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Our Interests and Christ

The Christian Existentialism of Helmut Rex

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Otago, Dunedin,

New Zealand.

29 November 2003
To my parents
Abstract

This thesis assesses both the historical and ongoing contribution to theology in New Zealand of Helmut Rex. Born in 1913 and educated in Berlin, Rex joined the Confessing Church as a trainee pastor and soon came into conflict with the Nazis. After arriving in New Zealand as a refugee he taught courses in biblical languages, church history, literature and hermeneutics. Rex initially taught at Knox Theological College and later at the nearby University of Otago. In 1948 Rex secured an M.A. in philosophy at the University of Otago and in 1954 completed a doctorate in Pauline eschatology and ethics at Tübingen. His competence as a scholar and teacher was recognised with the establishment in 1953 of a professorial chair in church history for his benefit. Although plagued by ill-health, Rex lectured until he took early retirement in 1963.

This study focuses predominantly on Rex's public lectures and publications and consequently leaves the majority of Rex's work in the field of biblical studies untouched. Five key characteristics, or leitmotifs, are uncovered in Rex's work. First, Rex places an emphasis on the need for ongoing reformation of the Christian faith. Second, he is concerned to be clear about just what we are actually able to assert about 'God and man'. Rex does this in order to move from a sure-footing towards those matters about which we would like to know. These are the subject of the third leitmotif in Rex's thought - 'matters of ultimate concern'. Fourth, Rex draws from a wide range of academic disciplines in order to construct a theology for 'modern man'. This approach has been called 'bricolage'. Finally, Rex's incisive analysis and quirky narrative style are seen to generate empathy in an audience in a manner that jars with his unexpected conclusions. This fifth characteristic, labelled 'cognitive dissonance', effects in an audience a re-appraisal of previously held convictions.

Towards the end of Rex's teaching career he asserted that the theologian should have dual foci - 'Christ and our interests'. It is observed in this thesis that the Christian scriptures inform Rex's understanding of the 'Christ', and existentialist philosophy his understanding of 'our interests'. It is argued that the approach might better be labelled 'our interests and Christ' because existentialist anthropology is both its starting and its strong point.
Investigation into Rex’s papers reveals the benefit ‘an sich’ of study into the history of ideas. As Rex suggests, we study history primarily in order to understand ourselves. Rex’s theology in particular is a record of an attempt to come to terms with the Christian faith in a secular environment. Rex was unusually sensitive to the ebb and flow of historical tides. Despite living in a period of unparalleled Church growth Rex maintained that the church was becoming less and less relevant. He was convinced that the Church needed to reform itself drastically. Rex was also responsive to new philosophical and theological movements. He was influential in the spread of existentialist ideas and gave early and considered assessment of the ‘death of God’ theologians.

Although his concrete contributions were largely ‘of their time’, Rex’s grappling with new philosophical and theological trends in a time of increasing religious uncertainty offer direction for those wishing to express theological truth in today’s environment. Towards the end of his teaching career Rex wrote papers addressing particular societal issues. His papers on race relations, homosexuality and alcoholism are illustrative of the way in which a sound theological framework coupled with a keen and sympathetic ear can shed new light on existing issues. Rex’s most important impact was on his students and those who assembled to hear his public addresses. His embodiment of dedication to learning and earnest pursuit of the truth generated an impression few who encountered him would forget. Using a term coined by one of Rex’s former pupils, this impact, as it is explored in this thesis, has been labelled ‘the scandal of particularity’.
Acknowledgements

I take full responsibility for the contents of this thesis, but many people have assisted in its production and I am pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge them. I am especially grateful to my supervisor Dr Gregory McCormick for his guidance and wisdom during the doctoral process. His Socratic questioning, critical comments and kind words have greatly encouraged me along the way. Two other individuals have contributed particularly generously to this work. Without the exchange of ideas, considered feedback and generous friendship of Drs Michael Grimshaw and Geoff King this project would almost certainly have been still-born. Thank you gentlemen.

Ms Bonnie Robinson selflessly shared the fruits of her previous work on Helmut Rex. I have benefited from her many recorded interviews and assorted papers. Many of Helmut Rex’s former students and colleagues also assisted me in my endeavours. I am grateful to those whose responses challenged the various theories I brandished during the early stages of my research. Specific mention is warranted for Drs Albert Moore, Maurice Andrew, Peter McKenzie, Ian Breward and Peter Matheson, and Messrs Peter Marshall and John Allen.

The vast majority of Helmut Rex’s papers are located in the Presbyterian Church Archives at Knox College, Dunedin. This has been my good fortune. The knowledgeable, welcoming workers at this organisation have assisted me greatly with my research. I would particularly like to thank the archivist Ms Yvonne Wilkie for access to uncatalogued material, and Mr Donald Cochrane for his prompt and accurate attention to my many enquiries. I am grateful to Ms Jane Bloore and staff at the neighbouring Hewitson Library. For their ready assistance and generous lending policy I am thankful, as too am I for their willingness to accommodate me in an office during my initial period of research.

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For helpful comments on early drafts of my work I would like to thank: Drs Tony Russell, John Salmond, Ivor Davidson, Richard Pierard, Antonie Alm-Lequeux and Mr Alex West. For access to the estate papers of Renate Rex I would further like to thank the trustee Mr Bruce Aitken. For assistance with final copy editing: Messrs Ben Clark, Robert Brockett, Matthew Dunstan and Julian O'Hagan, and Ms Dale Tye.

Last, but by no means least, heartfelt thanks to my family and friends for their support in this labour of love.

David Clark
Dunedin
November 2003
List of Common Abbreviations


OA201, OA202, OA203... = ["Other Archive001", "Other Archive002", "Other Archive003"] - Code used for archives consulted in the NZ Presbyterian Collection (PCANZ Archives held at Knox College, Dunedin) other than those in the Rex series (Cf. Below). Accession numbers where applicable are listed in the bibliography.


RA001, RA002, RA003... = ["Rex Archive001", "Rex Archive002", "Rex Archive003"] - Item number for material in the collection of provenance: Rex, Helmut Herbert Hermann (Rev.) as recorded in the NZ Presbyterian Collection shelf list sheet, series code: 3/132 (PCANZ Archives held at Knox College, Dunedin: see appendix five).

RTR - The Reformed Theological Review

Comment on use of gendered language

In the writing of this thesis I have used the gendered terms ('man', 'himself', 'he', and so on) that Rex employed when discussing the empirical single individual. Gender neutral terms such as 'humanity', 'themselves' and 'their' adopt the plural form and do not do justice to the existentialist focus on the individual person.
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Introduction

*Why did the people listen to Jesus? Because he talked about a subject his contemporaries were interested in. Should this not be a clue to the systematic theologian of today?*

**Why bother with the theology of Helmut Rex?**

Born in Potsdam, Germany in 1913, Helmut Rex studied Church history in Berlin under the great Hans Lietzmann. He was to put his education to good use, teaching an entire generation of Presbyterian ministers, after fleeing to New Zealand via Switzerland and London in 1939 to escape the Nazi regime. He lectured in Church History and tutored in biblical languages before being appointed the inaugural Professor of Church History at Knox Theological Hall, Dunedin in 1953. Rex also lectured, and became Dean for a brief period, at the University of Otago’s theological faculty in Dunedin. During this time, he was influential in the establishment of the University’s Religious Studies department.

On the basis of an examination of Helmut Rex’s public papers and lectures, in this thesis I will argue that his work should be regarded as signally relevant for the New Zealand Protestant theologian of today. Rex’s approach insists that the contemporary human

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2 Born in Dusseldorf in 1875, Lietzmann succeeded to Harnack’s famous Chair in Church History at Berlin University in 1924 and died in 1943. Due to the meticulous nature of his scholarship and his familiarity with primary sources, Lietzmann’s multi-volume *History of the Early Church* continues to be a valuable resource for the serious history scholar today. See for example: Hans Lietzmann *The Beginnings of the Christian Church* (London: Lutterworth, 1955).
condition be taken seriously, and, starting from the myriad interests of 'free' human beings, willingly forfeits any claim to provide an overarching system or explanation of theology. This makes sense on both a theoretical level - only God can justify our theological attempts; and on a pragmatic level, as Rex states - theology today can afford no other approach. Yet, as will be shown, Rex's approach engages with both the most useful western theory of his time - Christian existentialism - and with the specifics of New Zealand culture. An aim of this thesis is to depict the hard won fruits of this engagement as an expensive canvas - a background against which contemporary theology can paint an even richer work.

This thesis, part philosophy, part history, wholly theology, reflects the nature of the work it is assessing. It concentrates on Rex's bound typescripts, published papers and public addresses since these are the forums in which Rex offered the most complete expressions of his thought. This thesis aims to impress upon the reader the importance of Rex, not as another Bultmann or Barth, but as a theologian significant in the New Zealand context. On one level the fact that Rex did not publish in the same way as Barth or Bultmann makes him a less worthy subject of investigation, but to judge him by their standards is to miss his significance as a theologian whose impact was specific to a particular time and place. Rex embodied a particular set of historical and theological tensions. Neither of the aforementioned theologians, for example, put their mind to race issues in 1950s New Zealand, nor can they claim to have influenced a generation of students at Knox Theological Hall in quite the same way.

Because he wrote only one book and did not publish a great number of articles in high profile academic journals, at the time of writing this thesis Rex's name is not widely known outside the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. He is remembered predominantly by those who moved in Dunedin's society and academic circles in the 1950s and 60s, and a few students with whom he rubbed shoulders during his 1953-4 doctoral studies in

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3 Rex's handwriting is difficult to decipher. Those wishing to engage with Rex's thought are encouraged to first consult that which has been typed although much of merit is contained in the many exercise books in which he kept notes and also wrote lectures. The majority of his biblical studies and literature lectures are contained in handwritten manuscripts.


Tübingen. Yet for many students who studied under Rex, he was more important than the most famous theologians of the twentieth century.⁶

That memories of Helmut Rex as a teacher are treasured by his academically successful pupils⁷ is interesting in itself, however it is quite another thing to argue for significance of one who published so little theology. Yet as David Ford notes in the introduction of *The Modern Theologians*, his two volume work on theology in the twentieth century:

> A great deal of theology is done by those who write little or who may not write it down at all. A lifetime's wisdom may be channelled into teaching or other activity, or may issue in one powerful book [..] [I]t helps to keep the whole enterprise in perspective to remember that at the origin of the two traditions most influential on the theologies of these volumes are Socrates and Jesus, neither of whom left us any writings.⁸

Ford's words are apt in Rex's case. Rex's theology is important precisely because the greater part of his energies were devoted to teaching. His radio addresses were generated for a local audience the work he published was aimed at a New Zealand or Australiasian audience. The approach to the task of the systematic theologian which Rex later labelled 'Christ and our interests' captured the theological moment in 1950s and 1960s New Zealand. The amalgam of theology, existentialist philosophy and psychology inherent in Rex's work creates a critical tension that remains capable of captivating the reader today in a way many contemporary theologies fail to do.

This study will within the limits of the biographical material available, trace the development of Rex's thought whilst offering judicious speculation about the influence of personal and public events occurring during the period of history in which Rex was writing. Such background is necessary, even in a theological thesis, to understand more fully the motivation for, and meaning of, the theological material to be studied. As Carl Becker argued in 1932, modern citizens (and postmoderns are little better off) struggle to

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⁶Maurice E. Andrew 'The Hermeneutics of Helmut Rex' in *BHR*: p.90.
⁷*BHR* contains many tributes from former students. Prominent examples include: Lloyd Geering (Professor Old Testament, Otago; Professor Religious Studies, Victoria University Wellington), Ian Breward (Professor Church History, Otago, Melbourne), Albert Moore (Assoc. Prof. Religious Studies, Otago), Maurice Andrew (Professor Old Testament, Otago).
understand movements in thought, or even personal motivations, aside from their relation to
other historical events. Using the example of a time-machine and an imaginary conversation
with St Thomas Aquinas, Becker argues that our locus of understanding has become
uniquely narrative:

Let St. Thomas ask us to define anything - for example, the natural law - let him ask
us to tell him what it is. We cannot do it. But, given time enough, we can relate for
him its history. We can tell him what varied forms the natural law has assumed up
to now. Historical-mindedness is so much a preconception of modern thought that
we can identify a particular thing only by pointing to the various things it
successively was before it became that thing which it will presently cease to be.9

Rex's path to becoming a Professor was not a smooth one. It was substantially
influenced by the world wars that marked the first half of the twentieth century. His faith in
the merit of Christian existentialism and kerygmatic theology as the way forward for
Christianity in his time is for us more easily understood against some of the experiences
which shaped his personal journey.

How has Rex been viewed up until now? Frank Nichol records in the March 1966
edition of Landfall that "Dr Rex is a conspicuous example of an immigrant theological
teacher who forcefully and continuously confronted his students with the priority for the
New Zealander of his quest for his own identity".10 Indeed although the editors of the 1931-
1935 Journal of Theology rate a significant mention, it is with the Scottish immigrant Dr.
John Dickie that he begins, and it is Helmut Rex who receives the most attention in Nichol's
list of significant contributors to theology in this part of the world:

Helmut H. Rex was a young German pastor uprooted from his homeland by the
events which led to the Second World War, and set down in Dunedin in a context
which must have been utterly strange to him. Nevertheless Dr Rex has won for
himself a unique place in theology in this country and beyond it, and it is certain
that his work will continue to have seminal effects for some time to come. His
writing has been restricted to contributions to journals (including Landfall) and
unpublished notes, and it was a matter for profoundest regret when his failing
health brought about his retirement in 1963. His massive learning, his acute and
independent mind, his telling sense of humour and, above all, his persistent
preoccupation with the business of being human in New Zealand in the twentieth

9C.L. Becker, 'Climates of Opinion' in The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven and
century have had a striking and creative effect upon his students and his friends, a wide circle.11

As we shall see in the early chapters of this thesis, Rex had early experiences which placed him in the position of an outsider. He was a sickly child in a Germany obsessed with fitness; he was arrested by the Nazi regime for his work with the Confessing Church;12 and he had his marriage license application declined by them also. It is hardly surprising that the possibility of being called to military service in defence of this same Nazi regime led him to flee his homeland. Rex experienced life as an outsider as a refugee in London in 1939, his future unclear, until the Presbyterian Church, on the bidding of WCC President Visser't Hooft, accepted Rex and his newly acquired wife Renate into New Zealand later that same year.13

The situation Rex encountered upon arrival in New Zealand was in some ways no less difficult than the itinerant existence he left behind. News of the outbreak of war, coupled with an honest assessment of rising anti-German sentiment at the time, ruled out his placement in the traditional entry point for a young minister - a rural parish. Instead Rex was made a tutor at the Theological Hall, an environment believed to be less uniformly hostile to a recent German immigrant than a country town. Significantly it is said that Rex committed to living the rest of his life as a New Zealander only after his 1954 return from Doctoral studies in Tübingen.14 Perhaps at that point Rex was able to affirm congruence

11Frank Nichol, 'Theology in New Zealand' in Landfall 77, March 1966: p.43. Of Dickie, Nichol comments: "But it was in New Zealand that John Dickie (1875-1942) wrote his Organism of Christian Truth, a compact and comprehensive treatment of Christian doctrine published in 1930 and not yet superseded. Dr Dickie was a Scot who came to a teaching position in a Church where he might well expect to find himself at home, and where theological leadership would be natural to him."
12W.A. Visser't Hooft offers the following definition of the Confessing Church in his autobiography: "[T]he Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche) was the movement within the German Evangelical churches which carried on the struggle against the attempts of the nazi regime and the 'German Christians' party to introduce into the churches ideas and practices reflecting national socialist rather than biblical teachings. In a wider sense the term Confessing Church includes all churches or groups in the churches which took their stand on the Barmen Declaration of 1934. In a narrower sense the term is used to describe the movement embracing those sections of the German Evangelical churches which had broken off the relationships with a church government unacceptable to them and who, in 1936, had formed a Provisional Church Government of the Confessing Church." W.A Visser't Hooft, Memoirs (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973) p.99.
13For a full discussion of Rex's emigration to New Zealand see chapter one of the present thesis.
14In BHR: p.34; an anonymous contributor states: "Perhaps it would be better to ask when he felt himself to be a New Zealander. A turning-point here was probably his visit to Germany in 1953-4 [...] After fifteen years' absence from a Germany formerly under the Nazis he found renewed intellectual stimulus but a different Germany; he returned home with a renewed appreciation of the possibilities of New Zealand as shown by his varied contributions in the ensuing ten years". Samuel McCay, one of Rex's students, recalls that in the middle
between his world, his personal situation and his theology. On many levels, he was committing to a continuing existence as an alien in a foreign land.

The negative, indeed traumatic experiences in Rex's life appear to have fuelled his search for positive meaning in life. As we shall see, Bultmann's theology, with its underlying Lutheran emphasis on man's sinfulness and God's grace, offered Rex personal hope in a world still reeling from the horrors of the Second World War. Existentialist literature, with its realism about the goodness and evil in individuals, shapes his understanding of human experience. Rex's apparent acceptance of his role as an outsider enabled him to speak his mind, sharing thoughts that were often as troubling as they were challenging. In fact it is in critiquing the society of his adopted homeland that Rex gained a sense of belonging.  

_A Book of Helmut Rex_

The most accessible and interesting introduction to Helmut Rex, the man and his work, is contained in _A Book of Helmut Rex_. Published in September 1980 by two of his former students at the University of Otago, it contains a selection of his writings together with memoirs of his life and work.  Albert Moore and Maurice Andrew, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Dean of the Faculty of Theology respectively, edited this compilation out of a desire to capture something of the breadth and depth of Rex's thought, and to preserve the memories of the many students and friends influenced by him. They sought to gather a representative collection of his essays and addresses in lieu of any of a lecture, Rex had spoken of his return to Germany and the disappointment he had felt at realising that he was not as much of an individual as he had thought. In Germany Rex sat on public transport and recognised that there were many people who looked like him and dressed like him. In conversation he discovered there were people who sounded like him - not just in terms of their particular accent but in their forms of expression, their ways of thinking and their manner of speaking. In this way he experienced Germans as similar to himself, but he no longer felt 'at home' among them. Personal correspondence from Samuel McCay, 22 November 2003.

Maurice Andrew, _Set in a Long Place: A Life from North to South_ (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1999). On pp.201ff, Andrew notes: 'He certainly was prepared to take the risk of being different. Sometimes we felt as though a Jeremiah was calling out 'the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord', as our presuppositions about New Zealand were plucked up and destroyed. The very reason why some found him distasteful was that, in doing this, he not only wanted to belong - he claimed to belong. He wrote to me later: 'I have spent my active life out here trying to do justice to the fact that I live in New Zealand with all that implies...’"

_A Book of Helmut Rex_, ed. A.C. Moore and M.E. Andrew (Dunedin: University of Otago, September 1980). (Hereafter _A Book of Helmut Rex_ is referred to by the abbreviation _BHR_). Moore and Andrew's collection provides a healthy and varied selection of Rex's later writings and sufficient recollections from former students to flesh out something of a picture of the man, and the esteem in which his students viewed him. Of particular interest are the selections from personal letters, more candid than the formal papers archived in the Presbyterian collection.
definitive expression of his thought that Rex himself may have offered had ill-health not robbed him of the opportunity.17

Nestled amongst the fond memories and formal papers in A Book of Helmut Rex are two particularly worthy essays - one by each of the editors. Albert Moore's essay investigates 'The Contribution of Helmut Rex to Theology in New Zealand'18 and Maurice Andrew's surveys 'The Hermeneutics of Helmut Rex'.19 These essays present an accurate and concise exposition of key themes in Rex's thought and consequently it is to them that I have returned time and again to measure the clarity of my own argument and expression. They reach beyond the modest aim of the book's editors "to make available in writing some lively samples of his thought and personal impact",20 and raise some seminal issues for later students of theology in New Zealand to pursue.

These essays are all the more impressive when one considers that they were written by admiring former students less than 15 years after the death of their esteemed Professor. Even today they present a remarkably balanced assessment of Rex's contribution. The stated desire to avoid "a well meaning mixture [sic] of nostalgia and hagiography",21 coupled with a respect for Rex's own modesty in self-assessment has led Moore, if anything, to underplay the potential significance of Rex's work for future theology in New Zealand.

With its focus on personal recollections and lively examples of Rex's thought, Moore and Andrew's collection leaves some tantalising questions unanswered about Rex's role at Knox Theological Hall. For example, how did the theology of Rex critically compare with the material taught by his predecessors and colleagues? Was his theology perceived to be a 'corrective' to that of his peers? And why did Rex have so little to say about Barth and

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17 The intention of the compilation's editors is outlined in 'Editorial Preface' in BHR: p.7f. Rex's desire to have written more is captured in a letter to Peter McKenzie dated 29 January 1965. (The letter is held by its recipient). Rex apologises for the 13 month delay in replying to the previous letter of Peter McKenzie: "The truth is that I am no longer able to concentrate on any work at any length of time, and this includes the writing of letters. At the beginning of last year, I still hoped that now with my retirement I would have sufficient strength left to do some writing at least at the slow but steady rate of two to three hours a day. This has proved an illusion". In any case, it is unlikely that Rex would have offered a 'definitive' statement of his thought. Had he lived longer it is probable that he would have continued to write essays (possibly books) on specific topics. In this respect his approach is more like Bultmann's than Barth's.
18 BHR: pp.61-78.
19 BHR: pp.79-90.
20 BHR: p.8.
21 BHR: p.66.
Tillich despite regarding them (alongside Bultmann) as the greatest theologians of his age? It is hoped that this present work will go some way towards addressing these questions.

In attempting a full-scale study along the lines of that hinted at in the introduction to *A Book of Helmut Rex*, the present work will refer to material contained therein. It will also refer to interviews, correspondence and lecture notes, the majority of which are held in the Presbyterian Church’s archival collection held at Knox College, Dunedin.

Aside from that which is contained in *A Book of Helmut Rex*, the relative lack of biographical material is unfortunate for the student wishing to cobble together an understanding of one whose life was so thoroughly permeated by existentialism. The autobiographical material recorded in response to the questions of Rex’s protégé Ian Breward provides the most useful material for one wishing to gain a picture of Rex’s early years and academic influences. The reader of this material cannot help but note the broad philosophical, literary, psychological and theological interests Rex has listed. In particular the emphasis placed on the work of Hesse, Künkel and Sartre is indicative of the importance Rex placed on “the road to self-knowledge”.

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22 The majority of Rex’s lecture notes have been preserved. Unfortunately the burden of his personal papers were destroyed by his depressed wife shortly before her early and tragic death by her own hand on June 4, 1968, less than 15 months after Helmut’s death. Loneliness in the absence of her husband was given as the reason for her suicide (Source: Estate Papers of Renate Rex). The influence of existentialism on Renate in this regard is uncertain although it appears less than coincidental that an original leaflet cum bookmark was found in an ominous location in one of the couple's favourite works - on a page discussing suicide in the copy of Hesse’s work *Der Steppenwolf*. The book contains Rex’s annotations and was donated to the Hewitson library by Renate in memory of her husband in the year following his death. The book (originally purchased by Helmut Rehbein in 1936) appears in the interim period to have remained untouched until borrowed for the purposes of research for the present thesis. See: Hermann Hesse, *Der Steppenwolf* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1927) page 9 of ‘Tractat vom Steppenwolf’.

23 Ian Breward wrote to Renate and Helmut Rex with a set of biographical questions which he used as the basis of the biographical monograph found in the front of later editions of Rex’s hermeneutics coursebook (Breward continued to use this coursebook for his classes on hermeneutics). Both the biographical questions and their corresponding answers are found in RA003. Breward’s biographical monograph was also printed as ‘Helmut Rex, 1913-1967’ in *Theological Review* (Dunedin: The Magazine of the Theological Hall, Knox College, 1967).

24 Rex’s writings contain a cluster of phrases which relate to ‘self-understanding’ or ‘self-knowledge’. He uses the exact phrase “the road to self-knowledge” in RA003 (‘Untitled Response to Breward’, Q.9) when describing Künkel’s influence. He refers to the “life long pilgrimage on the road to self (der Weg nach Innen)” in connection with Hesse’s literary influence in RA003 (‘Untitled Response to Breward’, Q.12). RA166 contains a document related to the writing of Mauriac entitled ‘To be One’s True Self’ which describes the ‘correct’ understanding of self-hood. Rex’s 1958 introduction to the study of Church History in RA068 states: “For we study history first and foremost in order to know ourselves. The study of history is primarily an act of self-knowledge: It is its motive and strictly speaking also its subject matter.” His 1962 revision of this introduction contained in RA055 conflates knowledge and understanding of self: “Knowledge or understanding of self
Helmut Rex's theological approach was not unique in its aim to find contemporary expression for the Christian faith. As we shall see, what was significant was the way in which he intended this to happen. Additionally significant was Rex's personal impact which had much to do with the palpable congruence of word and deed that was embodied by this frail yet intense individual.

Andrew's contention that Rex's personal impact made him more important as a theologian to many of his students than any other they might read is highly pertinent. Coupled with his reputation as a scholar, Rex's personal presence underscored the importance he wished to see his students attach to theological concerns. A similar dynamic is described in Ian MacKillop's introduction to his study of literary critic F. R. Leavis where he recognises Leavis as a teacher with charisma:

This personal presence was not an incidental quality; he was not simply a teacher with a remarkably interesting personality. His teaching was a way of being a person - or not being another sort of academic person. It did not invite imitation. People did (and still do) mimic the manner, but this was a sign of his inimitableness, rather than the contrary; you could not 'do a Leavis' in real life. Leavis's [sic] demeanour as a teacher and in person became an emblem of seriousness, and that - embarrassing to admit it - is what a pupil wants.

Rex's style of critical reflection served as a symbol of seriousness for his pupils. Rex epitomised focused dedication to the academic task. The spectacle of his former

proceeds on three levels [...] 29

25This was the aim of Bultmann's demythologising programme. The work of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr stand out as other examples of the attempt to offer updated expression of the Christian faith in this period. The Journal of New Zealand Theology published between 1931-1935 was a standout attempt to write relevant theology in New Zealand. Relevant theology was clearly a concern of Nordmeyer who was a student under Dickie and went on to invent and instigate the Welfare State in New Zealand.

26A Book of Helmut Rex is a tribute to this phenomenon. A majority of its contributors offer memories or anecdotes about the way in which they were personally affected by encounter with Rex. Cf. for example, BHR: p.24: "No one person, apart from my parents and wife, had more influence on my life than Helmut Rex".

27Andrew, in BHR: p.90.


29Many students recall an example Rex posed for consideration in discussion of the 'natural rights' debate. In a 1950s culture of 'Rugby, Racing and Beer' Rex asked his class whether his neighbour had the right to listen to racing reports on his wireless on a Saturday afternoon whilst mowing his lawns. Then Rex astonished his students by telling them that this interfered with his own chosen leisure-time pursuit - studying philosophy in the quiet of his study. Rex asked whose rights ought to prevail in this situation. That anyone should wish to study philosophy on a Saturday afternoon was a proposition his students had never previously considered. Source: Interview with Albert Moore, 197 Signal Hill Road, Dunedin, 9 June 2000.

30Rex responded fully to student queries and provided thoughtful answers at subsequent classes for questions worthy of prolonged consideration. Ian Breward recalls that Rex was 'very good at answering questions and
students, claiming his influence yet succeeding in many and varied teaching fields, hints at his inimitability.\textsuperscript{31} Rex did not create a 'school' of followers. He was not interested in creating clones and never imposed his own ideas.\textsuperscript{32} Yet something of his unapologetic nature as an individual concerned with truth and the journey to self-hood, appears to have been conveyed to his intellectual heirs.

Maurice Andrew and Albert Moore concur that Helmut Rex's personal impact was significant above and beyond the particular theological insights he shared with his students. Moore says “the great contribution of Helmut Rex to theology was himself”,\textsuperscript{33} and Andrew notes that:

\begin{quote}
[...] most people spend much more time thinking about and acting upon someone they have known themselves personally in a small circle. [...] The fact should be faced squarely: for most of us he was a far more important theologian than, say, Bultmann was even though he is known by some all over the world, and Helmut Rex is known only to a few in New Zealand. [...] It's part of the scandal of particularity.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Further support for such a view is provided by conversations and interviews with former pupils who will fondly recall anecdotes of their favourite lecturer.\textsuperscript{35} These same students will recall the courses he taught and some key insights, but few if any will be able to offer a sustained critique of his viewpoint in the way that they might be able to for Barth or Bultmann. Rex is remembered as a catalyst rather than as a systematianist.\textsuperscript{36} Failing health

\begin{flushright}
very patient' – Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{31}Notable among Rex's former pupils are the following: Albert Moore (Assoc. Professor of Religious Studies), Maurice Andrew (Professor of Old Testament), Alan Quigley (Dean of Pacific Theological College), Ian Breward (Professor of Church History), Peter Matheson (Professor of Church History), Peter Marshall (Lecturer in Ethics) Frank Nichol (Professor of Systematic Theology), Lloyd Geering (Professor of Old Testament, Professor of Religious Studies), Graeme Ferguson (Principal of United Theological College, Lecturer in Systematics), Alister Rae (Professor in Pastoral Studies), Nancy Burgess (Lecturer in Pastoral Studies), Gavin Munro (Professor of New Testament), Evan Sherrard (Lecturer in Psychotherapy), Hew McLeod (Professor of History, University of Otago).

\textsuperscript{32}Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.

\textsuperscript{33}Moore, Albert; 'The Contribution of Helmut Rex to Theology in New Zealand' in \textit{BHR} p.67.

\textsuperscript{34}Andrew, Maurice; 'The Hermeneutics of Helmut Rex' in \textit{BHR} p.90.

\textsuperscript{35}Dozens of anecdotes are recorded in the interviews conducted for this thesis. Further anecdotes are to be found in interviews conducted by Bonnie Robinson and a large number are found in \textit{A Book of Helmut Rex}.

\textsuperscript{36}"He wanted students to think in a focussed and thorough manner for themselves" – Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.
and early death prevented Rex from publishing a greater amount of his mature thought in a manner that would have seen his work more widely discussed. 37

Rex’s theological legacy

How is Rex’s theology useful to us today? A close examination of Rex’s writing reveals five key themes, or leitmotifs, which might usefully be adopted and/or adapted for the writing of relevant contemporary theology in New Zealand.

1.0. Reform not conform

Rex takes the principle of a reformed church always reforming seriously. In attempting to do justice to the Protestant maxim *Semper Reformanda*, Rex’s theological approach encourages each generation to find new expression for the Christian kerygma. Rex’s understanding of this reforming principle is shaped by the work of theological forebears Luther and Bultmann. Rex is concerned not to preserve or conform to existing doctrine, but to find the most worthy expression of Christian faith. In the tradition of reforming thought, Rex is critical for example, of determinist thought influenced by Augustine, and, of unqualified acceptance by believers of church doctrine such as the doctrine of the trinity.

Rex’s approach is faithful to a model of ongoing revelation in history. It takes seriously the possibility of contemporary thought influencing a developing Christian tradition. Rex’s interaction with the thought of Paul, Luther, Kierkegaard and Bultmann is suggestive of a continuing history of apostolic witness.

2.0. Affordability

Realising that all of our attempts at theology are human attempts and can only be justified by God, Rex begins his theology with that which is most immediate to us - our selves. As we shall see further, his Sunday Service lecture suggests that the preacher should begin with what is known and concentrate on what is worth knowing. In moving from what

37 In *BHR* Moore describes the situation as Rex approaches retirement and records personal correspondence which indicated Rex’s desire to publish. “As I look back on my life, I think our Lord intended to teach me humility, and seeing myself in print is just one of the many ‘vanities’ he has taken from me”. Letter from H.H. Rex to A.C. Moore, Nov. 5, 1964, in *BHR*: pp.68f.
is perceived to be more concrete to that which is of ultimate concern, Rex is hoping to appeal to the pragmatic and rational nature of modern man. His existentialist approach is congruent with the experience of an audience who recognise themselves as isolated individuals. In this experience, says Rex, they share the lot of modern man.

In a time where the apparent stability of the self is less assured than was previously held, an existentialist starting point like Rex's would need to be justified in a different fashion - perhaps simply on the basis of its heuristic value. In any case a pragmatic 'affordable' theological approach has a particular attraction in a New Zealand context which continues to prize basic 'down-to-earth' solutions free from anything 'fancy'. It is something akin to this attitude that inspires tales of the fix-all piece of 'number 8' fencing wire in New Zealand's rural 'urban' mythology, and the familiar saying "she'll be right mate". The affection for practicality in the New Zealand collective psyche is something of which future local theologies might usefully take note.

Significantly, unlike the proponents of number 8 wire and "she'll be right, Rex's taste for affordability never tempted him into the realm of the 'slap-happy'. In the application of theological method his work is characterised by thoroughness and attention to detail.

3.0. Questions of ultimate concern

Rex's approach focuses on matters of life and death. His thought concerns itself with human ends and the prospect of doing justice to the human condition. In this regard it is informed by both Christian thought and existentialist thought. As we shall see, it is the concern to be relevant in this regard that leads Rex to declare that theology should be attempted with two foci: 'Christ and our interests'.

Rex's interest in what it means to be human expresses itself also in his preoccupation with the history of ideas and in a concern to examine tensions between authority and truth. Rex's theology is modern in so far as it advocates taking seriously insights associated with the Enlightenment. Rex values science and is suspicious of obscurantism. Pre-modern superstition is eschewed in his thought.
Modernist leanings in Rex’s thought point to the value of the search for truth. Rex was convinced that “intellectual honesty demanded the recognition of the historical critical method”.\textsuperscript{38} His interest in demythologising inspired by Bultmann was sparked by a search for the truest and clearest expression of the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{39} At the same time, Rex’s existentialism contains the seeds of postmodernism. For example, in his later work he focuses on the search for what he somewhat surprisingly calls a “myth that sustains”,\textsuperscript{40} and is adamant that, even if God really was dead, Christian efforts at theology and worship would not be entirely wasted.\textsuperscript{41}

Rex’s theology can be examined as theology written at a critical historical juncture. In tracing aspects of the modern and the postmodern in Rex’s approach, we will witness a modern emphasis on the authoritative accounting of the history of ideas and uncover an almost postmodern search for self-understanding. In Rex’s literature lectures he will convey a modernist concern for the ‘correct’ understanding of the human condition, but will betray a postmodern tendency to locate meaning in a variety of texts. And in his hermeneutics Rex will search for a modern kernel of kerygma all the while approaching texts from the perspective of ‘our interests’ borne of an existentialism which was later to be developed by postmoderns. Additionally it will be seen that Rex’s questioning of traditional frameworks, in a time of unparalleled Church growth anticipated subsequent questioning and demise.\textsuperscript{42}

Rex’s thoughtful theological articulation in the New Zealand context of the pivotal transition between the modern and the postmodern is significant for another reason. The study of history is capable of showing themes and movements; the sum of different directions and emphases can point to the possibilities of new resolutions in new circumstances. The study of Rex’s thought as an object of history is no different in this

\textsuperscript{38}RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.3, Q.3. For a full discussion on this matter see chapter one of the present thesis.

\textsuperscript{39}“As for his motivations, I think [Rex] saw authority in truth and careful critical inquiry”. Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.

\textsuperscript{40}Helmut H. Rex, ‘The Sunday Service’ in \textit{The Bulletin}, The Church Service Society of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, No.23, October 1962: p.6. See chapter nine of the present thesis for a discussion of Rex’s desire for a ‘myth that sustains’.

\textsuperscript{41}See for example: Rex, \textit{DJR}: p.42f; p.59, pp.79ff.

\textsuperscript{42}Elder statesman Arthur Harwell is widely quoted by Rex’s students as describing the Presbyterian Church in this period as ‘going like a train’, (original source unknown).
regard. As Rex was fond of saying: "Historical knowledge is essentially knowledge of self".\(^{43}\) In studying our past we are forced to take a critical stance in relation to it, which in turn helps us make more informed decisions regarding our future.

### 4.0. Bricolage

The term *bricolage* made popular by the French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss is usefully applied to Rex's theological approach.\(^{44}\) Rex borrowed freely from other academic disciplines in his writing and notably described his own theology as "a thing of threads and patches".\(^{45}\) By borrowing from other sources, Rex modelled an approach which valued the insights of many disciplines and refused to lock understanding of God into a highly technical language accessible only to those who devoted their lives to the study of historical theology. Also implicit in this method is the understanding that the activity of (or truth about) God cannot be identified with or limited to any visible earthly manifestation such as the Church, or a theology faculty, or a particular historically contingent form of expression. An important consequence of this is that it draws attention to the fact that no one academic discipline has a monopoly on understanding matters of ultimate significance.

Rex's broad range of interests and willingness to entertain the insights from a number of disciplines - among them: languages, philosophy, literary studies, depth psychology, social anthropology and the history of ideas - gives his work an erudite and authoritative feel. Significantly, this aids in the building of empathy with the audience and adds to the weight of the challenge felt at the end of each address.

A derivative benefit of borrowing from other disciplines is the interest generated by unfamiliar terminology. Even the dedicated reader of theology is all too easily turned off by the tired and antiquated language that is a frequent hallmark of much work in the discipline today. This generalisation applies *ipso facto* to work written in a previous century. By way of contrast Rex's theology is relatively free from this potentially alienating factor. Readers of


\(^{45}\) Peter Marshall reports that Rex described his own theology as 'a thing of threads and patches'. This disturbed some students although those who had a bit of charity about them recognised that Rex was a man who lived his faith and respected him for this. Source: Interview with Peter Marshall, Knox College, Dunedin, 31 August 2001.
Rex's papers may in the first instance find themselves asking whether this is really theology at all. Actually the fresh language models well the importance of the unfamiliar to a challenging theology. In so doing it does not effect a premature rejection of a conversion experience. Freed from the soporific rhythms of familiar terminology, the reader's mind remains active in the attempt to discern the implications of each new expression of theological truth. In a parallel way Rex appears willing to sacrifice not only traditional language, but also traditional systematic form, where it precludes relevant content.

5.0. Cognitive dissonance

Rex's writing strategy manifests itself in a consistent way. Rex builds empathy with an audience through an exhibition of his concern with questions of ultimate importance for them. As the argument builds, the audience is shown a different (existentialist) way of regarding everyday problems or issues. The problem or issue is demonstrated to be resolvable through the efforts of individuals aware of the nature of their human condition. At the end of each piece, Rex produces conclusions which, while frequently simple and orthodox when regarded on their own, take on new challenge and meaning when viewed in light of his demonstration.

The interest generated by Rex's frequently unorthodox and unfamiliar manner of engagement with an otherwise familiar issue creates a tension between the existing understanding of a commonly proposed solution and the more nuanced understanding Rex has generated. Action on the part of the hearer is often demanded in order to do justice to (produce consonance with) the new more existentially aware understanding of a problem or issue. That is, the individual hearer of Rex's message is made aware of their own involvement, as a human aware of their condition, in the resolution of an existing issue or problem. In this sense, Rex's theology may provide a fitting vehicle for confrontation with the kerygma.

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46 Rex acknowledged conversion as one aim of theology. For example see: letter from Peter McKenzie to Helmut Rex, 17 December 1963, and personal correspondence from Peter McKenzie, 29 March 2001: p.5: "Helmut mentioned that to understand his point of view required a sort of conversion".
Christ and our interests

In a 1961 letter addressed to his former student Frank Nichol (who became Professor of Systematic Theology at Knox in 1963) and circulated among Rex’s former pupils,47 Rex outlines his beliefs about the formulation of meaningful systematic theology. He suggests that this process begins with ‘Christ’ and ‘our interests’. By ‘Christ’ Rex means the man Jesus and what was related of him by the first disciples. By ‘interests’ Rex means those characteristics unique to humanity as described in Sartre’s existentialist thought.48 Without an awareness of the constitution of true humanity, man does not have the tools or direction to explore and expand his world.

The letter to Nichol is written by Rex in response to a manuscript for a talk delivered by Nichol which discussed matters of ecumenism, contemporary biblical scholarship and systematic theology. In the letter Rex gives candid expression to some of his key beliefs concerning the task of theology. He says that the “desire to have a clear and consistent view of one’s faith is only natural”49 but questions whether the basis of the Christian faith is such that it can be achieved. In any case Rex believes it “is certainly worth raising the whole question of the function and possibility of systematic theology, because the whole undertaking is [...] problematic in itself”.50

While he does make a distinction between common human interests and the interests of the theologian,51 what is significant about Rex is the way he is able to conflate the two. For Rex, an understanding of the human condition is intrinsic in any theological quest; in fact the human condition is the legitimate starting point of every theological quest. Rex’s theology might be described as a ‘cobbling together’ of insights derived from a number of

51 RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961. In the letter Rex offers advice to Nichol: “You started the wrong way, i.e. with your interests as a systematic theologian instead of their interests. Only if you had started with their interests would you have had a chance of persuading them that your own interests happen to be of interest also to them.”
disciplines. In assembling this material, Rex crosses the language barriers that mark out the defined fields or territories of theological discourse.

Rex does not seek to segregate theology and its language from the task of making meaning in everyday life. Rather than utilising the - all too easily misunderstood - traditional language of theology, Rex uses language accessible to everyday citizens in the twentieth century. This avoids the danger associated with traditional theological language - of encountering an audience which all too easily assumes it knows what is meant when discipline specific terms are employed. Whether intended or not, the additional interest created by Rex’s novel terminology and challenging concepts, can be seen to be a direct consequence of an approach which contains a confluence of the concerns of the human condition generally with the concerns of traditional theology.

It must be conceded that Rex’s intention when he adds questions of the human condition is not to give his theology an interest factor reliant upon its quirkiness. Nor is his theology likely to have been written in an attempt to break down interdisciplinary barriers. Any such consequence must be regarded as secondary to the desire to construct meaning in the most intellectually plausible fashion in the present moment. That Rex’s is not an attempt to conflate disciplines per se is evidenced in the fact that, at least to some degree, the questions of the human condition and of theology were separated in his mind - he clearly describes ‘Christ’ and ‘our interests’ as two foci that should guide the systematic theologian.

In the aforementioned letter to Frank Nichol, he writes:

Both in the biblical field and in the contemporary setting, the systematic theologian has an opportunity of formulating something that is meaningful not only to himself but also to his contemporaries. I believe, the systematic theologian needs two foci for his work: one is Christ (i.e. the man Jesus whose presence here on earth is at the root of the Christian faith) and what is related of him by the first witnesses, and the other is his own interest (i.e. his concern with his own human condition, incl. of course that of his fellow men).

Breward recalls: “[Rex] saw theological disciplines as a part of a wider heritage. Students needed to be in touch with other aspects (disciplines) within that wider heritage.” – Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.


RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961. It is interesting to note that while Karl Barth came from a different theological standpoint, he expressed a similar sentiment when he suggested that theology
This formula for the work of the systematic theologian is a concrete outworking of Rex's Christian existentialism, something he discovered in Bultmann in 1933 and which he claimed his own for life. It is interesting that he chose to describe his journey as that of 'Christian existentialism' rather than as 'existentialist Christianity.' Is there any significance to be attributed to his choice as to which is the noun to be modified? Could Rex best be described as an existentialist with Christian convictions or alternatively as a Christian with existentialist convictions? These are important questions because, with his existentialist emphasis, Rex is working toward a different way of being Christian, and perhaps inadvertently is anticipating new ways of being Christian in the twenty-first century - where orthopraxis now vies with orthodoxy for attention.

Our interests and Christ

Existentialism played a large role in the construction of Rex's theological outlook. For this reason, one wonders whether rather than 'Christ and our interests', it would perhaps be more accurate to describe Rex's approach as 'our interests and Christ'? Stating his formula in reverse emphasises two points. Firstly, in practice Rex focuses on 'our interests and Christ' in that order. He begins with the human condition and moves to the Scriptures to seek answers to the questions raised by this condition. And, secondly, Rex's existentialist anthropology (read: 'our interests') achieves more frequent and explicit expression in his work than does his Christology (read: 'Christ').

The most succinct expression of Rex's Christology is offered in his 1961 'Credo' written for a discussion on creeds being undertaken by the Presbyterian Church's doctrine committee. It proceeds by way of negative argument and in doing so raises more questions than answers. Here as elsewhere, the implicit nature of Rex's Christology raises some tantalising questions. Something of a picture of his Christology can be pieced together from his work on existentialist writers, hermeneutics, eschatology and scriptural material. On the

should be written with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.

55 H.H. Rex, 'Credo' in BHR: p.263.
56 For example, Rex's statement on God as Creator proceeds as follows: "When I use the word 'Creator' I do not wish to make any statement concerning [...]. I neither affirm the creation story nor do I deny evolution, nor do I try to link the two together. I wish to deny, however, that [...]." H.H. Rex, 'Credo' in BHR: p.263.
surface, at least, Rex is highly orthodox in his Christology. For example, Rex’s faith in God is “faith in God through Christ”.  

Rex does not intentionally attempt to prioritise ‘Christ’ over ‘our interests’ or vice versa. Instead, one wonders whether he may have seen the two as interdependent? Such an understanding can be deduced from analysing aspects of his definitions of each. Included in Rex’s definition of the Christ is “the witness of the first disciples”, that is, scriptural witness. Scriptural witness is linked also, in Rex’s doctorate, to Sartre’s thought. In his thesis Rex expresses the view that Sartrean existentialism is derivative of Pauline anthropology. Thus, it appears that Rex believes that both ‘Christ’ and ‘our interests’ are mediated to us by Scripture.  

It is important to note here that Rex favours this dual focus over any other the systematic theologian might traditionally claim. The motive, action and criterion for the theological task “should be: your own personal interest (of course not in a purely subjective sense of ‘personal’, but your concern with your human condition as a man of the xxth century, viewing this condition as a Christian)”. However, Rex is realistic enough to acknowledge that consistent with his definition:  

they may not have any real interests at all, but assuming that they are in fact alert to the fundamental questions concerning their human condition, you would have had to find out where they would start their theological quest. Most likely it would have nothing to do with the Trinity, the Incarnation, the relation of grace and works, the question of revelation, and all the other subjects to which the theologian turns first by sheer habit.  

Instead of being theoretically based, Rex anticipates that the ‘real’ interests a Church audience might be expected to have are those which impact more immediately on their understanding of the human condition:  

Possibly, their questions will have something to do with the meaning of life; with the question of what we ought to do; perhaps, the hope in the hereafter; or the  

function of prayer. Questions which the traditional systematic theologian does not place first.\textsuperscript{61}

Rex's existentialist starting point mean for him that the "tradition of his church as formulated in the confessions is primarily of historical interest but not of normative interest".\textsuperscript{62} In his view, systematic theologians are frequently guilty of a failure to take seriously the findings of Church historians:

They too frequently treat as absolutes doctrinal formulations that have their meaning in a distinct historical setting. That applies even to the doctrine of the Trinity. Neither we - nor Paul for that matter - would express our faith in God through Christ in this fashion today - if we had a chance of starting anew. As it is, we haven't [sic]. But that does not mean that a systematic theologian today must start his work with the doctrine of the trinity or with questions concerning revelation. He ought to start with questions that agitate our minds today and from there feel his way. It is at least conceivable that he might start, for instance, with the concept of the 'kingdom'. That is after all how Jesus started his proclamation (Mk.1.15) and it is a concept that is still full of relevance today. [...] Or why not start with ethics?! I can hear people scream and faint at the mere thought of it. But what is the Christian faith if it is not 'a way of life'? "Hee hodos." [sic]\textsuperscript{63}

While it is clear that Rex labelled the ideal approach to theology as one of both 'Christ and our interests', it is equally clear that for him this involves starting with a focus on a particular contemporary formulation of the condition of modern man. Rex's reasons for beginning in this fashion are demonstrably of an existentialist nature.

**The human condition**

The product of his existentialist convictions, Rex believes that without an understanding of his condition, modern man does not really exist, living at best an "unreflective animal existence".\textsuperscript{64} Such an understanding is to be informative rather than prescriptive. Rex is convinced that the tendency of eastern European collectivist philosophies to prioritize the theory of human existence over the realities of a truly lived

\textsuperscript{61}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961.
\textsuperscript{62}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961.
\textsuperscript{63}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961. 'Hee Hodos' is a transliteration from the Greek meaning 'The Way' - an ancient description of the Christian faith.
existence forces human beings into a mould which does no justice to the individuality of each person. They are harmful because they fail to begin with the human condition.

In Rex’s view modern man exists in the tension between life and thought, faith and reason. In practice this means that he can be observed to change his stance on matters according to the historical situation in which he found himself. This same tension is found in Paul’s writings as he wrestles with a synthesis between the life of a Jewish prophet and the dynamic cultural influence of Hellenistic philosophy. Recognising this, Rex believes that his understanding of the human condition is firmly rooted in the Christian Scriptures.

While Rex values the Christian Scriptures as a primary theological tool, his Lutheran heritage, and his reading of Bultmann convince him of the need for their reinterpretation. As we shall see further, Rex is highly critical of any, who, living in the modern period, seek to imitate the style of pre-modern theologians.

A radical change in the way theology is written is called for after the shift in worldview that Rex finds symbolised in the events of the seventeenth century. A new scientific outlook on life changed the way we interact with the surrounding world and with God. Theology cannot and must not avoid this conclusion if it is to be perceived to have any relevance to contemporary man. If we are to propose ‘a myth that can sustain’, it is essential, says Rex, to take seriously the condition of modern man. Humanity no longer experiences reality as it did before the Cartesian revolution. This involves, for example, recognition of a world in which miracles can no longer be witnessed. It is a world in which prayer involves

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65 See Rex’s inaugural lecture delivered at Knox Theological Hall, Dunedin in March 1949 and published as ‘In Defence of the Individual’ in Landfall 10, June 1949: pp.111-123.
66 An example of Rex’s inconsistency can be seen in the contrast between his 1960 declaration: “The age of preaching is past [...] We Presbyterians have preached far too much already”, and his 1961 address on the Sunday Service where he describes the importance of the sermon as the central act of worship: “In our reformed tradition of worship the sermon is central. The Swiss and French reformed churches used to call the whole service after it, and rightly so, because it is the sermon which makes the whole service intellectually convincing. If it fails to do that, then poison enters the rest of the ritual; a slow imperceptibly working poison that takes the life out of the ritual.” The citations are respectively sourced from: Helmut H. Rex, ‘A charge to a young minister: On occasion of the induction of A.S. Barton to Seaciff Parish’, 1960 in BHR: p.230ff.; and, Helmut H. Rex, ‘The Sunday Service’ in The Bulletin, October 1962: p.4. It is tempting to speculate that Rex deliberately chose to adopt contradictory viewpoints at different times in an attempt at dialectical theology, however, it is probably more accurate to say that he considered the matters at hand afresh in each situation and adopted the perspective that seemed to fit best with the interests of his audience and his learning to that point.
man in a conversation with a silent partner. Thus, the reader of Rex can quickly see that for him it is imperative that the core message of the Gospel be separated out from its elaborate and fanciful pre-Enlightenment costume.

In the context of a critique of the ecumenical discussion, which he described as “like a blight in the field of systematic theology” 68 Rex expresses his consistently held views about the worthlessness of outmoded idiom. In the ecumenical discussion ‘churchmen’ are recognised for discussing issues out of step with people involved in the church at parish level. 69 Rex accuses the ‘churchmen’ and their theology of living in the pre-Cartesian world, while the “people who make up the churches live in the xxth century”. 70

Nothing of what is done in the field of theology in the ecumenical discussion percolates through to the parish level, supplying the people with an intelligent understanding of their faith. The reason is quite simply that the questions which agitate the ‘leaders’ are not the questions which agitate the people and the vocabulary in which the ‘leaders’ express their ideas is not the vocabulary of the people.71

Concerns about ministers being ineffective at translating the kerygma for their congregations were, as we shall see, to gain fuller expression in Rex’s 1961 paper on the ‘Sunday Service’ but the message and method here is essentially the same. 72 The Bultmannian concept of demythologising is put in plain language and related to an ecclesial-theological issue in a local context. While Rex was party to popularising the theoretical aspects of Bultmann’s demythologising - as in this instance, it is important to note that he can more frequently be observed putting it into practice. With his work on the topic of eschatology being an obvious exception, very few of Rex’s addresses contain ostensibly theological language.


69It is interesting that Rex distances himself here from ‘churchmen’. Presumably he is criticising those who are involved in the political power games of the Church. Frailty meant that Rex would not go to the Church’s General Assembly by choice. He would attend if required. This was by way of contrast to his colleagues, Dickie, Salmond, Allan and Knight, all of whom were major assembly figures. Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.


72See chapter nine for an analysis of ‘The Sunday Service’.
Philosophically, Rex has sympathies with the writings of Heidegger and Sartre. While Rex correctly attributes the merit of analysing the structures of the human condition to Heidegger, Sartre poses for Rex “in the most forceful manner the question of what it means to be a human being”. Rex’s various papers and addresses assume Sartre’s understanding of the human condition, in fact many of them explicitly teach it in one form or another, for, as we have said, Rex is convinced that without a basic understanding of the current human condition, contemporary man could do his life no justice.

Rex’s idea of a basic understanding of the human condition involves the existentialist categories of ‘responsibility’ and ‘freedom’, and he outlines his reasons for this in his various papers on existentialist themes. Without a sense of freedom, man fails to exercise that aspect of his humanity which distinguishes him from the animals. Without a sense of responsibility, man is unable to make personal ethical decisions, and therefore fails to crystallise into an individual human being.

Rex’s adoption of an existentialist starting point for his theology is not without pitfalls. The perennial conundrum of common human ethics is raised by the recognition of humans who exist only as such by virtue of being individuals. Yet Rex perseveres, perhaps convinced that a common solution might be found once all people became aware that they share the same world.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, his existentialist leanings, Rex maintains a strong Christian faith. Despite his modern obsession with the insights of reason, the results of science and the findings of the historical-critical method, Rex is not a rationalist. He longs for experience of the transcendent and is tellingly disappointed that he has seldom made

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73 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.10, Q.12: “Sartre (to mention this only in passing) posed for us in the most forceful manner the question of what it means to be a human being. The merit of analysing the structures of the human condition is, of course, Heidegger’s, but Sartre more than anybody else taught us to see the difference between a cabbage or animal and a human being (You can have the most sophisticated and elaborate views about Man being the Image of God and yet existentially remain a cabbage).”


75 “It is only when people come to believe that the meaning of their own lives is bound up with the rest of the human race that they will discover the standards of value which will enable them to live in a world in common”. Helmut H. Rex, 'Existentialist Freedom' in Landfall 19, September 1951: p.215.
such acquaintance in the church setting. He believes in ‘meaning in history’, a ‘here-after’ and in the value of travelling ‘the way’. Rex’s ability to live with unresolved tensions between faith and reason in his academic work mimics his sources of inspiration. Paul, Sartre and Kierkegaard, to name a few, deal with irresolvable tensions and paradox. Irresolvable tensions also reflect the inner life of an alien in a foreign land.

Although the more comprehensive statement on theological method outlined in his 1961 letter comes late in Rex’s career, aspects of it are identifiable even in his earliest work. In each area of theology Rex progressively examines from the 1950s onwards, a relationship between the human condition and the theological subject is established. A careful examination of each area of Rex’s work will reveal why he believes this to be essential to contemporary theology.

Structure of the thesis

In 1946, while still employed as a tutor on a temporary basis at Knox Theological Hall, Helmut Herbert Rehbein changed his name to Helmut Herbert Rex. It seems that he did this to reduce the confusion caused by his uncommon surname in general, and to reduce the instances of confusion with Hubert Ryburn, the Master of the residential College at Knox, in particular.

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77 See especially RA110, Rex, ‘Five Talks on Eschatology: SCM Study Conference May 1957 at Christchurch: V. Beyond Bultmann?’, p.6. (Hereafter referred to as ‘SCM-V’). For a full discussion on Rex’s eschatology see chapter seven of the present thesis.
78 Rex’s unpublished 1947 M.A. thesis on Kierkegaard, ‘The Individual in Soren Kierkegaard’s Aesthetical Writings’, will be thoroughly examined in chapter three of the present thesis.
79 Death certificates confirm Rex and Renate’s particulars as they were legally recorded in the 1960s. (Source: Estate Papers of Renate Rex).
80 BHR: p.34f. “The change of name from Rehbein to Rex during the 1940’s [sic] would have some significance for his identity in New Zealand, though not necessarily as traumatic as one might first expect. Lloyd Geering recalls that Helmut gave three reasons for the change in N.Z.
(i) People had difficulty spelling the name Rehbein (which means literally “deer-leg” in German).
(ii) People had difficulty pronouncing it.
(iii) People in Dunedin confused it with Ryburn; (H. J. Ryburn was Master of Knox College). Whatever other reasons there may have been, the choice of the new name Rex was based simply on the fact that it was his mother’s ‘family name.’ Evidence in the résumé Rex supplied as a requirement for his doctorate does not support Geering’s claim that ‘Rex’ was his mother’s ‘family name’. Rex, D.Thel., Lebenslauf’ p.94 begins: “Ich bin am 15. Februar 1913 in Potsdam geboren als Sohn des Kreisinspectors Hermann Rehbein und seiner Ehelfrau Martha, geb. Haupt.” Ian Breward has verified this information independently via matriculation papers for the University of Berlin: see Ian Breward, ‘Rex, Helmut Herbert Hermann 1913-1967’ in The
Use of the name 'Rehbein' has been preserved in the body text of the opening chapters since it is both historically accurate and assists with the flow between supporting documents and argument. Exception has been made where the discussion has moved away from an examination of earlier thought - such as when Bultmann's life-long influence is examined in chapter one.

Chapter one of this thesis will examine Rex's time as a student. It will be shown that Rex's time at Berlin University was to prepare him for a lifetime of diligent critical study. Although there is much in this period of Rex's life that is undocumented, glimpses of his schooling, reading interests and theological teachers together with the political climate in pre-WW2 Germany depict Helmut Rex's preparation for an as yet unanticipated exile - an exile that would find meaning in existentialism.

Rex's early years in New Zealand would be his most difficult personally. John Dickie, the Principal of the Theological Hall, made it clear even to the students that the new immigrant was there as a temporary member of staff and "on sufferance". Rex published only at the beginning and end of the 1940s, but by 1948 had established himself on the permanent staff and had an M.A. degree to his credit. The second chapter of this thesis will examine the theology of Rex's early colleagues and identify the emergence in his work of key themes that he would later revisit.

Chapter three will examine Rex's M.A. thesis on Kierkegaard and draw attention to Rex's exploration of existentialist material that would feed into his understanding of the individual and his human condition. Kierkegaard's emphasis on the importance of individual moral choice to the self-realisation of the individual, is defended by Rex, and, as

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81Rex studied at Berlin University from 1931-1935.
we shall see, he explores the political implications of this viewpoint in his 1949 inaugural lecture.

The four pieces Rex produced in 1950-51 on Sartre suggest an intense period of interaction with the latter’s thought. They are important because Sartre’s existentialist concepts and terminology formed an integral part of Rex’s approach to theology. Sartrean anthropology informs Rex’s work on Pauline ethics in his *D.Theol.* thesis, inspires aspects of his eschatology and gives shape to his ‘situational’ writings. Acknowledging the importance of Sartre’s thought, chapter four outlines Rex’s understanding of ‘freedom’ and the existentialist teaching that ‘existence precedes essence’.

Chapter five examines a selection of Rex’s writings on literary topics. These public addresses are the fruit of the in-house lectures taught in his courses on general literature. Those lectures, inaugurated at Knox Theological Hall in 1950 and popularly audited by non-Hall students, provided a vehicle for Rex to propagate a more nuanced understanding of the human condition. Many of the insights Rex shared in his classes would not have been out of place in a contemporary ‘pastoral studies’ course. They served to illustrate the benefit of wider reading to the task of the minister. Rex was adamant that his students should understand the potential for good and evil that was present within the individual, and literature presented an opportunity to expose students to the concerns and perversions of the human condition. Without understanding of these matters, no worthy theological or pastoral response could be offered.

Rex’s interest in literary interpretation was not blunted by a period in Germany studying towards his *D.Theol.* (See appendices one and two). The sixth chapter of this thesis is a critical examination of Rex’s work in the field of hermeneutics. Although his published work in this area is discussed, the main focus of this chapter is the detailed course-book Rex generated for the students who attended from 1958 onwards, the course on the subject of hermeneutics that he inaugurated at Knox Theological Hall in 1955. In his hermeneutics course-book Rex highlights the importance of addressing a text with ‘our interests’ (those common to our human condition) in order to generate a worthwhile response. As we shall see, Rex’s view, that each generation needs to find fresh expression for its beliefs, is one that
needs fresh consideration today and the role of the historical critical method in our hermeneutics needs to be re-examined.

Many of Rex's public papers address the topic of eschatology. Eschatology is also the subject of his posthumously published work Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? In this thesis it is argued that Rex's work in this area should be regarded as a considered response to the area of Bultmann's thought with which he had greatest difficulty. Chapter seven examines the framework Rex uses in his investigations into this area of the systematic agenda and engages with his repeated attempts to find a suitable contemporary analogy for the resurrection.

Chapter eight of this thesis surveys Rex's papers on the history of ideas and discovers the importance he places on recognising the seventeenth century as a turning point in Western history. Although Rex presents a view of history that ends with an existentialist solution, it is argued in this chapter that Rex begins with existentialism and that it shapes his particular understanding of history. Rex wishes to locate meaning in history and his various attempts at explaining the difficulties with this task are discussed. In his lectures to students, Rex described history as an act of self-knowledge. This idea of Selbstverständnis (a manner of viewing one's condition in existential involvement) borrowed from Bultmann, is presented as history's raison d'être. We shall see that for Rex history is a struggle to come to terms with the situation created by the displacement of God and man that has resulted from advances in scientific knowledge.

Chapter nine examines Rex's occasional writings. It is argued that these writings, whether originally intended as social comment or one-off lectures, present a model of doing theology that is worthy of adaptation for use today. In these pieces Rex draws from a variety of disciplines. He uses philosophical, literary and theological sources to complement reading done in the directly relevant field - in order to convince his audience to view their situation in a new way. Rex's Christian existentialist viewpoint leads him to place emphasis on the importance of human relationships in the solution to problems he sees arising from our common historical plight as (then) twentieth century individuals struggling to come to terms with the displaced God and man scenario he has painted in his history of ideas lectures.
The concluding chapter of this thesis will examine how the Rex's theological model ('Christ and our interests') stacks up in the contemporary New Zealand setting. It will assess whether Rex's theology, Bultmannian in its basic commitments, can survive the criticisms levelled at the latter's theology and will argue that the five *leitmotifs* identified in Rex's approach warrant heuristic adoption in today's theological climate. Although the content of Rex's theology is primarily of historical interest, the concerns which drove Rex and the catholic approach he took to addressing them continue to be relevant today.
Chapter One - Student (1919-1939)

Introduction

This largely biographical chapter is interspersed with critical comment about Rehbein’s reading and academic direction. Critical self-awareness and a natural pull towards religion are demonstrated as key elements of his childhood and the trajectory for Helmut’s later development is located in the influence upon Rehbein of the great historian Hans Lietzmann and the work of the theologian Rudolf Bultmann. This chapter also chronicles Rehbein’s involvement with the Confessing Church and consequent imprisonment at the hands of the Nazi regime. His flight from Germany - and encounters with Barth, Bonhoeffer, Rade and other sympathisers with the Confessing Church cause - form the background against which his theology develops.

Helmut Rehbein’s journey up until his emigration in 1939 was to be an eventful one. During this period he lived through a world war and completed his secondary education before going on to study and train for the ministry in the Lutheran Church. Although Rehbein did not publish during this time, an appreciation of this period in his life is vital for an understanding of his intellectual loyalties and later academic work. More than anything else, Bultmann’s theology is to be viewed as significant in Rehbein’s journey.
As a twentieth century 'reformer' in Rehbein's own Lutheran tradition, Bultmann was something like a mentor for Rehbein. Yet the two men never met so the English term 'mentor' is not entirely appropriate. The relationship between Bultmann and Rehbein is more accurately captured by the German term *Vorbildlichkeit*. That is, Bultmann's theology was treated by Rehbein as of 'model' or 'exemplary' quality. He regarded Bultmann's theological approach and attitude as worthy of imitation - holding all that was symbolised by the name Bultmann as 'model' or *Vorbild*. It is important to note at this early stage that Rehbein frequently disagreed with Bultmann's conclusions. His critical mind would not allow him the luxury of becoming a mere sycophant.

**Childhood in Berlin**

Helmut Rehbein was born in Potsdam on the fifteenth of February 1913. He grew up in the Berlin suburb of Lichterfelde after his civil servant father, Hermann Carl Heinrich Rehbein, and his mother, Martha Lucie Hedwig Haupt, shifted there during his early childhood. Helmut had a sister exactly one year younger, Hildegard, through whom he was to meet his future wife, Renate. In recollections recorded in 1966, Helmut remembered Lichterfelde as a place with strong links to the establishment. Although no longer as exclusive as it once was, it was still a desirable suburb for members of the Army, Church, Civil Service and University and it had retained a good deal of the glory associated with it during the days of the Kaiser.

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84 Unless otherwise (or previously) specified - dates cited in this chapter are taken from a two page untitled document in RA003 which outlines in chronological order events and their dates as they were significant to the Rexes. RA003, 'lifeline'.
85 Helmut H. Rex, 'Lebenslauf', in *D.Thel*. p.94. These details have been independently confirmed by Ian Breward from the matriculation list for University of Berlin for his article: Breward, Ian, 'Rex, Helmut Herbert Hermann 1913-1967' in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 31 July 2003, URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/.
86 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.1, Q.1. Hildegard and Renate were fellow students at home school.
87 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward'.
88 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.1, Q.2. Rex recalls: "Even in my time the army was literally present in the suburb with one or two battalions, and many officers of the army lived and retired here. Ministers still regarded a call to one of its parishes as a desirable thing and as the final achievement of their ecclesiastical career." Unfortunately establishment links continued also into the Nazi period as Rex recalls (p.2, Q.2): "In the Nazi era, Lichterfelde became the home of the S.S. or Schutzstaffel, Hitler's bodyguard who had taken over the buildings of the former Kadettenanstalt, a rather sinister presence. During the Roehm putch in 1934 some of its members were taken from Munich and liquidated here."
The clerical presence in Lichterfelde was "definitely an important factor" in Rehbein's personal development - more important to him than his own home which he described as "Christian in a purely conventional sense". In addition to the clerical presence, Rehbein was aware that Hermann Strack, the author of a biblical primer he used as a six year old school child, was a University Professor resident in his suburb. Rehbein's awareness of the suburb's historical and contemporary links with University and Church reflect the attitude of one who felt the pull of religion from a very early age. As he later recalled:

You might say, [...] that in a sense I was almost naturally 'drawn' towards religion. The form of worship (predominantly Lutheran in tradition) appealed to my sense of the numinous [...] and religion, quite simply, interested me as a human phenomenon just as history in general.

Religion and history were to be important to Rehbein for the rest of his life. Lichterfelde was also associated with innovation and this must have stimulated his interest in the history of ideas. Indeed, the physical symbols which surface in Rehbein's recollections of his childhood serve as illustrations of the suburb's "strong link with the new world of science and technology". He remembers Lichterfelde as the home of the 'New Botanical Gardens', the location of the world's first commercially operated electric tram line, and the location for Otto von Lilienthal's gliding experiments. The Ikarus-bearing monument erected in memory of this aviation pioneer was one of the first monuments Rehbein saw as a child.

The school that six year old Helmut began attending in 1919 was chosen purely because it was located closest to the Rehbein home. Helmut was a frail child and the effort to get to either of the two grammar schools in the suburb would have been too much. Mathematics and the natural sciences dominated the school curriculum, but Rehbein later revealed that:

90Further links are reported by Rex in RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.1, Q.2.
93RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.1, Q.2. Rex eventually died of emphysema though he was not a smoker. It is not clear what caused Rex's frailty as a child and throughout his life but it appears to have been something of which he was always aware. See BHR: p.36.
The spirit of the school [...] was traditional, dominated by Goethe and the German Idealism of last century. Its motto was Licht, Liebe, Leben - words borrowed from Herder, the link between Leibniz and Hegel and the source of much confusion of thought about Geschichte and Volk which still affected many of my teachers and which they freely handed on to their pupils. Some of my teachers were still titular professors of the pre-war days, as remote in their ways and outlook from secondary school masters of this country in these days as can be. Not all the masters were of the old [e]stablishment. The headmaster himself was a social democrat, and so were one or two masters, but they were in the minority. 94

Rehbein’s detailed scrutiny of childhood events reflects the critical self-analysis and Akribie (meticulousness or precision) which, as we shall see further, are typical also of his theology. 95 These skills were honed during his time at University which followed the successful completion of his final school examinations in Easter 1931. Rehbein studied theology at the University of Berlin for eight semesters (1931-1935) specialising in church history under its esteemed Professor Hans Lietzmann.

University, Lietzmann and the historical-critical method

That Rehbein was permitted to attend Lietzmann’s seminar is a testimony to his early ability as a scholar. There were 800 divinity students in Berlin at the time he was studying 96 and usually no more than five of these attended his seminar at one time, the other places being taken by visiting academics and classics scholars to make up a class total of fifteen. 97 By all accounts it was a very exclusive group. 98

That Rehbein remained grateful for the education he received from Lietzmann is witnessed to both in his 1954 D.Theol. résumé 99 and again in his 1966 recollections:

95Of interest here is Irvine Roxborough’s recollection that Rex’s own family considered him to be a bit slow; hopeless; intellectually inferior - a viewpoint Rex himself believed until he in his 20s. Source: Interview between Bonnie Robinson and Irvine Roxborough, 17 April 1994.
97For a record of the names and interests of those Rex met in Lietzmann’s seminar refer: RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.5, Q.4. Rex’s list includes visiting academics and divinity student contemporaries who went on to make a name for themselves.
98One story Rex recalls highlights, in passing, the reputation for exclusivity enjoyed by Lietzmann’s seminar. RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.2, Q.3. “One of my fellow students applied for entrance to [Seeberg’s] seminar. In her case he wiped the customary entrance examination, since she had already passed the examination for Lietzmann’s seminar. He said, ‘Since you have already passed through hell, there is no point in sending you through purgatory’.”
Lietzmann impressed me tremendously as a scholar. As such he was without equal in the faculty. I took all four courses in church history with him; attended his seminar for five semesters; and I attended his lectures in NT exegesis as well.\textsuperscript{100}

It is significant that Rehbein took New Testament as well as History with Lietzmann. These two areas were to be key foci as he went on to complete a doctorate in New Testament despite recent promotion to a chair in Church History, and indeed throughout his teaching career.\textsuperscript{101} He was later summarily dismissive of the other lecturers in New Testament available to him during his time in Berlin. "Deissmann was not serious enough [...] in his treatment of critical questions [...]. Johannes Schneider was just a craftsman."\textsuperscript{102}

Although he said "Of my professors at the University of Berlin, nobody influenced me theologically",\textsuperscript{103} alongside Lietzmann Rehbein appreciated Bertholet, Lütgert and Fendt.\textsuperscript{104} Alfred Bertholet lectured in Old Testament and Rehbein took Systematic Theology and Ethics with Wilhelm Lütgert. Perhaps in Rehbein, a bias for content over form is revealed in his regard for Lütgert's lectures which he describes as "little systematic, but sparkling".\textsuperscript{105} Yet like all of his teachers in Berlin, Lütgert did not provide Rehbein with a theological foundation for his thinking.\textsuperscript{106}

More influential in Rehbein's development as a student for the ministry was Leonhardt Fendt, a Privatdozent and Parish minister who was able to show "in practice that one could accept the historical critical method and yet proclaim the Word of God from the

\textsuperscript{100}RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.2, Q.3: "die Person und Vorlesungen von H. Lietzmann [mir] besonders viel bedeuteten".
\textsuperscript{101}According to Rex, 'Lebenslauf', in D.Theol: p.95; Rex's tenure was translated into a professorship in 1953. The date of his oral examination for his doctoral thesis was 16 February 1954.
\textsuperscript{102}RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.2, Q.3. The term 'craftsman was probably a poor rendering by Rex of the German 'Handwerker'. If this is the case, the word 'tradesman' would provide a more apt expression for Rex's sentiment. Rex was not afraid to acknowledge the shortcomings of his lecturers. On Pages 2-4 one can also read that: Rex did not care for Deissmann's 'pompous manner'; Erich Seeberg's attitude to lecturing was "irresponsible (late in coming, ill prepared, bored) and haughty [...] as an oral examiner he was grossly unfair"; Lütgert failed to "recognise the presence of women in his class; Bonhoeffer ‘lacked sparkle’, and as a person he did not ‘come across’”; Stolzenburg and Fendt were guilty of naivety - as a consequence of which the latter "let himself be used as a tool of the Nazis”.
\textsuperscript{103}RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.2, Q.3. Curiously Rex does not mention Bertholet at all in these recollections.
\textsuperscript{104}RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.2, Q.3.
pulpit without committing oneself to theological liberalism". This was important since Rehbein had embraced the historical-critical method wholeheartedly as he later noted:

As a student, one thing became certain in my mind. This was that intellectual honesty demanded the recognition of the historical critical method. What kind of theological system this method demanded I was not at all certain.

Rehbein was emphatic about the primacy of the historical-critical method to biblical studies and he did not appear to question its priority at any subsequent stage. Fendt's example was influential on the new convert. Rehbein was impressed by the crowds which were drawn - "the whole of Berlin seemed to be troup ing to this place" - to the services Fendt conducted at his parish church called Zum Heilsbronnen (The Fountain of Salvation). Rehbein was convinced that the secret of Fendt's success lay in "[e]xpository preaching based on the historical critical method that managed to retain the authority of the Word of God and the life in it".

Accounts from Rehbein's students suggest that he successfully integrated Fendt's homiletical insights. From Fendt Rehbein also derived an appreciation of the teaching aspect of preaching. Rehbein recalled that when the chair in 'Practical Theology' became vacant it was filled by Fendt who tried to impress on his students that they must not assume any real knowledge of the Christian faith among the laity, "and that they have to be taught from the beginning and as a result, the sermon today must have largely a teaching function". The way in which Fendt shaped a response to this context, which he appropriately labelled 'the age of adult-catechesis', provided an understanding of the preaching task which is reflected, as we shall see further, nearly thirty years later in Helmut's 1961 address on the Sunday service. Fendt's influence on Rehbein was not without limits, for Rehbein recognised that his search for a theological system would not be met by Fendt.

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107 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.3, Q.3. In the German University system Privatdozenten (lecturers who have been awarded the right to teach in the university but do not receive a salary) contribute an important part to a student's education.
112 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.3, Q.3.
113 "das Zeitalter der Erwachsenekatechesis".
114 A full discussion of this paper is offered in chapter nine of the present thesis.
“As important as this example was, its contribution could be no more than piecemeal, from text to text”. 115

Rehbein’s ambivalence towards the theological systems peddled by his teachers caused him to search elsewhere for inspiration. Always an avid reader, when Rehbein himself was a professor he always carried a few books with him to his classes at Knox Theological Hall. 116 Rehbein’s love for books was also reflected in the passion with which he spoke of them and in the deep interest he took in the development of the literature and history collections at the Hewitson library at Knox College. 117

Making Bultmann’s acquaintance

Reading was the chief source of theological stimulation for Rehbein during his time as a student, although many books he later came to regard as important had not yet been written. In his 1966 recollections of his University experience he lists works by Gerhard Von Rad, Bultmann, Cullmann, Stauffer and Barth as unavailable at that time. 118 Nevertheless the key influences Rehbein recalled from his student days were to continue to shape his theology throughout his life:

In the early days of my theological studies my chief source of theological inspiration was Martin Luther whose principal works I read in Otto Clemen’s magnificent student edition of texts in the original languages. My favourite was and still is ‘Von den guten Werken’ and, of course, ‘Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen’.

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116 Although he seldom referred to the books he was currently carrying, students took note of the titles and on occasion secured them for their own libraries. Letter from Trevor Morrison to Bonnie Robinson, 12 September 1994.
117 Dennis McEldowney makes this observation in Ian Breward: Letters and Tributes Collated and Edited by Clive Pearson (North Parramatta, NSW, Australia: UTC Publications, 2000) p.35f. McEldowney, formerly librarian at the Hewitson Library, writes of Ian Breward but recognises the significant influence of Helmut Rex before him: “We were both heirs of your legendary predecessor, Helmut Rex, whose influence was as strong in the library as everywhere else in the Hall. The library performed a dual function, both for the Hall and for the students of all disciplines in the College. The theological library was recognized as the best in the country. The general section, the Paterson Library, was not in any way specialist, but was strongly representative of modern literature and history in particular”, and later “The influence of Helmut Rex was [...] apparent, particularly in the depth of the collections of both modern theology and general literature”.
118 RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.4, Q.3. “What theological stimulus I received in my student days, I received largely through reading.” Rex goes on to list books unavailable at that time: “I merely mention Gerhard von Rad’s works on the Old Testament; Bultmann’s commentary on the Gospel of John and his Theology of the NT; The works of Oscar Cullmann and the Ethelbert Stauffer; even of Karl Barth’s Dogmatik[,] vol.I/1 appeared only in 1932 when I was in my fourth semester. By the time vol i/2 appeared I had long completed my studies, and anyway it was not available in Germany because the Nazis had clamped down on it.”
Towards the end of my studies I came under the spell of Sören [sic] Kierkegaard and for a time was completely captivated by him. Luther, of course, could not solve the problems which the acceptance of the historical-critical method created for me. At this critical point I made the acquaintance of Bultmann the theologian.119

A strong Lutheran influence can of course be detected in Bultmann’s theology120 and interest in his thought does seem a logical next step for the student familiar with Luther but concerned about the need for application of the historical-critical method. Rehbein’s interest in Kierkegaard was explored further in his M.A. thesis ‘The Individual in Sören Kierkegaard’s Aesthetical Writings’, submitted to the University of New Zealand in 1947.121 Ideas derived from Kierkegaard and contained in this master’s thesis were subsequently shared with staff and students in Rehbein’s inaugural lecture in 1949.122 We shall examine Kierkegaard’s influence on Rehbein in the next chapter.

The influence of Bultmann on Rehbein is not to be underestimated. It was immediate and lasting. Even when Helmut later disagreed with Bultmann’s theological conclusions, at no point did he question the integrity of his method. The mature Rex later vividly recalled his first encounter with Bultmann’s theology:

I had studied already his history of the Synoptic Tradition, but as a theologian he had remained unknown to me until in 1933 a first volume of collected essays was published under the title ‘Glauben und Verstehen’. I still remember the occasion when I discovered the volume in the bookshop. The title captured my imagination immediately. To believe and to understand, that was what I wanted. So I bought it.123

120Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884-1976) was influential in the development of Neo-orthodox theology in the twentieth century - a reaction against the liberalism of his teachers. Bultmann himself believed he was building upon a tradition and was not simply reacting against teachers (among them: Gunkel, Harnack, Jülicher, Weiss and Herrmann). Bultmann himself commented: “Liberal theology owed its distinctive character chiefly to the primacy of historical interest and in that field it made its greatest contributions [...] We who have come from a background of liberal theology could never have become theologians nor remained such had we not encountered in that liberal theology the earnest search for radical truth [...] Here, we felt, was the atmosphere of truth in which alone we could breathe.” Bultmann, ‘Die liberale Theologie und die jüngste theologische Bewegung’ (1924); ‘Liberal theology and the latest theological movement’, Faith and Understanding, pp.29-30.
121For a full discussion of Rex’s M.A. thesis see chapter three.
122For a full discussion of Rex’s inaugural lecture see chapter three.
123RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.4, Q.3. See also: Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1953). “Helmut Rehbein (33)” is still handwritten on the inside cover of Rex’s original copy which was presented to the Hewitson library by Renate Rex shortly after her husband’s death.
In his 1961 letter to Bultmann, Helmut described how he had continued to treasure Bultmann’s first major essay collection throughout his life.\[^{124}\] “It became my faithful companion. I had it with me in Germany, in Switzerland, in England, and since August 1939 [...] here in New Zealand”.\[^{125}\] Clarity about why the mature Rex valued this book so greatly is found in his letter:

In 1933 I was a young student of theology, twenty years old. As an eighteen year old I had begun my study with great hopes of preaching the Gospel. After two years of this study everything had fallen to pieces. I was like an animal which, with an eager desire for rich nourishment, trotted onto the meadow - and lost itself in a great desert. In this situation a friend, who had also lost his faith, advised me to read Robert Eisler’s book on Jesus. That would give me the “coup de grâce”. I borrowed this work from the State library and read my way through the 1,000 pages. But the success expected failed to materialize. It decided nothing.

My melancholy kept on eating at me, and it was in this state of mind that I went one day to Collignon’s book shop in Berlin. It was not that I expected anything of the visit; it was more in the way of a farewell. As I looked around with my tired eyes, I saw the words “Believing and Understanding” (Glauben und Verstehen). “Believing and Understanding” ... I was like the wanderer in the desert who had given up hope for water. And now he does not believe his own ears. As from afar he hears the sound of fresh water, and behold, it is at his feet.\[^{126}\]

Rehbein began reading Glauben und Verstehen straight away.\[^{127}\] He found it difficult to read but persisted, telling its author that: “After weeks of wrestling with the book I had won

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\[^{124}\] There is no evidence to suggest that Bultmann responded to Rex’s single letter to his Vorbild. See Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann, 26 March 1961, trans. M.E. Andrew in BHR: pp.271-274. The original version of this letter is contained in appendix four of the present thesis.


its blessing. Limping a little like Jacob after his struggle in Bethel I was on the way to Penuel towards the sun'. 

Years later he revealed to Ian Breward that:

The reading was not easy. The philosophical background of Heidegger's existentialism was unknown to me, and since Bultmann used his terms (which appeared familiar enough on the surface) without explaining their technical meaning to a reader unfamiliar with his theological thought I had the greatest difficulty in understanding his argument. But I persisted, and when I had completed the volume there were still many 'areas of darkness' in it. But somehow a road had been opened which I have travelled ever since, the road of Christian existentialism and kerygmatic theology.

This important self description tells us much about Rehbein. In it he describes himself, using an ancient metaphor for the Christian life, as a traveller on the road. A final assessment of the accuracy of this self-description is best made after a thorough examination of his work. Certainly there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Rehbein's faith and the depth of his conviction of the reality of God. Although first and foremost a Christian, Rehbein was a Christian of a certain type. As we shall see further, he saw key aspects of the faith rendered intelligible within the framework of contemporary existentialist philosophy.

Because of Helmut's reliance upon the method and insights of Bultmann's theology, much scholarly criticism of Bultmann's thought might equally be applied to his work. This is true, for example, of Rehbein's adoption of Bultmann's theological framework, inspired by Heideggerian categories of existentialist ontology. As we shall see in a later chapter, Rehbein's own version of kerygmatic theology appears to take in history as well as Scripture, but is ultimately based on Bultmann's concept of address; that is, it presents a

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129RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.4, Q.3.
130Lloyd Geering, one of Rex's students, thinks it was Rex's basic Christian convictions that motivated him. He reports that Rex was critical of any literal use of the Bible, but never doubted that Christianity was somehow historically founded in a way that was eminently convincing. Rex never had any doubts about the reality of God in a way that people with a similar educational background might have today. Source: Interview with Lloyd Geering, Selwyn College, Dunedin, 31 May 2002. While the majority of Rex's students hold this viewpoint, a few of the more conservative students were less sure. Irvine Roxborough reports that some students doubted that Rex was a Christian and had heard stories of fundamentalist students ritually burning Rex's lecture notes. Source: Interview between Bonnie Robinson and Irvine Roxborough, 17 April 1994.
131As Rex commented in his 1957 series of lectures on eschatology: "I begin like Bultmann with our human condition. In fact, the best beginning one can make in theology". RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.7.
133Rex regarded History as a quest for self-knowledge. Bultmann's former doctoral student Robert Funk sums
challenge to its audience in the face of which, the individual recipient’s response or lack thereof renders his or her life other than that which it previously was.

Rehbein’s first contact with Bultmann’s theology left such a deep and lasting impression that towards the end of his life, Helmut still regarded him as the “man who has meant more to me than any other.” While Rehbein attributed the debt of gratitude he felt he owed Bultmann to the restoration of his lost faith through his first encounter with *Glauben und Verstehen*, it is clear that Bultmann’s influence on him went beyond this. This dissertation will show that the expression of Rehbein’s faith changed and developed throughout a lifetime of interaction with Bultmann’s theology.

Rehbein’s reliance upon Bultmann for his theological inspiration, agenda and antagonism, means that the student wishing to understand him in any depth must wrestle first with Bultmann - particularly those essays which impacted most strongly upon Rehbein. For this reason we now turn to a discussion of *Glauben und Verstehen* and its significance for Rehbein’s life and work.

**Believing and understanding**

Bultmann’s seminal theological work consisted of fifteen chapters. Each chapter of *Glauben und Verstehen* was a self-contained essay on a (then) contemporary theological theme. Ten essays were previously published (between 1924 and 1930) and the other five up the nature of kerygmatic address in the following manner: “the word as address concerns how I understand myself in the total nexus of relations that forms my world, and it addresses my self-understanding in such a way that my response, my ‘hearing’, here and now, determines whether or not I accept the self-understanding, the ‘word’, to which the word calls me”. Robert W. Funk, ‘Introduction’ in *Faith and Understanding* p.24. It is clear, for example in his lecture series to the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.) in 1957, that Rex has high regard for Bultmann’s kerygmatic theology per se. He discusses it favourably in RA110, Rex, SCM-V, and in the very act of presenting such talks on eschatology may be observed to be provoking a faith decision among his listeners.

134Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann, tr. M.E. Andrew in *BHR* p.271.

135As we have seen his 1961 letter to Bultmann, Rex indicates that he lost his faith while at University, recovering it only when he encountered *Glauben und Verstehen*. His gratitude to Bultmann is underscored in the final paragraph where he writes: “Nun wissen Sie, warum ich an Sie schreiben musste, sofort, denn ich danke Ihnen meinen Glaube, der mir in den letzten zwei Wochen neues Leben geschenkt hat”. Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann, 26 March 1961.

136Only thirteen of these essays are translated into *Faith and Understanding*. Translations of ‘Das christliche Gebot der Nachstenliebe’ and ‘Die Bedeutung des Alten Testaments fur den christlichen Glauben’ were omitted from the English edition because they had been made available elsewhere. See: Robert Funk, ‘Introduction’ in *Faith and Understanding* p.9.
in the collection were previously unpublished. In essence the collection is ordered chronologically, moving from the earliest essays through to the latest. Although themes are inevitably repeated, each essay has a different specific focus.

Significantly, *Glauben und Verstehen* was published in English as a collection (*Faith and Understanding*)\(^{137}\) for the first time in 1969. Thus it was only after Rehbein’s death that the collection became readily accessible to the English speaking world. Before this translation Rehbein was one of a small number of interested parties responsible for propagating Bultmannianism in New Zealand; indeed, for the great majority of his students, Rehbein was the primary mediator of Bultmann’s thought.

Bultmann’s indebtedness to his dialogue with the philosopher Martin Heidegger is reflected in the book’s dedication to the latter ‘in dankbarer Freundschaft’. Indeed, Bultmann made his most significant theological commitments during his period of close association with Heidegger in Marburg before the publication of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) in 1927.\(^{138}\) Robert Funk’s introduction to *Faith and Understanding* emphasises the seminal importance of the collection to Bultmann’s programme in the following way:

These essays introduce most of the major theological themes which were to occupy Bultmann’s attention in subsequent years. In them he frames the basic questions, sketches out the lines of his answers, and so charts his future course. In retrospect it can be seen that nothing appeared later, including the demythologising proposal, the preparation for which had not already been made during these formative years.\(^{139}\)

The mature Rex described this collection in enthusiastic terms. In his 1961 letter to Bultmann, he appears intoxicated with *Glauben und Verstehen* and the work of its author:


\(^{138}\)David Fergusson notes that while there are many similarities between the approaches of Bultmann and Heidegger, it is significant that both Bultmann and Heidegger have disputed the claim that the former’s theology was directly derived from the latter’s philosophy. Fergusson makes the point that Bultmann’s theological agenda was largely established prior to the influence of Heidegger and it was Herrmann’s influence which led Bultmann to appropriate and develop aspects of Heidegger for his pre-conceived purpose. Fergusson also offers an insightful defence of Bultmann’s appropriation of Heidegger. He draws attention to Bultmann’s justifiable claim that Biblical thought patterns had influenced Heidegger’s work. In addition, Fergusson points to the arbitrary nature of all systems of human thought and the importance of conscious recognition of the philosophy one is employing in order to be aware of its implicit shortcomings as well as its strengths. See: David Fergusson, *Bultmann* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992) p.67.

It was not hard to see that you belonged to that ancient race of bankers in the world of the spirit who, after the manner of the great Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, strike their coins in solid gold, where every word possesses the worth of its weight. More than that, you strike your coins in a particularly fine form. Your theological language has the clear beauty of a strong personality.\textsuperscript{140}

Rex's letter to Bultmann is interesting not only because it is one of the documents in which Rex expresses his high regard for Bultmann the theologian and his work, but also because one can extrapolate from it those characteristics Rex regarded as most valuable in the theological enterprise. For example, preservation of the 'old solid tradition' is deemed preferable to novelty.\textsuperscript{141} This is reflected in his description of Barth as a 'pastry-cook' where Bultmann is depicted as "insist[ing] on selling nothing but the solid bread of life".\textsuperscript{142}

Rex employs another simile to emphasise what he values in Bultmann's work, saying that Bultmann is "like a tradesman of the old stamp who refuses to go with the times and to deliver shoddy products which are fashionable at present".\textsuperscript{143} Statements of this nature draw attention to the fact that Rex assumes a lasting significance in Bultmann's work, and views him as the only truly worthy heir to the Lutheran throne. They also serve to underscore the importance of \textit{Glauben und Verstehen} to an understanding of Rex's life and work.

Among the key themes in \textit{Glauben und Verstehen} is Bultmann's argument against what he calls liberal theology's attempts to remove the stumbling block of faith.\textsuperscript{144} For the dialectical theologians, including Bultmann, depictions of a more sympathetic Jesus or a more reasonable faith were not welcome, nor was the suggestion that God was knowable through intellectual inquiry.\textsuperscript{145} In order to stress the relational nature of faith Bultmann says that God cannot be the object of faith. The other side of this dialectic dictates that an

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\textsuperscript{140}Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann, in \textit{BHR}: p.272.
\textsuperscript{141}Refer: Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann, in \textit{BHR}: p.273. Rex describes Cullmann's 'Salvation History' as a 'theological toy'. Karl Barth is described as a confectioner.
\textsuperscript{142}Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann in \textit{BRR} - p.273.
\textsuperscript{143}Letter from Helmut Rex to Rudolf Bultmann in \textit{BHR}: p.273.
\textsuperscript{144}"The subject of theology is God, and the chief charge to be brought against liberal theology is that it has dealt not with God but with man. God represents the radical negation and sublimation of man. Theology whose subject is God can therefore have as its content only the 'word of the cross' [...] but that word is a 'stumbling block' [...] to men. Hence the charge against liberal theology is that it has sought to remove this stumbling block or to minimize it." \textit{Faith and Understanding} p.29.
\textsuperscript{145}Bach, Bultmann and Gogarten are the names most frequently associated with this type of twentieth century Protestant theology. 'Dialectical' theology was precipitated by WWI and the lack of resistance shown by liberal theologians in the face of this crisis.
irrational approach is not encouraged either. For Bultmann the value of reason lies in the way it points towards its own limitations, and consequently towards the importance of faith in all that has to do with God. As Bultmann says: it is “[p]recisely when reason has followed its road to the end, [that] the point of crisis is reached and man is brought to the great question mark over his own existence”.

Rex, like Bultmann, is keen to pursue the relevant avenues of intellectual inquiry before issuing statements of faith. This is an important theme in Bultmann as his theological programme aimed at the radicalisation of Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith. A useful illustration of this concern in Rex is found in his 1957 lectures on eschatology. In the fifth and final lecture of a series on eschatology Rex discusses what he calls Bultmann’s ‘historical agnosticism’ - Bultmann’s denial that what we call universal history has any meaning. In establishing his argument for meaning in history, Rex’s concern for a thorough and scientific inquiry parallels Bultmann’s. In this case the inquiry is heavily dependent upon Bultmann and exposes the mythological casing of biblical themes. Despite eventual disagreement with Bultmann’s conclusions, Rex first devotes an entire lecture to the reasoning behind Bultmann’s position. It is only once the possibilities of scientific inquiry have been exhausted that Rex, like Bultmann, feels able to make clearly labelled faith statements.

Closely linked with his discussion of Bultmann’s ‘historical agnosticism’ is Rex’s discussion on the resurrection. Rex’s critique of Bultmann’s views on the resurrection proceeds by a similar method. Rex places his own cautious statement of faith in the resurrection in the context of a discussion of the logic of Bultmann’s realised eschatology and an affirmation of the appropriateness of Bultmann’s abandonment of a primitive world-

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148 RA110-SCM IV: p.6. See further discussion on this in chapter seven.
149 See RA110-SCM IV. ‘Bultmann: The Hermeneutic Problem (tutorial on eschatology, SCM, Christchurch, May 57)’.
150 RA110-SCM V: p.1f: “If we wish to go beyond Bultmann in this matter and yet remain responsible in our way of stating things, I am afraid, we are reduced to the declaration that we believe that the history of the human race is not merely a succession of fortuitous events: that is has a meaning inherent in itself which justifies the introduction of the notion of Heilsgeschichte into the context. If we wish to say as much as that, we must, however, immediately add that it completely defies our knowledge to state how precisely this is the case.”
view. Again, only in a context which shows the limits of human reason and comprehension of God, does Rex feel comfortable making his cautious statement of faith. He says that:

The truth of such statements can only be appropriated through the category of the 'leap' (to speak in Lessing's language). That is to say, we must be prepared to abandon our world of continuous and analogous thought if we wish to affirm the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and the belief in our own resurrection. 151

For Rex, as for Bultmann, faith decision is essential. Intellectual inquiry does not answer life's truly important existential questions. The idea that God is known only in specific, personal encounter features strongly in the first two essays of *Glauben und Verstehen.* More than a hint of the postmodern is identifiable in Bultmann's declaration that universal truths do not speak of the world we know and experience; they speak outside reality and consequently do not speak of God. 152

Rex was strongly influenced by Bultmann's demythologising campaign. 153 Like his *Vorbild* Rex could no longer accept the three tiered universe as valid since it does not fit into the post-Cartesian world-view. 154 Rex had a similarly modern view of miracles. In his book *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* he states:

One of the inalienable recognitions of secular man is that he lives in a natural universe which is subject to dependable laws, no matter whether these are defined strictly as laws or as statistical averages. This rules out all miracles as violations of these laws. 155

Rex's view on miracles can be directly traced back to Bultmann's influential essay, 'The Question of Wonder', contained in *Glauben und Verstehen.* 156 Bultmann states that "the idea of wonder as miracle has become almost impossible for us today because we understand

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151 RA110-SCM V: p.6.
152 See *Faith and Understanding* p.54: "Speaking of God in scientific propositions, that is, in general truths, means speaking in propositions the significance of which is their universal validity - a validity which is not related to the concrete situation of the speaker. But just because the speaker speaks in this manner, he puts himself outside the actual reality of his own existence, and therefore at the same time outside God. He therefore can only speak of what is not God".
155 Rex, *DJR* p.12.
the processes of nature as governed by natural law". The similarity is all the more noteworthy when it is remembered that in this instance over thirty years had passed since Rex first read Bultmann's essay.

In 'The Question of Wonder' Bultmann is already engaged in what would later become known as 'demythologising'. His explication of the biblical material leads him to declare that there are two ways of viewing reality. The first view is that of the unbeliever. In Bultmann's analysis the world not experienced as the world in which God acts is viewed in terms of human achievement. In our everyday existence we habitually act as though we were creators, rather than a part of God's creation, so we understand the world as amenable to our control.

The other view Bultmann proposes in 'The Question of Wonder' is that of the believer. For Bultmann's believer the world is continually filled with new wonders. "The world process, which to the unbeliever must appear as a sequence of events governed by law, has for the Christian become a world in which God acts". Bultmann prefers the term 'wonder' to 'miracle' for describing reality viewed in this fashion - the latter being associated with the supernatural. For Bultmann the concept of wonder correctly understood "does not present God merely as a supernatural causal agent" but creates a new understanding in the Christian:

the concept of wonder radically negates the character of the world as the controllable, working world, because it destroys man's understanding of himself as made secure through his work.
The change in understanding of the nature of the world described by Bultmann equates to a type of conversion experience in the individual which, as we have seen, was something Rex also was willing to acknowledge confronted the reader of his own work.\textsuperscript{163}

Bultmann’s demythologising project was in \textit{Glauben und Verstehen} further adumbrated in Bultmann’s analysis of Pauline Christology.\textsuperscript{164} Paul’s language of the ‘Spirit’ is correlated with obedience - acts receive their meaning from the ‘doing’. This may alternatively be called ‘authenticity’ or ‘life lived according to the future’. By contrast, Paul’s language of the ‘flesh’ means ‘life seeking justification now’.\textsuperscript{165} For Bultmann it is not only the individual concepts which stand in need of fresh description, but the very conception of Pauline thought: “the religion of Paul could be described as a new self-understanding”.\textsuperscript{166}

The misleading nature of biblical terminology highlights for Bultmann the ongoing nature of the Church’s task of proclamation - a theme also found in Rex.\textsuperscript{167} Bultmann recognises that every interpretation is a venture, a risk that can be taken “if one is clear about what one is doing and approaches the text with questions, not with a fixed point of view.”\textsuperscript{168} This is for Bultmann the only legitimate way to go about the related and necessarily ongoing tasks of interpretation, dogmatics and proclamation. Correct interpretation discloses for Bultmann correct understanding of the Christ event; it is recognised as summons and decisive event, the inauguration of the new world.\textsuperscript{169}

As we have seen in his views on Bultmann’s ‘historical agnosticism’ and the resurrection, Rex does not always agree with Bultmann. It is however, highly significant that when Rex states a viewpoint at odds with Bultmann’s theological findings that Rex is

\textsuperscript{163}For example see: letter from Peter McKenzie to Helmut Rex, 17 December 1963, and personal correspondence from Peter McKenzie, 29 March 2001: p.5: “Helmut mentioned that to understand his point of view required a sort of conversion”.


\textsuperscript{165}Bultmann finds Paul’s terms to be misleading for a contemporary audience. This finds further expression in \textit{Faith and Understanding} p.280: “Both terms meant a material substance which is also a force. How are these concepts really suited to what Paul wants to say? Clearly not in so far as the meaning is substance, for when Paul speaks of ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’, he means to speak of the mode of the old life and the new. Paul therefore must always be read critically.”

\textsuperscript{166}\textit{Faith and Understanding} p.275.

\textsuperscript{167}See especially RA162, ‘The Sunday Service’.

\textsuperscript{168}\textit{Faith and Understanding} p.280. Rex expresses very similar sentiments in his bound typescript: ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’ (1958) pp.VIII.

\textsuperscript{169}\textit{Faith and Understanding} p.283.
disagreeing ‘with Bultmann’ or differing ‘from Bultmann’. Thus Rex can be seen to measuring himself constantly against his *Vorbild*.

Theological implications - Rehbein joins the Confessing Church

It is easy to understand Rehbein’s fascination with Bultmann arising in the climate of 1930s Berlin. Bultmann’s call to existential decision was not without political significance at the dawn of the *Third Reich*. As his constant companion since 1933, Bultmann’s thought will also have informed the difficult life decisions Rehbein made during his remaining time as a German citizen. Later in the present thesis we will also observe its influence reflected in Rehbein’s consistent concern with the tenets of demythologising, with the study of hermeneutics and with matters of eschatology. For now it is important to note that it opened a road for Rehbein which he continued to travel, “the road of Christian existentialism and kerygmatic theology”.

Although the most significant, Bultmann was not the only source of theological inspiration for Rehbein during his time as a student. In his 1966 recollections he acknowledges other significant influences in the fields of theology and the New Testament:

Four other works published in my student days helped me to sort out my theological ideas. At the same time I found them exciting reading. First, Paul Althaus’s commentary on Romans in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, herald of a new era of theological commentaries. Secondly, Werner Elert’s *Die Morphologie des Luthertums* (2Bde) which I found absolutely fascinating. And not less so, Emil Brunner’s *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (The Divine Imperative). Finally, Karl Barth’s *Dogmatik I/1* which, I still think, is one of his best books. It was particularly his doctrine of the Word of God which I found tremendously helpful.171

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170 Rex, *DJR* may be viewed as another example of this type. Rex devotes an entire book to examining the historical event of the resurrection. Is it because Rex has taken issue with Bultmann’s dismissal of the detail of the historical event as irrelevant? And again, is it because Bultmann has extrapolated from Paul that it is the uniqueness of the ‘that’ not the ‘what’ of Jesus which is important, that Rex says “Bultmann admittedly does too little justice to the influence of the man Jesus on his disciples [...]”? *DJR* p.9. (Bultmann had declared that what was new about Jesus was that a number of Jewish expectations coincided in one historical figure. “None of these conceptions was new; they came from old mythologies, from ancient hopes and dreams. The new element was simply the fact that all these assertions were made about this specific historical man”.* Faith and Understanding* p.264.) It seems that even when Rex disagrees with Bultmann, he is engaged in a debate within the boundaries of a project initiated by Bultmann.

171 RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.4, Q.3. Interestingly Rex’s original copies of the first three books here listed are to be found in the basement of the Hewitson Library at Knox College complete with Rex’s familiar and extensive system of underlining and annotations. Inscriptions in the front of each reveal the year
Rehbein preferred books to politics in a time where the “parties of the Weimar Republic were all equally alien to [Rehbein’s] temperament and outlook, only some more so than others”. It does not appear to have been a dominant feature of student life and strong or clear divisions between members of the ‘Confessing Church’ and the ‘German Christians’ were not yet apparent. Helmut later recalled that the majority of his colleagues remained politically neutral whilst he was a student.

It is not clear why Rehbein joined the Confessing Church in 1934 - the same year in which his father died. It is tantalising to speculate that he was influenced by Bultmann’s theological assessment of the situation though there is no solid evidence to support such a view. In any case, he shared Bultmann’s belief in the responsibility of preachers and theologians to confess the Christian faith in response to the concrete, existential conditions they encountered:

In November 1934 I had joined the Confessional Church, and for me that meant that from that day I had cast my lot with the Confessional Church whatever the consequences. What these would be I knew then as little as anybody else, the situation was by no means as clear then as it appears now in retrospect. That it would not be pleasant was obvious, but how unpleasant the situation might become was as yet not clear. The German Christians had taken over by the time I was a Vikar; to that extent the situation had become clear.

Rehbein was modest about his courageous decision to join the Confessing Church. Although the Confessing Church had not yet attracted the attention of the state to the extent that it later would, the Nazis’ clinical brutality had already been demonstrated during 1934 in the Röhm Putsch and in the crushing of the trade union movement. It was clear that Hitler was not afraid to kill those who threatened to raise their voices in opposition to his regime.

Helmut Rehbein' purchased each. Althaus' commentary was purchased in 1932 (Althaus, Paul; Der Brief an die Römer, Göttingen: Bandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932.) Elert's work on the structure of Lutheranism was purchased in 1933 (Elert, Werner Die Morphologie des Luthertums, 2 vols., Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931f.) Brunner's work on ethics was purchased by Helmut Rehbein in 1934 (Brunner, Emil; Das Gebot und die Ordnungen, 2nd edition, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1932.)

RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.6, Q.9.

Bultmann was a member of the Confessing Church and a signatory of the Barmen declaration in 1934. For an assessment of the political overtones of Bultmann's work from 1933-34 refer: Fergusson, David; Bultmann, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992: pp.45-47.

RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.9, Q.11. Rex consistently refers to the 'Confessing Church' by the less common title 'Confessional Church'.
To say that a decision to join the Confessing Church involved 'unpleasant' consequences was therefore something of an understatement.

Once his university education was completed in 1935, Rehbein's further theological training was also determined by his membership of the Confessing Church. At that time the formation training (known properly as Lehr-Vikariat or commonly as Vikariat) in the Evangelische Kirche der Altpreussischen Union, to which Rehbein belonged, involved a two year course. The candidate who had made a decision to join the Confessing Church fell under the jurisdiction and instruction of senior ministers who shared the same allegiance.

The first year of formation training was spent in a parish, the next six months in a preacher's seminary and finally six months was spent in a second parish before the ministry candidate began preparation for the second and final theological examination prior to ordination.

**Rehbein's apprenticeship**

Having successfully completed his first set of theological examinations in January 1936, Rehbein was placed in the Kirche am Hohenzollernplatz under the care of a minister named Teicke. It was in this church that Rehbein preached his first sermon. Teicke "still lived in the old world of squirearchy where the minister was regarded as one of the pillars of the establishment". It is for this reason that Rehbein suggests that Teicke was well suited to this Berlin parish as it "was the home of many junkers from Prussia and Pomerania who preferred to live in this part of Berlin". Rehbein admired the striking and successful architecture of the church buildings and was aware that his "position had a certain glamour" but after a few months he sought a transfer because Teicke was 'lazy'.

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177Interestingly Rex recalls that the sermon was on Mark 9:24, a text chosen by his examiners. Source: RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.5, Q.9.
180RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.5f, Q.9.
It soon became clear to me that I would be wasting my time with him. Valuable as my university training had been in other respects, it certainly had not equipped me for the ministry, and it was obvious to me that Teicke would not equip me either.\footnote{RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.6, Q.9.}

As a consequence, Rehbein took the unusual step of approaching Martin Albertz, the man in charge of candidates for training in the Confessing Church. Normally an assistant was allocated to a parish as Rehbein had been to Teicke’s,\footnote{Rex took a calculated risk in approaching Albertz. Refer: RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.8, Q.10.} but Rehbein wanted to learn from a minister who took every aspect of the ministry equally seriously and he believed that Johannes Zippel was such a man.\footnote{Rex regarded him as “one of the most outstanding parish ministers in Berlin”. RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.6, Q.9.} Rehbein had heard that Zippel was conscientious in the training of men put in his care and he was not disappointed:

I count it among my blessings that Zippel accepted me. My year with him was one of the most valuable experiences of my life. It was he who trained me for the ministry and I wish, every young man could have as thorough a training as I received from him.\footnote{RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.6, Q.9. (The unusual comma placement in the second sentence of this citation is faithful to the original).}

Zippel saw to it that Rehbein gained as much experience of the ministry as was possible in the space of a year. Rehbein began at the Lucaskirche in Steglitz\footnote{RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.6, Q.9.} with Zippel, immediately following a three week tramping holiday with Renate - the woman who was later to become his wife - which he regarded as “probably among the happiest in our life”.\footnote{RA003, ‘1957 Biographical jottings’. Sadly, only three selected typed pages remain from a document which appears to have been longer than ten pages. As Renate was responsible for lodging Rex’s archival material, it is possible that she made the selection.} His brief romantic reminiscences of their three weeks in Bavaria and Württemberg form the most substantial surviving recollection of his private life. Rehbein recalls that this tramping trip “was the last time that it was possible to forget the Nazis at least most of our days”.\footnote{RA003, ‘1957 Biographical jottings’.
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Yet even on the first day of this trip they encountered a group of Stormtroopers in Würzburg:

Their black ribbons showed that they had come from the same place as we, Berlin or Brandenburg. We did not interpret this encounter symbolically; we simply went...
out of their way. But in retrospect one cannot fail to appreciate the symbolism. They were after you everywhere, even if you went to the ends of the earth. They came with us - even to New Zealand, in our dreams by night and in our fears by day. 188

By 1936 the Nazis had a powerful impact on the daily life of German citizens. As if the traditional standoffishness of Berliners was not enough, Rehbein as an unknown young assistant in the parish had to face an additional hurdle since he was living in the Nazi era, and as he stated “every meeting of strangers demanded the breaking down of a barrier of distrust which was not easily achieved within the limits of one pastoral visit”. 189 Rehbein regarded visiting as, for “a man of my temperament, [...] one of the greatest trials in my apprenticeship for the ministry”. 190 His own records show that Rehbein prepared for his parish visits with typical thoroughness. 191 Confirmation classes were “another great trial.” Rehbein did not relish the experience of teaching classes of adolescent boys and girls yet he:

discovered - the hard way - that when you are able to enlist the interest of your pupils and do not talk above their heads and, above all, are not afraid of them (for whatever reasons and they are numerous) you have no difficulties of discipline. 192

Upon Zippel’s arrangement Rehbein received assistance with his confirmation classes, in the form of pedagogical advice, from a local school principal, “a keen churchman and an extraordinarily kind man”, who was the father of theologian Gerhard Ebeling. 193 Helmut later recalled feeling ‘protected’ in Ebeling’s presence and consequently, that which he described as the main source of his difficulties - ‘fear’ - did not become obvious. He suggested that as a result of this the local headmaster gained a better than warranted impression of his performance. Helmut also remembered with gratitude the interest Ebeling took in his preaching and the encouragement he gave.

In a situation where the senior ministers in each parish keenly defended their allocated preaching slot, Rehbein was grateful for Zippel’s efforts to find opportunities for

188RA003, ‘1957 Biographical jottings’.
193Gerhard Ebeling had studied in Berlin at the same time as Rex although the two did not know each other at that stage. RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.4, Q.4. Ebeling’s efforts in the field of hermeneutics were of keen interest to Rex as the bibliographic entries in his own Hermeneutic text demonstrate. A full discussion of Rex’s hermeneutics is found in chapter six.
his young assistant to preach. "Zippel was [...] always on the lookout for some supply because of sickness etc." 194 In this way Rehbein was presented with the opportunity of preaching an entire series of Thursday night Lenten services in a village Church which he later regarded as "one of the loveliest experiences of my whole ministry." 195 Rehbein also conducted services in an old people's home at which Zippel was chaplain, and relished every chance to improve his preaching, a task only permitted once candidates had completed the first theological examination. He later noted:

> Since Germans have not the gifts of oratory which Scotsmen enjoy and since our congregations did not tolerate manuscripts in the pulpit and since the sermon was expected to last for half an hour, this was something of an ordeal the best treatment of which was continued practice. 196

The experience and insights gained during these formative experiences under Zippel's tutelage were no doubt heavily relied upon by Rehbein in his first years as a teacher and tutor in New Zealand. Of course during his period under Zippel's guardianship he had no idea that he would end up teaching on the other side of the globe. Rehbein was simply indulging an earnest desire to learn as much as he could from his diligent and competent instructor.

**Other influences - Künkel, Hesse, Sartre**

Zippel was a scholar who had maintained his interest in theology. From May 1936 until Rehbein completed his term in April the following year Zippel provided Rehbein with not only the practical but also the mental stimulation he earnestly desired. He introduced Rehbein to Otto Michel's commentary on Hebrews, the same Otto Michel who was later to supervise Rehbein's doctoral work. He was also responsible for introducing Rehbein to Johannes Hempel's, *Gott und Mensch im Alten Testament*. 197 Other connections made through Zippel were also beneficial. The academic Karl Ludwig Schmidt, one of Zippel's best friends, subsequently assisted Rehbein with the planning of his emigration from Germany; and it was on Zippel's bookshelves that Rehbein discovered the works of the depth

psychologist Fritz Künkel. Künkel’s work proved to be an ongoing stimulus for Rehbein, particularly in his relationship with Renate, the woman Rehbein met in August 1935 and had become engaged to in February the following year.

Künkel became one of the most important influences in our life and when I say ‘our’ I think of Renate and myself. It was his work that started us seriously on the road to self knowledge. Our life is inconceivable without that influence. The most important thing he taught us is that a crisis both in oneself and in one’s personal relations is something that must be faced.

As we shall see further, Rehbein’s literature lectures and ‘situational’ papers contain many insights consistent with the thought of Künkel. The former draws attention to characters in the novels he examines who construct ‘false’ selves either in an attempt to fit in with perceived social norms or in an effort to avoid individual tragedies. In his first English work, *In Search of Maturity*, Künkel makes pleas for a religious psychology and warns that without it Christianity may die out. Künkel maintains that:

The collaboration of religion and psychology must be based on the unanimous conviction of both parties that man is not as he should be. This presupposition limits us on the side of psychology to the so called ‘depth-psychology’. The different schools of psychology, as well as all Christian theology, subscribe to the statement that man as we know him is not ‘normal’, if norm means not what he ought to be. Academic psychology, which takes the average man as the normal man, excludes itself, at least for the time being, from our common religious endeavour.

Only our conviction that man should be changed, and that history without the inner change of mankind will end in chaos, gives us the starting point for research and action. The insight that man was on the wrong path religiously, and the discovery of the better way, was the starting point of the Reformation. The insight that our unconscious powers are going astray, and the discovery that we can help them to find the better way by bringing them into consciousness, is the origin of religious

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198 Rex records that Künkel and Zipple knew each other from school days in Landsberg/Warthe east of the river Oder in the Neumark. RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.8, Q.9.

199 Rex continues: “Pills are not the answer where personal decisions are required, and smoothing over differences is not the answer in personal relations. If there is a difference between two persons it has to be brought out into the open, if that relation really matters to the partners involved in it; if the relation is really sound, if there is a fundamental agreement, it will stand any crisis however violent. This we learnt from Künkel and that we learnt it while still in our early twenties has been our extreme good fortune. Next in importance was his distinction between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ motives in human action which enabled us to be more realistic about our own motives than we would have been otherwise. Evidence of his constant influence on us is that Renate coined the word ‘künkeln’, i.e. to künkel which means as much as to be at the point of developing some neurotic trend. “Künkle nicht!” (Do not künkell) we used to say to one another.” RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.8, Q.9.

psychology, and at the same time it is the beginning of the psychological period of religion.\footnote{Fritz Künkel, \textit{In Search of Maturity}: p.25.}

While it is beyond the scope of the current thesis to trace in detail Künkel’s influence on Rehbein’s self-development, it is important to observe the moment Rehbein himself attributed to Künkel’s influence upon him and the inevitable role this played in the shaping of his approach to his academic task.\footnote{The influence on Rex of Künkel’s depth psychology is further documented in \textit{A Book of Helmut Rex}. See BHR: pp.248-252. ‘On Psychology and Counselling’ (BHR: pp.248-249) contains notes taken from a refresher school lecture given by Rex in 1956 in which Künkel appears to have been the main focus of the address. On p. 249 is recorded: “Künkel’s books are deceptively simple. But don’t be deceived; their true worth is discovered only when you forget that they are psychological textbooks and read them existentially. You are the subject of the book!” Moore states in an editor’s note (p.251): “The Rexes did in latter years question whether Künkel was not rather too simple. […] Nevertheless one can see the abiding value of Künkel by recapitulating his main teachings on self-knowledge: (1) ask why you act as you do – especially whether it is through ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ (egocentric) motives. (2) Face your crises (in your own self and in personal relations) without covering-up or smoothing-over. (3) Always be ready to learn anew, to change and mature. (4) Seek maturity not in the isolated ego but in a ‘maturating-We’ relationship of communication between partners. (Künkel’s ‘We-psychology’ matches Buber’s ‘I and Thou’).”} The work of Hermann Hesse, the author and Nobel Prize winner in literature, had a similarly important effect on the Rehbeins:

What Sartre has \textit{[sic]} been to us in our thirties that Hermann Hesse has \textit{[sic]} been to us in our twenties, the constant companion and stimulus of our thought. It is largely with the help of these two authors that we have clarified our views concerning the human condition. Hesse formulated for us in a compelling way the eternal problem of how to reconcile the claims of the spirit and the flesh and he taught us to see clearly that all ‘solutions’ to this problem have their own flaws. With his help we began the life long pilgrimage on the road to self (\textit{der Weg nach Innen} - the very concept makes the average New Zealander shudder and mumble in retreat something about the dangers of introspection).\footnote{RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.9, Q.12. Rex possessed an anthology of Hesse’s stories which was entitled \textit{Weg Nach Innen}. Written in old German script, it contains Rex’s pencilled annotations and is available for loan from the Hewitson Library at Knox College, Arden Street, Dunedin. See: Hermann Hesse, \textit{Weg Nach Innen} (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1934).}

The intensity of the Rehbeins’ marriage as it was described in New Zealand by outside observers had its roots in the couple’s search for greater understanding of their intimacy even in the earliest phase of their relationship. Yet in his academic work, Rehbein did not refer to Hesse as frequently as he alluded to the thought of Sartre, Kafka and Dostoevsky. Was this because Hesse’s impact was more personal? Perhaps the answer lies in Rehbein’s age - after all he was in his mid-twenties when he journeyed to New Zealand. A man of that age living as a refugee in a somewhat hostile environment could hardly be expected to display the levels of self-disclosure which characterised the mature Rex. In any
case Rehbein was under Sartre's influence by the time he reached his thirties, and published relatively little before completing his M.A. thesis at age thirty-four.

The preachers' seminary

Another Hermann Hesse had a significant impact on Rehbein during his training for the ministry. This Hesse was the principal at the Reformed preachers' seminary Rehbein attended at Wuppertal-Elberfeld in the Rhineland from April until November 1937. Helmut later described him as "one of the most outstanding figures of German Calvinism of this [the twentieth] century and one of the most determined fighters of the Nazi takeover of the church". Although ancestors on Rehbein's father's side were largely Calvinists, it was Rehbein's first contact with the Reformed tradition in Protestantism. He was to attend the seminary because it had joined the Confessing Church but he had no personal say in its selection.

According to Rehbein's records the six months spent in the seminary were intended to offer opportunity for reflection on the practical problems of the ministry in light of experiences as a Lehr-Vikar, and to grant a deeper grounding in the reformed tradition. Rehbein studied sixteenth century confessions and participated in conversations about the Heidelberg Catechism. At the seminary, Rehbein also learnt Aramaic and had his "first systematic contact with the Septuagint", reading the Book of Daniel "in the original".

Rehbein's arrest

In November, Rehbein finished at the Seminary and took up a placement as assistant to a minister called Tecklenburg at 'St Gotthard's Brandenburg / Havel'. The four months from November 1937 to February 1938 were to be very eventful in the personal lives of the Rehbeins. It was during this period that Rehbein was arrested for his involvement in the Confessing Church.

204RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.9, Q.12.
205RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.10, Q.12. Rex recalled that these discussions "were conducted on Friday afternoons in a social setting with small cakes and coffee (provided by the matron who incidentally presided over all meals at table) - and black cigars (provided by Hesse) for those who had the courage to smoke them".
The reason for my arrest was the Nazis' attempt at the time to interfere with the finances of the Confessional Church; on the Sunday I happened to take the service at St. Gotthard's they arrested all ministers in the district who announced a collection for the Confessional Church from the pulpit. I was just one among others, a routine arrest you might say.\(^{207}\)

Beyond this description little is known of Rehbein's arrest by the Nazis. Rehbein's former students suggest that he looked as though he had suffered during his period of incarceration, but there is no firm evidence of this. The source of the injuries that led Rehbein to bandage his hands when he first arrived in New Zealand is not known.\(^{208}\) It seems likely that the only significant scars Rehbein bore from his encounter with the Gestapo were mental ones.

Rehbein reported that Tecklenburg, a first lieutenant in World War One, had a military manner which kept even the Gestapo of the place in awe. This was to prove fortunate in the circumstances of Rehbein's arrest. His description of Tecklenburg's arrival at the Gestapo headquarters indicates that the soldiers' attitudes changed from tyrannical to sycophantic and it appears that Rehbein's release was secured without further to-do.\(^{209}\)

It is unclear just how long Rehbein was incarcerated, although he was imprisoned long enough to receive a postcard from Martin Albertz. The postcard dated 14/11/37 implies that the Rehbines already had plans to emigrate.\(^{210}\) A few days before Christmas 1937 the couple received notification that their marriage license had been turned down on account of the 1935 'Nuremberg laws', which did not permit marriage between couples if the blood of one or the other was 'too contaminated'. Renate's mother was Jewish and she was

\(^{208}\)Rex's bandaged hands are recalled by his first students. See interview with Rod Madill, Dunedin, 30 November 2000.
\(^{209}\)"I vividly remember the scene after my arrest at the church door when he [Tecklenburg] arrived at the Gestapo's quarters affable and completely at ease as if he owned the whole show; and the same men who had been barking at me were now bowing and scraping and every second word seemed to be 'Yes, Reverend Sir!'" RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.10, Q.13.
\(^{210}\)"When I was in prison, Martin Albertz had written to me on a postcard dated 14/11/37, "...Meine Frau hat ihre helle Freude gehabt und [ihr] der Umsicht, Ruhe und Fürsorge Ihrer Verlobten. Das ist eine feine Sache und grosse Beruhigung, wenn man weiss: Sara geht mit..." Now it was my turn to go with 'Sarah'." RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.11, Q.15. [The two spellings of 'Sarah' are faithful to Rex's original].
therefore deemed to be not 'Aryan' enough to marry. This news may have acted as a catalyst, speeding up the couple's plans to flee their homeland.

**Escape to Switzerland - the Barth connection**

Events occurred in rapid succession for the young couple in the months following the rejection of their marriage licence application. In January 1938, while still posted at St. Gotthard's, Rehbein travelled to Basel to speak with Zippel's friend Karl Schmidt about emigration. Rehbein finished at St. Gotthard's in February, and in March Renate left Germany for London. In June Rehbein sat his final theological examination and was ordained in the *Jesus Christus Kirche* in Dahlem, Berlin. In July of the same year Rehbein left Germany for Switzerland where he stayed with Peter Barth, brother of theologian Karl, and his large family. Peter Barth was minister of Madiswill, a village in the Langenthal. Like Schmidt, he was an author published in RGG.

Rehbein stayed with Peter Barth for one month in their only spare room before leaving to make space for a visit by Mrs Barth's parents, the Rades. Rehbein then lived in the manse at nearby Rohrbach with a bachelor named Kurt Röthlisberger who, hearing of the imminent visit by the Rades, had invited him to stay. Rehbein spent the remainder of his time in Switzerland with Röthlisberger, his housekeeper and two children who were also

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211 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.11, Q.15.
212 Schmidt arranged hospitality for Rex with the Peter Barths, with whom he himself had stayed during the course of his own emigration. RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.10, Q.14.
213 In a letter to Charles Brasch the editor of the New Zealand literary magazine *Landfall* Rehbein later recorded: "I was a member of the Confessional Church, came into conflict with the Nazis, and left Germany on a three months' passport for Switzerland. After six months in Switzerland I went to England for another six months". Source: letter from Helmut H. Rex to Charles Brasch, 14 May 1949.
215 "Röthlisberger had studied at Berne where he had caused the displeasure of his rather indifferent teachers by attending the far superior lectures of Ernst Gaugler (RGG, Register Bd, 522) and Arnold Glig (op. cit. 537). In addition he had spent a semester or two at Bonn with Karl Barth; here he had met Helmut Gollwitzer. It was through Röthlisberger that I first heard about Gollwitzer a bit more. I only knew him from one sermon which he had preached in Niemöller's stead at Dahlem on Palm Sunday 1938 about Zech.9.8-12." RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.11, Q.14.
political refugees. It is possible that Rehbein's enjoyment of these children was influential in his later attempts to adopt a German orphan. 216

While in Switzerland Rehbein had the opportunity of meeting Peter Barth's more famous brother Karl. Karl Barth had come to preach and stayed for the weekend. Rehbein was invited to spend the Sunday with the Barth's and the visiting Rades. Karl Barth made a positive impression on Rehbein. He recalled that:

A number of girls from the Teachers' College, hearing that Karl Barth was taking the service had come to surprise him with a few songs at the service. After the service, Karl Barth was already waiting at the manse for the door to be opened when I arrived. He greeted me with his captivating smile, standing on no dignity whatsoever. "Weren't the girl's lovely?", these were the first words he addressed to me. Was this the Barthian emphasis on the Word of God? I wondered. It was a revelation to me; not many Barthians I knew would have been capable of this opening gambit of a conversation. 217

Since Rehbein also took a service for Peter Barth, he was justifiably able to claim that he had preached from the same pulpit as Karl Barth 218. Rehbein's Swiss encounter with the theological giant must have tempered any temptation Rehbein later had to dismiss Barth out of hand, although it should be noted that he remained critical of Barth's theological approach. Certainly Rehbein was grateful for the opportunity of interaction with important theological minds as is obvious from his recollection of dinner with the Barths and Rades that same evening:

That Sunday had, of course, the additional attraction that at dinner I was able to observe Karl Barth in the presence of one of the most outstanding leaders of theological liberalism. Martin Rade [...] was then a fine old gentleman of about eighty; he took a personal interest in me and I used to see him occasionally during the time of his visit. 219

Rehbein's respect for earnest individuals like Zippel, Hesse, Barth and Rade must not be viewed as sentimentality, for as we have seen, Rehbein could be sharply critical of others. He considered Minister Teicke 'lazy,' lecturers Erich Seeberg 'moody' and Deissman

216 Rex relates a delightful story about one of the children, both of whom were doted on by the housekeeper. Refer: RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.11, Q.14. Lloyd Geering recalls the attempt to adopt a German orphan in BHR: p.16. It seems that Renate was unable to have children and this was a source of great disappointment to the couple; See BHR: p.267.
'pompous'. As we shall observe he could also be critical of Barth's work, and of the work of the liberal school to which Rade belonged. In practice Rehbein often made a distinction between people and their theology.

**Refuge in England - Bonhoeffer, Bell and the ecumenists**

Rehbein's passage to England was part of a relief operation organised by cooperating Swiss churches. He was assisted by people from a variety of different denominations during his time as a refugee. Dr. G.K.A. Bell, Bishop of Chichester, was involved in the initiative at the other end, inspiring the Anglican Church to take an active interest in refugee pastors, and it was Dr Visser't Hooft of Geneva who initially suggested to the Presbyterians in New Zealand that they consider inviting a refugee pastor.

On 13 January 1939 Helmut flew from Zürich to London where he was reunited with Renate after ten months of separation. They had been engaged for a full two years when they were married in London on February the fourteenth - Saint Valentine's Day. Their civil marriage was in Edmonton, and the church service was conducted by Dr Julius Rieger at St. George's Lutheran Chapel in Whitechapel. During their stay in England the Rehbeins enjoyed the hospitality of Anglicans and Methodists.

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221 "There was a 'Hilfswerk' organised by the Swiss churches (On what basis I do not know) which was to finance my air trip from Zurich to London and whose agent at the city of Berne, Pastor Schloss (of German nationality and non-aryan race, minister of the church of the Moravian brethren) was of tremendous help to me in organising my move from Switzerland (no small matter for a man without valid passport and without means)." RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.10, Q.14.
222 This presumably was the parish who sponsored Renate's immigration to England. During the Nazi period in Germany St George's pastor, Julius Rieger, set up a relief centre for Jewish refugees from Germany who were provided with references to travel to England. St George's dates from 1762-3 and is the oldest German church in Britain. For further information see the 'Historic Chapels Trust' URL: http://www.hct.org.uk/chapel13stgeorges.html.
223 "We lived then at St Leonards-on-Sea in Sussex enjoying the hospitality of Anglicans for the simple reason that they were the only ones who took an interest in us refugee pastors from the Continent thanks to the initiative of the then Bishop of Chichester G.K.A. Bell". RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.12, Q.16. Elsewhere it is indicated that first Helmut, and then the married couple enjoyed the hospitality of Mrs E.T. Dixon (Auntie) at St. Leonard's-on-Sea. Before her marriage Renate stayed with 'the Lloyds' in London. RA003, 'Lifeline'. It is likely that 'the Lloyds' were the family of the prominent Methodist preacher A. Kingsley Lloyd from North London who were connected with St. George's via Franz Hildebrandt. Refer: Voigt, Karl Heinz; 'Hildebrandt, Franz' in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, Band XV, Spalten 707-714, (1999) URL: http://www.bautz.de/bblk/h/hildebrandt_f.shtml. The Rexes were also in Oxford for one month with Canon Taylor (later Bishop of Sodor and Man) at Wycliffe Hall. RA003, 'Lifeline'.
It is unclear how Rehbein spent the majority of his time during his six months in England. The young couple probably enjoyed the opportunity to catch up after such a long and eventful separation and presumably in the initial period they will have busied themselves with official paperwork relating to emigration and with the wedding arrangements. It appears that Rehbein had contact with people important in the Confessing Church struggle, many of whom spent time in London visiting or as a stage on their emigration journey. Rehbein heard Bonhoeffer lecture during one of his visits, although, according to his later account, he remained unmoved by Bonhoeffer’s lecturing. During the short time Bonhoeffer was a Privatdozent while Rehbein was a student he did not even attend the former’s lectures:

He was, of course, not yet ‘Bonhoeffer’, at least not to me (nor is he that today). At my time he was mainly known for his pacifism. As a young Privatdozent he drew unusually large audiences. Later I knew of him as a director of one of the preachers’ seminaries which the Confessional Church had created. His experiments in ‘monasticism’ did not greatly appeal to me. I have only heard him lecture twice; once in Berlin when theologians of different Party alignments [sic] addressed the student body and in London in April 1939. He did not greatly appeal to me as a lecturer. He lacked sparkle, and as a person he did not ‘come across’. 225

Rehbein exchanged a few words with Bonhoeffer as they left the meeting after his talk in London. Helmut later recalled that a mutual friend told Bonhoeffer that the Rehbeins were virtually on their way to New Zealand and in response Bonhoeffer “repeated the words ‘New Zealand’, as if he wanted to say, ‘I wish I could come with you’”. 226

Rehbein had not been able to work, even in a voluntary capacity, in the Anglican setting since he was not prepared to be reordained. 227 Indeed he “discovered very early on that for [r]efugees of our class it was best to seek employment outside Europe”. 228 So it was that when the Rehbeins were offered the opportunity of gainful employment it was readily grasped:

224 Rieger and Hildebrandt were at St. Georges Lutheran Church where Renate and Helmut were married. They had connections with other refugee pastors from the Confessing Church. There were connections with Bishop Bell also.
228 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.3, Q.3.
227 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.3, Q.3
226 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.12, Q.16.
225 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.12, Q.16.
In July 1939 we left for N.Z. and arrived here Aug. 28th, a few days before the outbreak of the war. The Presbyterian Church of N.Z. had extended an invitation to one of the pastors to come out to N.Z. at the suggestion of Dr. Visser't Hooft of Geneva. Franz Hildebrandt (now at Drew University) asked us whether we would go. We said, yes. We travelled on the Remuera via Panama.

Rehbein's journey up until he emigrated to New Zealand at age 26 had been an eventful one. The major world and personal events Rehbein had encountered before his emigration were to form the backdrop to his future academic work. It is hardly surprising that Rehbein found congruence between his experience of life and the world as explained by existentialists and by the Christian existentialist Bultmann in particular. Rehbein had lived through the First World War as a young sickly child, was educated under one of Germany's greatest church historians, and coped with the death of his father in his early twenties. He placed himself at odds with the oppressive Nazi regime, had his marriage licence application declined and was arrested. Fleeing his homeland he set out on a journey to an unknown destination at a time when international tensions and suspicions were high. If Rehbein felt himself to be an outsider in his country of birth, this feeling was to be compounded in New Zealand.

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229RA003, 'Lifeline'. Elsewhere Rex suggests that his invitation from the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand came about in response to an appeal by Bishop Bell. (Rex, 'Lebenslauf', D.Theol: p.94). Franz Hildebrandt had important connections in the Confessing Church and beyond. From 1937-1939, Franz Hildebrandt held a position alongside Julius Rieger at St. Georges Church. He was a close friend of Bonhoeffer's having studied with him at Berlin University shortly before Rex. (Interestingly, he spent part of his Lehr-Vikariat as assistant to Leonhardt Fendt at 'Zum Heilbronnen'). He was active in the Confessing Church from its inception and was the youngest man to sign the Barmen Declaration. In 1934 he was already connected with Bishop Bell, having delivered an invitation to him for the Dahlem Synod of the Confessing Church. He was also connected to Martin Niemoller and Pastor Fritz Müller. Refer: Voigt, Karl Heinz; 'Hildebrandt, Franz' in Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon BandXV, Spalten 707-714, (1995). URL: http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/h/hildebrandt_f.shtml.
Chapter Two - ‘Our New Zealand Ways’ (1939-1943)

Introduction

Ann Beaglehole notes that despite The New Zealand Government not encouraging immigration, 900 refugees from Germany and Austria made their way into New Zealand in the years between the rise of Hitler and the outbreak of World War Two. Her accessible account of the life experienced by these refugees during their early years in New Zealand resonates strongly with the experiences of the Rehbeins. The resentment felt by some sectors of the community towards refugees was moderated to the extent that this relatively well educated, middle-class and urban group proved able to swiftly assimilate themselves.

This chapter surveys the young Helmut Rehbein’s arrival and reception in New Zealand in order to expose emphases in his early thought. We shall observe a strong accent on Reformed thought and the learning and understanding of church doctrine. It is important to observe from the outset that this emphasis is at odds with the mature Rex’s insistence upon theology done with ‘Christ and our interests’ in mind and his parallel recognition that

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230 Ann Beaglehole ‘Refugees from Nazi Germany & Austria 1933-45’ in Out of the Shadow of War Ed. James N. Bade, (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.25. This 900 was from a total of about 1100 refugees from Central and Eastern Europe during this period.
the Church’s doctrine is of historical but not normative interest. Doctrinal minutiae took on a far greater importance for Rehbein in this earlier period - characterised as it was by historical conflict - than it did in the relatively peaceful environment of 1960s New Zealand.

Consistent throughout Rex’s theological life is a focus on the Reformed faith reforming. This attitude in Rehbein’s theology can be observed to have been at odds with that which he encountered upon arrival on the New Zealand theological scene. Although the theology taught by Principal John Dickie in the time before Rehbein arrived at the Theological Hall in Dunedin had sound philosophical and theological bases, its roots were in the time of Empire.\footnote{A quick introduction to Professor Dickie is provided in: Roxborogh, W. John, ‘Dickie, John 1875-1942’, in Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 31 July 2003. URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/} It had had its hey-day and Rehbein’s theology of the underdog (an ‘affordable’ theology) proved over time to have a greater resonance with the developing New Zealand psyche. Rehbein’s less triumphalistic theology had a better fit in a period where the claims of establishment (and especially of the church universal) could be seen to be in dissolution.

Although unusual for a European scholar of Rehbein’s ability to end up in New Zealand it was not unknown. Perhaps the most famous example of New Zealand benefiting from the wartime situation is provided by the Austrian philosopher of science Karl Popper, who lectured in philosophy at Canterbury University from 1937 until he took up a position at the London School of Economics in 1946.\footnote{See: Munz, Peter, ‘Popper, Karl Raimund 1902-1994’ in Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 31 July 2003. URL: http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/}

The works most readily associated with Popper’s name were penned in New Zealand.\footnote{Most notably whilst in New Zealand Karl Popper wrote: The open society and its enemies. Volume 1: The spell of Plato, Volume 2: The high tide of prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the aftermath, (London: Routledge, 1945).} The Jewish heritage and the threat of German Anschluß which confirmed Popper’s exile were a part of the same phenomenon which forced Rehbein’s hand. Annexation of Austria in 1938 focused Popper’s writing in the area of social reform. Here comparison with Rehbein is invited. Like Popper, Rehbein voiced opposition to totalitarianism and was consistently critical of the weaknesses inherent in apathetic forms of liberal democracy.
It is important to examine Rehbein’s arrival and welcome in the Dominion of New Zealand and the process which precipitated that same move since these events form the background against which Rehbein did his early work. Rehbein’s existing passion for history and the Reformed faith were demonstrated in his early writing as we shall see further. In them we witness the stress he places on historical awareness, in particular of the Reformed tradition and its principles, and also his emphasis on doctrine as the necessary basis for Christian action. This chapter will investigate the extent to which Rehbein’s sense of dislocation was exacerbated by external circumstances and church hostility. It will search out theological emphases he shared with teaching colleagues and identify key themes in his writing. An examination of the inaugural lectures of contemporary Hall professors will cast some light on the situation Rehbein encountered upon arrival.

The tensions surrounding Rehbein’s orientation to the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand and initial appointment are indicative of the ambivalence felt towards immigrants from outside the British Empire. Despite adoption by a new homeland and complimentary reports about his contributions at the Theological Hall, Rehbein continued to be treated with caution. A seat on Dunedin Presbytery was only recommended for him after he had been serving the Church for three years. 234

The Presbyterian situation

The Church was regarded in some quarters primarily as a servant of King and Country and Principal Dickie was a prominent exponent of this view. 235 Accepting a German refugee into New Zealand was difficult for New Zealanders of this ilk. Yet the public face of the Presbyterian Church in the period between Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 and the start of the Second World War was one of tolerance and compassion for refugees.

234Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, held in Auckland, November 1942 (printed in Dunedin, N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co. Ltd., 1942) p.210. It is significant that the gaining of a seat for Rehbein on Presbytery required the approval of the General Assembly since this was not the case for any of the other academics who held positions at Knox Theological Hall. Although it cannot be proved, it is tempting to speculate that Rehbein’s passage to a seat on Presbytery and to ‘Associate’ status on the Senatus may have been significantly eased (if not facilitated) by Professor Dickie’s death in 1942.

Tensions beneath the surface of official Presbyterian policy are not difficult to locate. For example, evidence that the reported keenness of the 1938 General Assembly to accept a refugee pastor was not always mirrored in the wider Church is supplied by a resolution deemed necessary at the following Assembly. This resolution issued by the General Assembly of 1939 (the Assembly also responsible for accepting Rehbein into the Presbyterian ministry) reads as follows:

That our church folk be urged to show to the refugees who have been compelled to seek a home in our land a spirit of friendliness and goodwill, and to discourage any attempts to create race prejudice which might make things more difficult for those who have already suffered in the cause of freedom.\textsuperscript{26}

The very need for such a remark is reflective of the ambivalence towards aliens that characterised wartime New Zealand. The internment of foreigners on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour is another pertinent example from the period.\textsuperscript{27} There were previous and further attempts to bring European refugees to New Zealand in line with a 1938 Presbyterian Church statement on the matter,\textsuperscript{28} but due to various circumstances other cases were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{29} New Zealand continued to have an ambiguous relationship with its German refugees.\textsuperscript{30}

A letter written by Rev. J.T. Macky in March 1940 offers a useful insight into the difficulty which existed in the period for even the most well-qualified and suitable refugees. The letter was addressed to Rev. C.C. Griffiths, in whose Sussex Parish the Rehbeins had been offered hospitality, and was a response to Griffith's plea for the New Zealand

\textsuperscript{27}Maurice Gee's recent novel offers useful insight into this episode in New Zealand history. See: Maurice Gee, \textit{Live Bodies} (London: Faber and Faber, 1998).
\textsuperscript{29}See OA206, Public Questions (P.Q.) Committee, subject file: Refugees 1938-41. This file contains the correspondence of the P.Q. committee in this period. The majority of the material is letters with various attachments. There are no less than 30 official letters and telegrams specifically concerning the Rehbein's immigration. These letters indicate that messages concerning this matter were also traded 'off the record'. Letters in this file also provide a record of attempts to bring other refugees to New Zealand: Dr Kahn and Family - October 1938; Dr Golzen - 1939; Dr Perl & Wife - 1939; Pastor Süßbach - 1939/40. See also: OA206, Public Questions Committee, Minute Book 1932-48.
Presbyterian Church to accept a refugee pastor called Süßbach. Macky summarises the position of refugees in New Zealand and the difficulties which existed for the Rehbeins despite their obvious gifts:

We were delighted with Mr. and Mrs. Rehbein, and as you have probably heard, he has been appointed to lecture on Church History for three years in our Theological Hall, and started work last week in this capacity. He had been doing supply work with great acceptance, but difficulties arose when we tried to find him a parish, and it was partly this difficulty that led to this position being found for him. We feel that this is lamentable but there always seemed to be a few unwilling to accept one of his nationality at a time like this. One fears that if the other opening had not occurred we could have got him a Parish but there would have always been the danger of his being put in an unfortunate position by some of his parishioners.

Acting on behalf of the Church Macky believed that potential hostility was a legitimate reason for caution when it came to accepting refugees. He warned Griffiths that this made the Church “consider carefully” before inviting anyone else under similar circumstances, and advised that getting Government permits was virtually impossible.

Subsequently Macky wrote a letter to Rehbein admitting that Süßbach had turned out to be an excellent candidate, but one who could not be accepted due to the predominating circumstances. Life was becoming increasingly difficult for refugees from the Nazi regime.

As we shall see, the publication of his addresses in the Outlook are indicative of an effort to raise Rehbein’s profile and integrate him into the wider New Zealand Presbyterian

241 Süßbach was a confirmed Bachelor who had been imprisoned and persecuted for his work in the Confessing Church before proving his worth in the ‘Scottish Mission to the Jews’ in Glasgow. Having survived public flogging and been incarcerated four times for his work in the Confessing Church, he was rescued from the threat of Concentration Camp through a personal invitation to England from The Bishop of Chichester. See OA206, Letter from the Rev. C.C. Griffiths to The Rev. J.T. Macky, 26 January 1940; also *ibid* 1 May 1940. Rehbein too held Süßbach in the highest regard. See OA206, Letter from Rev. H.H. Rehbein to Rev. J.T. Macky, 2 December 1940.


244 Macky wrote “I interviewed Mr. Fisher of the Customs [sic] department. He is a good friend to us, but he told us quite frankly that it was only a waste of time trying to get a permit for Pastor Süßbach, and would only raise his hopes for nothing. Of course we do not know how things may change, and I will add your letter to my file, so that we will have it as additional evidence, should the way open up for us to take further action. I only wish it would. I hated to have to write to Mr. Griffiths and tell him we could do nothing”. OA206, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to Rev. H.H. Rehbein, 2 January 1941.
community.245 The publication of his address on religious instruction over four issues of the magazine will have increased sympathy with his plight, as too the parallel publication of stories about the suffering of Confessing Church leaders in Germany - among them the symbolic leader of the Confessing Church, Pastor Niemoller. Stories and letters concerning the plight of German refugees and resistance figures were prominent in 1938 and 1939 editions of the Outlook.246

The negotiations

In the first place Rehbein’s passage to New Zealand came about as the result of a great deal of earnest discussion, planning and letter writing. Correspondence made its way back and forth between England and New Zealand, and within the Dominion itself. An investigation into this matter is aided by the full records of Rehbein’s immigration process contained in the Presbyterian Archival Material held at Knox College, Dunedin. There are many entries in the 1939 minute books of the Public Questions Committee and the Theological Hall Committee as well as a wealth of correspondence.247

The correspondence begins with Dr. W.A. Visser’t Hooft’s letter of 18 October 1938. As General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (in process of formation) he had written to churches around the world requesting that they each take one of the “forty or fifty” pastors who as a result of their opposition to ‘Hitlerism’ would be “forced to leave the country in the next few months”.248 Given the ‘untenable’ nature of their position Visser’t Hooft was eager to stress that the care for such refugees was “a piece of direct Christian

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245 The Outlook was the official newspaper of the Presbyterian Church during this period. Its editor from 1937 until 1948 was the Rev. Lawrence M. Rogers.

246 The following is a list of titles of The Outlook articles typical of the period: ‘German Preachers Arrested’ (March 23, 1938: p.9); ‘Niemoller Vindicated, Found Guilty, Fined, Released, Rearrested’ (4 May 1938); ‘An appeal to Christians: Our Brethren in Germany: Persecution and Imprisonment’ (18 May 1938: p.24); ‘The Jews in Germany: Christian Sympathy’ (18 January 1939: p.27); ‘Ideology and Science in Germany’ (27 December 1939: p.6); ‘Niemoller as a Symbol’ (10 January 1940: p.5); ‘Sad News of Niemoller’ (10 January 1940: p.6); ‘Non-Aryans in Germany’ (31 January 1940: p.4).

247 In the correspondence file of the Public Questions Committee relating to refugees, there are no fewer than thirty letters relating to the Rehbein immigration alone. The authors of these letters included Franz Hildebrandt (in charge of the refugee pastors in England), Visser’t Hooft (Secretary of the World Council of Churches), Rehbein himself, G.H. Jupp (Acting Convenor of the Theological Hall Committee), MacDiarmid (director of Missions Committee) and J.Thomson Macky (Convenor of the Public Questions Committee).

248 OA206, Letter from W.A. Visser’t Hooft to the Rev. J. D. Salmond, 18 October 1938.
responsibility” and furthermore “our plain ecumenical duty”.²⁴⁹ Yet he was equally swift to anticipate and dismiss any suggestion that such refugees would be a burden on their sponsoring church.²⁵⁰

Visser’t Hooft’s letter reached its intended recipient, Dr J.D. Salmond, just in time to have its sentiment processed and approved at the last session of the 1938 Presbyterian Church of New Zealand’s annual General Assembly. The Rev. J.T. Macky, Convenor of the Presbyterian Church’s Public Questions committee, responded to Visser’t Hooft’s letter reporting the Assembly’s mood and indicating its willingness to entertain the prospect of sponsoring a refugee:

At an earlier session of the Assembly I had moved on behalf of the Public Questions Committee and it had been agreed “That the Assembly ask the Government to adopt a more liberal attitude towards the reception of refugees from Europe, and assure the Government of our eagerness to co-operate with it in their assimilation into this country; and that the Committee be authorised to take the necessary steps to implement this assurance.” Dr Salmond therefore handed the letter on to me to take the necessary action.

I conferred with the Convenor of the Theological Hall Committee, the Rev. D.C. Herron, and having got leave to bring the letter before the closing sederunt of the Assembly, moved and it was agreed, “That the letter be received, and that the matter be referred to the Theological Hall Committee in collaboration with the Public Questions Committee with power to act.” It was obvious from the way your letter was received that the Assembly was keen to accept one of these pastors if the arrangements can be made.²⁵¹

It is either a small miracle or a tribute to the persuasiveness of Church leaders that both of these resolutions were ‘agreed’ upon by the Assembly. Indeed Macky records that those who warmed the Presbyterian pews on any given Sunday were as guilty of an intolerant attitude as any other members of society.²⁵² In any case Macky had the mandate of the Assembly and was eager to impress this upon Visser’t Hooft.

²⁴⁹OA206, Letter from W.A. Visser’t Hooft to the Rev. J. D. Salmond, 18 October 1938.
²⁵⁰“You may be sure that the kind of men who would be chosen would be of the finest type. They would be willing to be retrained, so as to become ready for service in a Church in another country.” OA206, Letter from Dr. W.A. Visser’t Hooft to the Rev. J. D. Salmond, 18 October 1938.
²⁵¹OA206, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to Dr. W.A. Visser’t Hooft, 14 November 1938.
²⁵²Even before war broke out, Rev J.T. Macky records negative feeling towards refugees in a letter sent to R.G. Sinclair, Honorary secretary at St. John’s Papatoetoe: “The Government is sympathetic but afraid of Public Opinion, and indeed our Committee in Wellington, and also the one in Christchurch feels that Public Opinion
Visser’t Hooft passed Macky’s letter on to Pastor Franz Hildebrandt, a member of the Confessing Church who had been put in charge of the 40 strong refugee group during its stay with the Bishop of Chichester. On 23 January 1939 he responded, recommending the Rehbeins:

As you have been kind enough to ask for one young pastor who could come to New Zealand, I should like to suggest Pastor HELMUT REHBEIN, born 15.2.1913 who is just going to marry Miss RENATE JAEGER, a “non-aryan” Christian. He himself is “aryan”. I know him well as I was one of his examinators [sic] in the Confessional Church in Berlin; there he was also ordained in 1938. I do not hesitate to recommend him and her best, both are able people and willing to get accommodated to a new situation and to serve the Church wherever they can in the ministry. Rehbein is of reformed (calvinistic) [sic] confession and would have no trouble to become a member of the Presbyterian Church.253

It is interesting that Hildebrandt should describe Rehbein as a Calvinist. He goes on in his letter to outline those aspects of Rehbein’s education tied up with the Reformed side of the Confessing Church and omits any mention of Rehbein’s Lutheran background. Certainly Rehbein’s time in Hesse’s seminary had allowed him the opportunity of becoming conversant with the finer points of Calvinist doctrine.

Rehbein’s comfort and familiarity with Calvinist teaching was demonstrated in an article published less than four months after his arrival in Dunedin. As we shall see further, in the article on ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’, Rehbein acts as an apologist for the Reformed faith generally, and advances the case for a greater Presbyterian awareness of its roots in this tradition specifically.254 The step towards Calvinism was not a large one for Rehbein given that he had become familiar with this Reformed tradition during his training and had indicated willingness to work within a Reformed environment, however it appears that Hildebrandt was being somewhat selective in his presentation of the facts when he implied Rehbein was a Calvinist per se.
Macky wrote to Hildebrandt on 20 February 1939 to inform him that the relevant committees had met and decided to agree to his suggestion that Pastor Rehbein be received "in terms of the Assembly’s resolution". The letter emphasised the Theological Hall Committee's concern that Rehbein travel with his "Church certificates and credentials". Macky's recommendation to Hildebrandt was that Rehbein should "have a term or two in our Theological Hall to help him get into our New Zealand ways." Macky suspected that Rehbein would benefit from a cultural adjustment period and the opportunity to mix with future colleagues so he conveyed these thoughts to the Theological Hall Committee:

[W]e do not think it would be advisable to put Pastor R[eh]bein into the work immediately. A period of training here might not be strictly necessary, and probably not at all necessary from the theological point of view, but at the same time we feel that it would be most advisable [sic] in order that he might get the "feel" as it were of our New Zealand Presbyterian Church, and learn something of our ways. A term or two with the men in the Hall would be invaluable to him. Then too we feel that his knowledge of English even by the time he reached New Zealand will not be sufficient for us to put him straight into the work.

In the 1930s a close relationship existed between the official representatives of courts and committees of the Church and representatives of state and government. Rev. Macky's letter to the Minister of Customs requesting a permit for Rehbein to enter the country outlines the flow of events leading up to the application. It also states the Church's undertaking to be responsible for the Rehbeins' support and acclimatisation. Finally Rehbein "would then receive an appointment to one of our charges in our New Zealand Presbyterian Church." The confident tone of Macky's letter culminates in a strong summary statement:

I trust there will be no difficulty in securing a permit for Pastor Rehbein to enter New Zealand. We, as a New Zealand Church, have been much concerned with the tragedy that has overtaken the Protestant Church in Germany, and we are looking forward eagerly to receiving into our midst one of these persecuted Pastors.

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257Such close relationships were both inevitable and necessary in a world where the Church played a more prominent role in public life than it does today. An example of close ties between Church and state is found in a later letter written by the convenor of the Public Questions committee. See earlier footnote re: OA206, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to Rev. H. Rehbein, 2 January 1941.
258OA206, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to The Hon. the minister of Custums [sic], 14 April 1939.
Moreover we believe that Pastor Rehbein himself will be an assert [sic] to our New Zealand Presbyterian Church.259

Closing the deal

Rehbein received his entry permit with an accompanying letter from Macky on 26 May 1939 and then proceeded to make final arrangements for his passage to the Dominion. In a letter to Rev. J.T. Macky the young refugee expressed his gratitude for the offer of hospitality from the Mackys and a desire to engage in productive work in his soon to be adopted homeland.

It is really impossible for us to express with words our gratitude for your invitation and all your thoughtful arrangements which you have made for us. You can be sure that we fully realize all the trouble you have taken for us, and that we will try with all our might to fulfill [sic] all what [sic] you expect from us. It is a most comforting thought that we shall be able again to work with all our responsibility in a ministry.260

The scene was now set for the Rehbeins' immigration. They were to travel on the New Zealand Shipping Company's Remuera departing on 13 July 1939 and eventually arriving in New Zealand on 28 August.261 Then, after arriving in Wellington, the Rehbeins were to stay in Lower Hutt with the Mackys to get their 'land legs'.

In the months preceding the arrival of the Rehbeins there was a breakdown in communication between the committees jointly responsible for their invitation and arrangements. While records are ambiguous as to the detail, it is clear that the Theological Hall Committee in Dunedin and the Public Questions Committee in Wellington disagreed over the appropriateness of a public appeal for funds for the new immigrants.262 Eventually deciding that "it was quite obvious [...] that the two Committees could not continue to work

259 OA206, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to The Hon. the minister of Customs [sic], 14 April 1939.
261 OA208, Passenger List, TSS Remuera. The Rehbeins were originally to have travelled on the Rangitata, arriving in New Zealand in early August. This arrangement was changed when the treasurer of the Church Refugee Fund in England chose to save £30 in fares, opting instead to book the Rehbeins on the Remuera, thus postponing the trip by a little over three weeks. OA206, Letter from Pastor H. Rehbein to Rev. J.T. Macky, 13 June 1939.
262 Reading the associated correspondence, it is difficult to imagine that there is not something more to this disagreement than what appears in the official record. Was the abrupt tone of the communications not in part the result of existing tensions between strong personalities in each committee, or, did one (or both) committee(s) feel the other had overstepped its jurisdiction? See especially OA206, Letter from Rev. G.H. Jupp to Rev. J.T. Macky, 16 June 1939, and, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to Rev. G.H. Jupp, 26 June 1939.
together" the Public Questions Committee resolved to "ask the Theological Hall Committee to take full responsibility for Mr. and Mrs. Rehbein from the time of their arrival in New Zealand". This responsibility was to include the raising of any money that might be necessary for their support. The Theological Hall Committee acceded to this request.

That there were tensions surrounding the reception of the German couple is revealed in the letters exchanged around the time of the Rehbeins’ arrival between Rev. G.H. Jupp (Acting Convenor of the Theological Hall Committee) and Rev. J.T. Macky (Convenor of the Public Questions Committee). Even among those who sponsored Helmut Rehbein’s selection there appears to have existed a cautiousness which would not have been exercised if the candidate had been an Englishman or a Scot. Such caution was presumably born, in the first instance, of concerns centred on language and confession rather than ethnicity. Jupp wrote to Macky on 27 August, the eve of the Rehbeins’ arrival, seeking impressions upon which the Theological Hall Committee might ‘shape’ their plans. Jupp wished to proceed with caution. Jupp wrote:

You said that you had written [to Pastor Rehbein] inviting him to stay with you for a little after his arrival and in a footnote written by hand you said that others of the Committee would like him to stay with them. I took this to mean that you wished to have an opportunity to ‘size him up’ as well as to show him courtesy and friendship.

It was in my mind to ask you to give me your impression - definitely confidential of course - in order that I might shape our plans a little less in the dark. If you will do this, and I trust you do not think it an unfair request, it will be a help.

Send a telegram, if you wish to be free of him unexpectedly, and I shall, like the German troops, be ready to move at a moment’s notice.

J.T. Macky of the Public Questions Committee appears to have been less parochial than his counterpart Jupp. Replying to Jupp’s letter of 27 August, Macky complained of indecisiveness on the part of the Theological Hall Committee and for the greater part ignored Jupp’s request to ‘size up’ the new immigrant. Macky was impatient with the Theological Hall Committee. It was 29 August, and the Rehbeins had arrived the previous

Macky felt the Committee had not yet issued a clear statement on the Rehbeins' immediate future and he wanted to know whether he should be sending the Rehbeins south to attend Knox Theological College in Dunedin for the final term of the year, or whether the Theological Hall Committee had in the interim developed another plan. In his letter of 29 August Macky restricted himself to discussion of the initial plan for the Rehbeins. In the matter of first impressions of the visitors Macky deferred to Dr. J.D. Salmond, elder statesman of the Presbyterian Church and lecturer at Knox Theological Hall, with the exception of a brief comment at the end of his letter:

[W]e have been very favourably impressed with both Mr. and Mrs Rehbein, and the more I see of them, the more is that impression deepened. Talking in English is still a strain to him but he manages remarkably well.

Dr Salmond’s telephone conversation with Jupp later that same day clearly provided the inside information Jupp desired such that he felt comfortable proceeding with the arrangements. A ‘comfortable and private’ flat was secured and furnished and Jupp requested that Macky “please assure Mr. and Mrs Rehbein that all will be ready for them when they arrive”. Meanwhile war broke out whilst the Rehbeins were staying with the Mackys. The Rehbeins travelled to Dunedin with MacDiarmid, the Director of the

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267 Macky wrote: “We gathered from your previous letter that your Committee did not approve of our suggestion that Mr. Rehbein should attend the Theological Hall for what was left of the year after his arrival. But you did not say definitely whether or not he was to do so, and I expected that after your sub-committee had met to consider the matter I would be told definitely whether or not he was to go to the Hall for the remainder of the time [...] Mr. Mitchell [A member of the Theological Hall Committee visiting the Mackys] led me to believe that the Theological Hall Committee were expecting Mr. Rehbein to attend the Hall for the last term [...] Now I get your letter [...] and it is apparent from this that your Committee is still of the opinion that he should not attend the Hall, or at least that it has not made up his [sic] mind yet on the matter, and that Mr. Mitchell has apparently been misinformed in the matter.” OA206, Letter from Rev. J.T. Macky to Rev. G.H. Jupp, 29 August 1939.


270 Isabel Stanton (nee Macky) J. Thomson Macky’s eldest daughter, at that time a young child recalls: “Helmut and his wife stayed with us when they first came to New Zealand. The manse was set up for visitors and there were lots, but I particularly remember them. They were, what as an adult I now recognise as pretty shocked by life. He was quiet and felt very restrained, while Renate [...] was much more obviously upset. I understand life was never easy for her.

What I remember vividly was sitting round the table listening to the announcement of the outbreak of war. The tension was tremendous. I was sitting opposite the Rex couple and both showed emotions of distress,
Missions Committee and Convenor of its Finance and Appointments sub-committee which had “power to act in appointments and grants”. The party was welcomed by representatives of the Theological Hall and its guiding committee. On 12 September 1939 Jupp was able to report that the Rehbeins had been well received in Dunedin.

We are very favourably impressed by them. Their English is good, and remarkably free from a pronounced accent, especially of the guttural type. He is possessed of a fine mind and should, if he gets a chance of any sort, make a definite contribution to our Church. Mrs. Rehbein is a good practical type, easy to get on with and quick in her grasp of things. She will, unless one’s judgement is far astray, be an acquisition in the women’s particular sphere.

Professor Allan lives not far from their rooms, and took Mr. Rehbein along to the Hall on Thursday morning. He, too, is most favourably impressed.

Arrival at Knox Theological Hall

Professor J.A. Allan lectured in New Testament and was later to benefit from Rehbein’s assistance with his Greek classes. As we shall see further, Allan was a devoted scholar and with Rehbein’s enthusiasm for sound biblical scholarship it is therefore easy to imagine the two having a natural affinity. The students at the Theological Hall resolved to welcome the new arrival, the Chairman of the Theological Hall Students’ Union urging “that all possible efforts be made to make him one with us and afford him our friendship and cooperation during the remainder of the session”.

Thus the initial introduction to Dunedin was complete and once legal formalities had been complied with, and attendance at the training institute for Renate had been organised, it became Jupp’s wryly worded wish that:

[T]he German people would just say to Herr Hitler and his group of merry poachers - to quote Punch - that they were tired of them and order them home for again Renate much more severe on the outside than Helmut.” Personal correspondence from Isabel Stanton, 27 July 2002.

271 OA207, Missions Committee Minute Book 1938-39, Tuesday 28 November 1938, and Missions Committee Minute Book 1939-40, Thursday 7 December 1939.
274 OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, minutes of executive meeting of the union in N.T. classroom, 7 September 1939.
275 The 'training institute' performed the function of Deaconess training within the Presbyterian Church. It was not formally recognised within the Presbyterian Church until 1939 although it had been in operation since 1903. See: URL: http://www.archives.presbyterian.org.nz/page139.htm.
instant execution, the Rehbeins would soon be in a suitable sphere and giving us a return for our work.\textsuperscript{276}

Once Rehbein had been acclimatised it was intended to place him, presumably in one of the vacancies in the less desirable ‘Home Missions’ or assisted parishes for which there were not enough ministers.\textsuperscript{277} By October however, it was clear to those who were in charge of making such placements that the war situation was working against Rehbein. It was a situation that MacDiarmid regarded as most unjust and unfortunate.\textsuperscript{278} He quotes Jupp whose support he had solicited in this regard:

If the War had not come we could have placed Mr. Rehbein. Indeed, I am coming steadily to the position that we shall have to find him a place that will take him and then trust that he be given an easy run. It may [be] that our idea of protecting him in some way may be utterly wrong.\textsuperscript{279}

As Convenor of the Finance and Appointments sub-committee of the Missions Committee, MacDiarmid would have been influential in Rehbein’s prospective placement in one of the Church’s newly established ‘Aided Charges’. Acting Convenor of the Hall Committee, G.H. Jupp had previously suggested that during his visit MacDiarmid might wish to “meet informally with the Senatus and as many members of the Hall Committee as can be got together, and discuss some of the matters which are in our minds.”\textsuperscript{280} Although there is no official record of these discussions it is almost certain that MacDiarmid will have taken the opportunity of raising Rehbein’s possibilities of placement with members of the Theological Hall Committee during his September visit to Dunedin.\textsuperscript{281}

\textsuperscript{277} Indeed, at a meeting of the missions Committee held in December of 1939 a record was made “to keep the matter of the shortage of men for the ministry before the mind of the Church”. OA207, Missions Committee Minute Book 1939-40, 7 December 1939.
\textsuperscript{278} OA206, Letter from Rev. D.N. MacDiarmid to Rev. J.T. Macky, 19 October 1939.
\textsuperscript{280} OA202, Theological Hall Committee, Convenor’s Papers, General Correspondence (in/outwards) 1937-38. Letter from Rev. G.H. Jupp to Rev. D.N. MacDiarmid, 21 August 1939.
\textsuperscript{281} OA207, The Missions Committee minute books record that during his Dunedin visit MacDiarmid “had arranged to give two lectures to the Theological Students on September 6th and 7th, to meet the Missions Committee of the Dunedin Presbytery and the members of the Presbytery”. Missions Committee Minute Book 1939-40, 29 August 1939.
A new role for Rehbein

Quite who first proposed that Rehbein should assume teaching responsibilities at Knox is unclear, but it is clear that the possibility was being seriously discussed within a month of his arrival in New Zealand. This fact is evinced by the following entry in the Theological Hall Committee minute book, the first official record of the proposal:

The Acting Convenor [Rev. G.H. Jupp] mentioned the unpleasant position in which the Rev. H. Rehbein was placed owing to the outbreak of war and suggested that it might be possible to secure funds sufficient for the Assembly to appoint him to a lectureship for three years in the Theological Hall. The Rev. J.G.S. Dunn, H.J. Ryburn and the Acting Convenor were appointed a Sub-Committee to explore possible avenues of work for Mr Rehbein and to report to the next meeting.282

Matters proceeded rapidly and a formal proposal was put before the Committee the following month.283 One month after that, the same proposal was being discussed on the floor of the Church’s General Assembly in Christchurch. The Assembly had been well briefed on the Rehbeins’ journey thus far and on the suitability of his references.284 The Assembly first granted Rehbein “full ministerial status”285 and then Jupp put the following motion outlining the terms of Rehbein’s appointment and the arrangements for funding his position at minimum stipend:

That the Rev. Helmut Rehbein be nominated to the Synod of Otago and Southland for appointment as lecturer in Church History in the Theological Hall for three years as from March 1, 1940, at a salary of £300 per annum, the Assembly to provide £100 and the Synod £200 of this amount.286

282 OA203, Theological Hall Committee Minute Book 1928–41, 21 September 1939.
283 The Theological Hall Committee minute book records: “It was decided to write to the Clerk of the Synod of Otago and Southland asking if it would be possible to allocate a sum of £200 per year for a period of three years to provide a Lectureship in Church History at the Theological Hall, and to ask the General Assembly to provide a further £100 on the same terms for such a Lectureship to which the Rev. H. Rehbein might be appointed.” OA203, Theological Hall Committee Minute Book 1928–41, 19 October 1939. Rehbein’s proposed salary was equivalent to minimum stipend. See also RA003, ‘Lifeline’.
284 Cf. the relevant section of the report of the Public Questions Committee (p.142) and the relevant section of the report of the Theological Hall Committee (p.166). Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, held in Christchurch, November 1939 (printed in Dunedin, N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co. Ltd., 1939).
286 Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1939: p.49.
The motion was seconded by another member of the Theological Hall Committee, Mitchell, and was unanimously agreed upon by the Assembly. It is then recorded that “Rev. Rehbein was introduced to the Moderator, and cordially welcomed, whereupon he made suitable reply.”

There are two key areas to examine in order to assess Rehbein’s early work in his new home. The first is the situation within the Church, and its attitude towards the foreigner in its midst. The second is Rehbein’s response to the new context in which he found himself. Although focussed on the Church situation until this point, this chapter has already conveyed aspects of Rehbein’s response. As we have seen, his sense of owing a debt of gratitude was expressed in a letter to Macky written shortly before the couple sailed on the Remuera. More important again was how Rehbein would exercise the ministry to which he was now called. Key figures had risked their reputations firstly by pushing for his refuge, and secondly by suggesting his appointment at the Hall. Now the opportunity arose for Rehbein to justify the faith - however tentatively - placed in him.

**Early publication - promoting the Reformed Faith**

Rehbein had already commenced the work of teaching and writing before the new academic year began. An early request for him to ‘tour the Churches’ was turned down by the Theological Hall Committee, but before the year was out he was delivering addresses, two of which were subsequently published in the *Outlook* with the titles ‘Religious instruction in the German Confessional Church’ and ‘The Bible in Germany’.

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287 The Synod of Otago and Southland ratified this proposal when it met in April the following year. *Proceedings of the Synod of Otago and Southland of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, held in Dunedin, April 1940 (printed in Dunedin, N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co. Ltd., 1940) p.415.


289 The Theological Hall Committee recorded the following minute: “A letter was received from the Session Clerk of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Timaru, promising support of the appeal from contributions to the Rehbein fund and suggesting that he be sent on a tour of the Churches. Pleasure at the kind thought expressed in the letter was evinced but it was decided to reply that in the circumstances obtaining at present it would be unwise to accede to the request.” OA203, Theological Hall Committee Minute Book 1928-41, 21 September 1939.

290 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook* (printed in four parts, one each on: 27 December 1939; 3, 10, 17 January 1940).

Rehbein’s article on religious instruction offers an interesting insight into his views on the task of Christian education - responsibility for which he was soon to be undertaking in his adopted Church’s Theological Hall. The article was essentially a report on the situation in the Confessing Church he had left behind but it provided him with an opportunity to reflect on paper - implications he saw the German situation containing for New Zealand. Segments of the article appeared in four consecutive editions of the Outlook, and one must assume that the three necessary divisions in the text were made on grounds of magazine layout by the Outlook’s editor, since only the first division corresponds in any way with the logical subdivisions in Rehbein’s script.

Rehbein’s concern for history was made immediately apparent. He opened his article with a section on ‘historical background’ which outlined the connection between Luther’s pamphlets and letters, and the establishment of primary and secondary schools. It was Rehbein’s views on western culture and the human condition, rather than those which might be labelled explicitly religious, which led him to decry the cutting out of religion from the school curriculum demanded by the Nazis. Rehbein regarded it as short-sighted:

Even if the school authorities are not Christians themselves, they cannot deny that even this 20th century is not thinkable without the centuries-old background of Christianity. How shall we educate our children to become independent citizens, able to judge the events of history and culture, when we leave out the main factor of the history of the last two thousand years of the Western World? One can at least expect that a child with this Western background should have the opportunity of getting to know the most dominating factor in its own personal history.

This argument will presumably have struck a chord with the many in the Presbyterian Church who were heavily involved in the ‘Bible in Schools’ movement. The new German situation paralleled a New Zealand situation where responsibility for religious education had fallen heavily on the churches. The restrictions in place meant that in the

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292 That religion had been a compulsory subject up until 1919 “was natural, because the German schools were more rooted in the Reformation than in 16th Century Humanism”. Source: Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in The Outlook, 27 December 1939: p.32. Rehbein reported that state intervention in 1933 had begun to change the nature of religious instruction in schools, the structure and attendance of which had remained largely unaffected by the non-compulsory status prescribed by the Weimar Government.

293 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in The Outlook, 27 December 1939: p.32.

294 Rehbein reported that “since 1933 the responsibility for religious instruction has been laid more and more on the shoulders of the Church”. Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’
Third Reich children's remaining possibilities for religious education existed primarily in confirmation classes, children's services and youth Bible study groups; and for adults in formal education, Bible studies and through effective preaching by the minister.

It was still the custom for parents to send their children to confirmation classes and this presented the primary opportunity for the Confessional Church to spread its message widely. Rehbein reported that since the establishment of the National Socialist regime emphasis had been placed on the points of conflict between the Confessional Church and the State. He offered as examples "the question of revelation. (Is there any revelation of God in nature and history apart from Christ?) [T]he relation between Church and State, and the Christian answer to the National Socialist race-policy".295 Consistent with his later teaching, Rehbein defended the use of formal catechisms as of primary importance for religious instruction. For he believed that the Reformed teaching they contained led to the heart of the Bible's message - radical dependence on God's grace and justification through faith alone.296

This method of instruction is used because of the fact that we people of the twentieth century cannot approach the Bible directly; we are always preoccupied by a certain, say liberal, or pietistic, or fundamentalist view. But for a Church of the Reformation there is only one legitimate approach to the Bible possible - and that is through the teaching of the Reformers themselves. For, the Reformation was not just one among many stages in the development of Christianity; it was a great turning back to the sources and the origin of Christianity.297

Rehbein's ability to articulate the message of the Reformers and a sense of its importance was heightened by his personal decision to take a stand with the Confessing Church. Capitulation to the reigning ideology would have provided a sense of safety and belonging. Pastors' individual stances against the snowballing mob mentality of Nazi Germany could not have been sustained without deep inner conviction, and when

295 Pastor H. Rehbein, 'Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church' in The Outlook, 3 January 1940: p.32.
296 "The main subject of the instruction is the Catechism. Luther's Shorter Catechism in the Lutheran and some United Churches, and the Heidelberg Catechism in the Reformed Churches. [...] It is through these catechisms that the children are led to the Bible and its centre. Romans iii, 21-28." Pastor H. Rehbein, 'Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church' in The Outlook, 3 January 1940: p.32.
297 Pastor H. Rehbein, 'Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church' in The Outlook, 3 January 1940: p.32.
considering the clarity with which Rehbein outlines his beliefs it is helpful to remember that he was making decisions with potential consequences that included life and death. Under the Nazi regime he had been exposed to a hostile environment where it was becoming increasingly apparent that the courage of one’s convictions came at the cost of incarceration and perhaps even the forfeiting of one’s own life. Against this background the clarity of conviction possessed by this young man in his mid-twenties can be more readily understood.

Rehbein’s encounters with the Nazi regime mean that every aspect of his teaching is infused with seriousness. In his Outlook article it is suggested that young children not be allowed the luxury of fantasy and should instead be directed towards taking first steps on the journey to confirmation. From the beginning the goal of “developing an intellectual understanding of Reformation Doctrine and the ability to read the Bible from a Reformation standpoint” is paramount. Thus Rehbein reported approvingly that in Germany children’s services are usually led by the minister and:

try to avoid everything that leads away from [...] Reformation principles: as e.g. all the “stories” which are in such favour in modern children’s addresses, all the flights of imagination which make the Biblical story interesting by adorning it with fictitious additions. The aim is religious instruction and not religious entertainment.

Although the spirit of this advice may now no longer be in vogue in educational circles, pedagogical training was very important to Rehbein. In his address on religious instruction he outlined the pedagogical training received by ministers, deacons and voluntary workers before describing the Catechetical Schools developed by the Confessing Church in an effort to train lay-people in the ways of Reformed Christianity. Religious instruction in the Catechetical Schools together with Bible Classes and Sermons are the chief means of religious instruction for adults identified in his article.

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298 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in The Outlook, 3 January 1940: p.32.
299 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in The Outlook, 10 January 1940: p.32.
300 In order to instruct lay-people for voluntary work in the congregations, the Catechetical schools presented a varied program. “The course lasts through the whole winter time. The subjects of instruction are Exegesis of the Old Testament and New Testament. Doctrine of the Catechism, Hymnology, Psychology of Youth and Social Work in the Congregation.” Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in The Outlook, 10 January 1940: p.32.
Centrality of the sermon, biblical theology and doctrine!

Rehbein's views on the sermon were ones that he would give further articulation to towards the end of his teaching career as we shall see when we examine his talk on the Sunday Service delivered in 1961.\footnote{See chapter nine for a discussion of Rex's 'Sunday Service' address. Although he appeared to waver from his convictions on the centrality of the sermon in a charge delivered at the induction of Rev. A.S. Barton in 1960, it is clear that when he speaks of the sermon he maintains an understanding of it as a teaching tool.} His earlier work is marked by a similar conviction of the sermon's central importance:

*The main instrument of instruction of the adults is the SERMON. It is a widespread conviction in the Confessional Church that we live in an age when the instruction of adults is much needed for they have lost their foundations in the past.*\footnote{Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.}

Rehbein wanted every sermon to be instructional because he believed that the pervading liberal theology and the humanist philosophy of the nineteenth century had destroyed a real sense of history among the citizens of his own country, and, one suspects, among the people of his new-found homeland. The idea that services of worship should be vehicles of education was in congruence with the ideals of Luther that he had mentioned earlier in the address. For Rehbein an instructional sermon involved exegesis first and foremost:

It is only with this exegesis as a basis that the sermon approaches the essential existence of the hearer as “Sinner before God,” as “Justified by Faith,” and in his situation as “Still living in the World,” i.e. Nazi Germany of the 20th century.\footnote{Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.}

In the style of a sermon Rehbein's address on 'Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church' ended with an epilogue presenting a 'threefold challenge': "First, back to the reformation! [...] Secondly, back to the Bible! [...] Thirdly, more doctrine!"\footnote{Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.} For Rehbein Christian thinking had to be done in sympathy with the aims of the reformers:

Calvin, the Shorter Catechism and the Confessio Scotica of 1560 must be known again. For they are the only solid ground for teaching-work [...]. All the manifold *individualistic* Bible interpretations along liberal, moral fundamentalistic pietistic lines

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\footnote{\small See chapter nine for a discussion of Rex's 'Sunday Service' address. Although he appeared to waver from his convictions on the centrality of the sermon in a charge delivered at the induction of Rev. A.S. Barton in 1960, it is clear that when he speaks of the sermon he maintains an understanding of it as a teaching tool.\footnote{Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.\footnote{Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.}}
are illusions and arbitrary methods of interpretation. There is no doubt on this point: *We cannot read the Bible as the Word of God without the teaching of the Church.*

As Rehbein was not interested in political expediency one can safely assume that his promotion of the traditions of his newly adopted denomination was born of earnest conviction. In the case of the Presbyterian Church Rehbein recommended approaching the Bible through Calvin. This self-conscious approach to the history of the tradition leads to the creation of more doctrine - a positive spin-off as far as Rehbein is concerned for “Christian action without doctrinal foundation is mere illusion. We must know what we believe, before we can act as Christians in this world”.

Socialism, Humanism and Atheism are the undesirable consequences which are said to result from action not programmed by ‘the Creed’. It is important to note that Rehbein’s stance on these matters paralleled that of the incumbent Professor of Theology at Knox. Professor John Dickie, with whom Rehbein was soon to become better acquainted, placed theological reflection ahead of ethical action, with the latter deriving its value and impetus from the former. As far as Rehbein was concerned:

The Christian Church has always been a CHURCH OF DOCTRINE, demarcating herself very distinctly from her surroundings. This was the only way by which the True Church could endure through all the centuries up to the present day.

Against the background of Church struggle in Nazi Germany, Rehbein’s stress on the fundamental importance of doctrine makes perfect sense. Rehbein had not yet tested the validity of this approach in the - relatively - conflict-free New Zealand context.

Consistent with the neo-orthodox emphasis on reformation and doctrine, Rehbein regarded the Bible as “the one legitimate and authoritative record, which God has spoken to mankind”. With this, Rehbein counters the liberal movement in theology and stresses that

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305 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.
306 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.
307 Rehbein does not state which creed he is referring to.
308 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.
309 Pastor H. Rehbein, ‘Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church’ in *The Outlook*, 17 January 1940: p.32.
God is not to be found in nature or in the unfolding of history "but in Jesus Christ alone". The centrality of Biblical witness found expression for Rehbein in another address delivered about the same time. Like the first segment of 'Religious instruction in the German Confessional Church', 'The Bible in Germany' was published in the last edition of the 1939 Outlook.

Consistent with later addresses Rehbein's talk on 'The Bible in Germany' had a strong human interest focus. Stories related to the interests of the audience were included to brighten the narrative. In his discussion of popular supplements to Bible reading, Rehbein advocated most strongly for the use of a lectionary. Approaching the Bible through the lectionary, said Rehbein, offered a minister's congregation the opportunity to "come to his Sunday-service prepared [...] wondering which text the minister might choose and how he will solve the problems of the subject of this particular week". Rehbein hoped that this might even lead to enlightened discussion between preacher and hearer. Rehbein's recommendations concerning the lectionary illustrate both his willingness to question the established practices of the Reformed Faith and a perceived need to justify any change to those practices. Indeed his concluding remarks on the reading of lectionaries confirmed this view.

At the close of his address on the Bible Rehbein offered a summary of National Socialist attitude towards the Scriptures. Against the anti-Jewish foundations for Nazi selective reading, Rehbein sided with the neo-orthodox and distanced himself from the

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310 Pastor H. Rehbein, 'Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church' in The Outlook, 17 January 1940: p.32.
312 The Outlook reports that it was delivered to the Bible Society of Otago and Southland. Beginning with an acknowledgment of the significant impact Bible societies have had throughout the world, Rehbein compared the contributions and translations produced by different Bible societies with which he was familiar and attributed the German popularity of Luther's translation to its 'colour' and 'miraculous impressiveness'. He suggested that it was just that consequent revisions have treated Luther's text reverently, since it was "simply impossible to do a better translation than he has done". Pastor H. Rehbein, 'The Bible in Germany' in The Outlook, 27 December 1939: p.10.
313 Pastor H. Rehbein, 'The Bible in Germany' in The Outlook, 27 December 1939: p.11.
314 "I am afraid it is a great pity that the reformed tradition has always been very suspicious against the Church Year as too Roman an institution. But this danger exists no longer and there are reformed ministers and congregations in Germany and Switzerland who have seen the immense instructive value which the Church Year has. It is certainly the best way to come through the whole contents of the Bible in one year." Pastor H. Rehbein, 'The Bible in Germany' in The Outlook, 27 December 1939: p.11.
sloppy logic of the regime. He concluded with a statement that allowed the Church only one answer to the Nazi challenge:

Under those circumstances the Church is asked of her attitude and her interpretation of the Bible. And there can be only one answer: The Bible is the one authoritative Word of God to mankind which has its centre in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And the foundation for this statement is neither the “beauty of the Biblical thoughts” not the “moral value of its teaching,” but the belief in the Justification by Faith alone.315

These profoundly orthodox words must have bought joy to the hearts of Outlook readers New Zealand over. The concluding remarks of this address parallel those of Rehbein's piece on religious instruction in which he described the Bible as “the one legitimate and authoritative Word” and rebuked those who would attempt to seek God “in the events of history, and in the lilies of the field”.316 Here Rehbein was attacking natural theology. The most important aspect of these early addresses given by Rehbein is their emphasis on education about, and adherence to, the Reformed roots of Presbyterianism. As has already been intimated, Rehbein was soon to find a further outlet for these orthodox Protestant views in his role as a tutor at the Theological Hall, Knox College Dunedin.

It is interesting to ponder why Rehbein’s addresses were so readily received by the Outlook, the official weekly of the Presbyterian Church. He was presumably encouraged to submit them for publication and it is likely that this encouragement came from those responsible for his welfare whilst he continued to be regarded as a refugee. The publication of these articles will have served to introduce Rehbein to the broader Church and also will have lent credibility to the decision to place him in a coveted role at the heart of Presbyterianism - its Theological College.

So it was that with a personal background in the Confessing Church struggle and strong publicly expressed convictions about the value of reformation principles, Rehbein began his work in the Theological Hall at Knox College.

315 Pastor H. Rehbein, 'The Bible in Germany' in The Outlook, 27 December 1939: p.38.
316 Pastor H. Rehbein, 'Religious Instruction in the German Confessional Church' in The Outlook, 17 January, 1940: p.32.
It is important to note that in 1940 - his first year of teaching - Rex published two further articles. These appeared in The Student - the official organ of the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.). 317 As shall be demonstrated when these papers are examined, Rehbein wished to declare the bankruptcy of the Church and to reassert the call to 'live the cross'. 318 It is tempting to speculate that Rehbein’s plea for a Christianity free of nationalism contributed to the lack of any further publication by Rehbein during the war period. In the first instance, it is unlikely Rehbein’s senior colleague and Principal - John Dickie - would have regarded such views as tolerable among his teaching staff. On the other hand, a lack of any publication following Dickie’s death in 1942 may in part be explained by resultant increase in Rehbein’s teaching load.

**Theological colleagues - John Allan**

As we have seen, Professor John Allan was one of the first to be impressed by Rehbein when he arrived in Dunedin. It is not too difficult to imagine why this was the case when one examines Allan’s theological agenda, which was given its most concise form two years after war’s end in his inaugural lecture as Principal of Knox. 319 Allan welcomed the more biblical theology that was then emerging.

Like Rehbein, Allan was reacting against the rationalist liberal tradition in theology which sought to tear the Bible to pieces, examining each part on its own and stripping away its theological layers, in an attempt to reveal the historical events at its ‘core’. Because the Jesus revealed by such an approach bore little resemblance to the obvious intention of the Gospel authors, Allan believed that the search for absolute historical fact through the removal of all that savoured of theological interpretation was better abandoned in favour of a new approach where:

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318These articles are examined in chapter eight of the present thesis.

The Gospels are no longer regarded as primarily intended to be histories or biographies. They are just books that record the Church's testimony to Jesus as Divine Redeemer, and so are theological in primary intention. 320

The approach promoted by Allan played down the irreconcilability of witnesses within books of the New Testament, contradictions between its individual books, and disjunction between Old and New Testaments. Allan's approach favoured instead an emphasis on the unity of the Biblical witness. 321 For him, this was the necessary consequence of the determination to take the great underlying ideas of the Bible quite seriously, rather than explaining them away as unacceptable to the modern mind. 322

For Professor Allan, the new approach to the Bible had three main roots: the precarious situation of civilisation, a feeling that something was lacking in the liberal presentation of Christianity - "it is thin and bloodless" - and thirdly, the work of scholars who:

have begun to see that Liberalism failed to reach any deep understanding of the very documents it studied so acutely. The great central meaning of the Bible, God's activity in judgment and redemption, has been strangely missed in the search for thrilling ideas and inspiring ideals such as are more readily acceptable to the modern mind. 323

For Allan the verdict against Liberalism had to be given since it failed to interpret the Bible as the Word of God. The new movement, by way of contrast, was taking the Bible "more seriously and more religiously". 324 Allan's propagation of the "earnest endeavour to get behind externals to the real meaning of the Book", 325 will have been met with sympathy from Rehbine.

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John Dickie

Although he was only to live for a further two and a half years, John Dickie - Principal of Knox Theological Hall and the Professor of Theology and Church History - was to have a significant impact on the young Rehbein. Dickie had taught a generation of men and wielded influence through an informal old-boys network within the Presbyterian Church. This, together with the not inconsiderable esteem associated with his chair in the mind of the broader church, made him a formidable opponent in any ecclesial battle. The tensions between the two men will be examined further, but first it is important to note that their theological approaches appeared to have much in common.

The inaugural lecture Dickie delivered in 1937, following a sabbatical abroad, confirms both the impression that his theology had stagnated and that his contacts and influence were broad. The lecture is filled with entertaining anecdotes and impressions of his trip abroad. For an understanding of Dickie's theological perspective, one must search his earlier work. As Geoff King has pointed out, Dickie's first (1910) inaugural lecture offers a valuable overview of his theological agenda.

Dickie began his first inaugural lecture with an outline of the nature of the burden imposed upon the occupant of a chair of Systematic Theology and New Testament Language and Exegesis, the post he had been invited to fill at the Theological Hall. Dickie believed the task of a New Testament lecturer was to understand Scripture’s component parts “as if they had been written yesterday” and, “with special reference to our own needs and circumstances”, present them in such a way “as to show what makes them a unity and the supreme rule of faith and life”. Rehbein would soon demonstrate that he shared these convictions. Like the new immigrant Rehbein, Dickie clearly considered dogmatics more important than the theological tasks of apologetics or ethics. For him each area of

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329 Dickie offered the following definitions: “apologetics deals with the problem of religious knowledge and its relation to other knowledge” and “Ethics shows the practical outcome of Christian faith in a Christ-filled life”. ‘The Perennial Task of Christian Theology’: p.21.
theological study was to be undertaken in order to cast light upon the ‘problem of ultimate religious truth’.

Dogmatics [...] endeavours to set forth the whole content of the Christian revelation as a reasoned orderly system in all its divine harmonious completeness, and to commend it to both heart and mind as the very truth of the living God, whom to know is life eternal.

Rehbein would prove to be more suspicious of man’s ability to achieve this goal. Dickie’s entire 1910 address was filled with the assuredness of the period - “nothing more certainly grows than the sum of human knowledge”. The world wars had not yet occurred and, as Dickie asserted, theology had stood its ground against the serious challenges of Darwin and Strauss. Dickie’s theology was influenced by the approaches of Schleiermacher and Ritschl whom he cited as authorities alongside Calvin. In line with these theologians, Dickie regarded the subject of Christian Theology as “Christianity itself as an historical and personal religion”.

Dickie painted a picture of theology justly occupying its chair as the ‘queen of the sciences’. Breward comments that Dickie was a liberal “in the best sense of the word”. For Dickie theology is like any other science working from its data “forwards to its conclusions, according to definite principles appropriate to its subject matter”. Yet for him it was also more than that, since Dickie was convinced of theology’s perennial value and of its contemporary health.

In theory, this confidence in the vitality of contemporary theology allowed Dickie to embrace differences of opinion within the discipline since “[o]nly the true endures” and

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335 Breward qualifies the term liberal in the following manner: “utterly convinced of the reliability of the Christian faith and equally convinced that it could be restated without loss of any essentials for faith and life.” Ian Breward, Grace and Truth (Dunedin: Theological Education Committee of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1975) p.28.
337 “I question whether any other intellectual pursuit has engrossed the attention of so many minds of the first order, during the same period. I am quite sure that no study had been pursued more fearlessly or more unselfishly by men of such wide learning and such diversity of high mental gifts”. John Dickie, ‘The Perennial Task of Christian Theology’ in The Outlook, 13 April 1910: p.22.
“truth comes to its own through struggle and conflict.” In practice, however, this was not always the case.

A more comprehensive assessment of Dickie’s theology is offered elsewhere, but for the purposes of the present work it is important to have an appreciation of the theological standpoint of the man responsible for teaching the entire previous generation of theological students. The snapshot of Dickie’s theology offered above is intended to generate an impression of the vacuum which Rehbein was to begin to fill in the wake of Dickie’s early and unexpected death in June 1942.

Dickie and Rehbein shared significant theological convictions. Both stressed the importance of historical awareness to the Christian faith, and for both men this found expression in the adoption of the historical-critical method. Both held that doctrine should take priority over ethics - valuing orthodoxy above orthopraxis, and both were revered for the encyclopaedic grasp they had of their subject. Yet there were also significant differences which came as a result of their adherence to the propositions of a different generation of German scholarship. Like Schleiermacher and Ritschl, Dickie shared the liberal ‘modern’ belief in progress. By contrast Rehbein shared the scepticism his Vorbild Bultmann had adopted over and against his liberal forebears.

Other colleagues

Alongside Dickie and Allan, other men taught at the Theological Hall when Rehbein arrived. Among them was Dr. Salmond, one of the men responsible for the initiation of Rehbein’s immigration through his connection with Visser’t Hooft. His official responsibility to the Church was as youth Director, but he also had lecturing responsibilities in Christian education. In his history of Knox Theological Hall Ian Breward presents Salmond as a compassionate and attentive man with a deep concern for social issues. The Rev. Dr. S.F. Hunter had been in the Old Testament Chair for ten years when Rehbein

340 Of his role in the Hall, Breward reports: “With considerable pedagogical experience and wide knowledge of contemporary educational thought, Salmond brought great energy to his dual position. He kept his students in touch with the latest educational thinking and practice, but strongly emphasised the need for a theological base for true education.” Grace and Truth: p.46.
341 For an overview of Salmond’s contribution to Knox Theological Hall, see: Grace and Truth: pp.44-48.
entered Knox. He was an Australian who had narrowly missed out on appointment to the corresponding chair at Ormond College before being appointed to Knox. While he did not produce any major work of Old Testament scholarship, he wrote frequently for *The Outlook* and is reported to have pushed for the elevation of the standard of entrance examinations.342 He was actively involved in public affairs. His successor G.A.F. Knight arrived in 1947. Knight published extensively and was heavily involved in ecclesial and refugee affairs. The final member of the teaching staff when Rehbein arrived at the Hall was G.W. Johnstone who lectured in voice production and expression.

In 1944 Dickie’s replacement for the chair in Systematic Theology was found in Scotsman John Henderson. In his history of Knox Theological Hall Breward offers a measured account of Henderson’s contribution - including lecture courses which remained virtually unchanged for nearly twenty years.343 Breward concurs with a consensus among former students - that Henderson failed to serve the church in the fashion demanded of one upon whom the honour ‘professor of theology’ had been bestowed. In *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, Allan Davidson pulls no punches: “His [Henderson’s] teaching was unimaginative and he failed to give theological leadership to either students or the church during the 19 years he held the chair”.344 In his own inaugural lecture Henderson had stated, in portent fashion, that he could not hope to fill Dickie’s shoes.345 It is important to note that Rehbein’s theology spoke into the theological vacuum which characterised Henderson’s time at the Hall.

**Making a start**

Rehbein’s first year teaching at the Hall was successful by all accounts. He will have been acquainted with many of the students he encountered in 1940 through his own attendance of lectures as a student in the previous session. Initial difficulties of transcription

342 *Grace and Truth*: p.42.
343 See: *Grace and Truth*: pp.58-61. Breward’s account examines the weakness of Henderson’s contribution but is not written without compassion or generosity. He sums up: “Though few were convinced by him, none could fail to respect the integrity of his convictions and the courtesy with which he put them, even if some felt he was remote on many contemporary issues”. *Grace and Truth*: p.61.
345 OA210, John Henderson, ‘The Revival of Reformed Theology’, inaugural lecture as Professor of Theology and Church History in Knox Theological Hall of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 26 February 1945: p.1.
experienced by his students appeared to evaporate after the first month. Students regarded him favourably. Rehbein's offer of an extra curricular discussion group was well received and he appeared on a short-list of candidates to be invited to present evening papers on items of interest for students.

Official appreciation of Rehbein's contribution to the Hall was recorded in the 1940 edition of the General Assembly's *Proceedings*. D.C. Herron's Theological Hall Committee's report began with glowing praise for the new recruit:

> At the beginning of the Session the staff of the Theological Hall was strengthened by the addition of the Rev. H.H. Rehbein. Mr Rehbein, by his diligent and thorough work, has commended himself to his fellow-teachers, his students, and the members of the Committee.

Principal Dickie's compliments contained a telling reminder of Rehbein's place in the hierarchy: "Mr H. Rehbein has shown himself a competent scholar, keenly interested in his work and pleasant and obliging in his relations with both students and professors". For Dickie, Rehbein "lectured one hour a week to all three years on the early church, and one hour a week on the Reformation and what led up to it". This eased the heavy load Dickie had been carrying up until this point. Dickie, however, retained the chair in History and the additional £100 he had been given to assume that responsibility.

The Old Testament report indicated that Rehbein had taken classes with the "non-Hebrew men" who previously had to read their text books unaided. The New Testament

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546 Concern was expressed in the Student's Union minute book: "Reference was made to the difficulties of transcription of Mr Rehbein's lecture notes and suggested approaching the lecturer with a view to some arrangement being made e.g. for a monthly typed synopsis of the notes." OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 14 March 1940. By the time of the next regular meeting of the executive this matter appeared to have been resolved. "The Chairman said he had discussed this matter with Mr. Rehbein but as everyone seemed to be satisfied now the matter would simply lapse." OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 19 April 1940.

547 QA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 6 April 1940.

548 OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 6 April, 19 April 1940.


report indicates that "The first year class met one day a week with Mr Rehbein and read selected passages as practice in translation and grammar."\textsuperscript{353} Approaches were also made to have Rehbein undertake outside teaching work. The Theological Hall Committee sought to protect Rehbein from an overburdening teaching load in its response to such requests.\textsuperscript{354}

Rehbein indicated in a letter to Macky that he had valued his first year teaching at the Theological Hall. The reading of his letter must be tempered with the knowledge that it contained reference to Pastor Süssbach and was written primarily to convince Macky of Süssbach's worthiness as a refugee. Nevertheless Rehbein's letter contains a valuable summary of his earliest work.

"It must be since ages that I wrote to you for the last time. But during the session life was terribly busy with preparing lectures and all sorts of addresses and articles. And then, during the winter, there was much visiting and many invitations of friends and of the students with whom we had much personal contact. - I daresay, I enjoyed my work in the Hall immensely; the professors proved very friendly, and Prof. Dickie helped me a great deal with his marvellous library.\textsuperscript{355}"

Within the year moves were afoot to increase Rehbein's Salary.\textsuperscript{356} His pattern of lecturing responsibilities was kept substantially the same in 1941 as it had been the previous year. It was not until Dickie's sudden death in June 1942 that Rehbein was accorded greater responsibility.

**Life after Dickie**

In the General Assembly *Proceedings* published in 1942 Rehbein was granted space to write his own report as 'lecturer in Church History'. Previously this report had been written by Dickie despite Rehbein's adoption of the majority of the teaching load. Rehbein also now reported to the Assembly on his teaching of the Greek New Testament and the English Bible.\textsuperscript{357} The Theological Hall Committee recorded its extreme satisfaction with Rehbein's


\textsuperscript{354} See OA203, Theological Hall Committee Minute Book 1928-41, 15 February 1940.

\textsuperscript{355} OA206, Letter from Rev. H.H. Rehbein to Rev. J.T. Macky, 2 December 1940.

\textsuperscript{356} "It was agreed to ask Synod to increase Mr. Rehbein's Salary by £50 per ann. & for a grant of £50 per ann. for House Allowance to be paid from Fire Insurance Fund." OA203, Theological Hall Committee Minute Book 1928-41, 3 October 1940.

\textsuperscript{357} Rehbein's reports are found in *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, held in Auckland, November 1942 (printed in Dunedin, N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co. Ltd.,
work and recommended his appointment for a further three years. In the same report, the Committee also reported the following minute of appreciation recorded by the Hall students:

As Mr Rehbein nears the end of his third year as a lecturer in the Theological Hall, we desire to place on record our appreciation of the contribution he has made to the Hall. His scholarship, his efficiency as a lecturer, and his Christian witness have gained our respect, and it is our deep conviction that the Church’s action in appointing him has been more than justified.

In a practical gesture of friendship and appreciation the Hall students also procured a high quality B.A. gown which was presented to Rehbein on 17 August 1942. Rehbein expressed gratefulness for the gift at the time and wore it throughout his teaching career. He notably made reference to it more than 20 years later in a letter of thanks for another gift he received to mark his retirement.

Rehbein did not enjoy the affection of all the students who passed under his tutelage. A notable incident occurred when a group of his pupils took exception to the way Rehbein taught a class on the virgin birth at the beginning of the 1943 session. A special general meeting of the Theological Hall Student’s Union was called on the 17th of March. Some students wished to express their displeasure at the content of one of Rehbein’s lectures. More conservative students Wallace and Scarrow put forward the following motion which was carried 13/4 on a show of hands.

That this meeting of the T.H.S.U. while reaffirming its attitude of respect for Mr Rehbein and appreciation of his valuable teaching expresses concern at the dogmatic manner in which teaching rejecting the Virgin Birth had been put before us.

The secretary of the Student’s Union was instructed to communicate the motion to Rehbein in writing. Rehbein responded to the letter with a demand for a further letter detailing that the voting in the student’s meeting had not been unanimous. In response to

1942) p.216f.
359 The original minute is found in: OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 14 August 1942.
361 OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 17 March 1943.
362 OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 18 March 1943.
his further demand to see the Student Union minute book the Union replied that the minute book was confidential.

The students must have felt out of their depth when they next received a sternly worded list of demands from the principal of the Hall and head of the Senatus J.A. Allan. He wrote to the Union chastising them for what he labelled an attempt at 'censure' of Mr Rehbein and instructed that they take steps to mediate the effect of their actions. This involvement by the Senatus signalled to the students that their actions constituted a grave error of judgement. The students submitted and responded according to the only avenue left open to them - apologising to Rehbein for not having adopted the correct procedure in expressing their concern. Their apology was complete and self-deprecating aside from the decision to “respectfully point out that [they] did not imply any censure in the expression of concern”. What had become clear in the incident was that Rehbein’s theology and teaching were not always going to be regarded as uncontroversial. The Senatus’ swift and heavy-handed response to the incident, promoted by the sensitivities of some of the Hall’s more conservative students, showed a growing solidarity between the professors and their junior colleague.

The previous principal, John Dickie, had made Rehbein’s life more difficult in other ways. A firm believer in the Church as a servant of the State, he had removed Luther's

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363 Both King ‘Organising Christian Truth’ and Breward Grace and Truth incorrectly record that this matter was dealt with by Principal Dickie (who was in fact deceased at that time).
364 "In view of the letters sent to Mr Rehbein by the T.H.S.U. date March 17th and 18th the Senatus resolves as follows: -
(1) That the union has no jurisdiction over the members of the Senatus and Communication of a resolution of Censure to Mr Rehbein is ultra vires and the letter embodying this resolution must be withdrawn and an apology offered.
(2) That Students be reminded that full freedom is given them in class to express their opinions and to discuss any teaching given.
(3) That in the event of any student feeling dissatisfaction after such discussion in class on any point which seems to him of major importance there should be full personal conference with the teacher concerned before further steps are taken.
(4) That any further steps deemed necessary must be by way of approach to the Senatus and if dissatisfaction still remains by appeal to the Theological Hall Committee.
(5) That with reference to the letter of March 18th the T.H.S.U. be informed that the records of every recognised organisation in the Presbyterian Church are subject to examination by a superior body, and cannot be described as confidential and the Senatus regards the Union as subject to the Theological Hall Committee in this matter."
OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 26 March 1943.
365 OA201, Theological Hall Students Union, Minute Book 1932-43, 26 March 1943.
portrait from the Chapel during the First World War. Despite being a man of significant theological stature whose views were shaped by German thinkers, Dickie is reputed to have had quite a blind spot on British-German relations. Geoff King has examined the “more or less veiled animosity which Dickie appears to have harboured towards his junior colleague”. 366 It is worth considering the sources of this conflict since they are indicative of the broader tension between the world-views of each. The animosity Dickie had towards Rehbein is documented by King and well remembered by former students. Lloyd Geeting, part of the new intake taught by Rehbein for the first time in 1940, recalls:

[Dickie] astounded us all in class one day by saying, ’It is my considered view, which I have held consistently for the past thirty years, that there will be no hope for permanent peace in Europe until the last German is wiped off the face of the earth.’ He made it clear to students that, so far as he was concerned, Helmut was accepted as a temporary member of staff and ‘on sufferance’. 367

Whatever the reasons for Dickie’s dislike of Rehbein, Dickie had helped to mould the theological world-view of the previous generation of theological students. New students arriving at the Hall were indirect heirs of his intellectual legacy through their own parish ministers, the majority of whom had been taught by Dickie. With his neo-orthodox views, it

366 King records: "A number of reasons for the more or less veiled animosity which Dickie appears to have harboured towards his junior colleague have been suggested by students who trained at the Hall in 1940, 1941 and 1942. First, the outbreak of the Second World War had done little to mitigate Dickie’s antipathy towards Germany and all things German. Unlike his deceased friend James Gibb and his colleague D.C. Herron, John Dickie continued to hold German militarism - aided and abetted by ‘sentimental pacifism’ - responsible for the carnage of the Great War. He had predicted that the failure of the Allied powers to ‘humble Germany to the dust’ at the conclusion of the 1914-18 conflict might lead to just the sort of situation which was then developing in Europe, and it seems that this unbending belief in the collective guilt of the German nation may have blinded him to the reality of the suffering undergone by many individual German Christians in the name of Christ. Secondly, Dickie and Rehbein were separated by an intellectual gulf even wider than that which had divided a much younger John Dickie from his predecessor a third of a century earlier: the main influences on Rehbein’s thought, namely Christian existentialism, kerygmatic theology, Althaus, Elert, Brunner and Barth and the historical teachings of Hans Lietzmann were as far removed from the theological perspective of the older Dickie as the younger Dickie’s modified Ritschlianism had been from the educated evangelicalism of John Dunlop. Finally, Rehbein’s arrival at the Theological Hall and the decision of the church to offer him a temporary teaching position there meant that Dickie was obliged to surrender partial control over a subject which was particularly dear to his heart, and to look on as a younger and equally if not more gifted man took over the responsibility of teaching New Testament Greek, another subject which had also once been Dickie’s own domain.

Owing to the absence of any direct reference to Helmut Rehbein in what survives of Dickie’s papers it is not possible to state with confidence what made it impossible for the two men to enjoy the sort of relationship which might have been beneficial to them both as well as to the church which they served. Whatever its causes, the atmosphere of tension which existed between them meant that the ‘shared’ task of teaching Church History from 1940 until the middle of 1942 was undertaken separately rather than co-operatively.” G.S. King, ‘Organising Christian Truth’: p.167f.

was the liberal assumptions passed down to the current generation of students that Rehbein was immediately challenging.

Many students were appreciative of Rehbein and it is difficult to avoid speculating that his popularity with the brighter students may have served to crystallise resentment, providing as it did, competition to Dickie’s established cult of personality. Students certainly noticed a change in the study of church history with Rehbein’s arrival at the Hall. Lloyd Geering notes that Rehbein’s theological and biblical position was much more radical than what the students were used to:

With Helmut’s arrival in the Hall the study of church history (previously taken by Dr Dickie) took on a new dimension. I still remember clearly his very first lecture. He raised the question of the purpose of studying history and whether it is possible to discern any meaning in history. This unexpected start, amplified by subsequent lectures, did two things for me. It whetted in me an interest for history which I have never since lost. (…) But secondly, Helmut taught me how to follow up lectures by using the library and reading around a subject for myself.368

Although a new lecturer, Rehbein was Geering’s biggest influence during his time at Knox Theological Hall. Rehbein had the gift of communicating enthusiastically with students the products of his own ongoing education. His early emphases - on historical awareness, the Reformed tradition and its principles, and the importance of doctrine - had as much to do with the subject of his new formal lecturing role as they did with his own struggle to come to terms with his new environment. It is unlikely, for example, that Rehbein would have been writing articles affirming the roots of Scottish Presbyterianism had he remained a Lutheran in Germany.

Although the learning curve was steep, Rehbein was still to a large extent operating out of the framework of his own formal education. New questions would have to be answered as time went on and Rehbein developed a better feel for his context. How would the theological understanding he had in the early 1940s be modified to serve the post-war New Zealand environment? To what extent would the experience of being a stranger in a strange land affect the development of his theology? Would the theological emphases he arrived with remain of primary interest throughout his teaching career?

What is clear from the historical sources is that Rehbein’s reception in New Zealand was not as universally hostile as has been widely assumed up until this point. An unpleasant relationship with his immediate superior and a feeling of indebtedness to his sponsors may have served to turn the already earnest Rehbein further in on himself, yet he had undoubtedly encountered more dangerous hostility in his land of origin. Rehbein’s, soon to be further explored, fascination with the insights of the existentialists hints at an experience of dislocation. It is likely that the sense of dislocation Rehbein is reported to have experienced was not caused, but was merely exacerbated, by life in a foreign land.
Chapter Three - Kierkegaard

Acquiring the tools to address matters of ultimate concern

Rex’s papers can be loosely divided into those delivered before his 1954 PhD, and those delivered afterwards. According to such a schema the papers written by Rex before 1954 belong to the ‘acquisition’ phase of his career. Those delivered after, to the ‘application’ phase. Prior to 1954 Rex writes predominantly about the work of other prominent thinkers - judiciously reviewing their thought.369 Certainly Rex does not refrain from criticising the big names in this period, but modesty in the presentation of his own contrasting viewpoints is evident.

Following his elevation to Professorship in 1953, and the completion of his doctorate in 1954, Rex adopts a more authoritative tone. In his papers he speaks frequently in the first person, and rather than outlining the arguments of others as an end in itself, he often alludes to the arguments of others as stepping stones to his own thesis on any given matter.

369 An obvious exception to this loose division of Rex’s papers is present by those written within a year of his arrival in New Zealand. Publications in The Outlook (examined in chapter two) and the articles which appeared in the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.) Journal The Student (examined in chapter eight) bear closer resemblance to Rex’s later work in their authoritative tone.
The M.A. thesis Rex submitted in 1947 and the inaugural lecture delivered in 1949 are positioned close to the climax of Rex’s ‘acquisition’ phase. They are followed in the early 1950s by an intense period of interest in, and writing about, the thought of the French existentialist John-Paul Sartre. The insights Rex acquired from Luther, Bultmann, Kierkegaard and Sartre continue to fuel his thinking and writing throughout the ‘application’ period that follows the writing-up and publication of material related to Rex’s D.Theol. thesis.

The conflict between thought and existence is the subject of Rex’s Kierkegaardian pieces - his M.A. thesis and his inaugural lecture. Rex presents the view that the individual would rest secure in his individuality when existence had priority over thought; and that when thought took a masterly role only so much of each person’s individuality would remain as fitted into the classes under which thought would subsume it. Yet there is an important distinction to be made between Rex’s 1947 M.A. thesis and his 1949 inaugural lecture. Rex’s inaugural lecture details some historical outworkings of the priority of thought over existence in order to explain why such situations should be reversed. In contrast to this his M.A. thesis largely assumes this viewpoint, focussing in greater detail on the defences of the individual available to the intellectual.

Systematising Kierkegaard - in defence of the individual

Rex’s M.A. thesis attempts a systematisation of Kierkegaard’s ‘aesthetic’ and ‘ethical’ vindications of the individual in an effort to answer the question: “has the individual any intrinsic value of his own, or does he derive his worth from his membership in the ‘crowd’?” From the initial chapter it is clear that Rex favours the former Kierkegaardian view over the latter Hegelian. With references to martyrdom as the potential lot of true individuals, and allusions to the implications of crowd mentality in Nazi Germany, Rex...
indicates early in the thesis that he will find the path of the individual intrinsically closer to
the fulfilment of what it means to be human.

Rex made it clear that he would not in this thesis deal with the “respective merits
and defects of individualism political and economic”, nor would he “try to strike a balance
between the ‘claims’ of the individual and of society respectively”.\(^{375}\) These matters were
obviously burning issues for him and became the subject of his inaugural lecture which we
will examine below.

Central to Rex’s investigations is Kierkegaard’s examination of the consequences of
Hegel’s priority of whole over individual. Since Rex believes that the individual is “in no less
danger of being swallowed up in the ‘crowd’ than he was in Kierkegaard’s time”\(^{376}\), his thesis
represents an attempt to grapple with Kierkegaard’s thought in order to critically assess the
foundations of its derivative - existentialism. In its favour this ‘dernier cri’, Rex approvingly
notes, has even its critics admitting that it performs the “noteworthy function” of
“vindicating the individuality of the person against his submersion in the absolute”.\(^{377}\) The
definition of existentialism offered by Rex is rooted in the philosophy of Jaspers and
Heidegger, their opposition to objective idealism being based in Kierkegaardian terminology.
Rex writes:

the meaning attached to this term by Kierkegaard and the German philosophers is
[...] an almost perfect inversion of the English way of referring to ‘existence’ as
‘mere’ existence. ‘Existence’ is rather that which ‘stands out’ as ‘true’ existence in
contrast to ‘mere’ existence.

‘True’ existence, in this usage, is opposed to both a human life that does not rise
above the bare biological level and to the purely academic, abstract, or theoretical.
It is this latter opposition with which existentialism is primarily concerned.\(^{378}\)

For the readers of his thesis, Rex draws attention to Kierkegaard’s distinction
between thought driven by the personal interest of ‘inwardness’ or ‘subjectivity’ and the
disinterested ‘objectivity’ of Hegelianism. He describes Kierkegaard’s work as:

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374Rex, TIISKAW: p.6.
375Rex, TIISKAW: p.6.
376Rex, TIISKAW: p.6.
377Rex, TIISKAW: p.6.
378Rex, TIISKAW: p.1f.
a vigorous protest against the Hegelian departure from the classical Greek tradition resulting in a dangerous dichotomy of thought and life. In Greece, so Kierkegaard contended, philosophers had not only been 'thinkers', but they had also lived "the richest human life", compared with which the philosophers of his own time appeared as 'stunted crippled creatures', who produced works of art instead of being works of art in their existence. 379

Existentialism - biblical roots and contemporary relevance

In a bid to connect Kierkegaard's criticisms to current philosophical trends Rex lists the English philosopher R.G. Collingwood as concerned about the separation of life and thought. 380 In this way Kierkegaard's complaint that his age exhibited "the disgusting sight of men who are able to mediate ... the titanic forces of history, and are unable to tell a plain man what he has to do in life," is shown to have contemporary relevance. 381

When it comes to concerns about the separation of life and thought, Rex identifies the concerns of the existentialists. He is also careful to forcibly state their objection to Hegel's solution which he labels 'mediation' - resolving all contrasts into a harmonious totality. Citing Guido de Ruggiero's 1946 work, Existentialism, 382 he reports the agreement of Kierkegaard and the existentialists:

that thought can mediate opposites, but in the sphere of existence contraries are not eliminated, but retained in all their force. "In terrible tension" human

379Rex, TIIKAW: p.2f.
380Rex, TIIKAW: p.3.
382Guido de Ruggiero, Existentialism, trans. E.M. Cocks, edited and introduced by Rayner Heppenstall, (London: Secker and Werburg, 1946). This book was reviewed in The Australasian Journal of Philosophy shortly after Rex submitted his thesis. The article's author, A.M. Ritchie, paints a picture in his opening paragraph of Australia's philosophy reading public as largely ignorant of existentialist thought. No doubt his depiction was equally apt for the New Zealand situation. Ritchie notes: "As yet Australian has been almost unaffected by existentialist thought. In part this is due to geographic isolation, an isolation aggravated by the war, in part to the cultural inertia which results from insularity and is swaddled by political authoritarianism and a commercial and political censorship. To most Australians, John Wild's statement about Kierkegaard (Philosophical Review, September, 1940) that "it is, indeed, difficult to point to any single modern philosopher whose influence is at present being more widely felt", would still appear, in 1947, nonsensical. Indeed, even the name of Kierkegaard is little [sic] known, and since the same is true of Heidegger and Jaspers, with Marcel certainly less well known than Camus and Sartre, the interesting nature of this volume is obvious". Source: A.M. Ritchie, 'Critical Notice' in The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol.XXXV, Number 3, December 1947: pp.174-184. By way of contrast, it must be noted that Rex was by no means the first in New Zealand to wrestle with existentialism. A pertinent example of this is found in Dickie's student J.M. Bates who proceeded to Europe and studied under Brunner. His 1935 refresher course 'The Doctrine of Man in Brunner's Theology' shows thoughtful engagement with existentialist material. OA209, J.M. Bates, 'The Doctrine of Man in Brunner's Theology', New Zealand Presbyterian Collection.
consciousness "chooses not one or other of the contraries but both together in their contrariety, and maintains them in all their tension. Sin and salvation, death and life, are equally present in the process of redemption, and one term is nourished by the other". 383

Rex lays claim to a biblical basis for existentialism - something he was later to restate in his D. Theol. thesis on Pauline ethics. 384

This view of existence as a life of unresolved tensions has its roots in the Pauline tradition of the Christian religion. It was fully experienced by Luther who gave it its classical formulation in his dictum of the 'simul justus et peccator'. In Kierkegaard it had received a personal fervour which Mr. Guido do [sic] Ruggiero happily compares with the religious experience of Blaise Pascal. Depersonalised and emptied of its religious content this interpretation of existence has been made the basis of Heidegger's and Jasper's philosophy, and in this depersonalised and atheistic form it is now creating a philosophical fashion in post-war France and Italy. 385

This extract from Rex's M.A. thesis is of particular importance since it is one of the few places he explicitly makes a link between Christianity and existentialism. In many of Rex's other writings existentialism's kudos as a derivative of Christianity is assumed but not laid out as such.

Not only does Kierkegaard's 'vindication of the individual' serve as an indictment against Hegelian intellectualism, says Rex, but it was a protest "that existence is always as individuals and never as collective impersonal beings, which are the fruits of intellectual abstraction". 386 Against this background Rex proposes to deal with the question he believes "underlies the more specific discussions concerning the individual in the field of politics and economics". 387

The aesthetic argument

In favour of the view that the individual has intrinsic worth rather than simply that derived from membership of the 'crowd', Rex draws upon the two models of self-realisation presented in Kierkegaard's aesthetical writings. The first was the argument from uniqueness

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384See appendix two for a full discussion of Rex's D. Theol thesis.
385Rex, TISKAW: p.3f.
386Rex, TISKAW: p.4.
387Rex, TISKAW: p.6.
- the 'aesthetic vindication of the individual', and the second was the argument from moral responsibility - the 'ethical vindication of the individual'.

Rex begins with an introduction to the 'aesthetic' thesis, which in turn is subjected to an 'ethical' critique, before finally a synthesis is presented. If it were argued that Rex's examination of the Kierkegaardian material proceeded by way of a Hegelian framework - thesis, antithesis, synthesis - Rex might dispute such a claim on the basis that it is a systematisation rather than a synthesis which he offers. While he does present two different arguments - rather than hoping for a resolution of potentially conflicting viewpoints - he aims at retaining an unresolved critical tension between them.

In introducing the theme Rex clarifies that Kierkegaard's aesthetic argument is not concerned with the formal appreciation of beauty:

By the 'aesthetic element' Kierkegaard expresses rather the tendency towards 'self-enjoyment', which, failing to discover any other meaning in life, finds contentment in the cultivation of 'individuality' and a 'formed personality'. It stands for an attitude of life in which man 'lives, as it were, in the aesthetic objects and simultaneously experiences both them and himself'.

The champion of such an aesthetic attitude will invariably experience the "fettering claims of the group on the individual". Rex opts to preserve Kierkegaard's characteristic terminology - using the emblematic term 'crowd' when describing a group or number because he feels it serves to remind that Kierkegaard held "an entirely negative view of the group".

The aesthete formulates his argument in an apologia against the 'crowd' as it demands, in the form of the State, subordination of the individual to a 'super individual', or, as society, clamours for the procreation of the race, or again, as the great mass of mediocre men, betrays intolerance of the unfamiliar, the odd, and eccentric.

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388Rex notes that Kierkegaard favoured a third approach - 'the religious argument'. Not wishing to detract from the 'force' of the other arguments, Rex chooses not to explore this third argument in this research. See: Rex, *TIISKÅF*: p.7.
391Rex, *TIISKÅF*: p.4.
This acutely experienced limitation of the aesthetic individual by the group which surrounds him offers a natural starting point for assessing whether the individual has any intrinsic worth, or whether his worth is merely a derivative of membership of the larger group. In its case for the vindication of the individual, Rex reports that the aesthetic argument rests on three axioms. The first of these is that humans are unique, and in this uniqueness, are not the product of society and circumstances. The second axiom is that "man is, essentially, irresponsible"; and the third is that "man is an end and not a means".395

Kierkegaard considered that the first axiom was best expressed in the example of the genius, whose talents propel themselves towards self-realisation. The individual genius "owes nothing to circumstances and environment".394 Accordingly, the second axiom "is radically formulated in the concept of the demoniac personality".395 Don Juan and Faust are Kierkegaardian examples given of this type as it expresses itself respectively in the sensual and intellectual spheres.396 Rex extrapolates:

individuals charged with these energies will either break those with whom they come in contact or will be involved in conflict with their environment. As vehicles of elemental and unreflected energies, these individuals are essentially irresponsible.397

The case for the aesthete’s third axiom - that man is an end and not a means - involves a “bold egotism” which perceives “two main obstacles, the duties of the work-a-day world and binding human relationships”.398 These obstacles stand in the way of the “supreme right of the individual”, which is “the cultivation and enjoyment of his own personality”.399

And in protest against the busy man’s creed that ‘idleness is the root of all evil’, the aesthete declares that idleness is the ‘truly divine life’ and ‘the only true good’. Capacity for idleness, or intelligent use of one’s leisure, is made the very criterion of man’s humanity, for “every human being who lacks a sense of idleness proves that

394 Rex, TIISKAW: p.15.
395 Rex, TIISKAW: p.15.
397 Rex, TIISKAW: p.15f.
398 Rex, TIISKAW: p.16.
399 Rex, TIISKAW: p.16.
his consciousness has not yet been elevated to the level of the humane”. Not idleness, then, but boredom is the root of all evil.400

Participants in the everyday working world are correspondingly depicted by Kierkegaard as simultaneously industrious and uninspiring - their monotonous example serving only to reinforce the value of the aesthetic ideal.401 Rex proceeds to describe the practice of the aesthete as earnestly focussed on cultivating the category of the ‘interesting’;402 avoiding the responsibilities and duties of the everyday world;403 interested in women as a stimulus for reflection;404 and devoted to the ‘moment’. He cites Kierkegaard extensively in support of the claim that, for the aesthete, the moment is everything:

To rely on the mood of the moment, that is, on the temporary state of mind, is to
the aesthete the secret of freedom, for it frees him from the continuity of objective
as well as personal relationships which he dreads. For continuity “has always a
disturbing effect”. “The more the personality disappears in the twilight of the
mood so much the more is the individual in the moment, and this, again, is the
most adequate expression for the aesthetic existence: it is in the moment”.405

Mirroring Kierkegaard, Rex first outlines his aesthetic argument before subjecting it
to critique by the ethical argument. Rex makes it clear from the start that in his view neither

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401 Rex reports that Kierkegaard “scorns the busy men of affairs who ‘are prompt to meals and prompt to work’ and ridicules their extraordinary talent for transforming everything into a matter of business, ‘who fall in love, marry, listen to a joke, and admire a picture with the same industrious zeal with which they labour during business hours’: (Either/Or, Vol I: p.19f., p.237)”
402 According to Rex Kierkegaard’s individual will defeat boredom by cultivating the art of reflection, thus acquiring the category of the ‘interesting’ as the true alternative to boredom: “By way of reflection, the individual gives the interesting an astounding variety of shades. At one moment the aesthete will turn himself into an old man in order to imbibe in slow draughts through recollection what he has experienced, at another moment he is in the first blush of youth, inflamed with hope; now he enjoys in a manly way, now in a womanly; now he enjoys reflection upon his enjoyment, now reflection upon the enjoyment of others; now he enjoys abstinence from enjoyment, now he devotes himself to enjoyment. This cultivation of the art of reflection is no less strenuous work than the work of the busy man. Reflection demands ‘aesthetic seriousness’, and a
serenity of conduct which those who bungle at enjoyment a little, are ignorant of. (Either/Or, Vol II: p.155).” Rex, TILSKAW: p.17.
403 Rex notes: “the individual must keep out of the daily rut of duties in order to enjoy his own personality, so he must not enter any lasting human relationships. If he takes an interest in his fellow-men, then he must do so only because he ‘enjoys’ them as ‘stimuli’ to his own reflection”. Rex, TILSKAW: p.18.
404 According to Rex, woman is an inexhaustible fund of material for Kierkegaard’s aesthete. She offers an eternal abundance of observation, but the aesthete must not give himself if he is going to retain his prized individuality. From his position as an observer the aesthete absorbs the ‘moods’ and the ‘situation’ with great interest. “He [an aesthete] must not love a woman, he can only ‘enjoy’ her [...] Within [given] limits, woman is the chief interest of the aesthete. ‘The man who feels no impulse towards the study of woman may be what he will; one thing he certainly is not, he is no aestheteian’. (Either/Or, Vol I: p.357)”. Rex, TILSKAW: p.19f.
argument is complete in and of itself. Citing the Danish philosopher’s translator, Walter Lowrie, Rex states that even Kierkegaard “was never of the opinion that the ethical could stand alone”. Further, Kierkegaard’s ethical argument is described by Rex as ‘prosy’ and ‘dull’ and “lack[ing] the force and conviction of its aesthetical counterpart”.

The ethical argument

Rex believed the ‘prosy’ and ‘dull’ presentation of Kierkegaard’s ethical vindication to be a derivative of Kierkegaard’s naturally aesthetic disposition. When it came to the ethical argument Kierkegaard’s own lack of conviction was - perhaps unwittingly - conveyed in his writing. Despite its tendency towards the prosaic Rex considered the ethical argument valuable “both in its criticism of the aesthetical argument and in the main theme of its positive formulation”. In line with the former claim he discerns that Kierkegaard’s moralist criticism of the aesthetical argument proceeds on three bases:

- it reduces the individual to an assemblage of transient moods; it dissolves the identity of the self into mere relations; and it leaves the individual abandoned to thought. In the eyes of the moralist, the ‘essential aesthetic principle’, that is, “the moment is everything”, defeats its own end. It simply reduces the individual to ‘nothing’, a chain of shifting moods and colours without substance. Further, in pursuing his moods, the individual resolves himself into mere relations to others. To a fond shepherdess he holds out a languished hand, and instantly is masked in all possible bucolic sentimentality, and a reverend spiritual father he deceives with a brotherly kiss. In other words, his moods reduce the aesthetical individual into the very relationships which he refuses to take seriously. Finally, the aesthete’s moods keep ‘existence’ away, by the most subtle of all deceptions, by thinking. He leads an ‘imagination-existence’ that cannot win through to true existence.

The aesthetical individual, instead of living, spends himself in thought. For this state of the individual Kierkegaard has coined the name of ‘despair’ or ‘despair in thought’. The Kierkegaardian individual only comes to the ethical after first despairing of the aesthetical. This happens where the individual is conceived in terms of beauty, talent and health and it

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411 “From the ethical point of view, the aesthetical individual appears to him as a man whose thought has hurried on ahead, who has seen through the vanity of all things, but who has got no further. Occasionally he plunges into pleasure only to discover its vanity. So he is ‘constantly beyond himself’, that is, in despair”: Rex, *TIISKAW*: p.25f.
later becomes obvious that "though the conditions for enjoyment lay in the individual, they were not posited by him. The uniqueness which he claimed was only accidental to him". Thus it can be seen that when contingency of humanity's gifts is acknowledged the whole argument based on it in vindication of the individual breaks down - yet one could conceivably consider as beneficial the process by which an individual passes through the aesthetical stage and arrives at the ethical. Its emphasis on, and initiation of, the search for a fulfilment of the human condition remains a valiant contribution.

The breaking down of the aesthetical argument offers Rex the opportunity for the exposition of further existentialist principles. Although their sentiment is overtly Kierkegaardian, we shall observe below that the ethical argument represented a viewpoint Rex is willing to defend in his inaugural lecture and in his essays on the thought of Sartre. Rex concurs with Sartre regarding the importance of individual responsibility to the realisation of true humanity. This emphasis had its origin in the reaction of Kierkegaard's ethicist to the reality of the aesthetic life.

It is of such a life that the moralist has despaired and has instead built, "upon what essentially belongs to being", that is, on the freedom of choice by which [an] individual 'chooses himself' in responsibility to others. In other words, the ethical vindication of the individual is based on the acceptance of the 'either/or'.

Rex observes that for Kierkegaard a significant difference existed between the ethical and the aesthetical either/or. The aesthete also knows of choice "But his either/or is a non-disjunctive either/or, and as such it should be written as one word". The ethical either/or is, by contrast, disjunctive, as Rex explains:

[The ethical] is to Kierkegaard the real 'either/or', and this takes with him three different aspects. First, it refers to the choice between the aesthetical and the ethical; second, it stands for the choice between good and evil; and, thirdly, it denotes the choice whereby one chooses to will. It is the latter kind of choice which is the fruit of ethical despair; and in this interpretation, the acceptance of

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413Rex, TILSKAW: p.27f.
414Rex, TILSKAW: p.28. Rex offers a reference to Kierkegaard at this point (Either/Or, vol II: pp.141, 135) and continues "As he once sarcastically put it, the aesthete's whole life can be summed up in 'either/or': "Do it / or don't do it - you will regret both". (Either/Or, vol II: p. 134.)"
choice together with the recognition of 'man's duty to reveal himself' constitute the essence of the ethical vindication of the individual.415

Considered choice is, then, the way in which the individual differentiates themselves from the group. Rex uses a Kierkegaardian example of ethics to emphasise this point - ethics is an individual activity: "it does not take humanity in a lump, any more than the police arrests humanity at large".416 Thus aside from its depiction of the individual as a murky shadow of a crisp abstract theory, he sees dangers when collectivism leads to an evasion of responsibility. Jung's talk of 'collective guilt', for instance, "leads headlong into collectivism where the distinctions between the individual and the 'crowd' are fatally blurred."417 And when applied to a whole society "is only a short-hand way of saying that all its individual members are guilty; otherwise, such a statement is purely nonsensical and dangerous".418 Philosophically, asserts Rex, choice is the point at which the individual crystallises as individual over against the 'crowd'.

For to 'choose to will' is identical with the recognition of one's responsibility; and responsibility, in its turn, is the very matrix of the individual, because responsibility can be significantly attached to the individual only.419

As alluded to above, 'existing' as an individual - "that which is divinely understood is the highest of all things" - might "require the life of the artist".420 Kierkegaard warns that dangers confront the true individual, who the crowd may perceive as threat to 'mass', 'race' or 'public', and Rex agrees:

These words come as a timely warning to a generation that has not only recently witnessed one of the most fearful exhibitions of the tyranny of the 'race' and the 'mass' over the individual, but to whom the individual and his relationship to the group is still a problem.421

415 Rex, TIIKAIW: p.28f. Rex makes the point that the ethical argument is purely philosophical when it comes to pressing home the significance of choice for the individual. He adds that emphasis on 'man's duty to reveal himself' introduces psychological considerations as well.
417 Rex, TIIKAIW: p.29.
419 Rex, TIIKAIW: p.29.
421 Rex, TIIKAIW: p.6.
Such strong convictions about the dangers of collectivism illustrate why Rex chooses to devote his thesis to the explication and systematisation of Kierkegaard’s vindications of the individual. He searches, as it were, for an intellectual framework to back up his existential commitments. Kierkegaard’s own criticisms of Hegel provide for Rex the basis of this framework, and suggest the platform from which he can espouse his own existentialist commitments:

Kierkegaard’s criticism was that Hegel applied the categories of historical study to the sphere of existence. History, however, is, in contrast to existence, thought. It is a mental construction from documents referring to past events and actions. History is, then, secondly, of the past, while existence is always of the present. I can neither exist in the past nor in the future but by present memory and anticipation. This implies, thirdly, that history is concerned with what is dead, and existence, with what is alive. History and existence are, then, diametrically opposed to one another, and to transfer the categories of the one into the other cannot but work havoc.422

For Rex, “existence is always of individuals; and the whole can be said to exist only in a derivative sense, that is to say, it exists by way of individuals”.423 In fact abstract thought “stands convicted as inimical to the individual”.424 It is against a background of the acceptance and amplification of Kierkegaard’s criticism of collectivism and its dangers that Rex constructs a more systematic understanding of Kierkegaard’s vindications.425

Critical to his reading of Kierkegaard, Hegel and others, is Rex’s belief that “acceptance of responsibility is the true matrix of the individual”.426 In concluding his thesis with these words Rex positions himself alongside Kierkegaard’s moralist who, realising that the way of the aesthete is dependent on external stimuli, “has instead built, ‘upon what essentially belongs to being’, that is, on the freedom of choice by which [an] individual ‘chooses himself’ in responsibility to others”.427

422Rex, TISISKAIF: p.43f.
423Rex, TISISKAIF: p.44.
424Rex, TISISKAIF: p.44.
425A chapter each was devoted to outlining the ‘aesthetical’ and ‘ethical’ vindications, before the concluding chapter attempted a critical evaluation of both.
426Rex, TISISKAIF: p.53. See also p.29.
427Rex, TISISKAIF: p.27f.
Creative tension

Rex's wish to keep the 'aesthetical' and 'ethical' vindications in tension stems from the dislike of Hegelian abstraction he shares with Kierkegaard, whose work, as previously stated, he views as "a vigorous protest against the Hegelian departure from the classical Greek tradition resulting in a dangerous dichotomy of thought and life". As indicated above, in his desire to see thought and life held in tension Rex solicits support also from Scripture. His whole argument can thus be seen to be devoted to opposition of the Hegelian concept of 'mediation' which "resolves all contrasts into a harmonious totality".

The 'aesthetical' argument, however, has limitations as we have noted above. Zarathustra's counsel, 'Become what thou art', "demands that the dispositions in the individual [...] are permitted complete development in order that he may become 'what he immediately is', a Don Juan, a Faust, or a burglar". For, "evil never exercises a more seductive influence than when it makes its appearance in an aesthetic guise". Therefore the 'aesthetical' argument needs to be linked to the 'ethical' with its acceptance of responsibility to others if it is to offer true human development, that is, as an individual. Rex asserts the value of a moderated aestheticism in the following manner:

By submitting to the aesthetical 'pathos of limitation', and cultivating the 'virtues' of unity, poise and aesthetical seriousness together with their internal and external conditions, reflection and 'idleness', the individual will not only increase in stature, but also in happiness, and, no doubt, society too will benefit from this. For, who can tell whether wars and crimes and general upsets have not their root in boredom as much as in 'wickedness'.

For Rex the aesthetic and ethical are to be held in tension. The aesthete who 'lives in the moment', without reference to the ethical, suffers from 'despair in thought'. The ethicist who lives without reference to the aesthetic is accused by Rex of following the general European tradition, "which, ever since Plato, had put a one-sided emphasis on the moral in the development of the individual, declaring that the moral is the beautiful" and this "has continually proved detrimental to the individual resulting in his deterioration". Rex

420Rex, TISKAW: p.2.
421Rex, TISKAW: p.3.
422Rex, TISKAW: p.49.
424Rex, TISKAW: p.52.
insists that this “preoccupation with the moral training of the individual [...] heeded too little the aesthetical contention that ‘boredom is the root of all evil’.” As Rex points out, there were limitations in each of the arguments:

Of the ethical vindication of the individual it must, then, be said that it is admirable in its fundamental conception, but that it hopelessly breaks down in its detailed elaboration. Of the aesthetical argument we shall have to say the opposite. It contains valuable material in its details but it is weak in its general conception.

According to Rex the aesthete when living in the moment becomes a series of moods, moments and relationships - precisely those things he is hoping to avoid. The ethical argument shows weakness when one begins to consider the exact nature of the good and the beautiful, failing to take man’s sinful nature into account. With this in mind Kierkegaard himself moved on to the religious argument with its more absolute concept of the Divine law.

Rex’ M.A. thesis is interesting for its attempt to order the thought of an ‘existentialist’ thinker. It is unlikely that the irony of this effort was lost on Rex. Certainly he strives to maintain critical tensions in the work and, as we shall see further when we examine Rex’s attitude towards variety contained within the biblical witness, is wary of attempts to harmonise differing viewpoints. While Rex exhibits the ability to critically analyse in his work, his strength lies in his ability to synthesise thought from a wide range of sources. For this reason, the value of Rex’s contribution is not to be found in the detailed analysis or literal correctness of his understanding of significant thinkers, so much as in his ability to gather strands of thought together and present a convincing argument. It will then come as no surprise that Rex’s inaugural lecture, though relying heavily on his understanding of Kierkegaard, draws on a variety of sources to address existential as well as political concerns.

**Defending the individual in public - inaugural lecture**

Rex’s inaugural lecture, delivered two years after the submission of his M.A. thesis, builds upon its insights. Although he maintains an interest in presenting a working model which holds the ethical and aesthetical arguments in tension, less is made of the

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435 See chapter six.
shortcomings of Kierkegaard's vindications of the individual. Rather, Rex focuses on generating a stronger, more historically grounded, case for the necessity of the individual's vindication. This case is based on an assessment of ideologies present in Rex's day that were usually described as 'Eastern' and 'Western'.

Rex's inaugural lecture was delivered at the Theological Hall, Knox College, Dunedin in March 1949. It was published in the literary journal *Landfall* the following June. The paper itself begins with a survey of the 'current situation'. Rex argues that ideologies associated with the terminology 'East' and 'West' are more accurately described - and with less potential for confusion - using the terms 'individualism' and 'collectivism'. His descriptions of the two terms indicate that he desires neither to offer caricatures nor entertain discussion about the extreme expressions of these ideals. For Rex, the distinction between individualism and collectivism, at its most basic level, involves a difference in attitude:

Individualism is primarily concerned with the empirical single person, collectivism has an ideal single person in view which is produced by a certain kind of society. For it, the empirical single person counts only in as much as he is able to assimilate this ideal, and to achieve this, the collectivist insists, the individual must be an integrated part of the collective.

Basic to Rex's address is his conviction that the conflict between collectivism and individualism which he describes "forms just another instance of what is one of the major themes of European civilisation, that is, the conflict between Thought and Existence".

The dangers of collectivism

In order to distinguish between 'Existence' and 'Thought' Rex describes the conscious individual ('both unique and concrete') who is compared to the fruits of his intellectual labours (tending towards abstraction). The individual's ability to think abstractly

437 Rex chooses the obvious example of New Zealand - "geographically in the East, but ideologically in the West". Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.111.
438 For example, Rex declared as an 'over-simplification' Martin Buber's declaration that "individualism sees man only in relation to himself, but collectivism does not see man at all, it sees only society", nor was Rex willing to support the more extreme spectre of laissez faire individualism. Cf. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947) p.200, cited in Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.111f.
439 Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.112.
440 Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.112.
involves “turning the world of living beings into objects of thought”, disregarding “their unique singularity” in order to class them “according to universal concepts”. Rex proffers an illustration which considers the viewpoints of a lion-tamer and a zoologist. When faced with an individual lion each views the lion from a different perspective. One is interested in its individuality; the other views it as a specimen of its class. “The one views the lion from the point of view of existence, the other from the point of view of thought”. For Rex, however, both stances are legitimate and necessary:

Thought without existential reference is empty if not impossible; existential experience without thought is vague and confused. We naturally move from existence to thought and back to existence. That is, from living we turn to thinking about our life, and what clarity we have gained in our thought we put back into our life.

Rex identifies the conflict in European civilisation as being between ‘those who do’ and ‘those who do not’ recognise this ‘natural flow’ “from existence to thought and back to existence”. “Those who do not’ commit the cardinal sin of “one-sidedly” fixing their “attention on the movement from thought to existence”. For Rex thought falls into the category of servant when it helps the individual to order the world which surrounds them and becomes a master when it impresses its own forms upon the world, retaining individuality in so far as it fits into classes of thought:

In the former case, the individual rests secure in his individuality; in the latter only so much remains of his individuality as fits into the classes under which thought subsumes it. And once thought has been given first place, the next step is complete confusion between thought and existence.

Rex suggests that abstraction annihilates human nature in its concrete individuality. Although Hegel considered himself the arch-enemy of abstraction, Rex finds Hegel’s thought guilty in precisely this respect:

[...] it was Hegel’s own mind that began to dictate to existence and to cast it into a rigid intellectual framework, chiselling the individual’s individuality into conformity

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with the general thought pattern. What was beyond chiselling was thrown overboard.\textsuperscript{445}

Leibniz’s vision of “the universe as a world of distinct individual spiritual entities\textsuperscript{446} is proposed by Rex as an illustration that “not all cases of thought getting the better of existence produce a collectivist view as in the Hegelian system”.\textsuperscript{447} Rex’s choice to focus chiefly on Hegel’s thought in his article can be explained by his conviction that the “modern tyranny of thought over existence has its philosophical roots not in Leibniz, but in Hegel, for Hegel is through Marx the grandfather of modern collectivism”.\textsuperscript{448} In Rex’s view Hegel made the mistake of imposing his own abstract reasoning onto the historical process rather than eliciting its rationality from empirical data.\textsuperscript{449} Accordingly the “result was as vicious an abstraction as the one which Hegel had set out to supplant”.\textsuperscript{450} Marx’s economic interpretation of Hegel’s “dialectical (logical) interpretation of history”\textsuperscript{451} suffers in Rex’s view since “it is not the individual, as he really is in his individuality, that has a place in the Marxian scheme of things”.\textsuperscript{452}

A difference of emphasis, either on thought or on existence, is then at the root of the present conflict between collectivism and individualism. Collectivism is under the spell of thought and sees accordingly in the individual primarily a member of a class (like the logician). He views him as a ‘Jew,’ a ‘capitalist,’ a ‘worker,’ etc. In contrast to this, individualism tries to bear in mind that existence is of individuals, and therefore views the individual primarily as ‘John Smith,’ ‘Tom Jones,’ etc. Collectivism is guilty of confusing thought and existence; individualism tries to keep thought subservient to existence.\textsuperscript{453}

Rex is eager to make a keen distinction between the two attitudes since he considers that they had “serious implications as regards the treatment of the individual”.\textsuperscript{454} He asserts that, at bottom, collectivism’s tendency towards abstraction carries the potential to

\textsuperscript{445}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.113f.
\textsuperscript{449}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.115: “He had an abstract skeleton of history complete and all he needed was to clothe it with names and dates. And here, his selection was completely arbitrary. Only the facts that fitted into the celebrated pattern of ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’ were considered. The rest was dismissed as ‘a superfluous mass, which, when faithfully collected, only oppresses and obscures the objects worthy of history’.”
\textsuperscript{450}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.115.
\textsuperscript{452}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.115.
\textsuperscript{453}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.115.
\textsuperscript{454}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.115.
undermine our sense of individual justice, the result of which sees individuals prejudged according to the class to which they belong. For an example Rex chooses a description of Heinrich Himmler’s instructions to his S.S. generals regarding the extermination of the Jewish race to illustrate that “a member of a class has little hope of mercy on account of his individual circumstances once his class stands condemned”.\textsuperscript{455} Rex’s judicious choice of an example from Nazi Germany serves to underscore his seriousness at this point.

**Criterion for a useful defence of the individual**

While the first half of Rex’s inaugural lecture illustrates the inadequacies and dangers of Hegelian philosophy and its derivatives, the second offers a more constructive analysis of a series of available defences of the individual in relation to society. That said, Rex’s assessment of the first defence is less constructive than the rest. His summary dismissal of contract theory as “a mere historical fiction” - given that man is born into commitments to the clan, family, tribe or nation\textsuperscript{456} - appears willfully simplistic since in his penultimate paragraph he presupposes a negotiable societal contract.\textsuperscript{457}

Working methodically from what he evaluates as the least convincing arguments through to his own synthesis, Rex offers next an assessment of the ‘wildly’ differing manifestations of ‘natural law’. The sheer range of available natural law theories is sufficient evidence for him to claim that, while it has been of historical importance, it was no longer an adequate defence of individual rights in a society that recognised it as a formal concept

\textsuperscript{455}“This abstract approach to the individual is well illustrated by Heinrich Himmler’s instructions to his S.S. generals at Posen in October, 1942, dealing with the extermination of the Jewish race. On that occasion he warned his men not to bother him with the one exceptional decent Jew. All that counts is the elimination of a whole class. For, by definition, the class of Jews is not included in the class of decent beings. Once this is granted, there is no room for exceptions. This single example (it does not matter that it comes from a collectivism of a different shade, the essential features are the same) proves sufficiently that what Luther said to Zwingli, the individualist must say to the collectivist: ‘yours is a different spirit from ours’.” Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.116.

\textsuperscript{456}Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.117.

\textsuperscript{457}“And it is possible that the public standards of value run counter to the convictions of a greater or lesser number of individuals who happen to be in the minority. In that case, the individual, living in a democracy, can either try to alter the generally accepted standards of value by constitutional means, or exchange his present community for another by way of emigration.” Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.123.
without content: “reason in itself does not delineate any distinct rights which the individual may justly claim.” 458

Rex articulates the difficulties encountered when Bentham and Mill’s utilitarian arguments strike a conflict of interests. He finds that their instruction to pursue one’s own interests without making a nuisance of oneself falls flat in light of the question: “who determines what is a nuisance?” For Rex this conundrum is solved to a certain extent with the suggestion that ‘higher pleasures’ have priority, but as he legitimately asks; again, who is to determine which pursuits are higher than others? 459

Following Rex’s discussion of the ‘rights’ approach to defending individuality is a fresh sketch of Kierkegaard’s ‘aesthetic argument’, in this instance referred to as ‘the romantic argument’. The key points of this thesis are outlined with the additional rider that: “This thesis, rightly understood, reminds us that all ‘rights’ which the State can grant are in the end illusory as long as the individual, when face to face with himself, knows nothing better to do than to yawn”. 460 Here Rex argues that ‘rights’ are a waste of time if society does not produce conditions conducive to the development of individuals who know what to do with them, since ‘free speech’ and ‘private property’ are not inherently good in themselves.

Developing Kierkegaard - holding the romantic and the moralist in tension

To supplement his argument, Rex draws on a number of insights from his M.A. thesis. “Boredom, not idleness, is the root of all evil” the audience is told. 461 In support of the view that the romantic reacts also against a society which promotes the mask of duty to cover all inherent desire for self-gratification Rex offers one of his own aphorisms, plucked from his M.A. thesis. “The romantic protests against a society which compels the individual to become the thief of a good that he has a perfect right to possess: his own self”. 462 Yet, ultimately for Rex the romantic argument has obvious shortcomings. Since it only concerned itself with the exceptional individual, Rex, like Kierkegaard, judges it

459 Rex’s discussion of utilitarian approaches is to be found on pp.118f. of ‘In Defence of the Individual’.
460 Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’: p.120.
unsatisfactory. Thus, as in his M.A. Thesis, Rex prepares to introduce a synthesis, the first step towards which is made with an explanation of Kierkegaard's moral defence of the individual:

[Kierkegaard's] choice of this sphere rested on the right assumption that individuals do not differ as widely in their capacity to distinguish between good and evil as they do in their intellectual and artistic equipment.\(^{463}\)

In his inaugural lecture, Rex's discussion of Kierkegaard's moral argument is brief and to the point, declaring that "in the experience of moral choice the individual watches, so to speak, his own birth as individual" and all moral responsibility "rests ultimately on the shoulders of the individual".\(^{464}\) For Rex, even a group only makes a moral choice in a derivative sense, as it comes either through a leader or through the vote.

**Political implications**

What follows Rex's emphatic agreement with Kierkegaard's insistence that "the individual crystallizes into full individuality only by accepting his moral responsibility"\(^{465}\) is an important discussion presenting socialism as the society which tries to secure for the individual the means for his full self-development. In this context Rex stresses again that liberty means little if the conditions for its realisation are not present:

For socialism proceeds on the obviously right assumption that political, civil, and personal liberties remain largely academic as long as the wealth of a nation is not justly distributed among its individual members.\(^{466}\)

Where socialism was compared with 'eastern collectivism', Rex insists that "socialism (at least in its British forms) has not fallen under the spell of abstract thought".\(^{467}\) This is where theory and practice coincide, and Rex is able to demonstrate the importance of well-formed theory for the health of the individual and society. Because this theory is designed to

\(^{463}\)Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.121. Rex adds: "Plato was mistaken when he coupled moral awareness with intelligence. Cicero was right when he claimed all men were equally capable of discriminating between right and wrong".

\(^{464}\)Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.121.

\(^{465}\)Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.121.

\(^{466}\)Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.122.

\(^{467}\)Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.122.
benefit the individual it serves as a practical example of the implementation of Rex's conviction that thought must act as a servant to existence.

Socialism includes 'economic freedom' in its 'plan' in order to set free an ever increasing number of individuals to pool their resources intelligently as fully responsible moral units; collectivism, on the other hand, wants the individual unit obediently to click into the uniform pattern.468

Aware of a potential weakness in his own position, Rex pointed out that there are hazards inherent in Socialism's insistence on 'planning'. It runs the risk of falling prey to the dangers he had espoused of collectivism. Anticipating this criticism, Rex made it clear that individuals within society needed to participate responsibly. Active participation would thus ensure that the 'plan' devised for the development of the individual within socialist society did not turn into a pattern "according to which the individual is cast into relief".469 A fully participatory democracy is Rex's perfect tonic for such a situation. The hazard is avoided where society as a whole values, and is concerned to preserve, individual rights and is able to impress upon governments "that their tenure of office depends upon respecting them".470 For Rex, the final responsibility of citizens for their own governance "impresses upon us only the more emphatically the truth that moral responsibility rests ultimately on the individual".471

The insight Rex shares after stressing the importance of individual accountability to corporate responsibility, accurately described the challenges that would continue to face the West long after his own lifetime. Arguably these matters have since been brought into even clearer relief in a New Zealand which has embraced a laissez-faire economic model. Rex's words carry a prophetic ring even today:

Up to the present time, the defence of the individual took the form of establishing his 'rights' in a slow historical process. But once these rights are effectively established the individual is prone to become a danger to himself. That danger becomes acute when the majority of individuals by their selfishness reduce the nation to a majority of individualists who keep one another at arm's length,

bargaining hard over claims and counter-claims. An individualist society is doomed. It will fall prey to collectivism either from within or from without.472

Rex is concerned to convince his audience as individuals to act in what he regards as their own best interests. The socialist understanding of society provided a model with both Christian and existentialist concerns at its core. The understanding of socialism which Rex presents is concerned that every citizen has the opportunity to maximise his possibilities - even the very least.

Rex’s understanding of a society that presented equal opportunity for all of its individual members is dependent for its success on the recognition by its citizens of the importance of their individual rights. They must individually accept responsibility for maintaining these rights in order to preserve a situation benefiting the greater good. Thus, says Rex, “[t]here comes a day when it is more important to stress the duties of the individual than his rights, in order to save from destruction that concrete individuality which his rights were meant to establish.”473 For Rex, rights and duties are inextricably linked:

[The] correlation of rights and duties reminds us [...] that the individual can prosper only in a mutual give and take of moral relations which bind all individuals together in the recognition that everyone has an equal right to pursue his happiness in his own way.474

Rex remains aware that this point of view might appear to lead to a utilitarian understanding, but identifies utilitarianism’s analysis of human nature, which discovered in it nothing but the desire for happiness as an end in itself, as a crucial difference. Such a position is anathema to Rex who does not wish to base a defence of the individual on this analysis, preferring instead to side with Kierkegaard who believed that happiness could never be more than a by-product of our moral conduct.475

**Personal significance**

A pragmatism underlying Rex’s idealistic strategies is again exposed at the close of his inaugural lecture. An affirmation of his own journey may be uncovered in his advice to

472Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.121.
474Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.123.
475Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual': p.123.
those “greater or lesser number of individuals who happen to be in the minority” in terms of their “standards of value” derived from intellectual beliefs and religious faith. To those individuals who find themselves at odds with the prevailing viewpoint, Rex advocates:

the individual, living in a democracy, can either try to alter the generally accepted standards of value by constitutional means, or exchange his present community for another by way of emigration.476

The Confessing Church, of which Rex had been a member, had attempted through the normal procedures available in a democracy to elicit change in the community of which it was a part. With the recognition that this battle was not to be won through democratic means in a fascist state many members, including Rex, left Germany for personal and / or, ideological reasons.

Being offered the opportunity to deliver this address was an affirmation of Rex’s acceptability as a member of the teaching staff of the Theological Hall. While it might reasonably be suggested that Professor Dickie’s cool response to Rex in 1940 resulted in part from professional jealousies or bitterness at circumstances that promoted Rex’s academic advancement over Dickie’s more qualified peers,477 it was clear that Dickie’s explicitly negative attitude towards Germans was not out of step with the view of many in the broader populace. The invitation to give an inaugural lecture - a high academic honour - was an affirmation that by 1949 attitudes towards him had changed. Certainly such occasions were never viewed as opportunities to invite controversial or ill-qualified speakers.

Given the formal nature of the honour bestowed upon Rex at this point in his teaching career,478 it is the noteworthy that he chose this occasion to affirm - albeit obliquely - a significant aspect of his own journey. By presenting emigration as a legitimate option for the individual out of step with society Rex was, on another level, affirming the moral justification for his own flight from Germany, as well as his consequent integration into a more suitable society - New Zealand. On such an auspicious occasion avoidance of any

477The tensions that existed between Rex and Dickie are examined in chapter two.
478Rex was thirty-six years of age and held neither a doctorate nor a professorship. His selection as the candidate for an inaugural lecture must be viewed as a credit to the personal esteem in which he was held by his colleagues and the Theological Hall Committee.
reference to potentially inflammatory discussion may have appeared the more prudent course, but, in a manner, the public acceptance of the olive branch was an astute response.479

The inaugural lecture was an important step in the process of acceptance and affirmation of Rex and his role in the wider church. In 1947 Rex had finally been made tutor at Knox Theological Hall on a permanent basis. Previously he had only held the role in a temporary capacity.480 In 1948 he was admitted to full membership of the Senatus.481 The inaugural lecture followed in 1949. In 1950 Rex was permitted to make substantial changes to the teaching curriculum (for example - a series of lectures dealing with literature). Three years after that a professorial chair was created for his benefit.

Concluding remarks - the state as servant of the individual

The conclusion to Rex’s inaugural lecture presupposes acceptance of the first half of the paper - that individuals flourish in an individualist, rather than collectivist, environment. The first of Rex’s three concluding points is “that the individual crystallizes into individuality most effectively in the moral sphere”.482 The moral aspect is depicted as definitive of humanity. For Rex the individual is “the unit in the moral universe in whom ultimately all

479 Rex’s inaugural lecture was not reported in the Dunedin newspaper – *The Otago Daily Times*. Any assessment of public response to the lecture must be judged by the lack of protest (there were no letters to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times*) and the subsequent demand for its publication in the literary journal *Landfall*. See H.H. Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’ in *Landfall* 10, June 1949: pp.111-123.

480 The relevant records of the General Assembly’s proceedings confirm the record of Rex’s career development as it is described in the Rexes’ own file: “At the General Assembly of 39 at Christchurch H. was received into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church, his ordination in Germany being recognised. H. Was appointed temporary assistant [sic] lecturer in church history and other subjects for three years (minimum stipend). After the lapse of three years the appointment was renewed for another three years under the same conditions. In 1945 at the Assembly at Invercargill it was renewed for two years only (Elliffe and Heron!). In 1947, however, at the Assembly at Christchurch, H. was appointed for life ‘tutor’ (£100 above the minimum stipend plus house allowance of £200)”. RA003, ‘Lifeline’. Cf. *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, held in Auckland, November 1942 (printed in Dunedin, N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1942) p.210; *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, held in Invercargill, October-November 1945 (printed in Dunedin N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co. Ltd., 1945) p.121; *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, held in Christchurch, October-November 1947 (printed in Dunedin N.Z.: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co. Ltd., 1947) p.157.


responsibility rests". 483 Rex’s second conclusion is aimed at creating desirable societal conditions for the implementation and development of his first conclusion:

To fulfil this moral function, the individual must have freedom to exercise his moral responsibility. In other words, he must not be reduced to the position of a pawn or automaton pushed about by a leader or a party. 484

As we have seen, Rex envisages this situation eventuating through models of socialism similar to those observable in Britain in the late 1940s. Rex prefers socialism to communism since, most crucially, he believes the former to be free from “the spell of abstract thought”. 485 The concern to be free from such patterns as might be imposed on the individual by abstract thought also underlies his final conclusion:

What the individual’s freedom actually consists in cannot be demonstrated by pure reasoning. It is only in the course of history that the content of this freedom will be worked out. 486

These concluding comments reiterate Rex’s conviction of the priority of existence over thought. He warns again of the danger to humanity that results from submission of the individual to absolute (Hegelian) answers. His final words also serve to remind an audience that the reasoned abstract argument presented is neither Rex’s, nor any, last word on the situation. It is fitting that he should finish with this warning as it points toward the existentialist solution he would soon develop in his papers on Sartre. Essentially, Kierkegaard’s thought represents to Rex a working model of the correct approach to theology. This sentiment found succinct expression in his masters’ thesis at the point in which he considered the motives of Kierkegaard and his provocateur.

Hegel was not ‘against’ the individual; on the contrary, his concern was with the individual. So far, Kierkegaard, and many a modern critic, do Hegel injustice when they charge him with neglecting the individual for the ‘universal’. The true point of difference is as to the source from which the individual derives his value. Kierkegaard and Hegel do not even disagree as to the end of the individual: it is self-realization, (though not in the technical sense of moral theory), but concerning the means to this end they are poles apart. 487

Chapter Four - Sartre, Climax of Acquisition

Introduction

Rex was one of very few equipped, at the time when it was becoming the hot topic in European intellectual circles, to mediate for a New Zealand audience the thrust of existentialism. This was for three good reasons. Firstly, he could read the prominent thinkers in their original language; secondly he had, through his academic background and recent thesis on Kierkegaard, the necessary critical tools for a convincing evaluation; and finally, Rex had a passion for challenging the determinism he identified as the status quo academic position. While the first two grounds are by no means incidental, it is the third which is most interesting. By promoting existentialism at Knox Theological Hall Rex was facilitating possible cultural revolution. Having witnessed significant cultural upheaval in Europe, Rex was aware of thought's power to influence the fundamental direction of the individuals who make up a nation. Rex appears to have imagined that releasing Sartre's ideas would spark positive change in his students and the communities in which they would work. It is unlikely, however, that the majority of students entering Knox Theological Hall would have imagined that a cultural shift was necessary.

In the first instance Rex's view of existentialism is shaped through his reading of Bultmann, following that by Heidegger and then by Kierkegaard. Sartre, however, poses for
Rex “in the most forceful manner the question of what it means to be a human being”.

His appreciation and criticism of Sartre is informed by his own previous reading in philosophy and by other critics of Sartre, especially Marcel. Rex also draws upon material on psychology and temperament which feeds into his view of existentialism.

It is important to appreciate Rex’s understanding of Sartre not only because Rex's D. Theol. thesis relies on Sartrean analysis, but also because his adoption and adaptation of Sartrean themes underpins his later ‘situational’ writings. In fact, a Sartrean anthropology will be seen to underlie most of his subsequent work including his public addresses in the late 1950s and early 60s.

This chapter will examine Rex’s stance towards the work of Sartre through an examination of his early work on Sartre - specifically the two journal articles he published and two radio addresses he delivered, as well as relevant notes, drafts and letters.

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489 It is not unusual to find annotations in the margins of his books such as: “Fichte”, “contrast Buber”, “Voltaire!” or “cp. Kant”. His many hand-written notes on existentialist novels contain frequent allusions to philosophers. See especially RA113.
491 Rex's notes suggest that he did not view temperament theory and existentialism as mutually exclusive concepts. In fact, it appears that he read the two in parallel.
492 These talks will be analysed in later chapters. Of particular relevance in this regard are his addresses on alcoholism and racism, as well as his lectures on eschatology.
494 The scripts of both of these addresses are found in archive RA113. No recorded copy of the addresses exists at the Radio New Zealand Sound Archives. Source: Personal correspondence from Bruce Russell, Chief Sound Archivist, 17 October 2000. The extant script of Rex's first radio address on Sartre is entitled ‘Existentialism (4YA)’. The broadcast was in fact delivered on station 4YC on 2 May 1951. The heading was probably prepared for submission of the same talk for broadcast on 4YA. A letter thanking Rex for his lecture on 4YC and informing Rex that the talk had not been selected for further broadcast on 4YA is found in archive RA113. This first address will hereafter be shortened to 'Existentialism'. The second Radio address entitled 'An Introduction to Existentialism on the Basis of J-P. Sartre's Tetralogy 'Roads to Freedom'' (hereafter: 'An Introduction') was delivered on 6 July 1951 as the second in a series of broadcasts under the general title *Six Modern Creeds*. Rex's address was singled out and profiled in an article entitled 'Six Creeds' in *N.Z. Listener*, 22 June 1951.
495 Archival evidence suggests Rex's second radio address, 'An Introduction to Existentialism on the Basis of J-P. Sartre's Tetralogy 'Roads to Freedom'' was a revision of an earlier piece bearing the same name. Indeed, the article 'Six Creeds' in *N.Z. Listener* June 22, 1951 concludes: “The talks were originally given as lectures to Adult Education Classes in Otago, and the broadcasts consist in the main of condensations (from half an hour
Four scripts - four perspectives

In 1950 and 1951 Rex produced four items primarily devoted to Sartre's thought. Over this short period Rex's focus can be seen to shift from the general to the particular, and back again - as he himself wrestles with the new material. In the first of these pieces Rex offers a broad introduction to existentialism before concentrating more directly on Sartre. Thus, 'Concerning Sartre' begins with a wide focus, seeing a unity in reaction against Hegelian logic and metaphysics as the defining characteristic of existentialism.

In May 1951 'Existentialism', the second of Rex's four pieces on Sartre, claims that general agreement among existentialists is based on the acknowledgment of the irreducible barrier between our conceptualised picture of the world (including ourselves) and the actual world (also including ourselves). This view is modified for his July radio address based on Sartre's tetralogy 'Roads to Freedom', wherein Rex offers the following definition:

>The term Existentialism carries a clear and distinct meaning when it is confined to a group of philosophers who - notwithstanding their differences - have this in common that they define the relation of existence and essence as summed up in Sartre's thesis, "existence comes before essence".  

By September 1951, in his Landfall article, 'Existentialist Freedom', Rex deals not with existentialism generally but focuses on Sartre in particular - whose main contribution to European thought he describes as "the uncompromising assertion that man is free". He then positions Sartre's existentialism within a broader debate over free-will and determinism, using the history of ideas as a framework. While an examination of scripts and drafts reveals to twenty minutes) of the original lectures. They will be heard later from other centres." This earlier draft, also found in RA113, will be hereafter referred to as 'Adult Education'.

Rex, 'An Introduction': p.1. Sartre's view that "existence comes before essence" is frequently quoted but seldom sourced. He has said: "Existentialism maintains that in man, and in man alone, existence preceded essence". He elaborated: "This simply means that man first is, and only subsequently is this or that. In a word, man must create his own essence: it is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually defines himself. And the definition always remains open ended: we cannot say what this man is before he dies, or what mankind is before it has disappeared". From 'A propos de l'existentialisme: Mise au point', in Action, 29 December 1944. See also Sartre's 1946 lecture 'Existentialism is a Humanism' reprinted in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Meridian, 1956) pp.287-311. As Rex himself remarks in a handwritten note on the back of page ten of 'Adult Education': "Secondly, the thesis 'existence comes before essence' is another way of saying that man is free. The freedom which Sartre has in mind is not one which man must acquire or fight for, it is, on the contrary, an inalienable possession of which he cannot rid himself even if he desired to do so. Or to put it differently, Sartre's doctrine of freedom is an antithesis to determinism in any and every form". In the main, this material (with additions) appears also on page two of Rex's second radio address: 'An Introduction'.

Rex, 'Existentialist Freedom': p.209.
that a harmonisation of Rex's differing presentations is possible, it remains to be observed that each rendering emphasises the indispensability of Sartre's thought - to an understanding of the human condition - from a slightly different angle.

A closer look at each of these four pieces reveals Rex's understanding of key concepts in Sartre's thought - concepts which are crucial to the former's analysis of issues in New Zealand society. These articles may also be viewed as a record of Rex's process of discernment. They are a journal of Rex's progress - each stage involved working out an aspect of the human condition, and an understanding of it that was real to him.498

Sartre as the disillusioned romantic

Published in the first edition of the Victoria University Literary Society's journal Arachne in 1950, 'Concerning Sartre' is an article which, as its name suggests, offers a critical presentation of the philosopher's work. As Rex's first article on Sartre, it is significant for its more negative estimation of Sartre and his work than is found among the remainder of Rex's papers. Rex's assessment of Sartre is here influenced by his reading of L'etre et le néant and is dependent upon insights derived from Gabriel Marcel's The Philosophy of Existence.499 In the article Rex also discusses Hegelianism and Platonism and makes important comparisons between Sartre and Kierkegaard.

'Concerning Sartre' opens with a citation from a letter Rex received from a young New Zealander touring Europe.500 An early indication of Rex's estimation of the importance for the journal's literary audience of gaining an understanding of this movement is provided by his choice of introduction. This unnamed young New Zealander's assessment of Sartre's contribution as "extremely negative and dangerous" is coupled, by Rex, with the observation that existentialism has spread into "almost every branch of life and thought" in the

498In the context of a lecture on sermon preparation, Rex was later to instruct his students: "never write down something which is not real to you". 'Four Steps in Sermon Making: Notes taken from a lecture given by Prof. H.H. Rex in 1962', BHR: p.243.
499Six of the eight footnotes Rex records for this paper relate to these two works.
500Unfortunately there is no further record of the letter, its origins or its author.
Continent. For the benefit of those encountering this phenomenon for the first time, Rex comments that it is difficult to group the existentialists together given that they cover:

a wide range of frequently contradictory views, ranging from militant atheism to orthodox Christianity and varying from an emphatic denial of the possibility of personal communion to an equally emphatic assertion of the reality of the 'we'.

Whilst acknowledging that the influence of Kierkegaard is evident in most existentialisms, in this early work Rex identifies unity in reaction against Hegelian logic and metaphysics as their common feature. "They share a disbelief in the possibility of erecting a metaphysical 'system', and they are all preoccupied with the ontological study of the concrete individual existent". Having thus established a general framework for understanding existentialism, Rex proceeds to focus on Sartre.

The subheadings Rex opts for in his investigation of Sartre indicate the direction of his assessment and argument. Under the second subheading, 'a fiasco of romanticism', Rex compares Sartre's thought with that of Kierkegaard. The basics of Sartre's philosophy are outlined under three further subheadings: the first, 'abortive gods', draws attention to Sartre's atheistic ontology and the inevitable failure, in his view, of every person's project. The second, 'twilight of the gods', examines Sartre's concept of 'the look' and its implications for the conflicts that exist between individuals in Sartre's world. The final heading 'a god after all?' looks specifically at Sartre's model of 'love'. The unresolved conflicts in Sartre's thought suggest to Rex, in his conclusion, the need for a religious answer.

The headings Rex chooses are not the only indicators of an emphasis on the negative aspects of Sartre's ontology. Another is Rex's use of 'loaded' phrases. He chooses the term 'abortive god' to describe the Sartrean man who is doomed to failure because it does justice to his "sex-ridden language". This uncharacteristically negative reference to sexuality is not the only loaded phrase Rex employs. The "endless stalemate" which arises out of

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501 Rex, 'Concerning Sartre': p.18.
503 Rex, 'Concerning Sartre': p.18.
504 Rex, 'Concerning Sartre': p.19.
Sartre's separation between the _pour-soi_ and the _en-soi_, says Rex, "Sartre calls in his typical perverted manner the individual's freedom".\(^{505}\) Further, "The Nothing" is described as "one of Sartre's philosophical atrocities".\(^{506}\) Derogatory one-liners and _ad hominem_ critique are notably absent from Rex's later writings on Sartre.

Another of the unique aspects of Rex's first article on Sartre, "the disillusioned romantic",\(^{507}\) is his comparison of the former with Kierkegaard who "took a critical view of his own romantic position".\(^{508}\) Given that these two thinkers underpin much of Rex's own thought in the existentialist arena, it is interesting that he offers a direct contrast between the work of these two men. Using the three key words, 'contingency', 'irony', and 'the single one',\(^{509}\) Rex describes Sartre’s thought and how he sees it as divergent from that of Kierkegaard. To begin with, the elevated awareness of the reality of contingency bequeathed by the continental romantics to their existentialist counterparts means the two thinkers have much in common. Yet this awareness of contingency manifests itself in different ways according to Rex:

> whereas the romantics found pleasure in the inexplicable irrationality of the contingent, Sartre is offended by it. In him it causes an all-pervading nausea from which he does not permit himself to escape through the backdoor of Platonism either. The eternal verities are gone, and rightly so, for they are, to quote Thomas Merton, 'the big sin of Platonism'.\(^{510}\)

Rex compares the concept of 'irony' presented in Kierkegaard and that put forward in Sartre, the latter being a development of the former. Rex describes Kierkegaard's irony as a result of his scorn for the Hegelian logic which "issues into a 'unity of contrasts'," preferring instead "a logic which regards the 'cleavage' as the ultimate reality".\(^{511}\) This separation of existence and essence by a rigid boundary is something Kierkegaard still believed could be overcome through faith. Rex contrasts the faith of Kierkegaard with the

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\(^{505}\) Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.19. Italics are sourced from the original.
\(^{506}\) Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.19.
\(^{507}\) Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.21.
\(^{508}\) Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.18. A brief contrast between the two is offered in ‘Adult Education’: p.6.
\(^{509}\) Rex's distinctive English renders: "This can be illustrated under the three heads of 'contingency'; 'irony'; and 'the single one'.” Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.18.
\(^{510}\) Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.18. The original citation is from Thomas Merton, _Elected Silence_, with foreword by Evelyn Waugh (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949) p.67. Rex held a prejudice against Platonism which was common to Lutheranism at the time. Rex's references to Platonism are frequently off-hand and derogatory.
\(^{511}\) Rex, ‘Concerning Sartre’: p.18.
position of Sartre: "To Sartre, this passage is closed, and so man is in his sight for ever [sic] doomed to failure in his attempt to realise his self". 512

The final comparison Rex made between Sartre and Kierkegaard in his *Arachne* article is under the romantic category of 'the single one'. Kierkegaard's individual is described as a closed system open only to God; Sartre's system has no room for God and consequently leaves the individual isolated. This fact, coupled with the other comparisons with Kierkegaard, informs Rex's impression of Sartre's philosophy as a desolate one:

We have then in Sa[r]tre a romantic who has cast aside everything on which the romantic depends for his happiness: Logical inconsistencies, metaphysical flights of imagination, or revealed religion. 513

Despite conveying distaste for aspects of Sartrean philosophy Rex consistently praises Sartre for heroically facing the fact of contingency. 514 The admiration, initially reserved for this aspect of Sartre's approach, appears to have matured into the more balanced assessment of Sartre that Rex subsequently offers audiences.

A wider audience - existentialism on the airwaves

The radio addresses, delivered between the two written articles we examine in this chapter, provide further insight into aspects of Rex's understanding of Sartrean anthropology. The script read by Rex for a radio broadcast in May of 1951 515 and written as a precursor to the transmission of a BBC adaptation of Sartre's play *Crime Passionnel*, forms a succinct and erudite introduction to Sartre's doctrine of *pour-soi* and *en-soi*. At the time it received positive treatment in the hands of the then well known N.Z. *Listener* reviewer 'Loquax', who described it as "a lucid exposition of Existentialism, the philosophy underlying the play" and praised the radio station for giving "not only the play, but also the context in which to place it". 516

512 Rex, 'Concerning Sartre': p.18.
513 Rex, 'Concerning Sartre': p.19.
514 Rex, 'Concerning Sartre': p.21; cf. 'Existentialist Freedom': p.209.
515 Rex, 'Existentialism'. For full reference see earlier footnote.
516 Loquax, 'Background to Sartre' in *N.Z. Listener*, 18 May 1951.
The first quarter of Rex’s script offers his summary of the plot for *Crime Passionnel*. His summary was necessarily shaped in a way that lends itself to his exposition of key themes in the play. The first theme Rex focuses on in this address is one he implies is central to existentialism. His presentation of that which unites existentialist philosophies is simpler than that in his first article ‘Concerning Sartre’. In this first radio address Rex states:

Existentialism is older than Sartre, and the term has come to signify a variety of philosophies which frequently conflict with one another. Still existentialists are generally agreed that there lies an irreducible barrier between our conceptualised picture of our world (including ourselves) and the world (again including ourselves) as it exists in itself. This barrier is a brute fact which the existentialists have singled out for their study, chief among them, Jean-Paul Sartre.

Rex confides that the “play can certainly be enjoyed without taking it as an exercise in existentialist philosophy”, but that he himself finds “the play somewhat pointless unless it is related to its existentialist background”. Once the background is taken into account “the perspective becomes clear, and the whole play appears as an exposition of one of the major points of Sartre’s philosophy”. The existentialists were, of course, not the first to separate the world into ‘appearances’ and ‘reality in itself’, or ‘subject’ and ‘object’ categories. What Rex values most highly is the clarity with which Sartre outlines the corresponding division between *en-soi* and *pour-soi*, together with its repercussions for humanity. Sartre’s divisions are also basic to the analysis of humanity which underpins Rex’s *D. Theo.* thesis.

In his address, Rex correctly depicts Hugo, the protagonist in *Crime Passionnel*, as a man who is running away from his true self - forming an example of what Sartre calls ‘bad faith’. Hugo tries to imagine himself as a certain kind of person, merely as a reaction against his family background which cast him as another sort of person. Rex draws attention to the language of ‘play’ employed by Sartre as a device to show the protagonist has not made the serious moral choices which would constitute authentic existence.

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517 For example - when drawing attention to the protagonist, Hugo’s, dilemma as he faces decisions about how to regard his own past - Rex anticipates his own explication of Sartre’s teaching about choosing oneself, the responsibility such a decision involves, and the freedom that results from that decision.
520 Rex, ‘Existentialism’: p.2.
Rex explains that Hugo ‘plays at’ being a revolutionary. This fact is highlighted in the play by the frequent talk of ‘following orders’ - a point not made in Rex’s address. The more important and broader point made by Rex is that Hugo realises his humanity, “this ‘freedom’”, when he retrospectively ‘chooses’ the assassination for himself. Rather than simply fulfilling a predetermined role, Hugo, in line with Sartre’s thought, becomes an example of a free individual through the exercise of personal choice. This point is underlined in Rex’s analysis of Hugo’s drunken monologue:

In a moment of penetrating clarity he realises that the question of ‘To be or not to be’ never resolves itself, but that one has always both ‘to be and not to be’ at the same time, for instance an assassin. He realises the necessity of choosing ever anew.523

The exercise of free choice by Sartre’s protagonist costs him his life when he hands himself over to his killers - a tragic consequence. Rex demonstrates in this radio presentation that he understands Sartre to be suggesting that the pour-soi and the en-soi coincide only with tragic consequences. “For much as Sartre emphasises man’s freedom, this freedom is a calamity rather than an opportunity”.524 Rex deduces that this is a direct result of the playwright’s radical atheism:

Sartre does not belong to the ordinary run of atheists who deny the existence of God and then continue in their observance of moral standards and in their pursuit of ideals very much as their believing fellow-men. Sartre has seen more clearly than the atheists before him that without belief in God life ceases to have a meaning. Life becomes pointless, an inexplicable calamity from which death alone can set us free.525

That Rex concludes this address with this particular theme is important. Sartre’s play naturally presents itself for understanding as a tragedy. At this point, Rex, rather than simply accepting this outcome of Sartre’s philosophy as the best possible analysis of the human condition - as in the case of Sartre’s analysis of en-soi and pour-soi - instead chooses to distance himself from Sartre’s thought. Objectivity, rather than the enthusiasm demonstrated earlier, characterises the address at this point. Rex regards the tragic world-view that arises from

523 Rex, ‘Existentialism’: p.4.
525 Rex, ‘Existentialism’: p.4f. A similar paragraph containing examples from Sartre’s writing is found in Rex, ‘Existentialist Freedom’: p.214.
Sartre's thought as a natural and correct consequence of his atheism. For Rex, Sartre's interpretation of the human condition is question-begging. From Sartre's basic position Rex believes there are other possible perspectives on the recognised religion of the day - the Christianity of which Rex is a representative. From this it is clear that even the early Rex did not equate existentialism with atheism.

**From explanation to explication**

Rex's second radio address, 'An Introduction to Existentialism on the Basis of J-P. Sartre's Tetralogy 'Roads to Freedom", delivered in July 1951, clearly provides the genesis for his September *Landfall* article. An illustration of this is provided by Rex's example of the freedom of the 'ugly man' which is paraphrased from the radio script into the journal article. Many of the same citations are borrowed from Sartre for both scripts. This having been said, there are significant differences between the two pieces. The radio broadcast contained additional and unrefined material; but did not contain the detailed explanation of Sartre's significance within the history of thought that is found in *Landfall*.

Earlier drafts of Rex's second radio address - which are extant in the Presbyterian archival material held at Knox College - show interesting trends in Rex's presentation of Sartrean anthropology. The reader unfamiliar with Sartre's thought can gain much background information and context from reading Rex's lengthier drafts.

Much of the material culled from an earlier version of his second radio address - originally prepared for an adult education class - resembles material contained in his first radio address. Over time Rex's analysis of Sartre shifts away from explanation and towards explication. The difference is subtle, but one can see, for example, that less ink is spilt describing how existentialism may be regarded as a reaction to Hegel's philosophy, and more column-inches are devoted to describing why Sartre's declaration that 'man is Free' is so

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526 Speaking of a person's free choice in the face of hereditary and environmental factors, Rex gives the following example: "An ugly man is never ugly as such. He is always ugly as determined by his choice, i.e. his attitude towards his appearance. It is ugliness ignored, ugliness experienced as a burden, ugliness creating an inferiority complex, ugliness seen as an asset (in so far as beautiful women frequently prefer ugly men). That is to say, man chooses his essence in the course of his existence". Rex, 'Existentialist Freedom' in *Landfall 19*, September 1951: p.212; cf. 'An Introduction': p.4. See also RA119, Rex, 'III Sartre: God's Widower' (p.5) in 'Three talks to Christchurch Presbytery', 1961.
important. Likewise, comparisons to Kierkegaard are omitted in favour of an emphasis on reasons for the denial of determinism.\textsuperscript{527}

‘Existentialist Freedom’

Rex’s article ‘Existentialist Freedom’ - published in the literary journal *Landfall*, and written a year after his first journal article - moves in a similar manner from an outline of Sartre’s philosophy and the questions it raises, towards the invitation of a religious answer at its end.

It is of vital significance that Rex’s understanding of Jean-Paul Sartre’s notion of ‘freedom’ is grasped if one wishes to grapple with Rex’s application of Sartre’s ideas. Indeed the theme ‘freedom’ occupies a central place in Rex’s later ‘situational’ writings. Conveniently, the greater portion of Rex’s article ‘Existentialist Freedom’ is devoted to explaining and explicating Sartre’s notion of freedom, and serves as a useful source document in this regard.

As far as Rex is concerned, “Sartre’s main contribution to European thought is his uncompromising assertion that man is free”.\textsuperscript{528} Impressed by Sartre’s concern to remain true to his human condition - identified as freedom - he accepts that “man is free, and that absolutely and completely”.\textsuperscript{529} In this respect Rex follows Sartre’s rejection of the ‘common sense’ conviction that man’s character is more or less determined and that his moral choices flow more or less inevitably from it. This premise is basic to all of Rex’s subsequent work.

In fact it is difficult to underestimate the importance of Sartre’s notion of freedom to the thought of Helmut Rex. It is the category which contains the answers to the questions ‘to do with the meaning of life’ and ‘what we ought to do’; the very questions which Rex later identified as critical to the systematic theologian.\textsuperscript{530} Even an academic article like ‘Existentialist Freedom’ was concerned with what Rex would subsequently term: ‘our

\textsuperscript{527}These developments can be observed by placing the earlier draft of ‘An introduction’ (also contained in file RA113) next to the radio version. When the radio version is placed next to the *Landfall* article, a similar metamorphosis can be observed to have taken place.
\textsuperscript{528}Rex, ‘Existentialist Freedom’: p.209.
\textsuperscript{530}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to Frank Nichol, 9 July 1961: p.2.
interests’. That is why the formal content of the article is sandwiched between an introduction which seeks to impress upon the reader the full import of Sartre’s assertion that man is free, and, like his previous article on Sartre, a conclusion which points towards religion as the fulfilment of Sartre’s aims.

The careful exposition of Sartre’s notion of freedom which forms the greater part of the ‘Existentialist Freedom’ article serves mainly to highlight Rex’s conviction that it is in the reader’s genuine interest to grasp the key elements of Sartre’s philosophy. The fact that this article provides valuable insight into the philosophical basis of Rex’s theology is an additional reason for investigating it in greater detail. The introduction and conclusion, in particular, offer a nearer guide to Rex’s own theology.

‘Existentialist Freedom’ begins with an attempt to place Sartre’s denial of all forms of human determinism into an historical context. Here, as elsewhere, Rex seeks to demonstrate the importance of a movement by placing it within the history of ideas, for - as he subsequently states in a book review - he believes that, “no theologian is worth consideration who does not take the whole of the history of religion into account as he constructs his system” 531

The historical framework Rex produces highlights the inadequacies in previous philosophical and theological attempts to defend the free will of man. Augustine, Descartes, the schoolmen of the middle ages and Kant are all found wanting in Rex’s estimation. This history of determinism, according to Rex, is the reason why people today are so eager to accept scientific theories which allow for freedom of any sort, “even at subatomic level”. He is convinced that the significant contribution of Sartre to European thought can only be adequately measured “against this background of the tremendous prestige of determinism and of the entirely inadequate attempts at defending man’s free will”. 532

In ‘Existentialist Freedom’ Rex depicts Sartre in a form reminiscent of a reformer who stands on principle, unable in good conscience to compromise. 533 “Sartre insists that

533 Rex’s descriptions of Sartre contain ‘uncompromising’ overtones: “Sartre insists”; “his position (…) leaves behind Kant’s half-hearted solution”; “Sartre rigidly distinguishes between (…)”. (Italics mine). Source:
the study of man must provide its own clues, for he believes that man is unique in the world and this uniqueness consists in his freedom". When Sartre says that "man carries the whole weight of the universe on his shoulders", Rex finds it a "startling way of pointing out a simple truth", and takes him to say: "The only world we know is our world and in that world our freedom continually interferes with those factors which are subject to the laws of cause and effect". As we shall see further, these comments point towards Rex's awareness of the responsibility he finds implied in this conviction about the absolute nature of human freedom.

Having applied the weight of the history of ideas to his introductory argument, Rex is not content to have simply stressed to the reader the significance of existentialism. After his exposition of Sartre's thought, he attempts in his conclusion to convince his audience that the shortcomings in Sartre's philosophy are addressed by a Christian existentialist faith. In a carefully crafted - and consequently deceptively simple - manner, Rex's assessment of the weaknesses in Sartre's contribution anticipates his conclusions.

**Rex's Christian existentialism**

It will be recalled that in Rex's first radio address on Sartre, the negative use of freedom by Sartre's characters is attributed by Rex to the author's atheism. Without belief in God life ceases to have meaning, and so Sartre can see no reason that would justify the inexplicable calamity that is our human existence. Rex finds that Sartre is very clear on the implications of his atheism, and admires the rigour with which he follows his thought to its logical conclusion. But he finds Sartre less satisfactory when it comes to the common action he advocates in a world which free men and women cannot have in common:

Freedom implies of course, responsibility. Responsibility means either 'responsible for' or 'responsible to'. Sartre affirms the former and accepts the latter as meaning 'responsible to oneself'. This virtually eliminates the distinction between fact and

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"Existentialist Freedom": p.211.

534 Rex, 'Existentialist Freedom': p.211. Cf. 'Adult education': p.10; 'An Introduction': p.3: "What Sartre emphatically and rightly denies is that you have made any significant statement about man as long as you operate exclusively with such terms as heredity, environment[,] association, etc. He does not deny that man is also part of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, but what he insists on is that man as man is absolutely unique in the universe, and as such he must be understood on his own terms - that is to say, as 'free'."

535 Rex, 'Existentialist Freedom': p.211.

value. Consequently there are no values to which anyone can appeal apart from those expressed, as a matter of fact, in an individual's choice. As choice is, in fact, identical with freedom, and as freedom has no reason but itself, values - as the fruit of free choice - cannot be judged by any objective standard. The dangers of such a position are obvious. It implies the complete denial of any standards of value to which individual men and women can turn as a common court of appeal.  

Rex takes the lack of any objective basis for common values as a source of embarrassment for Sartre in a world where God does not exist, and affirms Sartre's use of Dostoevsky's maxim: "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted". The search for other 'objective standards' proves equally fruitless. Consistent with the stance he took in his earlier inaugural lecture, Rex agrees with Sartre's rejection of 'human nature' and 'human rights' as "purely formal concepts without content".

In the face of a lack of any objective basis for values, Rex interprets the use of Dostoevsky as an indication that Sartre has:

seen clearly that the problem of God is a human problem concerning the relations of men with each other. For to say that there is a God means in the last resort that we believe that life has a meaning from which the lives of individuals derive their meaning in a world they have in common.

This understanding of Sartre is convenient for Rex because it anticipates his solution. Rex views the problem of God as a human problem so he agrees with Sartre's character Daniel - that the one word which changes everything is 'God'. Rex explains:

It is only when people come to believe that the meaning of their own lives is bound up with the rest of the human race that they will discover the standards of value which will enable them to live in a world in common.

In this way Rex is able to agree with Sartre's view that life without God is an inexplicable calamity from which death alone can set us free. Sartre speaks of the problem of no God as a human problem, whereas Rex speaks of the problem of God as a human problem. Just what Rex means by 'God' in this context is by no means clear. Were Sartre to have responded to Rex's article he may have challenged him to show why 'God' ought not to

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538 A fuller discussion of this point is contained in 'Adult Education': p.9.
be categorised in the same way as 'human nature' or 'natural rights' - that is, as a purely formal concept without content.

As previously noted, Rex's understanding of the commonality of our human condition is closely tied to his existentialism. He would later say that those who are not concerned with the quest for true self-hood they have 'no real interests'.\(^{542}\) So when he subsequently suggests that theology should begin with 'Christ and our interests', he presupposes an existential concern in 'our interests'. In Rex's thought, 'our interests' involve understanding our common human condition - including questions 'to do with the meaning of life' and 'what we ought to do'. Rex espouses that our common human condition is constituted by a 'freedom' very similar to that described by Sartre. Where Rex differs from Sartre is in his understanding of how we are linked by this freedom, and what its final purpose is.

Rex follows Sartre's lead in deploring those who hide themselves behind roles and masks.\(^{543}\) According to Rex they forfeit their humanity in so doing. So it is that exercising one's freedom carries the weight of moral imperative in Rex's writings. If one is not exercising those human gifts which separate one from the animals, one is no better than them.\(^{544}\) This is as true of the exercising of one's freedom to choose oneself as it is of exercising the abstract intelligence which allows one to conceptualise such an act, as Rex emphasises in his 1956 address on Race Relations.\(^{545}\) Religion too separates man from the animals. Only a human can choose God.\(^{546}\)

On the topic of the relationship between God and human freedom, Rex disagrees with those proposing rigid doctrines of predestination. Because he is convinced that the

\(^{543}\) Rex explains Sartre's concept of mauvaise foi in 'Existentialist Freedom': p.214. It is clear in this article and in subsequent writings that Rex finds Sartre's analysis of the human condition very compelling. Rex's early interest in Sartre is explored in chapter one and his protests against 'suburban philistines' (who live in bad faith) are examined in chapter nine.
\(^{544}\) Rex later used comparison to animals in his talks on 'Alcoholism' and 'The Sunday Service'. See chapter nine of the present thesis.
\(^{545}\) RA158, 'Race Relationships' two addresses to the Maori Synod, 1956: Address I: p.6. Rex's Race Relations addresses will be examined in detail in chapter nine.
\(^{546}\) See RA119, 'I Dostoevsky: 'God-Man or Man-God' (p.1) in 'Three talks to Christchurch Presbytery', 1961: "Religion is a distinctly human phenomenon. Animals have no religion. Nor do they need any, because they live in a closed world or habits and instincts [...]'.
human condition of freedom is God-given, it follows that it ought to be exercised. In a sermon ‘on love and fear’ delivered in 1950,\textsuperscript{547} Rex preached that “when God created us in his love, he gave us full freedom to determine our destiny” and spoke of this gift as “an enormous risk humanly speaking”\textsuperscript{548}.

Since Rex's interest in existentialism is fuelled by Christian concerns he is interested in Sartrean anthropology in as much as it casts light on everyday Christian interests such as the relationship between fear, love and freedom. It is useful to bear in mind the pragmatism that underlies Rex's employment of Sartrean thought. While biblical material shapes the vision, Sartre provides the bricks and mortar that are used to build Rex's model of the Christian life.

Rex believes that the use of our freedom to determine our destiny fulfils the purposes of God; our condition is freedom and we are to act in freedom. Man is to be true to his condition. In this vein, Sartre's elimination of the distinction between ‘doing’ and ‘being’ receives praise from Rex,\textsuperscript{549} and finds a parallel in Rex's own assessment of ‘our interests’. Questions ‘to do with the meaning of life’ and ‘what we ought to do’ - that is, ‘being’ and ‘doing’ questions - are both linked to freedom as the human condition.

While it is clear that Rex differs from Sartre on some important points, it is equally clear that his own theology is heavily indebted to Sartre. How Sartre's existentialism informs his understanding of ‘our interests’ and the connected task of examining the most

\textsuperscript{547}Rex, 'Sermon on Love and Fear' in \textit{BHR}: p.240. The record in \textit{BHR} (pp.240-242) is a summary “taken down in long-hand by a student at the service”, St. Andrew's Church Dunedin, evening service 15 September 1950. It is tempting to speculate that insights derived from Künel's depth psychology were important to the preparation of this sermon. Cf. for example Künel, \textit{In Search of Maturity}: pp.27, 91f.

\textsuperscript{548}BHR: p.241. Rex's sermon is significant because it makes explicit links in his thought which are elsewhere implicit. Having chosen the text “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4.18), Rex preaches that human beings are dependent on God's love as the ground of their being and that God's grace allows them to make full, meaningful, use of this freedom. (It is difficult to assess the extent to which direct references to Tillich's theology are intended in Rex's writing. Rex lists Tillich among the greatest theologians of the twentieth century in his book, \textit{DJR}: p.71). Full use of freedom is seen to manifest itself through trust in the goodness of God, which enables the believer to love without fear - for 'perfect love casteth out all fear'. Furthermore, recognition of the freedom, which is the condition of the other as well as of the self, is said to create an environment free from 'patronising' or 'clinging' love. Rex concludes: “It is in the diligent use of the means of grace which the church has to offer that we are led back to the root of our being which is love, and where love thus conquers, fear will die away”. BHR: p.242.

\textsuperscript{549}Rex, 'Existentialist Freedom': p.212.
fundamental questions relating to our human condition is the subject of the following chapter.
Chapter Five - Literature

Introduction

Rex's literature lectures are an example of his local and ‘particular’ impact. While Rex favours certain authors, he neither proposes a strict canon nor attempts to offer a 'system' of interpretation. In these lectures Rex models critical engagement in matters of everyday life for his students, teaching them how to recognise just what therein is of ultimate concern. Students are encouraged to engage with learning outside the strict confines of the theological discipline. These lectures provide the necessary tools and inspiration for students to learn more about themselves, their peers and the human condition generally. As one pupil recalls:

The lectures were an embodiment of his person. As Principal J.A. Allan once said, - the new course in Literature was not being offered to Theological Hall students to give more information about literary books but so that Mr Rex could express his thoughts through lecturing on them.550

The first of the four papers examined in detail in this chapter is the script of a radio address Rex delivered in the early 1950s. While the ostensible subject of the address is Joyce Cary's novel *Mister Johnson*, analysis reveals that, like all of Rex's literature lectures, it serves as

an effective vehicle for delivering the insights into the human condition that Rex has developed from his reading of existentialist and other authors. Here Rex uses the occasion to educate his audience about factors underlying difficulties in race relations.

It is apparent that Rex wishes to raise fundamental questions concerning the human condition in the other three papers examined in this chapter. In a world where God is more frequently experienced as an absence than as a presence, Rex draws on the insights of authors who have asked where authority is to rest in a world without God. For Rex the question of meaning is linked to the question of God, and in his three lectures to Christchurch Presbytery in 1961 he therefore chooses work by the authors Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre - a believer, an agnostic and an atheist - to examine the question of meaning. The ability to draw religious insight from literary sources, which is witnessed to in this series is consistent with Rex’s interdisciplinary approach.

For Rex Dostoevsky is pivotal. Dostoevsky battled determinism, showing that the will has the ability to triumph over reason, and depicted the idea of total freedom as too overwhelming to be sustained without the individual lapsing into insanity. Rex opines that both Kafka and Sartre are best understood in the light of Dostoevsky and subsequently depicts Sartre as Dostoevsky’s God-man in action.

Rex draws Kafka’s life and work together and in so doing illustrates the way each is a reflection of the ambiguity of living the life of a man of ‘acute consciousness’. Kafka is held up as an example of a ‘consistent agnostic’ who lives with ambiguity and refuses to yield to the temptation of introducing a cheap ‘Deus ex machina’ type solution. One cannot help but feel that Rex has an enormous amount of empathy with the picture he paints of Kafka.

Both Kafka and Sartre are admired by Rex for the consistency and accuracy of their portrayals of the world when God is experienced as absent. The quest for truth was a key motivator in Rex’s theological studies and he did not hide from his students the realities of differing outcomes of the implementation of this ideal. For Rex, Sartre’s model contains a

551 This is true also of the lectures delivered to Rex’s theological students at Knox Theological Hall. These lectures on the work of Dostoevsky, Eliot, Ibsen, Kafka and Mauriac are housed in the Presbyterian archives at Knox College, Arden Street, Dunedin. See appendix five.
clear vision of the depravity of humanity in a world without God. Taken together, the lectures on Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre may be viewed as embodying a kerygmatic challenge. Rex would have all people adopt the attitude of Dostoevsky's Zossima: “Everyone is really responsible to all men, and for everything”.

**A novel approach**

Intellectuals who attempted to lay hold of the New Zealand psyche in the 1950s described a concern to be seen to be moderate in all things. The ‘average chap’ was found to be riddled with the contradictions born of a fear of self-reflection and driven by a desire to be considered unexceptional. One essayist whose writing on this topic has aged well is Bill Pearson. He found in his 1952 essay ‘Fretful Sleepers’ that the highest principle for judging public morality in New Zealand was: ‘Do others do it?’ Although highly critical of David Ausubel’s 1960 work *The Fern and the Tiki: an American looks at New Zealand*, Pearson nevertheless affirms in a review article Ausubel’s basic findings:

The national self-image, as Dr. Ausubel sees it, is of a people reserved and modest, easy-going and friendly, practical and adaptable, forthright but courteous. But in fact and in contrast he found us reserved and introverted, hostile to strangers, touchy in our interpersonal relation, contentious on committees, intemperate in the correspondence column, maudlin In Memoriam, prickly under criticism, assertively egalitarian in principle but in practice both deferential and secretly resentful towards authority. We are hostile to the intellect; we are lackadaisical in our attitudes towards work, having neither ambition, efficiency, enterprise nor foresight; we reserve our best energy for sport and for home jobs. Our smugness about our place in the world, about our education system, our standards of public health and our standard of living are not in fact justified, and, further, it covers a sense of insecurity and a sense of international insignificance of which we prefer not to be reminded and which we conspire to ignore.

Robin Wink’s 1954 assessment of the New Zealander is no more flattering, finding that “the five day week has caused the New Zealander to lose his enterprise and initiative. ‘I couldn’t care less’ is the favourite New Zealand expression, and one that summarises a way

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553 David Paul Ausubel, *Fern and the Tiki; an American view of New Zealand: national character, social attitudes and race relations*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1960.
of life". It was the smug and insular New Zealand described by its intellectual critics that Rex’s courses were designed to challenge.

Although the use of literature and the arts - to hint at ideals other than public opinion that might usefully be considered as fitting expressions of true humanity - may seem a model worthy of consideration nowadays, Rex’s selection of novels written by white (and in many cases already deceased) western males would be found wanting by critics today. What is significant about this approach is that it seeks a way through the impasse created by the slowly dissolving metanarrative of western progress and religious authority. By presenting a new and plausible synthesis constructed from existing tools - recent western literature and psychological and philosophical insights - Rex’s affordable theology touched on those matters of ultimate concern that more traditional systematic approaches no longer seemed able to do.

It is beyond the scope of this study to detail the extent to which Rex’s courses paralleled similar developments in the United States and elsewhere. Yet it is clear that when he introduced a course devoted to the study of literature he was doing something unprecedented in New Zealand theological studies. Courses on the work of Eliot, Ibsen, Mauriac and Dostoevsky served as vehicles for Rex to convey his understanding of the human condition to his students. While Bultmann’s theology was a key influence in this

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556 Maurice Andrew comments: “Helmut probably proposed the literature courses. ‘Non-Hebrew’ and ‘Non-Greek’ had previously been ‘Exegesis from English Bible’. […] The purpose was not to make students read literature, but for students to get stimulated by what Rex had to say about the literature. […] Rex would deviate more in his literature lectures than in his other courses (e.g. Church History). He would talk about sex and about alcohol. He was keen to address problems he saw in New Zealand society”. Source: Interview with Maurice Andrew, 127 Signal Hill Road, Dunedin, 8 June 2000. Ian Breward notes: “Helmut helped students break out of the mould which said that all theological students should only read theology. There was an older tradition of familiarity with Shakespeare and the poets but that was different. Literature allowed him to raise philosophical and moral issues. He was able to show in the ‘shadows’ novel that a world without meaning left people without meaning (despite the fact that he rightly regarded the novel to be of poor quality). He saw theological disciplines as a part of a wider heritage. Students needed to be in touch with other aspects (disciplines) within that wider heritage.” Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.
557 A substantial collection of lengthy manuscripts and typescripts for literature courses Rex taught in the 1950s are located in the Presbyterian Archives at Knox College. They continue to provide lively reading. Of particular interest is an eight page manuscript entitled “To be one’s true self” in the file on Francois Mauriac (RA166) which appears to be the basis of a lecture outlining Rex’s own understanding of selfhood. He outlines aspects that go into the creation of the ‘true self’ based on the presupposition that: “Our true self is not something we can comfortably fall into. It is the goal that we conceive at those moments when we overcome our inertia.” Kunkel remains a background influence in Rex’s writing on realisation of the ‘true’ or ‘real’ self.
regard, Rex frequently employed Sartrean language to communicate key concepts where Bultmann favoured the use of Heidegger. It is likely that Rex preferred Sartre over Heidegger because his concepts are more easily communicated to a first-time audience. This would be in keeping with Rex's desire to approach his audience at a level they could understand without compromising on the delivery of key ideas.

This chapter examines one of Rex's earlier lectures with an eye to its insight into a particular societal issue and then proceeds to analyse a series of his later lectures on key thinkers Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre. In all of the chosen examples Rex communicates the existentialist issues that feature prominently in his reading of the selected author's work. The popularity of Rex's literature lectures is a witness to the relevance at the time of the model of the human condition that Rex interprets, develops and describes.  

**Joyce Cary - towards mutual understanding**

An address concerned with Joyce Cary's novel *Mister Johnson*, delivered on Dunedin public radio by Rex in 1953, offers a pertinent example of Rex's ability to draw together insights from a variety of academic disciplines in order to cast light on a contemporary issue. He describes the book as "a most stimulating contribution to the subject of Race Relationships", which for Rex is "one of the most urgent problems of our time that demands a sane, honest and just solution". Rex asserts that no time spent on the clarification of the issues involved is misspent and in a manner congruent with this declaration he applies himself to that task in this address.

Rex identifies the subject of the novel as "not primarily race prejudice and the colour bar, but the mutual lack of understanding which becomes so obvious when men and women of different cultural background meet". In a manner consistent with his existentialist

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558 Rex's literature lectures were full to overflowing. They were popularly audited by many students of professional courses other than theology living in at Knox College at that time.

559 RA047, Rex, "Mister Johnson' by Joyce Cary (4XD)' (hereafter referred to as 'Mister Johnson'). Rex shows familiarity with the study of literature, cultural anthropology and psychology in this address. Contained in the same archival file, the notes pertaining to his lecture course on this book illustrate in greater depth Rex's 'magpie-like' approach to collecting insights from a variety of disciplines. In these he also indicates a familiarity with, and appreciation of, non-western religions.


561 Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.1.
views, Rex is careful to insist that, while this lack of understanding may be aggravated by the racial factor, it is a problem that is not confined to people of different racial background.

The way in which he describes Cary’s protagonist provides Rex with an opportunity to explore some of the tensions the novel contains. As a teenage native of Nigeria working as a lowly clerk in a government office, Mister Johnson is a liminal figure - neither at home completely in his culture of origin, nor his adoptive culture. Although only recently introduced to western ways, “Mister Johnson is whole-heartedly on the side of the white man’s civilisation”. 562

**New Zealand parallels**

It is primarily its parallels with the contemporary New Zealand situation that recommend *Mister Johnson* as a valuable and relevant text to Rex. 563 He is convinced that a fundamental lack of understanding between peoples of different racial origins is often present. Even where a lack of actual prejudice is evident, this lack of understanding:

contributes to frictions even where men of good will meet and naturally it becomes a source of tragedy when ignorant or unthinking men and women are involved in the meeting of the two races. This is the case in Joyce Cary’s novel, and since the majority of men and women are either ignorant or unthinking and since in this country they may do greater harm in our own relations between Maori and pakeha than the racially prejudiced, Joyce Cary’s novel has a timely interest for us, quite apart from its really outstanding literary merit. 564

Rex likens Mister Johnson’s position to that of many a contemporary young Maori: “He has cut himself off [from] his tribal roots, and he has not yet taken root in the civilisation of his adoption”. 565 Further, Mister Johnson is a stranger to both the world of the white man and the world of the black man:

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563Ian Breward, notes: “Helmut was appalled at how limited New Zealand theological students were (though they weren’t stupid) but their horizons needed widening. ‘Mr Johnson’ by Joyce Cary allowed him to raise race relations issues which no-one was dealing with at all. Most New Zealanders believed that the assimilationist model was working and that everyone was happy. Rex was one of the driving forces behind the Maori Theological Hall. He was concerned to allow Maori to be Maori in their own way”. Source: Interview with Ian Breward, Knox College, Dunedin, 2 June 2000.
564Rex, ‘Mister Johnson’: p.1f.
He lives actually in a cultural no man's land, no longer remembering the moral standards and folkways of his tribe and still completely vague in his appreciation of the moral standards of the white man which he sincerely and enthusiastically tries to copy.\textsuperscript{566}

Rex's description of the protagonist's situation betrays a compassionate understanding of the human condition and its inherent frailty. Rex depicts the tragic execution of Mister Johnson on a charge of murder as a natural consequence of a particular personality involved in a difficult set of circumstances: "Living between two worlds [...] without patiently built up moral standards and without the support of personal friends Mister Johnson builds up a compensatory world of imagination which provides him with success and adventure".\textsuperscript{567} In Rex's view it is this same imagination that "in a no-man's land without clear moral distinctions between good and evil [...] leads to murder".\textsuperscript{568}

Rex finds no fault in Cary's narrative portrayal of the colonial situation which neither "condemns nor excuses" but "simply reports".\textsuperscript{569} Guilty of condemnation in Rex's view are those who avoid facing the complexities introduced by the meeting of races. He insists that "the problems which arise from the white man's contact with the coloured man stand out in a manner that accuses everyone who tries to run away from them".\textsuperscript{570}

**Race relations - the role of perception in the meeting of cultures**

Rex attempts to clarify the particular difficulties involved through the discernment and description of three issues in race relations which suggested themselves upon reading *Mister Johnson*. These issues are, as shall be seen in the final chapter of the present thesis, elaborated upon in Rex's 'Race Relationships' addresses to the Maori Synod of the Presbyterian Church. Rex identifies the following points as arising from Cary's novel:

First, the difficulties which are involved when a man abandons his tribal background for the white man's civilisation; secondly, the precariousness of our habit of judging the behaviour of a man of another race or culture by our own

\textsuperscript{566}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.2.
\textsuperscript{567}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.2.
\textsuperscript{568}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.2.
\textsuperscript{569}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.3.
\textsuperscript{570}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.3.
accepted standards; and thirdly, the illusion that good will and a reasonable attitude are enough to bring people of different races together.\textsuperscript{571}

Rex's elaboration on the first of these points includes a discussion on the "difficulty of perception quite generally".\textsuperscript{572} In Rex's view this is the key contributor to a lack of comprehension of the new ideas one encounters in a new culture:

It has nothing to do with lack of intelligence or vagueness of mind or a poor ability of accurate observation. It is simply a matter of how perception works. We take in familiar facts, so to speak, in a lump, and only gradually do we learn to sort out things and to draw the necessary distinctions.\textsuperscript{573}

To the example of Mister Johnson's limited understanding of western marriage supplied by Cary, Rex adds that of a New Zealander's first impressions of European architecture. He posits a sight-seeing tour of Gothic cathedrals and supplies an exaggerated comment that with its local reference would no doubt have forced a wry smile from his Dunedin audience: "You might easily return with the impression that you saw a number of churches which all reminded you of First Church without ever having noticed any other differences but the size".\textsuperscript{574} As shall be seen further, this use of appropriate humour is another talent that Rex uses to good effect in his attempts to engage with his various audiences.

The second of the key points that Rex identifies as arising from Cary's novel involves the confusion generated when one person's behaviour is judged in the context of another set of cultural codes. Rex calls to mind the importance of judging behaviour according to "the cultural pattern to which it belongs".\textsuperscript{575} He elaborates:

The [extraordinary] thing is that what may appear externally familiar to us in the other man's behaviour may yet carry for him a totally different moral value compared with the same external behaviour in our own cultural pattern.\textsuperscript{576}

It is Rex's contention that this basic misunderstanding is at the heart of difficulties on the part of New Zealand women in their dealings with visiting American G.I.'s during

\textsuperscript{571}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.3.
\textsuperscript{572}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.3.
\textsuperscript{573}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.3f.
\textsuperscript{574}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.4.
\textsuperscript{575}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.4.
\textsuperscript{576}Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.4.
wartime: “they interpreted the courtesy of the G.I. in terms of what this courtesy would have meant, had it come from a New Zealander”. Similarly, Mister Johnson took at face value the conventional courtesies of white officers. Elsewhere Rex uses as an example friction caused by the pakeha who sits on the Maori eating mat.

The first two of Rex’s three points are closely related for they are concerned with the causes of alienation in the interaction between races - the no-man’s land between cultures and the judging of an individual's behaviour on the basis of the cultural patterns of another culture. Rex’s final point may contribute to the same consequences but it is concerned with the difficulties caused by the ill-fated attempt to introduce the category of ‘reasonableness’ into the race relations discussion. Rex contests that reason is not in a position to tell us what to do in the face of a moral problem such as the relation of races:

In the face of all these difficulties some people, with the best of intentions, exclaim, if people were only reasonable, everything would be so simple... This is, next to prejudice, about the worst attitude one can adopt, because it leads to a hopeless muddle, since reason functions only on convictions which we hold for other reasons.

In his lecture notes for the class Rex taught at Knox College, Dunedin on Mister Johnson Rex contends that ‘reasonable’ or ‘natural’ behaviour is bound to create trouble because it proceeds on the mistaken assumption that there is such a thing as universal ‘reason’ and universal ‘nature’. In Rex’s view this problem is bound up with the mistaken idea of the uniformity of human nature:

As regards ‘reason’, it is void of any but purely formal content (the law of identity and the law of contradiction); for the rest it is nothing but an instrument with the help of which we are able to sort out our experiences (sensory and emotional). Luther used to call reason a whore. This was one of the profoundest [sic] statements concerning reason that has ever been made. For it means that reason is at everybody’s service. She lives, so to speak, not on her own premisses, but on the premisses of who ever [sic] invites her. She does not furnish her own premisses. ‘Reasonable’ behaviour is therefore behaviour which is in accordance with certain premisses which have been accepted on other than reasonable grounds. These premisses are, in the case of conduct, culturally patterned. What appears therefore

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577 Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.4. Rex does not elaborate on this statement.
578 RA047, Mister Johnson, manuscripts.
579 Rex, 'Mister Johnson': p.4.
reasonable behaviour to a man of one culture (in the anthropological sense) does not necessarily appear so to the other.\textsuperscript{580}

Rex is guilty here of overstating his case. While it is true that reason proceeds on the basis of premises that cannot be argued to have any absolute validity, the approach he models might itself be described as a ‘reasoned’ examination of the race relations issue. What Rex is actually objecting to is a stubborn or ignorant refusal (often on the part of the dominant party in the discussion) to acknowledge presuppositions in so-called reasoned discussion. It is only when the different starting points of each member of an inter-cultural discussion are acknowledged that common ground can be sought. Common ground is sought precisely in order to provide a basis upon which reasoned discussion can proceed. Rex’s analysis of the inadequacy of ‘universal nature’ is similar in this context to that found in his earlier writings on existentialist themes.\textsuperscript{581}

\textit{Bricolage - building up a picture of ultimate concern}

Rex’s literature lectures offer illustration of his ability to cross disciplines in the attempt to provide contemporary answers to religious questions. The purpose behind Rex’s literature studies is spelt out in the first of three lectures he delivered to Christchurch Presbytery on Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre.\textsuperscript{582} Rex identifies his ideal subjects for literary investigation on the basis of “their penetrating insight into man’s condition in general and our condition as modern men in particular”\textsuperscript{583}. The three novelists are chosen specifically to assist Rex with his educational task:

I have selected Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Sartre for this series of talks, because they, all three, are ‘men of acute consciousness’. In my opinion, one of the most urgent tasks today is to rescue man from his ignorance about himself. And I have no hesitation in adding that this ignorance is a greater threat to his existence than the nuclear weapons that he is at the moment so busy piling up. He is aware of the

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  \item RA047, ‘Mister Johnson by Joyce Cary’ typescript lecture notes: p.8.
  \item See chapter three of the present thesis. On p.8f of RA047, ‘Mister Johnson by Joyce Cary’ typescript lecture notes, Rex states: “There is no such thing as ‘nature’ in the raw, not even with regard to such primitive drives as sex, the desire for food and shelter. Even in so-called primitive man nature is always wrapped up in culture. Nowhere does man have sexual intercourse just anyhow. People who believe that they behave ‘naturally’ behave either in complete harmony with the cultural pattern which has formed them or (if they find it irksome) they behave in reaction to the cultural pattern according to which they have been brought up.”
  \item RA119, Rex, ‘God-Man or Man-God, Three Talks to Christchurch Presbytery on Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre, 1961’. The addresses are separately labelled: ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’; ‘II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina’; and ‘III. Sartre: God’s Widower’.
  \item RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.2.
\end{itemize}
dangers of these weapons, but he is ignorant of his ignorance. That makes the latter the more dangerous of the two.\textsuperscript{584}

Rex is concerned that, amidst the hubbub of scientific advance, the real understanding of what it means to be human has been lost. According to Rex the educated West has rejected traditional understandings of man as 'the image of God' and the 'rational animal'. Rex wishes to speak out against that which has replaced these understandings:

The modern habit of viewing man primarily as a product of heredity and environment and as a set of reflexes virtually shuts him up in the scientist's closed universe. This is the danger I see for man today; and to my mind, it is one of the major catastrophes of our time, and that the more so as it has largely gone unobserved.\textsuperscript{585}

All those who by default subscribe to the scientific understanding of man are criticised by Rex including church folk who believe that their task is merely to replace bad habits with good. For this reason it is Rex's opinion that the commonplace "that man is 'an animal of habit' is [...] dangerous". The Sartrean influence on Rex's thought is clear when he insists:

Man is not an animal of habit; he is a freedom, a consciousness. That power to reflect on his own condition and to recast it as he affirms or denies his past, is man's unique possession which takes him right outside the scientist's closed universe. That possession is at stake today, and with it, man himself.\textsuperscript{586}

For Rex, the question "What is man?" is a question closely related to the question of God. His thoughts on this matter are illuminating for they provide the theoretical basis for his literary investigations. For this reason they are worth citing at length:

The two questions are correlated to each other. Religion is a distinctly human phenomenon. Animals have no religion. Nor do they need any, because they live in a closed world of habits and instincts. By way of contrast, man's world is not closed, but 'open'; his world is not bounded by his habits or instinct. He has an 'exit' to his world which enables him to step outside it: to look at it with detachment; and to raise the question of meaning touching the world and his own self in their totality. In this context the question of God arises.

Whenever man determines the question of meaning in its totality he does so in relation to God, either by affirming or denying his existence or by suspending his

\textsuperscript{584}RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.1.
\textsuperscript{585}RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.2.
\textsuperscript{586}RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.2
judgment. Every thinking man is either a theist (pantheist), atheist, or agnostic, and I would add, no man can realise his human condition in the full sense of what that implies without relating himself to God in anyone [sic] of these three alternatives. 587

In Rex's thought there is to be observed a progression from man's condition as freedom, to the values which guide its use, and further on to the question of authority (on what basis a potential conflict of values should be resolved). Thus he outlines the consequences for values based decision-making in the context of a theistic model, an agnostic model and an atheistic model. Rex himself identifies Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre as three writers of indubitable literary merit who have explored the question of freedom in great depth. Rex's explicit purpose is expressed in terms of appreciating the value of the authors' efforts as explorations of human identity:

For Dostoevsky, the question of freedom in man is central, and that is also the case in Kafka and Sartre. Dostoevsky explored this question in all its ramifications, psychological, sociological, and theological. Kafka posed this question within the ambiguity of the agnostic's world. And it is the merit of Sartre (following Heidegger) to have pointed to the very structure of our human condition as the source of our freedom. They are the true humanists of our age, because they have come to the rescue of man at a moment when he threatens to lose his identity in the laboratory of the scientist; in the ant-heap of modern mass-civilisation; and in the irrelevance of modern suburbia. 588

Fyodor Dostoevsky - author of humanity

Dostoevsky is Rex's starting point. Rex regards him as an eminent critic of the modern age. He claims that Dostoevsky anticipates Nietzsche in many ways and is his equal as a critic of nineteenth century naturalism and positivism. In Rex's view Dostoevsky was responsible for exploding "the myths on which our secularised civilisation rests in prophetic [sic] anticipation of what was to come." 589 Further: "the writings of Kafka and Sartre appear in their full significance to us only when we approach them from Dostoevsky's angle." 590

587RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.1f. By focussing on the 'thinking man' Rex excludes from the equation those whom Nietzsche describes as contributing to the death of God through their indifference.

588RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.3. Rex adopts the Dostoevskyian term 'ant-heap' and uses it in other situations. See for example his address at Alex Barton's induction at Sea-Cliff, BHR: p.230f.

589RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.3.

590RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.3.
Rex supports the claim that Dostoevsky preferred an intense life to a moral life by citing from *The Brother's Karamazov* textual evidence for Dostoevsky favouring emphasis on God's forgiving love rather than puritan striving. Rex connects Dostoevsky's writing with his real life experience, finding that: "When Dostoevsky affirms his belief in life with the words, 'Life is life everywhere' or when he defines man as the 'creature that can get accustomed to anything', he speaks with authority." In Rex's view Dostoevsky's life was as amazing as the events and characters in his books. Because Rex believes that Dostoevsky's life lends authority to his writing, he writes about it in some detail. In particular Rex describes the development of Dostoevsky's thought with an emphasis on his four years in a labour camp in Siberia from 1850-1854:

It was during that time that he made his threefold discovery of the common people; of Russia; and of the Gospel. It was from these three that he came to expect the salvation of mankind; they also furnished him with the criterion by which he judged the growing materialism of Western civilisation [...]. Dostoevsky came to look on the simple people and the Russian peasants in particular (mojlik) as a child who had retained for themselves [sic] the unspoiled candour and truth of children.

According to Rex Dostoevsky came to look on Russia as 'Christophorus', the God-bearing nation, and the "Gospel came to represent for him the triumph of the heart over the mind. Christ stands for the heart, the West for the mind". Rex's reporting of his marriages and travels lead into Dostoevsky's criticisms of the western belief in progress:

The Western belief in progress posed a number of questions for Dostoevsky. It was based on the assumption that man was essentially a rational creature. Is that actually the case? It operated with the idea of enlightened self-interest. Is self-interest actually the dominant motive in men's actions? The modern belief in progress virtually dispenses with the belief in God. But how can man be good without God? Modern democracy wants to set men free by raising them to a status of equality, but can freedom and equality be reconciled with one another? Modern

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591 RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.6f. Rex records: Janko Lavrin has said of Dostoevsky that he "preferred an intense life to a moral life. His aim was the fullness of existence, deepened by religion, and not the triumph of puritanism at the expense of both life and religion". Cf. Janko Lavrin, *An Introduction to the Russian Novel* (London: Methuen, 1947) p.113.
592 RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.4.
593 Rex uses the term 'phantastic' [sic] presumably intending the English term 'fantastic', believing it was the best word to convey the sense of the German term 'phantastisch' meaning 'unbelievable' or 'incredible'.
594 Rex reports that Dostoevsky was a condemned man before having his sentence commuted five minutes short of his execution. Dostoevsky then spent four years labouring in Siberia. As an epileptic, Rex contests that Dostoevsky saw things that were not accessible within the scientific paradigm.
595 RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.5.
596 RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.6.
socialism is about to create a race of free and happy men, but are not freedom and happiness mutually exclusive? Modern science is busy erecting its 'palace of glass' on the basis of mathematical equations, but can man live in a world that recognises no other truth but that two times two make four? All these questions were combined for Dostoevsky in the one overruling question, How can man be free in a world without God? The answer to this question presented itself for him in the alternative of the God-Man and the Man-God.597

Rex explains that Dostoevsky’s ‘Man-God’ is the one who has taken the place of God and is to be contrasted with the ‘God-Man’ Christ. 598 Dostoevsky’s thought provides the conduit for issues Rex regards as crucial to ‘our interests’.

**Humanity and the victory of the will**

When he has finished drawing parallels between Dostoevsky’s life and the thought which arises out of it, Rex uses Dostoevsky’s 1864 ‘Notes from the Underground’ as a starting point for a more detailed examination of key themes presented in his work.599 For Rex it is “a vitriolic attack on western science and an impassioned defence of the irrational in man”. 600 In Rex’s opinion the novel answers the age old question over which has primacy: will or reason. With the will primary all talk of ‘enlightened self-interest’ is dispelled as illusory.

In a more balanced and nuanced manner than elsewhere, Rex discusses the metaphor of the machine, introduced in the seventeenth century to describe the natural universe and later adopted by humans to describe their own place in it.601 Rex contests that

597RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.8f.
598RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.17f.
601RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.9. “The metaphor of the machine had been introduced in the seventeenth century, and its introduction had brought about a tremendous liberation of man. By learning to think of the natural universe in terms of a machine, he had finally rid himself of the power of demons which had threatened his soul from the Dark ages to the Renaissance, and he had come to possess a ‘disenchanted world’ of which he had made himself increasingly master. But what began in the seventeenth century as a tremendous process of liberation threatened by the middle of the nineteenth century to end in a new enslavement. Ever since the seventeenth century, western man increasingly developed the habit of approaching his own condition by the methods which were proving spectacularly successful in his approach to the natural universe. This was in itself no mistake. As a living organism, man is after all a natural phenomenon, and the methods of natural science are applicable to him too. And, as a matter of fact, in such fields as physiology, psychology, and sociology the application of these methods has contributed much to the understanding of man. But they do not touch the core of man. It is with this core that Dostoevsky is concerned.” Rex’s handling of the ‘metaphor of the machine’ is further dealt with in chapter eight of the present thesis.
Dostoevsky’s intention is the same as that which he posits for all people: to “prove to himself that he is a man and not a cog in a machine.”

The battle between will and heredity is a theme drawn out and explored by Rex. He argues that Dostoevsky’s protagonists are not victims of their passions but rather demonstrations of the embodiment of Dostoevsky’s belief in the primacy of will over reason. He finds such an attitude demonstrated by Dmitri in The Brothers Karamazov—choosing penal servitude in Siberia over escape to freedom in America “precisely in order to rescue his humanity through suffering.” Rex views this as a demonstration that the actions of man as a free agent cannot be explained by environment or heredity.

The burden of freedom

Implications of the question raised by Dostoevsky’s character Dmitri—“What will become of man when everything is permitted?”—are teased out by Rex in his examination of themes captured in The Possessed. The characters Stavrogin and Kirillov are examined as individuals who pursue their freedom in a world without God. Both choose to end their own lives.

The description of Stavrogin’s fate offers a concrete example of Rex’s ability to convey insights about the human condition drawn from other sources into his literature lectures. Stavrogin, a young man who “acts out his freedom to the utmost limit in a spirit of cool deliberation” yet whose “freedom is completely unrelated to any ideal or tangible goal”, “is overwhelmed by the sense of the meaningless of life, and his freedom becomes destructive and finally self-destructive.” Rex expounds with an insight drawn from his M.A. thesis:

We all find ourselves occasionally in a state where we feel that there is nothing to choose; nothing interesting on; nobody to talk to; nothing at all that stimulates us,
etc. In other words, we know what it means to be bored. Kierkegaard has said that boredom and not idleness is the root of all evil, and he was right. You can be idle and yet remain a human being in the fullest sense of that term. It all depends on how you employ your idleness. But when you are bored, your very humanity is at stake. Your freedom has become a burden to you, because you cannot think of anything to which to attach it. This state in its extreme form is what Stavrogin experiences. 608

Stavrogin with "no stake in life" commits suicide and while he regards him as an extreme case, Rex does not desist from using him as a contrast to "well-adjusted and law-abiding citizens of suburbia whose whole life virtually exists in the enactment of customs and conventions". 609 Stavrogin's anti-social behaviour provides a useful counterpoint and leads Rex into a sharp criticism of bourgeois existence. For Rex Stavrogin's "inhumanity is evidence of his humanity". 610 Further:

A Stavrogin awakes us from our suburban slumbers and recalls us to a true sense of our condition, and that, perhaps, is also what the delinquents of our own day do. There is a sense in which it is true to say that the real 'inhumanity' is not with a Stavrogin, but with suburbia where man sinks into animality, as his drives and reflexes take over where he ought to create his personality, accepting the responsibility which his freedom implies. 611

'Suburbia' is a cipher for Rex which represents his worst fears about contemporary man. 612 His portrayal of suburban man can easily be criticised as a caricature which does not do justice to the individual lives, decisions and anxieties of each person living in the suburbs. In Rex's thought 'suburbia' is best understood as representing a general attitude which favours conformity to customs and conventions over individual expression. As shall be seen in further chapters, the significant degree with which Rex concerns himself about this attitude is reflected in lectures and papers on a variety of subjects.

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608RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.15.
609RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.16.
610RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.16.
611RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.16.
612 Although, as a Professor of Theology and adherent to existentialist thought, he was no typical resident, Rex himself lived in the suburbs. The majority of Rex's life in New Zealand was spent with his wife in their suburban bungalow at 138 Signal Hill Road, Opopo, Dunedin.
For Rex the “full logic of the Man-God is worked out in Kirillov”. Kirillov, who is described as feeling like a new Messiah in a world without God, finds the ultimate expression of self-will in the decision to shoot himself. As an illustration that shows how “for the individual in his present constitution the idea of total freedom is too overwhelming as to be sustained without lapsing into insanity”, Rex examines the logic of Dostoevsky’s character. In Rex’s view the scene of Kirillov’s suicide “is anything but ‘divine’” and instead is suggestive of insanity.

The Grand Inquisitor, happiness and responsibility

Rex’s examination of Dostoevsky’s attempt at dealing with the idea of the Man-God in its collective setting is noteworthy for its attention to relating the detail of the ‘Legend of the Grand Inquisitor’. The lengthy citations and focus on conveying the moment of this story of freedom and its relationship to happiness from *The Brothers Karamazov* is rendered less surprising in the light of Rex’s comment that it is probably Dostoevsky’s masterpiece.

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613 See RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.17f. “The mystic’s experience of God is based on the assumption that a divine spark rests in his soul. If we were to use Dostoevsky’s terminology we might say that for the mystic the Man-God and the God-Man are not mutually exclusive. But they are so for Kirillov. For him God is in the way of Man. Either God is and then his will rules supreme or He is not and then man’s will rules supreme. In other words, man takes the place of God. Or, man is autonomous. We have here the creed of secularisation in its most radical form.” Cf. Rex’s Discussion on the God-Man p.25f.


616 RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.18f. As there is no God-given meaning to his life, Kirillov finds shooting himself a fitting expression for this. Rex describes his situation thus: “He sees his own suicide as an integral part of a whole philosophy of history. He is bound to show his unbelief, because he has no higher idea than disbelief in God, and he is convinced that he has the whole history of mankind on his side. ‘Man has done nothing but invent God so as to go on living, and not kill himself; that’s the whole of universal history up till now (562).’ But his own advent marks an epoch, a turning point in history, because he is ‘the first man in the whole history of mankind who would not invent God (562).’ This is the turning point. Therefore, the whole of history falls into two parts: the first extending from the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and the second from the annihilation of God [...] to the transformation of the earth and of man physically (102) for without such a transformation the Man-God could not bear his freedom. We have here a vision of the ‘superman’ before Nietzsche. Nietzsche was to say that man is in the making. This is also what Kirillov says in his own fashion [...] At present, life is pain and terror, and man is unhappy, because man fears death and God is the pain of the fear of death (102). God is ‘the pain of the fear of death’, that is Kirillov’s definition. That fear Kirillov wishes to kill by committing suicide. [...] It is in a messianic spirit that Kirillov accepts this ‘new terrible freedom’ and ‘opens the door’ for the future happiness of mankind (563, 564).” The page references correspond with the 1946 impression of Constance Garnett’s translation. See: F. Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, trans. Constance Garnett (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1946).


This praise is still higher when one considers that Rex regards Dostoevsky as one of the greatest writers ever.\textsuperscript{619}

In the first instance the story relays the terrible reality of a world that does not aspire to a Dostoevsḳyan understanding of the human condition. Rex cites the Grand Inquisitor’s accusing question to the imprisoned Lord - “Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil”\textsuperscript{620} - presenting the Inquisitor’s vision of a society that forgoes freedom in order to achieve happiness under rulers who lead them like sheep. He then contrasts this with his own understanding of Dostoevsky’s vision of the kingdom of God:

\textit{Men can live as ‘persons’ only if they accept their freedom in the choice of good and evil and if they recognise their fellows as endowed in the same manner. That ideal, however, was attainable to him only through the God-Man and that means, so far as the individual is concerned, through an act of conversion. Then and only then can equality and freedom unite.\textsuperscript{621}}

Subsequently Rex adds:

The Church, for him, is essentially a kingdom not of this world (57), and that kingdom will spread wherever starets Zossima’s maxim is accepted that ‘everyone is really responsible to all men, and for everything’.\textsuperscript{622}

Rex contests that responsibility to all men and for everything is the way of the God-Man in Dostoevsky’s thought. It is the ideal answer to the problem of ‘no God’ which is central to Dostoevsky’s work in Rex’s view. “When the gods fall, the demons emerge” and “When the gods fall, the Jones’s emerge” are the other two less appealing solutions Rex finds depicted in Dostoevsky’s work.\textsuperscript{623}

\textsuperscript{619}RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.7. “Dostoevsky is one of the greatest writers the world has ever known. No other author has contributed four major novels which can be classed as world literature, Crime and Punishment, The Possessed, The Idiot, and The Brothers Karamazov”.


\textsuperscript{621}RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.23.


\textsuperscript{623}RA119, Rex, ‘I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God’: p.24. The context suggests that Rex’s reference to “the Jones’s” is derogatory and refers to that ‘suburban’ attitude characterised in the expression “keeping up with the Jones’s”.

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Having outlined aspects of Dostoevsky's thought in this first lecture of the three prepared for Christchurch Presbytery in 1961, Rex moves in his next address to examine the world of man and the related question of meaning from the perspective of a thoroughgoing agnostic.

**Franz Kafka - incarnating the strangeness of life**

As he does with Dostoevsky Rex begins his examination of Kafka's work with a biographical sketch. Rex depicts Kafka as an outsider - introverted, tall, angular and sickly, an extreme ectomorph, leptosomatic. Rex tells of Kafka's relationship with his friend and literary executor Max Brod - Kafka's “window into the world” - and of the legal training he undertook reluctantly, as well as of his career as a public servant. Rex shares this background because he was convinced that the detail of Kafka's life played an important part in his literary work: "In Kafka, autobiographical and literary creation are even more inseparable than in Dostoevsky's [sic] work".

In a sense Kafka's conflict was that of many a young man who feels destined to write. It was the choice between literature and an ordinary career by which a man is able to support himself, a wife and family. But in Kafka's case this conflict took on a singularly dramatic form. He was determined to write, but he had not the heart to disappoint his father, a successful businessman who expected his son to get on in the world. Kafka [...] procured a position in the Austrian public service [...] which allowed him to leave his office at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The scene was set for a life of compromise, but it did not work in Kafka's case.

The many conflicts in Kafka's life and literature leave open a range of interpretative possibilities for scholars. Rex contests that the three main currents of interpretation of Kafka's work: "the theological; the psychoanalytical; and the sociological" are obvious. Rex supports this claim with examples. Contemplation of religious motifs is apparent in a survey of Kafka's diaries which sheds light on his person. Using material taken from these diaries Rex explains the nature of Kafka's neurotic relationship with his father as well as the reasons for Kafka's 'incapacity' to marry despite feeling the obligation to marry acutely. (II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina: p.3.) Rex argues that while Kafka attributes blame to his father in this regard, it is most fully explained by Kafka's fear that married life would interfere with his literary work even more than his employment as a public servant. (II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina: p.3.)

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625RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.3. While Rex believes Kafka's “literary work is as elusive as his person”, (II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina: p.3.) as we have indicated, he argues that the events and environment surrounding Kafka provide an aid to understanding his writing. Much was recorded in Kafka's diaries which sheds light on his person. Using material taken from these diaries Rex explains the nature of Kafka's neurotic relationship with his father as well as the reasons for Kafka's 'incapacity' to marry despite feeling the obligation to marry acutely. (II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina: p.2.) Rex argues that while Kafka attributes blame to his father in this regard, it is most fully explained by Kafka's fear that married life would interfere with his literary work even more than his employment as a public servant. (II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina: p.3.)
of his notebooks, diaries, aphorisms, shorter literary pieces and autobiographical material which reveal that "Kafka thought deeply on matters of ultimate concern". The potential for psychoanalytical interpretation is revealed in his diaries which give direct reference to Freud - and his "two major novels, The Trial and The Castle, are crowded with sexual symbols". Finally, Rex notes the bases for sociological interpretation:

Heinz Politzer, with an intimate knowledge of Kafka’s Prague, refers to the ‘triple ghetto’ of Jewish traditionalism, of his family’s prosperity, and the German tongue, which was the language of his books, but not the language spoken in the streets around his father’s house” (F.K. Today, 232), and he quotes Pavel Eisner’s words, “The German Jew in Czech Prague was, so to speak, an incarnation of strangeness and will-to-be-strange, was the people’s enemy without a people of his own.

While he does not explicitly state it, Rex develops an approach which draws on psychoanalytical and sociological insights but which finally focuses on matters of ultimate concern. That is, Rex develops an understanding of Kafka’s work which centres on its religious interests (the human condition ‘our interests’, and its relation to God).

The authenticity of consistent agnosticism

Rex spends a good deal of his lecture discussing the literary form and style of Kafka's writing, finding that open form and pictorial imagery allow for a multitude of interpretations. Of the traditional literary terms available, Rex deems the term ‘parable’ most apt to describe much of Kafka’s work. Further, Kafka’s failure to provide clear explanations for his parables is argued to be significant: “inconclusiveness is a true reflection of Kafka’s attitude to his own person and to life in general. All his major works remained fragmentary. This has almost symbolic significance". In a fashion, Rex ties Kafka’s life and his writing together in order to illustrate to his audience the way of life that being a ‘man of acute consciousness’ demands. Rex is implying that the ambiguity contained in a ‘correct’ understanding of the human condition is preserved in the language Kafka employs:

627RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.4.
628RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.4.
629RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.4.
630RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.6. “Kafka once spoke of a ‘numberless mixture of intentions’. This is precisely what we must be prepared for, particularly in his novels. Kafka’s language is definitely pictorial language. (Some might see in this evidence of a Hebraic tradition); his is not the language of clearly defined concepts”.
Now, the function of words is to be carriers of associations which come into play as people communicate with each other. But whereas a conceptual language, operating with clearly defined concepts, tries to reduce the number of associations for each word in order to avoid ambiguity, pictorial language increases this ambiguity as it tends to enhance the number of associations. This ambiguity is quite deliberate in Kafka, because it is precisely in these terms that he experiences himself and the world around him, and it is this sense of ambiguity that he reflects in his writing.632

Rex describes Kafka as a ‘consistent agnostic’ and uses this as a clue to explaining many aspects of his work.633 Rex argues that Kafka’s work is of interest to his audience because of the picture of the human condition which arises from his writing:

since for Kafka all problems take on an absolute dimension, they always transcend the sphere of purely personal and private. With him, they become instances of the human condition, and as such they take on a universal interest. They concern us, because here the human condition is meticulously laid bare right down to its ontological structures.634

As previously indicated, ontology of the human condition is particularly important to Rex. Probably because Rex frequently draws upon distinctions between humanity and animality for this task - he evaluates Kafka’s ‘playful’ use of animals as his protagonists. Rex likens Kafka’s pieces to Aesop’s fables, qualifying this remark in the following manner:

While Aesop’s fables teach their lessons about human nature in abstracto, Kafka’s fables pinpoint a concrete human condition in which the author is existentially involved. Aesop’s fables illustrate the behaviour of man the social animal; Kafka’s illustrate the condition of man who, as Sartre would say, ‘condemned to be free’, has to ‘map out’ his own destiny: in Kafka’s case, usually in dread of that freedom.635

Although Rex here draws upon parallels between the stance of the atheist Sartre and Kafka’s approach, he maintains that Kafka was an agnostic. According to Rex, the picture Kafka gives of the human condition “is a picture without God”, but God is not dead for

632RA119, Rex, ‘II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina’: p.6f.
633RA119, Rex, ‘II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina’: p.12. Rex also uses the corresponding term ‘consistent agnosticism’ to describe Kafka’s stance. See pp.9,10. On p.9 Rex summarises: “I have spoken of the ‘inconclusiveness’ of his writing and of the ‘ambiguity’ of his language as perfect expressions of his mind. A mind whose ruling attitude can be summed up as ‘consistent agnosticism’. That term applies here not only to the specifically religious questions of the existence of God, but quite generally to the question of meaning in life, and of the knowledge of self”.
635RA119, Rex, ‘II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina’: p.9f.
Kafka; “Kafka is not a virtual atheist”. Rex notes in Kafka’s statements on the subject “a strong sense of the absence of God and of his silence. All we have are traditions, scriptures, and messengers. They interested and intrigued him, but he did not put his trust in them.”

It is clear that Rex has a certain sympathy with Kafka’s position and he cites the following which he finds has an ‘authentic ring’:

On one occasion, Gustav Janouch, a young friend of Kafka’s asked him with youthful directness, What is Faith? Kafka replied, ‘Whoever has faith cannot define it, and whoever has none can only give a definition which lies under the shadow of grace withheld. The man of faith cannot speak, and the man of no faith ought not to speak.’ And he continued, ‘I try to be a true attendant upon grace. Perhaps it will come - perhaps it will not come. Perhaps this quiet yet unquiet waiting is the harbinger of grace, or perhaps it is grace itself. I do not know. But that does not disturb me. In the meantime I - have made friends with my ignorance’.

Rex and Kafka

Kafka is a particularly important figure for Rex. Although the reasons are finally unclear, it is interesting to speculate about why Rex found resonances sufficient in Kafka’s work to deliver a greater number of public lectures on him and his work than on any other individual author.

On the surface at least, the connection is apparent; Kafka, a leading German existentialist author, has written - with an eye to religious concerns - on exactly those aspects of the human condition in which Rex is interested.

639 Both Matheson and Andrew note the importance of Kafka to Rex. Source: Interview with Peter Matheson, Knox College, Dunedin, 18 December 2000; Interview with Maurice Andrew, 127 Signal Hill Road, Dunedin, 8 June 2000. The emphasis in a sentence in Rex’s 1966 autobiographical response to Breward is telling. In Rex’s sentence the recollection of his journey to his supervisor’s house is punctuated by a record of the death of his father and an incidental connection with Kafka. The latter is clearly more significant to Rex: “It was half an hour’s walk from my mother’s flat (My father died in 1934 when I was still a student) to Zippel’s flat, a walk that took me across the street in which Franz Kafka had lived during his short stay in Berlin, shortly before his death. At the time I was, however, unaware of this”. Source: RA003, ‘Untitled Response to Breward’: p.6, Q.9.
640 Prior to the 1961 lecture to Christchurch Presbytery entitled ‘II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina’, Rex had delivered a lecture to the Goethe society in 1956 (RA143, ‘Franz Kafka (Goethe Society)’) and two further lectures in 1960 (RA145, ‘The Psychological Interpretation of ‘The Trial’ by Franz Kafka’ and ‘Beyond the Psychological Interpretation of the Trial’).

641 There are a number of striking parallels between the two men that invite further speculation. Rex and Kafka share a number of physical and temperamental dispositions. Both, outsiders in their country of residence, could be argued to be ‘individuals of acute consciousness’; both were unusually thin, prone to anxiety; also, Kafka’s early death must have struck a chord with Rex, aware as he was of his own frailty.

Other correspondences invite comparison in the literary / publication sphere. Rex had reservations about the longevity of his contribution to theology. During a bout of severe illness, Rex was asked by a former student if
Kafka's refusal to introduce shortcuts to God (hence: 'No Deus ex machina', the title of Rex's address) recommends him to Rex. In Rex's view this 'consistent agnosticism' allows him to experience and describe the dread which is the human condition in God's absence, and yet Rex believes that "this agnostic has a truer realisation of what it means to enter the sanctuary than many a conventional churchgoer", as a 'consistent agnostic' he is not prepared to discard the religious tradition entirely. Rex finds parallels between Kafka's "believing means liberating the indestructible in oneself" and Tillich's 'courage to be'. In Rex the tragic in Kafka emerges as a consequence of the desire for the religious that accompanied his agnosticism:

Kafka was convinced that man cannot live without the belief in the indestructible element in him, even if he is at a loss to say what it is (Max Brod, F.K. 209,210). And to Gustav Janouch, Kafka said, "Truth is what every man needs in order to live, but can obtain or purchase from no one. Each man must reproduce it for himself from within, otherwise he must perish. Life without truth is not possible. Truth is perhaps life itself." These observations are of great importance. They show clearly under what conditions human existence in the full sense of that term is possible. Man must relate himself to a reality outside himself, call it God or the Law or Truth, it is immaterial. But this is the agnostic's predicament as it emerges in Kafka's work, there is no way of establishing satisfactory contact with this reality, and therefore in both his novels, for instance, his leading characters perish.

he had considered putting his life's work into a book; to which he replied: "I have never taken the time to explore and develop my thinking beyond what was necessary to meet the needs of my students. They were my first concern as a teacher and I spent all my time working for them. I have nothing more to give". 'Letter from Trevor Morrison to Bonnie Robinson' 18 July 1994: p.3. Like Rex, Kafka's most significant work was published posthumously - In Kafka's case against direct instructions to the contrary by his close friend and editor Max Brod. Rex's book DJR was only published posthumously, and many of his public papers were first published after his death in BHR. In his address to the Goethe Society in 1956 (RA143) Rex remarks in a footnote that Charles Neider regards perfectionist personalities as psycho-neurotic, and speculates that Kafka's literary perfectionism might be an aspect of his neurosis. The same footnote also witnesses to Brod's view to the contrary which stated that Kafka's lack of publication is best traced to his humility. It is tempting to speculate that Rex's lack of publication could result from the expression of a complex similar to Kafka's, yet the humility Rex had about his work might more simply be traced to the sharing of education and correspondence with a number of the biggest names in theology. Interestingly the letter to Bultmann that Rex composed towards the end of his life bears some similarity to Kafka's neurotic letter to his father. A translation of Rex's letter to Bultmann is found in BHR: p.271ff.


Avoiding the asylums of science and suburbia

Rex suggests that Kafka himself believed an escape from the endless ambiguity of the agnostic was only possible in death. As we have already noted it is the consistency and thoroughgoing nature of Kafka's agnosticism that impresses Rex. Rex puts forward an interpretation of Kafka's unfinished novel *The Castle* which sees the protagonist 'K.', 'a surveyor', as representative of modern man seeking contact with higher authority only on his own terms. Rex refers to an existing psychological interpretation which supports this understanding, and offers his own religious derivative. This passage illustrates not only the multiple layers of reading possible in Kafka's writing, but the kind of reading Rex is able to construct to support, for his audience, his understanding of Kafka's work:

On the psychological level of the novel itself: his own destiny for which he wants the endorsement of the Castle authorities (which stand for some kind of authority which he recognises as final, be it conscience or some other 'law'). But by an easy transition, the 'surveyor' becomes, on the religious level, modern man who has become the measure of all things, mapping out his world as he goes along. Again, he looks for endorsement, this time to God or whatever name you wish to put in the place of ultimate reality, and again he wants the endorsement on his own terms. Here is the impasse, and it is Kafka’s merit that he sustained this impasse without introducing any Deus ex machina that will carry him across the human stage into safety.

In the final paragraph of his lecture on Kafka Rex approvingly records Brod’s comment that Kafka's contribution was to clarify the absence of clarity in the human condition, "In other words its ambiguity". Again Rex stresses that the "important thing is that Kafka ‘held out’ under this ambiguity, taking the full brunt of it". Essentially Rex wishes his audience to recognise that Kafka has chosen the more difficult path: that of the individual who does not seek refuge in "either of the two ‘asylums’ which modern man has...".

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646 RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.17.
647 It is important to note that Rex finds it necessary to argue that Kafka is an agnostic. He acknowledges Max Brod’s view to the contrary and engages with it: “Max Brod has rejected the label of ‘agnosticism’ for Kafka. When he did it, he had in mind that Kafka was in some sort of relationship with the absent God: that he was aware of his absence and would have preferred it otherwise. And it is true, Kafka does not exclude the hope for the future, but like the messengers in his novels who always arrive too late or not at all, Kafka’s Messiah comes one day after the Last Day [...] In the meantime, Kafka endures the absence of God”. RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.11.
648 RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.15.
649 Brod’s comments are recorded in: Max Brod, *Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1954) p.211.
650 RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.17.
created for himself; science and suburbia". Put another way, Rex holds Kafka up as modelling an approach which finds a way between two extremes - succumbing neither to the absolute determinism popular in modern science nor to the temptation to hide from the consequences for humanity of modern 'scientific' thought.

Jean-Paul Sartre revisited as the Man-God in action

Following the lecture on Kafka, Rex's third and final address to Christchurch Presbytery was on Sartre. Entitled 'Sartre: God's Widower', it contains much material that would be recognisable to a reader of Rex's earlier lectures and papers on Sartre. Those papers have been examined in a previous chapter of the present thesis. What is useful to examine in the present context is the parallels and divergences Rex notes in Sartre's thought when it is placed alongside that of Dostoevsky and Kafka, the other two men of 'acute consciousness' that he selects for examination in this series. In fact, Rex sets the scene for his lecture with just such a comparison:

Dostoevsky had warned his generation that if God is dead then everything is permitted. The alternative is virtually chaos or some form of authoritarianism or other. In this situation, man's freedom is at stake - unless he turns from the Man-God to the God-Man for the rescue of his freedom. This was of course, essentially a believer's solution. Kafka was not a believer, nor was he a humanist who looked to reason for moral guidance and a justification of life. Instead, he tasted to the full the ambiguity of man's situation in a world without God. In such a world the 'authorities' man ought to look to for guidance have an irrational and confusing sound. In this atmosphere, man cannot breath. The air is poisoned without and within. He is paralysed into inaction. Like Kafka, Sartre is neither a believer nor a humanist. He is an atheist, but not of Kirillov's type. God is dead for him, and he resolutely takes on his shoulders the burden of the world - as God's widower. Not exactly that he rejoices at the Death of God; like Dmitri, he is sorry to lose him. But one cannot help feeling that even during his lifetime, God was rather in the way of Sartre. He would have been a rather jealous wife, coveting the 'freedom' of her husband.

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651 RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.17. Rex depicts Kafka as exemplary in facing the challenge of his individuality head on. Accordingly, he concludes his address in the following way: "Kafka's world is a tripartite world, as he said in his letter to his father. For him there is the world of his father (authority); his own world; and the world in which everybody else lived. Although Kafka looked with some longing at this 'third world', it was closed to him. For him it was, as Maurice Blanchot has put it, either the Wilderness or Canaan (F.K. Today, 217). This alternative was in his view not only his personal alternative, but quite universally, the alternative before which all men alike are put. 'There is no third world for mankind (Tg.565: 28, Jan. 1922)." RA119, Rex, 'II. Franz Kafka: No Deus Ex Machina': p.17f.

652 See chapter four.

Rex adds that he is not aware that Sartre was, in fact, personally married to God at any point and describes his situation as a widower of God as something which Sartre relishes: "After his brief and perfunctory mourning, Sartre has thrown open the windows of the dead God's house and let in the fresh air - the fresh air of freedom."

Rex recognises Sartre's dependence on Dostoevsky for inspiration and basic concepts. Rex opines: "In Sartre we have the Dostoevskyan Man-God in action and he shows by his example that Dostoevsky was right when he said that freedom and equality cannot be reconciled in a set-up that is dominated by the Man-God". Rex likens Sartre's Man-God to Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor in concluding that the majority of people wish to be rid of their freedom.

While Rex alludes to the term 'mauvaise foi' in the first instance he is careful to explain it in terms of 'make-believe' rather than 'bad faith'. This lecture on Sartre is notable for its clear explanation of Sartre's terminology. Some formulations remain the same: 'Projet originel' receives the common translation 'fundamental choice', but in other places Rex chooses to avoid Sartrean jargon completely. 'Le Neant', 'pour-soi' and 'en-soi', are avoided in favour of concentration on the consequences of Sartre's 'rift'. While the flow of ideas is similar, and significant sections of the lecture contain recognisable origins in Rex's earlier work, these notable simplifications and shifts in emphasis indicate that - with an increasing familiarity with the material and the New Zealand audience - Rex has chosen to make corresponding alterations to his material.

As in Rex's 'Existentialist Freedom' article examined in the previous chapter, the contribution of Sartre and Heidegger is depicted as valuable against an overwhelming...
heritage of determinism in western thought. Correspondingly, the first half of Rex’s Christchurch Presbytery lecture on Sartre is primarily devoted to outlining Sartre’s system and explaining its benefits while the second half focuses on its shortcomings.

A true picture of man in a world without God

In this third lecture to Christchurch Presbytery Rex employs formulations both new and familiar. Some formulations are plucked from his earlier lectures; for example: “A man’s character, so Sartre insists, is the result of his free choices in face of heredity and environmental factors”. Others are new:

What makes other people ‘hell’ to the Sartrean man is not just this or that nauseating characteristic or an intolerable degree of incompatibility, but their ability of reducing him, the subject of his world into an object of their world. Or, in other words, their ability of putting an interpretation on him which he has not authorized. Sartrean man is an extraordinarily sensitive creature who cares and worries about what every little goose thinks of him.

This memorable expression of Sartre’s position is complimented by the observation that “these Sartrean ‘gods’ have little opportunity to enjoy their divinity. They are like a host of bereaved relatives who quarrel over the legacy of the departed”. To observations made by Hermann Gunkel and Gabriel Marcel found in his other writings on Sartre, Rex adds insights from the Freudian Roberts who describes Sartre as like an ego-centric infant who resists growing up - hanging on to impulses and illusions of god-like omnipotence as long as he can.

Roberts is also credited with offering an assessment of Sartre’s attempts to do justice to the ‘we’ of human relations, finding that Sartre’s understanding of the concept differs in an important way from the Christian understanding:

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663 RA119, Rex, ‘III Sartre: God’s Widower’: p.5. Cf. ‘Existentialist Freedom’: p.212: “His character is the result of a man’s free choices in face of hereditary and environmental factors”. Both texts are then followed by exact same sentence “In other words, all given factors are in themselves neutral”.
666 While he does give page numbers, Rex does not give a source for his citations from Roberts. It is likely that he is referring to Harold Roberts. Work on a similar theme can be found in Harold Roberts, ‘Self-deception’ in *The Expository Times*, Number 61, December 1949: pp.74-77.
Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre's associate, puts at the head of her novel, *The Blood of Others*, the words of the starets Zossima, 'Each of us is responsible for everything and to every human being.' These words could also have been appropriated by Sartre himself, but in both cases, they have lost their original meaning. Dostoevsky naturally thought of the solidarity of the human race which the Christian feels in his love for it. With Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre, the same words relate to the idea that with the demise of God, man is carrying the whole weight of the world on his own shoulders, and by making others part of his world he also makes himself responsible for them, without, however being, in the original sense, 'responsible to' them. Sartre comes nearest to the Christian sense of solidarity in his concept of 'total engagement' by which a man accepts his solidarity with lovers of freedom against its enemies (cp. Roberts, 222).\(^{667}\)

This weighing-up of Sartre's commitment to his fellow human beings is a continuation of Rex's examination of and concern about the impossibility of ethics in a Sartrean world. In this vein Rex admits that the dominant theme in Sartre remains that of estrangement: "The self is cast into this condition without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness and dies by chance".\(^{668}\) There appears to be little hope, in Rex's assessment, of finding a common purpose for humanity in a world without God. For Rex the importance of Sartre's work lies in its accurate reflection of the human condition in a world without God:

> The question is [...] has he given us a true picture of man in a world without God? And here those among us who have been brought up on the doctrine of the total depravity of man should find little cause for complaint. His picture is as dark as the Calvinistic catechism's.\(^{669}\)

Rex believes that the roots of Sartre's discontent with religion lie in his French Protestant heritage. He depicts Sartre as reacting to the faith of his forebears: "as a result much of what he says about God and religion is puerile and does not command the same respect as his numerous astute observations concerning different aspects of the human condition".\(^{670}\) Rex finds Sartre's understanding of religion to be qualitatively similar to that of David Hume, that is: "religion is based on fear".\(^{671}\)


\(^{668}\) RA119, Rex, 'III Sartre: God's Widower': p.15.

\(^{669}\) RA119, Rex, 'III Sartre: God's Widower': p.16.

\(^{670}\) RA119, Rex, 'III Sartre: God's Widower': p.16.

\(^{671}\) RA119, Rex, 'III Sartre: God's Widower': p.16.
The aim of Rex's final address is to convince an audience to read Sartre as an accurate picture of the human condition in a world without God. In this regard it completes his trilogy of pictures, complimenting Dostoevsky - the believer, and Kafka - the agnostic. In a certain sense, these addresses may be viewed as representing a development or secularisation of Bultmann's demythologising project. In this perspective they adumbrate the notion of kerygma in the Bultmannian sense. They present a number of attitudes towards the world and an understanding of the human condition and its relationship to God in such a manner that the way one goes about one's life after reading them can only be considered as a reaction to them - even the decision not to react to them may be considered a decision.

Rex uses Dostoevsky, Sartre and Kafka for his own ends. Their stories offer Rex material for his presentation of the present day in his broader 'history of ideas'. In their original context Rex's literature lectures were intended to inform ministers, and ministers-to-be, of the reality of the world around them; to enable them to be more proficient at assessing the society in which they lived; and to be able to make more constructive interventions - guiding their charges towards 'the fullness of life'.
Chapter Six - Hermeneutics

Introduction

Rex’s 1954 return from a German theological scene bubbling with debates on hermeneutics, and the spectacle of his Vorbild, Bultmann, at their very centre, would seem to have fuelled his interest in this area. He proposed the introduction to Knox Theological Hall of a course dedicated to hermeneutics. This course was instituted in 1955. As we have seen, he had an existing interest in the intersection of Biblical Studies and Theology, and few subject areas could claim to stake out this territory more clearly than that of hermeneutics.

Rex subsequently produced a course-book which was to become familiar to theological students over the following decade and beyond. His ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’ was first produced in hard-bound foolscap form in 1958. A monograph

672 Prior to Rex’s course on hermeneutics, students were taught biblical studies which focussed less on theory and more on the practice of exegesis.
'Helmut Rex, 1913-1967' was added after his death by Prof. Ian Breward and the text continues to be used as a teaching resource at the Theological Hall.674

Opening with a brief history of the subject which is clearly viewed from the perspective of the Protestant tradition, Rex's 'Hermeneutics' proceeds to examine fundamental hermeneutical issues of textual definition and critical methodology and introduces basic theory such as the hermeneutic circle. In the final chapters, Rex focuses more closely on interpretation of the Old Testament, prominent contemporary thinkers and ultimately on the benefits of Bultmann's demythologising project.

The most important expression of Rex's thought on hermeneutics outside his teaching text is found in his article 'Hermeneutics Today' published in 1960 in The Reformed Theological Review.675 In the article Rex stresses the priority of the historical-critical method as a tool for interpreting scripture. It is presented as the only method which can hope to satisfy the demand for general validity in the interpretation of particulars found in literary and historical documents. This is granted by Rex since it "rests on the axiom of analogy, and it insists on the strictest possible canons of verification".676 As we shall see, this belief is fundamental to Rex's 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction', and this is hardly surprising since, to a large extent, the former article is a distillation and re-expression of the latter teaching text.

This chapter is devoted to a critical analysis of Rex's 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction'. It does not propose to deal with the subject of hermeneutics as a whole. The critical examination of this text undertaken in the present chapter will reveal that Rex's focus on 'our interests' is not limited to his study of existentialist authors. His model of theology rooted in 'Christ and our interests' locates existentialist concerns even at the heart of that bulwark of Protestant Christianity - the interpretation of the Scriptures. We will observe Rex's reliance on, and commitment to, the basic elements of Bultmannian theology.

674 RA121, Helmut H. Rex, 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction: with monograph 'Helmut Rex: 1913-1967' by Ian Breward', bound typescript, Knox College, 1967. The text continues to serve students studying in Dunedin for the Presbyterian Ministry in a course on preaching taught by the Rev. Dr. Mary Huie-Jolly. Dr. Huie-Jolly has used the text for her MINX401 and MINS401 (1998-2003) courses because it contains reference to many of Bultmann's writings that never appeared in English translation and because of its clarity of expression for ideas.


(including its Heideggerian foundations). Further, in showing a willingness to challenge the conclusions of thinkers he admires, Rex demonstrates that aspect of theology he most wishes his students to emulate - critical engagement. Finally, having analysed the strengths and weaknesses of Rex's introduction to hermeneutics, noted its groundbreaking status in New Zealand theology, and appreciated the new strands of thought it introduced to his adopted country, it will be suggested that it is time to heed Rex's challenge to discover new and more appropriate methodological approaches to the study of hermeneutics, since if we do not address the correct (current to our human condition) questions to the text, it will remain silent.

Defining hermeneutics

Rex's 'Hermeneutics' begins appropriately with a definition of the subject. The definition maps out a scientific space for the discipline that challenges the validity of traditional 'non-scientific' religious approaches (allegorical and otherwise). With an emphasis on intuition, the definition also protects against mechanistic reproduction and the application of universals, which Rex suspects analytical philosophers of tending towards:

Hermeneutics is the art or science of interpreting literary texts. It matters little whether you call it an art or a science. In fact, it is both. It is a science in so far as it goes about its business in a methodological and orderly way with due regard to standards and criteria of verification (Dilthey, one of last century's pioneers in the subject, was concerned with the erection of a system of Geisteswissenschaften which would be in its own way as 'scientific' as the recognised system of natural sciences); it is an art in so far as much of the success of interpretation depends on one's intuition, imagination, and quite generally, on one's ability to think and feel oneself into that world of experience and thought of which the texts are an expression. If you wish, on one's empathy (J.G. Herder): the power of putting oneself in another's place.677

The term's etymological links with 'interpretation' are outlined - as well as its connections with 'translation' in the New Testament material. From this start Rex moves through a brief history of the subject. Rex's history sees Protestant theologians Luther, Schleiermacher and Bultmann emerge as the major contributors to a history of hermeneutics, which had been previously marked by allegorical and typological methodologies. Luther is credited with having "dethroned the allegorical method from its

677RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.I.
dominant position”, and with introducing a more existential (personal) interpretative approach. In the history of hermeneutics other landmark figures include, in Rex’s view, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, who, working on the reformation assumption that scripture should be its own interpreter developed the doctrine of authorial intention as definitive for textual interpretation; Hugo Grotius, who viewed texts in the context of the Judeo-Hellenistic origins; and Jean Alphonse Turretini to whose declaration, that one set of hermeneutic rules should apply for sacred and secular texts alike, Rex readily assents.

Among his list of luminaries in the history of hermeneutics since Luther, Rex attributes “the outstanding contribution” to Schleiermacher: “the most outstanding Protestant theologian after Calvin”. At the beginning of the 19th century, Schleiermacher attempted to discern hermeneutical rules by examining the act of interpretation itself. Rex describes this process in the following way:

We might say, he attempted to see the processes of understanding and interpretation as part of the human condition. In other words, he took account of the fact that man is an interpreter by nature: a recognition which Nietzsche was to take up in his own forceful manner when he ridiculed the Positivists for trying to go straight to the ‘facts’ (‘Tatsachen’). As if that were humanly possible!

Schleiermacher is to be commended because, according to Rex, interpreters in his wake have paid greater attention to historical and psychological factors surrounding authors and their production of literary texts. Most significantly, Schleiermacher based his hermeneutic structure on a conviction he shared with other thinkers of the 18th century: that

Additional footnotes:

678 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.II.
679 This was at the time a direct attack on the hermeneutic stronghold of Protestant scholasticism: the doctrine of verbal inspiration. It is, however, an axiom that has become the common property of all responsible interpretation of scripture in the last two centuries”. RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.III. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.11.
680 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.III.
681 Rex is heavily dependent upon Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) for his history of hermeneutics. Dilthey, believed Schleiermacher’s was the first to attempt to construct a general hermeneutics (Schleiermacher also believed this of himself). This widely held belief has been demonstrated to be a fallacy since an earlier tradition of hermeneutic interpretation has been rediscovered. The history of this tradition (beginning with Johann Conrad Dannhauer and Johann Clauberg) is traced by Alex Bühler and Luigi Cataldi Madonna in the introduction to an edited imprint of a work by an eighteenth century hermeneuticist. See: Georg Friedrich Meier, Verzucht einer allgemeinen Auslegungskunst, mit einer Einl. und Anm. hrsg. von Alex Bühler und Luigi Cataldi Madonna (Hamburg: Meiner, 1996). See especially the introductory section: ‘II Zur Geschichte der Hermeneutik im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert bis zu Meiers Auslegungskunst’: pp.XXI-LIII.
682 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.III. The recognition that humans are interpreters by nature is very important to Rex – particularly in light of his commitment to a Christian existentialism that places upon the individual the burden of his or her own choices.
the individual man is essentially identical in nature to all other men. Surprisingly for one so taken with existentialism, Rex argues that a commitment to this belief is fundamental to the hermeneutic enterprise:

All individual differences of personality are essentially not differences in quality but in degree only. On this assumption the whole business of hermeneutics rests. Without it, it would be futile to attempt understanding and interpreting the literary production of other men.683

This assertion stands in glaring contrast to Rex’s existentialist commitment to individualism in decision-making as a defining aspect of the truly human life and it runs contrary to the existentialist conviction that there is no essential sameness shared by individuals. That Rex does not address this contradiction in his thought at this point is certainly an oversight. As we have seen, he regards the recognition that ‘existence precedes essence’ as the most significant contribution of the existentialists.

The distinction between biblical and general hermeneutics

Despite believing that one method of interpretation should apply to sacred and secular literature alike, Rex holds the opinion that the distinction between biblical literature and literature generally, ought to be upheld - as we shall see further. Through his dry mocking of Barth, Rex underscores the importance of explicit and defensible grounds to an argument for discrimination between general hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics. Since Rex finds Barth’s case for not making a distinction between the two unconvincing, he derides it, while Bultmann’s argument - judged more compelling though it reaches the same conclusion - is treated with greater respect.684

Bultmann’s argument that no distinction should be made between the practise of general and biblical hermeneutics is valid in Rex’s opinion, since it is based on explicit adherence to Turreini’s axiom, that the rules of hermeneutics should be the same for sacred and secular alike. Nevertheless, Rex discerns on other grounds that it is useful to preserve a

684RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.IV. Rex does not cite an original source for either Barth or Bultmann’s case. He describes Barth’s adherence to the belief that the Bible should provide the basis for the understanding of all other texts and is dismissive of it - recalling the popular criticism of Barth’s theology as ‘christomonism’. Bultmann’s argument is described in the following paragraph (above).
distinction between biblical and general hermeneutics. Thus, of the scriptures, he states: “they come to us with the claim of being the Word of God which engages us in such a way that our attitude to it [sic] becomes a matter of life and death for us (Paul Tillich!).” For Rex this unique existential claim raises the possibility of a separate hermeneutic for the Scriptures.

It is important to pay careful attention to Rex’s argument at this point, since despite the cautious wording early in his publication, he proceeds to assume the validity of a distinction between a general and a biblical hermeneutic throughout the work:

Questions of interpretation arise which are the unique property of the biblical writings. Of course, that quality does not attach to them as such, but then the biblical writings ‘as such’ are a mere abstraction. ‘As such’ they are not accessible to us at all. Nietzsche’s reminder is here in place, and Bultmann would be the first to grant it seeing as he is the most trenchant critic of so-called objective ‘Heilstatsachen’ today. In short, the biblical writings carry that additional quality which makes the distinction between general and biblical hermeneutics feasible, because we approach them as believers: because they are offered to us in the interpretation of the church.

Here Rex opens the way for an understanding of Bultmann’s kerygmatic approach to the scriptures. Indeed, the remainder of Rex’s introduction is reserved for a primer on Bultmann. Bultmann is in his opinion, “the central figure in the contemporary discussion of hermeneutics to an extent that one might almost say, it has become a matter of for or against Bultmann.” The fact that he also devotes the entirety of his sizeable penultimate chapter to Bultmann underscores the seriousness with which Rex offers this assessment of his work in the area of hermeneutics.

‘A matter of for or against Bultmann’

In his primer on Bultmann Rex draws his students’ attention to Bultmann’s essay ‘The Problem of Hermeneutics’, in which the Marburg theologian examines the...
contribution to nineteenth century hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. 689 Rex assesses Bultmann’s selection of Dilthey’s question “whether our understanding of the individual can be given general validity”, 690 finding that this “question circumscribes [...] the whole problem with which the Geisteswissenschaften [the humanities] are faced in contrast to the natural sciences and their occupation with the universal”. 691 Although he offers no definitive answer, Rex signals with this that he considers the question - of whether general validity could be attributed to the work of the individual authors and unique societies that produced the biblical texts - highly pertinent.

On the question of whether authority of interpretation should lie with authorial or textual intention, Rex steers a path between existing positions. It is likely that he does this because his focus is on the kerygmatic implications of the text - its impact on the individual in the here and now. Bultmann’s criticism of Dilthey and Schleiermacher for placing too great an emphasis on affinity with the authors of a text to be interpreted, meets with Rex’s approval: “Bultmann is, of course, right when he says that we go to the text for the interest which it has for us and not for our interest in the author”. 692 Yet Rex, in turn, is critical of Bultmann’s swing in the direction of the affinity with the text; which in his view goes too far:

As it is, the two interests which can engage us in the study of a text (i.e. in the author and in what the text says) need not exclude each other even on the ground of a kerygmatic theology. For it should be obvious that we have a better chance of understanding what the text says to us once we know its author better]. 693

As we shall see, for Rex it is ‘our interest’ - an interest shaped by Bultmannian existential engagement - which draws us to a text and determines our interpretation of it. As


689 Dilthey is depicted as having contributed to an understanding of interpretive processes as fundamental to the human condition. Previously the study of hermeneutics had focussed more nearly on the subject matter per se of the scriptures.


691 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.V. Comments in parentheses following this statement would indicate that, in the classroom context, Rex would have evoked the metaphor of the zoologist and the lion-tamer - an image familiar to the audience of his 1949 inaugural lecture. See: Helmut Rex, ‘In Defence of the Individual’, in Landfall 10, June 1949: p.113. This material is discussed in chapter three of the present thesis.

692 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.V.

693 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.V. When Rex speaks here of the ‘author’ of scripture, he is referring to the Sitz im Leben of the text - its original purpose in the community in which it was written - the very human aspect of scriptural authorship.
has already been mentioned, Bultmann's theory of existential engagement has strong philosophical underpinnings and is deeply indebted to Heidegger. To outline Bultmann's analysis of the process of understanding or interpretation - as an Existenzial - Rex offers a brief introduction to the thought of Heidegger as presented in his 1927 work *Sein und Zeit.* As Rex explains:

Heidegger distinguishes rigidly between human existence (human condition) and the world of objects. In order to bring home to us the difference he refuses to apply the 'categories' to the human condition; they apply only to the world of objects. [...] The two must be kept strictly apart [...] We might, therefore, say rather pointedly and paradoxically, [...] the Existenzialien are the categories of the human condition. The two most outstanding Existenzialien are 'authenticity' and 'non-authenticity' [...].

Distilling the significance of Heidegger's work for his student audience, Rex underscores the fact that Heidegger has shown man to be an 'interpreting animal':

He cannot help but interpret. It is his way of existing in his humanity. He is made that way. In their own way, Nietzsche as well as Schleiermacher had said the same thing. But it was left to Heidegger to work out this recognition and to give it more than a psychological or aphoristic expression in a philosophical ontology that traces the fundamental structure of the human condition.

That each human being is responsible for his or her interpretation of the biblical material - and corresponding decisions in face of the kerygma - is something Rex is hoping to underscore with his explication of Bultmann's work including its basis in Heideggerian ontology. Thus even where he disagrees with Bultmann - such as over the acceptability of a biblical hermeneutic separate from general hermeneutics - it is on the basis of a kerygmatic understanding of the scriptures which has its roots in Bultmann's thought.

**Every text is an interpreted text**

Based on the idea that humans are interpreters by nature, Rex holds that every text is an interpreted text. "The belief that one can go straight to the text is [...] based on an illusion". He uses an everyday metaphor to describe the way a tradition shapes a text: even if one wishes for the ‘raw’ dish, the biblical interpretation of one's elders means that it

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694RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.V.
695RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.VI.
696RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.VI.
is supplied in a ‘cooked’ form. Accordingly, Rex declares that certain biblicist approaches are “simply mistaken about the human condition”, and warns that the refusal to acknowledge that we “cannot have the text other than as an interpreted text” leads to a situation where the chance of viewing a text critically is ‘cut off’. Rex correctly asserts that a proponent of a biblicism “which hopes by bypassing doctrinal traditions and denominational commitments to get straight to the Bible itself” is guilty of “uncritically identifying his unconscious interpretation of the text with the text itself”.

To elucidate the way a text reaches us, Rex also describes the Bible as a fountain (of life) which the expositor approaches from a certain road. The road to the fountain is provided by a previous generation, and upon arrival at the fountain, the traveller’s first view of the fountain is from a perspective provided by that road. In characteristic fashion, Rex is able to draw his metaphors together to offer clear advice on the way matters theological ought to proceed:

As it is, every interpretation carries an element of risk (the chance of being mistaken) and it needs continual checking and re-checking. But this can only be done if one has a clear understanding of the road on which one has approached the text. Or, if you wish, the way one has ‘cooked’ the text, for in a sense, hermeneutics is the art of ‘cooking’ a text properly.

**Vorverständnis and ‘our interests’**

It is worth noting that this metaphorical ‘feast’ provides a useful way for Rex to engage his audience in the topic. No doubt this is his intention. Having methodically secured the interest of his audience, he then begins to unravel specific hermeneutic concepts, starting with a definition of Vorverständnis:

[R]oughly it stands for the presuppositions (conscious or unconscious to us) with which we approach a text. These presuppositions can be determined by a number of factors: the doctrinal tradition in which we happen to stand; our denominational

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697RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VI.
698RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VI.
700 An ability to coin striking metaphors was one of Rex’s gifts as a teacher. Maurice Andrew comments: “Rex’s whole performance was a ‘mixed-metaphor’. Consciously and unconsciously he was translating ideas his whole life”. Interview with Maurice Andrew, 127 Signal Hill Road, 9 June 2000.
701RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VI. Rex’s culinary metaphors were well remembered by Rex’s former students. Cf. BHR: p.80, 83.
commitment; our beliefs concerning the human condition quite generally; the questions we bring to the text; or the universe of discourse within which we consider the text. 702

Rex is at pains to emphasise that “without such a ‘Vorverstándnis’ the texts remain silent”. 703 Further, if one’s Vorverstándnis is ‘inadequate’, the text yields corresponding results. For Rex “the questions must be commensurate with the text”. 704

The link in Rex’s thought between Vorverstándnis and ‘our interests’ is an important one. As noted above, ‘our interests’ are of fundamental importance for Rex - without them, there is no possibility of engagement with the text, and therefore no possibility of a refined understanding of our own condition and situation. That is, one’s Vorverstándnis cannot be engaged and enhanced if individual texts are not attended to with the individual’s interests (those common to the human condition) in mind. As Rex notes:

Of course, we may not be interested in the subject with which a given text or number of texts are dealing. In that case, we shall not address any questions to the text, and it will remain silent. We only ask questions when we are interested! This, our interest, is in fact of fundamental importance. It is our interest that provides us with a perspective and a point-of-view: the focus round which we organise our experiences in life. 705

Rex offers a striking description of a Wellington street scene to discuss the way in which ‘our interests’ shape our reading of a text or situation:

Three men may happen to stand in Lambton Quay at the same time and virtually in the same place, and yet the way they assimilate that experience will vary according to the interpretation they put on it, and that interpretation depends on their interests. For the smoker the focus will be the shop window which displays a particularly attractive collection of pipes; for the man who is in a hurry to post an urgent letter it will be the letter box, and for the idler with plenty of time on his hands it will be the blonde in the black satin dress whom he noticed in the crowd. 706
As we have noted previously, that which shapes Rex’s understanding of ‘our interests’ is existentialism. The most basic question one might ask in response to Rex’s choice of existentialist categories is how he might justify this choice in his hermeneutics. Why should existentialist questions be viewed as the ‘correct’ questions to address to the text? Rex addresses this question in his article in *The Reformed Theological Review*. This passage contains Rex’s justification for adopting and adapting a Bultmannian approach to hermeneutics and is therefore important enough to be cited at some length:

What then are “interests opposed to the Bible” and what is the criterion for the “right” kind of interest? Many a contemporary theologian would be inclined to quote Bultmann’s attempt to rediscover Heidegger’s “Existential” categories in the New Testament as a blatant example of an “interest opposed to the Bible.” Thielicke, for instance, confronts in this context “principles alien to the Bible,” such as Heidegger’s philosophy as well as Kantianism and Idealism, with the “facultas se ipsam interpretandi” of Scripture. This is not the place to discuss the rights and wrongs of Bultmann’s use of Heidegger; the question is rather whether a philosophical tool extraneous to the Bible is eo ipso “alien” to it as well. The answer to that question must be definitely no, for an affirmative invalidates not only the whole history of theology; it also lacks realism. Here Bultmann is more realistic than Thielicke when he points out that every interpreter depends at least in an unreflective and uncritical manner on some philosophical tradition or other. And I should say that he is setting us an example when he demands of himself ruthless honesty in the matter. In view of our knowledge of the influence of the Jewish and Hellenistic environment on the formulation of the Christian message, it is at least advisable to take cognizance of the problematic nature of such terms as “extraneous” and “alien,” when applied to our biblical interpretation. If it was “right” for the apostle Paul to avail himself of gnostic concepts, then Bultmann should be able to claim an equal “right” of availing himself of Heidegger’s philosophy as a matter of principle. For just as Paul did not become a “gnostic” by his use of gnostic categories, so it is at least conceivable that Bultmann has not reduced the Gospel to existentialism by his use of Heidegger. That this might be the case, or at least partly the case, does not affect the principle as such.707

Rex and the biblicists

In his view of biblicists Rex is not only pragmatic and open-handed, but also ostensibly sympathetic. Yet Rex is clear that he cannot accept the world-view of the

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708 Rex uses the term ‘biblicist’ and ‘fundamentalist’ interchangeably.
709 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XII: “one cannot altogether be without sympathy for the fundamentalist for he is suffering acutely under the strain which the application of the historical-critical method introduces to the Bible: a strain that is too obvious as that it can be ignored by anyone, and to a certain degree we all suffer from it.” Cf. Rex, RTR, February 1960: p.11f. Further Maurice Andrew remarks that Rex, though undoubtedly more liberal in his views, did not confront biblical literalists in the manner that his Old Testament contemporary George Knight did. Interview with Maurice Andrew, 127 Signal Hill Road, 8 June 2000.
biblicist. Admitting that such stances are never taken without the influence of temperament, Rex for example, follows Bultmann in rejecting a literal understanding of the three-tiered universe which imagines earth sandwiched between heaven above and hell below.\textsuperscript{710} Rex recognises that an individual's general world-view is very important to his or her specific interpretations.

According to Rex even the view that scripture should be its own interpreter - put forward by people of more moderate views than the biblicists - is flawed.\textsuperscript{711} In order to illustrate that two people within the Christian faith who have adopted different interpretive strategies will struggle to come to a common understanding, Rex offers the following example:

Once a man has got into the habit of looking at the Epistle to the Romans as the focus to which he relates the rest of the Bible he finds the man who has chosen the Book of Revelation or the prophet Ezekiel as focus, rather exasperating, and sooner or later he will dismiss him as a stubborn mule with whom it is impossible to talk. But what should determine the sectarian who sees everything in the light of Revelation or Ezekiel to come round to the other way of relating everything to the Epistle to the Romans? Merely because Luther said it was the right way? This will make little impression on the sectarian, no matter how erudite and eloquent the other may be in the art of interpreting the scriptures. The reason for this is that they have obviously not the same interests. The man who has his focus in Romans (assuming, of course, that he is not a conventional churchgoer, but has made the tradition of the church his own) will in one way or another be worried by the question how a sinner can maintain himself in the sight of God, while the man who prefers to read the Book of Revelation or Ezekiel is interested in the ways of God in history as he understands it. As long as they do not come to share their interests they will go different ways in their interpretation of the Bible.\textsuperscript{712}

\textsuperscript{710}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XI: "It can, of course be denied that the historical-critical method has become our destiny, and it is being denied very emphatically by the Fundamentalists. Who is right and who is wrong, that question will certainly not be decided on the ground of exegesis, for far more fundamental commitments are here involved which determine the exegesis from the start. Ultimately one's decision will depend on how the whole body of knowledge which has become the property of modern man ever since the 17th century affects one [...] To a certain extent, the choice will be a matter of temperament and personality." Cf. also p.XXVIII and further DJR: p.9.

\textsuperscript{711}Rex, RTR, February 1960: p.15: "strictly speaking, scripture is by no means its own interpreter. When we refer to it as an 'interpreter' and when we speak of its 'faculty of interpreting itself' we are using anthropomorphisms. The Scriptures are a book or a set of writings, and they are not a human person. A book can never be its own interpreter". In an earlier letter to Moore, Rex candidly asked: "Is the axiom of the Scripture being its own Interpreter really more than a piece of polemic?" RA124: Letter from Helmut Rex to Albert Moore, 5 November 1956: p.3.

\textsuperscript{712}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.VII. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.12.
Although he considers biblicists laudable for wanting nothing to come between themselves and the Bible Rex tactfully stresses that it is impossible to achieve such an ideal due to our human condition, adding that: “all interpretation must remain to a certain degree at least ‘subjective’."

**The hermeneutic circle**

Since all interpretation is affected by Vorverständnis one might be excused for thinking it to be an inevitably circular enterprise. This quandary provides the starting point for Rex’s discussion of the hermeneutic circle which draws, among others, on Heidegger, Tillich, Dilthey, Bultmann and Barth. According to Rex, it is Heidegger who “far from lamenting the ‘vicious’ nature of the hermeneutic circle, sets out to teach us its profitable use”.

In light of Heidegger, Rex explains that since we make assumptions even as we approach a text to interpret it, the process of interpretation has already begun before the hermeneutician begins his formal task. Our assumptions are then confirmed or challenged as we read the text and encounter a mixture of that which we expect and that which we do not, or, in Rex’s own words, “the interpreter must in some way already know what the text is about before he begins his interpretation of it”. Rex adds Heidegger’s point of view to his own exposition:

> The circle becomes vicious in Heidegger’s opinion, only if the interpreter comes to a halt at an interpretation which is generally accepted (“This is what people say it means” or “This is the meaning which might prove acceptable to most people”) instead of remaining for ever [sic] open to the text. In other words, we must always be prepared to consider our interpretation of a text as preliminary and tentative only: ready to discard it for a new interpretation.

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713 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VII.
714 It is interesting to notice that Rex does not mention Plato’s so-called ‘Meno Paradox’ in the historically oriented paragraph which precedes his engagement with Heidegger’s thought. Because of his (previously noted) Lutheran prejudice against Platonism, it is possible that Rex consciously or otherwise avoided favourable reference to the Greek philosopher.
716 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VIII.
717 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VIII.
Rex concedes that the hermeneutic situation is dominated by the circle, yet he does not find this situation a calamity. In the interpreter’s position, “an existential situation”, the hermeneutic circle is “inevitable and must be accepted”. Rex offers examples of instances paralleling the hermeneutic circle, which he locates within: the interpretation of history; the relationship between scripture and tradition; and the construction of coherent theological systems generally. In the end, the interpreter must simply remain aware of the dangers of the circle, and work with it constructively.

On the one hand, we interpret individual words and sentences in order to come to an understanding of the literary production as a whole, and on the other hand, we must already have some idea of what the whole is about if we wish to interpret the individual words and sentences rightly. In fact, there is no way out of it. We must simply accept the situation, moving patiently from the individual parts to the whole and from the whole to its individual parts, checking and counter-checking. This is how both text and context come to take shape in our view.

Taking a stand with Bultmann

Of particular interest in his section of writing about the hermeneutic circle, is Rex’s rejection of Barth’s description of the Word of God as the criterion by which true and false interpretations of the Scripture should be recognised. Of especial significance in his unequivocal refutation of Barth, is a statement Rex makes in which he openly identifies himself as a Bultmannian. In line with this unashamed admission, Rex comments of Barth’s proposed criterion:

A criterion must be at our disposal, and that is precisely what the Word of God is not. It comes to us by the grace of God alone and that puts it outside our reach as a tool that we can manipulate. It is dubious whether this statement can be accepted even on Karl Barth’s own ground. When he insists that the word of the Bible ‘is’ the word of God only in so far as it ‘becomes’ the word of God he is saying something that is not altogether different from what Bultmann is saying. That is, that the Word of God is not at our disposal (‘verf[i]gbar’).

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71RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.VIII.
72Rex states: “In the acceptance of this circle and in its patient use lies the promise of discovering what the scripture itself is saying”. ‘Hermeneutics’: p.IX.
74RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.IX: “Karl Barth says, the criterion must be the ‘Word of God’ itself (K.D.1,2,809).”
75RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.IX: “But this is at least unacceptable to one who has taken his stand by Bultmann”.
76RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.IX.
From the question of the hermeneutic circle, Rex moves to a discussion of the criterion for judging ‘what constitutes a hermeneutic text’ and on to an examination of the hermeneutic methodology appropriate to specific texts. Rex calls to mind his suggestion that it is desirable to distinguish between a general and a biblical hermeneutic: “we pointed out that the biblical writings constituted a class in itself in so far as they carried the claim of being the Word of God with them”. Assuming this explanation to be sufficient, Rex offers no further discussion on this matter short of enlisting Luther’s support in claiming that in so far as the Scriptures are the Word of God, the Holy Spirit might properly be regarded as their legitimate interpreter. Since the Holy Spirit, like the Word of God, is not at our disposal, Rex argues that “it will always be an experience of divine grace when we interpret the word of the Bible in such a way that it becomes recognisable as the Word of God". Rex is primarily interested in the question of which method exegetes might most appropriately employ in their hermeneutic dealings with the words as they are printed in the canonical scriptures. He is calling for a certain boldness of approach yet all-the-while he is careful to stress the vanity of all attempts to capture and contain the Word of God.

The historical-critical method

Given his commitment to using the same methodology for sacred and secular scripture alike, Rex is drawn to conclude that “the historical-critical method has become our destiny”. He wishes his contemporaries and his students to use the same methods an

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724 In his 'Hermeneutics', Rex deals swiftly with the question of just what constitutes a hermeneutic text. In short, he regards canonicity as the key criterion, with authenticity of authorship no guarantee. Rex discusses the link between canon and inspiration and notes the theological significance of acknowledging that the canon remains open even today.
725 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.X.
727 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XI. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.15: “The belief that the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of Scripture and the conviction that without his aid the Bible cannot be accepted by us as the Word of God, cannot be harnessed by us to do the work of a hermeneutic tool. A ‘pneumatic’ exegesis or method of interpretation which ‘harnesses’ the Holy Spirit for its exposition is a contradiction in terms, for the simple reason that it is of the essence of a method to be a tool which is at our disposal whenever we turn to it, while the Spirit ‘bloweth where it listeth.’ In other words, it is jealous of its divine sovereignty and freedom; or, as Bultmann would say, it is ‘unverfiigbar’ or an ‘eschatological’ event. The truth of the axiom lies in the recognition that it is an experience of divine grace when our interpretation of biblical texts brings us in touch with the Word of God”.
728 Rex, RTR, February 1960: p.13: “There is no point lamenting [the] “risk” of subjectivity, for it is the price at which alone interpretation can be had”.
729 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XI. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.11. Also cf. RA003, Untitled Response to Breward: p.3, Q.3. Rex’s commitment to the historical-critical method is discussed in further detail in chapter
academic would use in the interpretation of secular texts. Rex reminds his audience that this includes adherence to the rule of analogy - a stance which would have been very threatening to his more conservative students. Accordingly Rex insists:

Above all, we must submit to the rule of analogy according to which nothing extraordinary or contradictory to the general experience of man can be accepted as true in the sense that it has happened in such way that it is verifiable by the critical function of the historian [...]. That this puts a certain strain on the interpretation of biblical texts is obvious enough. It affects the very centre of the Christian faith, i.e. the resurrection of Jesus. By the canon of analogy it is ruled out as an historical event on the simple ground that the universal experience of man (in so far as it stands up to criticism) is that the dead do not return to life. 730

Rex indicates a significant interest in the contemporary discussion about the sense in which it is meaningful to speak about the resurrection as an historical 'event', and as we shall see, he returns to this topic in his chapter on Bultmann's hermeneutic. For now we need to consider whether contemporary theologians ought to have similar faith in the historical-critical method. To ask ourselves such a question is faithfully to re-enact the most valuable aspect of Rex's critical process for our own day. In Rex's own words:

I think it ought to be granted as axiomatic that every generation must discover its own method of interpretation: a choice that will be determined for us by what measure of intellectual honesty and awareness of truth we have achieved. 731

If the 'scientific conscience' of early-mid twentieth century humanity was demanding of the historical-critical method, and, if lessons from Rex's thought are in any sense to be translated for use in the twenty-first century it becomes important to ask whether, and to what extent, Rex would have continued to hold this view to the present day. Although the answer to this question cannot finally be known, the question is done justice whenever an attempt to engage with important theological issues is made from a similarly informed yet updated critical perspective. Indeed, some idea as to where this might lead is offered at the end of the present chapter.

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730 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XI. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.10: "Of course, all human thinking relies on analogy and proceeds by way of analogy".
731 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XIX. Cf. RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.18.
It is important to recognise that Rex does not naively anticipate that the historical-critical method will solve all riddles and thus pave the way for a never-ending progression of human history towards God and God's purposes. Of course the belief in unilinear progress and predictable civilised advance through the accumulation of knowledge are no longer axioms to which western intellectuals subscribe in the wholesale fashion with which they once did; yet even in his own day, Rex is careful to deny (as we shall see further) any identification of human history with a visible representation of *Heilsgeschichte*. For him God, and God's future, are in no way to be considered demonstrable in human events save in the historical events surrounding the life of Christ.

The logic of a position like Rex's is intriguing to the student of his thought. As stated above, Rex considers the views of the fundamentalist unacceptable to one who has come to terms with the disenchanted world-view which was first explored in earnest in the seventeenth century. Ultimately this decision involves its own hermeneutic circle - one who accepts the historical-critical method must logically accept its fruits. Of course the appeal to logic is less persuasive to the fundamentalist, who may live among the fruits of modernity and yet still cling to a 'primitive' world-view.

Although, as we have seen, Rex has a certain degree of sympathy with the aims of fundamentalism, he is also prepared to confront fundamentalism and its presuppositions - quoting Tillich's criticism of fundamentalism at length in his 'Hermeneutics':

Tillich says of Fundamentalism that it "Fails to make contact with the present situation, not because it speaks from beyond every situation, but because it speaks from a situation of the past. It elevates something finite and transitory to infinite and eternal validity. In this respect fundamentalism has demonic traits. It destroys the humble honesty of the search for truth, it splits the conscience of its thoughtful adherents, and it makes them fanatical because they are forced to suppress elements of truth of which they are dimly aware".73

Such an eloquent criticism of fundamentalism must have appealed greatly to a man such as Rex - deeply concerned with the search for truth. Conveniently, it is offered by one Rex considers authoritative on theological matters. Rex's own comment, added to Tillich's critique, serves to reinforce that he shares these concerns:

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As it is, the fundamentalists have become the unwitting captives of the 'modernists' in their preoccupation with the historical truth of the biblical texts, granting in this way the truth of the axiom that true is only what can be established as historical truth.\textsuperscript{733}

As we have stated Rex is clear that intellectual honesty demands of him commitment to the historical-critical method in his biblical studies. Despite this commitment, Rex retains a high theological view of the scriptures, regarding the humanity of the scriptures as an extension of the humanity of Christ. “It is part of the Incarnation”.\textsuperscript{734} Yet he sees this as no reason to except Biblical texts from the hermeneutician’s critical gaze:

That they transcend the categories of mere human literary production is a paradox of which faith gets hold but which must in no way affect our commitment to the historical-critical method.\textsuperscript{735}

**Beyond the historical-critical method - the phenomenology of texts**

Nevertheless, Rex’s case for the supremacy of the historical-critical method is put to one side in his chapter entitled ‘Phenomenology of Texts’. Here Rex presents the very reasonable view that texts should be treated according to the genre from which they derive.\textsuperscript{736} While on the one hand historical texts should be primarily subjected to historical-critical tools, on the other, legends, parables, allegories and miracle stories require a variety of methodologies.

The interpretation of legend is a matter that Rex considers in need of particular explanation, as perhaps one of the “literary forms the presence of which in the Bible [an interpreter] finds for one reason or another embarrassing”.\textsuperscript{737} Rex’s advice is that the interpreter should:

> learn to appreciate the fact that history is full of legends [...] since the Bible contains so much history it would be surprising indeed if there were no legends. For the legend has a very important function to play in history. It is a way of drawing attention to the extraordinary on the historical scene, and since there is much in the

\textsuperscript{733}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XII.

\textsuperscript{734}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XII.

\textsuperscript{735}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XII.

\textsuperscript{736}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XII: “It is obvious that the interpreter must pay due regard to the literary form of the text he is interpreting. A credal statement demands different treatment to a proverb”.

\textsuperscript{737}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XIII.
nature of the extraordinary in the Bible it is only to be expected that legends are recorded in it. It would certainly be cause for comment if that were not so.\

In his discussion on allegorical interpretation Rex implies that, in the main, the worth of this method belongs in the past. He connects allegorical interpretation with Platonism, and - as any reader familiar with Rex’s Lutheran prejudice against Plato would know - this signals that his treatment of it will not be entirely kind. Rex does, however, suggest that a desire to render a text ‘contemporary’ might be considered a ‘serious motive’ for employing the allegorical method:

While it is not always easy to see what relevance certain historical texts have in their literal interpretation, they can be made to appear relevant when interpreted as vehicles of timeless spiritual and moral truths.\

Since he later changes his stance, it is interesting to note that Rex does not completely rule out the use of the allegorical method to interpret passages such as miracle stories, which, in the face of the historical-critical method have “become to the modern interpreter an embarrassment”. Rex notes that it is entirely appropriate to interpret biblical allegories in an allegorical fashion - in line with the text. However, textual criticism has revealed that many of the allegories contained in the Bible, having received modification by the early church, no longer represent a full likeness of their original form as a parable taught by Jesus. Rex does not address this matter, nor does he stipulate - in light of the hermeneutic circle - the qualities associated with appropriate interpretation of allegory.

In his examination of the proper interpretative strategy for texts altered by the early church, Rex offers the uncontroversial opinion that this was done in an effort to update them. “[T]hey read (listened to) the parables of Jesus in the light of their own situation, adapting the original to it”. Given this situation, and the possibility of exegetically uncovering an accurate approximation of Jesus’ original parable, Rex asks the more interesting question:

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738RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XIII.
739RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XIII.
740RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XIII. Rex acknowledges that such an interpretation runs contrary to the original intention of the author of the miracle narrative. N.B. Rex expresses a strong contrary view in his ‘Sunday Service’ address which is examined in chapter nine of the present thesis.
741RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XIV.
which of the two versions constitutes our text? [...] Must it not be axiomatic that priority be given to the words of the Master? That answer which we offer to that question will be affected by our theological commitment. A theology that is mainly concerned with the teaching of Jesus will naturally go back to the original version while, for instance, a kerygmatic theology (particularly when it shares Bultmann's scepticism concerning our knowledge of Jesus) will, as a matter of principle, resist the temptation of going beyond the teaching of the primitive church.742

Aspects of Bultmann's work on kerygmatic theology presage the work of the contemporary 'Jesus Seminar'.743 Many of the concerns expressed by Rex here anticipate those issues with which this group of contemporary biblical scholars has busied itself in the closing years of the twentieth century. This is not surprising when one remembers that one of the Seminar's founding members, Robert Funk, was himself a doctoral student under Bultmann. Yet a contrast is also to be observed. Rex's development of Bultmann concerns itself with the theological and kerygmatic implications and as such prefigures the work of other Jesus Seminar members Crossan and Borg - whereas Funk's work places more emphasis on identifying the 'original' tradition and in this aspect bears closer resemblance to work by Rex's student Geering.

Despite elsewhere indicating that he believed Bultmann's scepticism went too far when dealing with the historical Jesus material,744 Rex indicates a preference for Bultmann's kerygmatic approach. He finds also that a potential benefit lies in the overtly layered nature of the Biblical tradition, and that benefit may be recognised in regarding this as a demonstration of the proper use of texts:

> They are not there to be put into a glasscase in order to be preserved like mummies in a museum; but they are there to be lived with. [...] They wish to engage us existentially, and in such engagement the distinction of subject and object is transcended: the subject enters the object and the object is affected by the subject's appropriation of it. That is the ontological basis for the different layers of tradition in the scriptures. It is to this kind of situation that Bultmann's defence of 'subjectivity' applies.745

742RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XIV.
744Cf. RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXIX: "Bultmann's scepticism concerning our knowledge of the person of Jesus does not appear quite rational; in fact, there is something pathological in his stubbornness with which he digs his toes in".
745RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XIV.
The Old Testament

Rex's discussion of the phenomenology of texts functions as a theoretical prelude to the more specific example of 'The Interpretation of Old Testament Texts' - the title of the largest chapter in his introduction to hermeneutics. The chapter contains an impressive literature survey and reveals Rex's preference for the insights of Luther, the scholarship of Hirsch, and the contemporary views of Baumgärtel, in his assessment of methodologies propounded by the aforementioned thinkers as well as others including Hofmann, Vischer, Eichrodt, and his contemporaries Zimmerli and von Rad. Bultmann is represented in Rex's discussion of Old Testament interpretation, although Rex does not regard him as so authoritative on these matters as he does in matters concerned with the New Testament.

For Rex, the New Testament provides the perspective from which Christians should view the Old Testament. He understands the Old Testament in an orthodox scholarly fashion - as Hebrew scriptures - appropriated but not produced by the Christian Church. Thus, for Rex, Jesus Christ is to be the focus from which the Christian approaches the Old Testament as the Word of God. Model Christian interpreters concern themselves with the question of how the Old Testament as a religious text speaks to us of the Christian message or kerygma. No doubt with the history of Nazism in mind, Rex warns that abandonment of the Old Testament leads to Gnosticism or Docetism.

It is important to note that Rex's instruction to view the Old Testament via a New Testament perspective introduces an additional complexity to his Old Testament hermeneutic, since Rex's interpreter must first possess a clear New Testament theology before the issues of Old Testament interpretation can be faced. On the other hand Rex warns against reading New Testament themes back into the Old Testament. For instance, he is highly critical of Luther's reading of the Old Testament as a Christian book and his


747 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XVI.
consequent discovery of the trinity within it. According to Rex, any discovery of the Son in the Old Testament threatens the uniqueness - the 'once and for all' - of the Christ event.

Rex's own strongly kerygmatic theology and understanding of the New Testament give him clarity of purpose that is enviable today. While he is appalled by certain Old Testament passages, he perceives that the New Testament contains little of offence to the Christian:

What Christian would wish to sing Psalm 109 or even Psalm 137 if he were to take their words literally? [...] That is the kind of problem we are faced with in the Old Testament and of which the New Testament is mercifully free.

Despite having fled the blatant anti-semitism of Nazi Germany, Rex, like his contemporaries, appears to have been blind to the anti-semitic strains inherent in New Testament texts themselves. Indeed Rex seems to have accepted the classification system of the period. And, though he does not like certain Old Testament passages, this does not lead him to question the validity of the entire compilation. He simply notes these difficulties and gets on with his next point.

For Rex, the distinction between 'promise' and 'prophecy' is crucial to his Old Testament hermeneutic. He positions himself alongside Baumgärtel's critique of Vischer's attempt to interpret the Old Testament christologically. Despite finding shortcomings in

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748 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XVI.
749 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XVI.
751 Although Rex later discusses the benefit of the mixing of races (as we shall see when we examine his papers on race relations) he does not directly challenge the dubious practice of distinguishing between 'Aryan' and 'Non-Aryan' peoples; he does however appear to adopt an ironic stance towards the language of 'purity' and 'contamination' which was applied to 'blood'. e.g. in the 1960s Rex wrote: "I left Germany in defiance of the so-called Nuremberg laws of 1935, the racial laws which prohibited the mixing of pure aryan blood with less pure blood. In theory, the laws did however allow for the application of marriage licences if the blood of the non-aryan partner was not too contaminated. These laws applied in Renate's case since her father was a pure aryan (very 'nordic' indeed) and her mother only was a Jewess, but in practice these applications were turned down [...]" RA003: p.11, Q.15. Prevailing sympathies at the time of Rex's proposed emigration to New Zealand led Pastor Franz Hildebrandt to write in his letter of recommendation that Rex was "himself an 'aryan'." OA206, Letter from Pastor F. Hildebrandt to Rev. J.T. Macky, 23 January 1939. One year later when Rev. C.C. Griffiths of St. Leonard-on-Sea in Sussex (Rex's host in England) wrote in support of another Pastor's emigration bid, he deemed it prudent to mention in the context of the latter's Jewish parentage that "Pastor Sussbach does not look like a Jew and he has great social as well as intellectual gifts". OA206, Letter from Rev. C.C. Griffith to Rev. J.T. Macky, 26 January 1940.
Vischer’s formula “The Old Testament tells us what Christ is and the New Testament Who he is”,\textsuperscript{752} Rex approvingly records that Baumgärtel:

praises Vischer for not wasting his time to show that in Jesus Christ the prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled, but that it is the promises of the Old Testament that have received their fulfilment in Him.\textsuperscript{753}

As we shall see Rex returns to this important distinction between promise and prophecy but here he offers the opinion that Vischer’s formula “does full justice neither to the Old nor the New Testament” since the Old Testament “tells us much besides what Christ is and the New Testament tells us not only who Christ is but also a great deal of what Christ is”.\textsuperscript{754} Rex further describes Vischer’s Old Testament hermeneutic as ‘typology’, and in a somewhat forced fashion bridges into a discussion on the difference between allegorical and typological interpretation.

**Typology - correcting Bultmann**

For Rex typology is a method of casting present and future events in the light of past lessons, with the aim of bringing meaning or clarity to the present situation.\textsuperscript{755} It interests itself in correspondences. Since it is concerned with the ‘now’ and the ‘then’ Rex also believes that the intention of typology is eschatological.

A careful examination of Rex’s argument in favour of typology reveals the likely motivation for the detailed nature of this ‘aside’ to the main discussion. Rex is offering a conditional defence of a method dismissed by his Vorbild, Bultmann. This is evinced by a heavily referenced paragraph half-way through his discussion - a discussion which also foreshadows his evaluation of typology and Salvation History (or Heilsgeschichte).

In contrast to typology, Rex does not wish to defend allegory - a method which he believes has difficulty conveying the incarnation in a Christian fashion. Thus he distinguishes strictly between typology and allegory, describing allegory as committed to


\textsuperscript{753}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XVII.

\textsuperscript{754}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XVII.

\textsuperscript{755}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XVIII.
Platonic dualism, such that the contingent and passing events of the historical world are seen merely as vehicles for eternal spiritual or moral truths. While Rex concedes that typology is also preoccupied with analogies and correspondences, and wishes to lead from the sensible to the spiritual, the method finds favour with him because it “accepts the media of time and history as of intrinsic value for the revelation of God to man”.756

As we have noted, Rex considers the intention of typology to be eschatological. Yet he offers the caveat that unlike the historical-critical method which also operates under the axiom of analogy, typology’s truths are only accessible to the believer. It is not, however, the element of correlation (casting present and future events in the light of past lessons) which Rex calls to mind in his critique of Bultmann’s dismissal of typology, but the component of climax it contains:

This is obvious at once in the correspondence of Adam and Christ and in the manner in which Paul treats this correspondence in Rm. 5. [...] It is particularly important to take note of this climactic element in typology in view of Bultmann’s unjustified charge that typology is repetitive and consequently unable to do justice to the ‘linear’ conception of time of the Bible.757

Rex reports with approval Baumgärtel’s rejection of the typological method in his own day since it does not fit into the manner in which the twentieth-century sought truth. By way of contrast, it is noteworthy that present-day interpretive strategies that emphasise correspondences rather than literal understanding – such as those engaged in by reader-response practitioners such as Stephen D. Moore - are more reminiscent of typology than they are of the historical-critical method.758 Thus, although influenced by and reacting to the modern, some postmodern models have stronger affinities with the pre-modern typological method. The possibility of reappropriating pre-modern methods today is something we shall return to consider further at the end of this chapter.

756RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XVIII.
Rex believes that once committed to the body of knowledge that has become the property of humanity since the Enlightenment, “we find it impossible to accept the typological method of interpretation as a legitimate hermeneutic tool for us today”. Rex’s preference for the historical-critical method results from a strong belief in scientific process and in the eventual accessibility of facts - a belief which is currently in retreat in face of postmodern scepticism about the nature of truth. Indeed - as we shall discuss further - a return to methods which seek for correspondences, may do more justice to our sense of truth in the twenty-first century. This possibility is well worth considering in light of Rex’s previously noted professorial pronouncement - that each generation must, in light of its own intellectual circumstances, accordingly discover its own method of interpretation.

**Heilsgeschichte, prophecy, promise and fulfilment**

Rex’s examination of the affinity between typology and the schema of prophecy (promise) and fulfilment is geared towards generating an understanding of Heilsgeschichte as a prominent part of Old Testament hermeneutic discussion. He draws attention to the historical roots that inform the debate on Oscar Cullmann’s contemporary theological work. Perhaps too, he wishes to emphasise his sympathies with the intentions behind this strategy before, as we shall see further, he finally launches an attack on Cullmann.

Rex’s sympathies with Heilsgeschichte are revealed in his assessment of the work of Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann which he describes as the reassertion and development of “a tool which helped understand the history of Israel as a meaningful historical progress towards a goal which he naturally identified with Jesus Christ”. Rex explains that the truth of the (a priori) schema of prophecy and fulfilment is axiomatic to Hofmann and that the historical details were made to fit the scheme. In Rex’s assessment,
Hofmann has surveyed the whole of human history from the point of view of its consummation in Christ much as Hegel had done with an eye to its consummation in the Prussian state. And while Hofmann's parochialism (the one-sided focus on Israel) makes the work appear dated, Rex notes a renewed interest in this type of schema and asserts in its favour that the general validity of the schema of prophecy and fulfilment in the Old Testament is widely recognised.\textsuperscript{763}

In the context of his discussion on the validity of \textit{Heilsgeschichte}, Rex again relies upon Baumgärtel, this time to describe the importance of the distinction between prophecy (\textit{Weissagung}) and promise (\textit{Verheissung}). Rex notes that the majority of interpreters use the terms interchangeably - apparently unaware of a distinction that exists between them:

Not every prophecy includes a promise, and promise may include a prophecy or not. [Baumgärtel] points out that while it is meaningful to say of God that he promises something, it is impossible to say of Him that He prophesies something [...] And again, the Christian lives from the promise which has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, not by the prophecies which have received their fulfilment in Him [...]. Baumgärtel believes he has the support of the New Testament for his rigid distinction between prophecy and promise [...].\textsuperscript{764}

Rex's emphatic support of Baumgärtel's distinction leads him to assert his adherence to an orthodoxy which challenges what he perceives as one of the less desirable trends in modern Christianity:

This claim is perfectly justified and we shall seek in it in vain for anything like the preoccupation with the tracing of individual prophecies and their fulfilment that is so characteristic of many a modern 'student of prophecy' and frequently degenerates into a biblical literalism from which even the remotest trace of the spirit has disappeared. Preoccupation with prophecy leads to preoccupations with detailed data while trust in the divine promise views God's relation to man in its totality.\textsuperscript{765}

Without this emphasis on the 'totality' of divine promise, Rex indicates, the explicit and tangible nature of Old Testament promise and fulfilment may serve as a potential embarrassment to interpreters since the 'life' that Israel sought indeed involved a strong link to promise and fulfilment in the historical medium. Rex favours interpretations which

\textsuperscript{763}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXI.
\textsuperscript{764}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXI.
\textsuperscript{765}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXI.
identify a larger picture involving a promise of divine kingship - the fulfilment of which remained outstanding.

**Luther's dialectic between Law and Gospel**

This link between promises of the Old Testament and fulfilment in the New, provides the connection to the last Old Testament hermeneutic Rex wishes to examine before he offers a judicious conclusion to this section of his publication. The work of Emanuel Hirsch, whose “interpretation of the Old Testament rests on Luther’s dialectic of Law and Gospel”, 766 is critically examined. In Rex’s eyes, one of Hirsch’s main contributions lies in being the first in his generation to identify and attack the shortcomings associated with the liberal Old Testament interpretation of his forebears “with that ruthless honesty that faces the truth even when it hurts.” 767

Rex finds the general impetus of Hirsch’s Lutheran argument, that Gospel does not exist as Gospel without the dialectic of Law and Gospel, highly applicable to the New Zealand situation:

Lift the Gospel out of this dialectic and it quickly degenerates into a new Law [...]. The importance of this observation can hardly be exaggerated. It is particularly timely here in New Zealand where the Gospel has a constant tendency to degenerate into a collection of petty legalisms. And the reason for this is precisely that the dialectic of Law and Gospel has been removed from the interpretation of the Bible. Not that the Old Testament has been discarded; quite the contrary. The dialectic has been discarded, with the result that the one Testament is read like the other. In other words, the New Testament is read simply as a continuation and climax of the Old, but essentially with the same accent. This ‘monotony’ inevitably breeds legalism. 769

Rex asserts that this is “not a peculiarity of N.Z. Christianity” but something which occurs whenever “Paul’s lesson goes unheeded, be that the Church of Rome with its conception of the Gospel as ‘new law’ or the Church of Geneva with its lawyer-interpreter John Calvin”. This dig, at the heritage of legalism within the tradition of which the Presbyterian Church was a part, betrays Rex’s unease with aspects of his ecclesial

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766RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXII.
767RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIV.
768Rex noted that Hirsch’s interpretation (unlike that of the later Luther) did not distinguish between Old Testament and ‘law’.
769RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIII.
commitment. As we shall see when we come to examine Rex’s address ‘The Sunday Service’, he would willingly abandon this legalism for a more mystical religious experience.

Whatever he thinks of Hirsch’s attempt Rex accepts that “he makes a serious attempt at a theological interpretation of the Old Testament”, He is also sympathetic to his motivation, as an attempt to fight back against the liberalism of his forebears Gunkel, von Baudissin and Gressmann - who Rex claims saw the Old Testament as a body of literary, historical and human curiosities.

**The correct perspective for reading the Old Testament**

In the final analysis, those Old Testament critics Rex regards most highly are those who share a similar theological standpoint to his own. He does not identify with any particular method, and saves his praise for those who are scholastically cautious and those whom he believes have ideal motives. The suitability of the method is to be judged against the material examined as Rex states:

One thing should have emerged by now, and that is that there is no one single method of interpretation which does justice to the whole of the Old Testament by itself. All methods that have been discussed so far have some legitimate claim in that they help, each in its own way and in its own sphere, to illuminate the meaning of the Old Testament for a Christian reader, beginning with Vischer’s Christological interpretation at one extreme and ending with Hirsch’s dialectic interpretation at the other. This is not surprising, for whatever unity there exists in the Old Testament, it would be a fatal mistake to overlook the actual diversity and even contrariness which we discover in it as well.

Rex calls for flexibility in the interpretation of the Old Testament, using as many tools and methods as there are literary forms in the stories recorded over a millennium. He cautions his students that the approaches he has listed are not to be regarded as the only

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70 See chapter nine of the present thesis.
71 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIII.
72 For example Hans Walter Wolff is praised for his conservative estimate of the possibility of correctly exegeting Old Testament texts: “With laudable detachment, he declares that any method can at best only lay bare a fraction of the texts that make up the Old Testament”. RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIV. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.21.
73 RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIV.
74 In a letter to Albert Moore Rex records: “As regards the OT more specifically, I am convinced that no one theological principle can do the whole job. That would presuppose a theological homogeneity that is simply non-existent. I think, one has to cast many different hermeneutic nets to gather the whole theological truth of the OT.” RA124, Letter from Helmut Rex to Albert Moore, 5 November 1956: p.3.
legitimate approaches available to the interpreter. Even approaches which carry 'the taint of liberalism', reading the Old Testament "as the story of man's progress from the bondage of nature to spiritual freedom, reaching its climax in the monotheistic belief and in the recognition of moral law", are not to be disregarded. For Rex interpretive strategies both old and new have something to offer discerning critics:

Today it is very fashionable to stress the 'historical' nature of the religion of the Old Testament. By that is not only meant that the Old Testament contains a great many historical accounts, but that the Old Testament sees man essentially as 'historical', i.e. in encounter with an opposite, i.e. God, who is essentially the Lord of history. This is not a mere theological fashion; it is an interpretation of the Old Testament that has grown out of a truer recognition of the nature (or condition) of man as opposed to the world of objects around him (which, of course, includes the animal world). To exist in encounter, i.e. an encounter that involves him continually in choices which are historical in nature, that way of existing is unique to man. And it is this uniqueness that the Old Testament does justice to in a manner that is exemplary in its discernment.

It is important to note that Rex is wont to view the Old Testament as a treasure-trove of existentialist narrative. This will not be surprising to the reader familiar with his affection for the work of Kierkegaard, Sartre and Bultmann. The link he makes between the human condition (described in the Old Testament) and the redemption offered it in the New Testament is consistent with the theology espoused in the radio address and journal article on Sartre examined earlier. An appreciation of the extent to which existentialist concerns ('our interests') pervade even the driest academic aspects of his work (Old Testament Hermeneutic Theory) may be gained from the urgent tone of Rex's demand that his students understand the Old Testament material in a specific way:

In so far as it is the case that we continue in our humanity only if we accept our 'historical' destiny, it is obvious that the Old Testament will have to tell us much when read in this light. And with that I do not mean that here is, so to speak, 'something' that is 'still' of value to us Christians. Far from it. I wish to say that here is something that we must not ignore under any circumstances if we want to understand our human condition properly - and understanding it properly, see the need for redemption in Jesus Christ. When Elijah is fighting the priests of Baal, when Hosea and Jeremiah teach Israel to recognise in the Lord of history their Creator, and similarly in the work of the Deuteronomists, it is always our humanity that is being fought for: our 'historical' existence which is always on the verge of

775 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXIV.
776 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXIVf.
777 See chapter four.
gliding back into the cycle of nature where man loses his identity in the process of
procreation, caught in the cycle of birth, copulation and death, and supplanting the
true faith in God by a religion that merely glorifies natural processes. This aspect is
unfortunately lost sight of in the contemporary interpretation of the Old Testament,
but to me it seems of vital importance.\textsuperscript{778}

This plea for something of an existentialist corrective in Old Testament
interpretation concludes the section on the Old Testament in Rex’s introduction to
hermeneutics. As we shall see, he returns to address the more explicitly existentialist
concerns of exegesis in his chapter on Bultmann’s hermeneutic, but first he applies himself
to a short sharp demolition of Oscar Cullmann’s then contemporary revival of \textit{Heilsgeschichte}.

\textbf{Critiquing Cullmann}

Much of the material in his section on Cullmann is found also in the lectures Rex
delivered to Christchurch Presbytery on eschatology.\textsuperscript{779} His ridicule of Cullmann is here only
slightly more comprehensive. Rex seeks to destroy Cullmann’s arguments with carefully
crafted finesse and obvious relish. The vehemence of Rex’s critique is ironic when one
considers that he had previously been an enthusiast for Cullmann’s work.\textsuperscript{780}

Rex describes Cullmann’s \textit{Heilsgeschichte} as comparable to Hofmann’s in that it is a
further “attempt to trace the divine economy of salvation in the course of history”,\textsuperscript{781} but
recognises it as unique in the detailed working out of this economy. Rex emphasises the
similarities between the two in his description of Cullmann’s hermeneutic:

\begin{quote}
Like Hofmann, Cullmann is an apostle. He has a framework ready which he
imposes as a kind of interpretive gadget on his material; and again, like Hofmann,
he confines his selection of material largely to the history of Israel, notwithstanding
the fact that the framework is meant to cover the whole history of mankind.
\textit{Heilsgeschichte}, so viewed, is the economy of salvation viewed in historical terms.
In other words, through his framework the economy of salvation is viewed by
Cullmann in conjunction with the universal history of mankind.\textsuperscript{782}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{778}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXV.
\textsuperscript{779}The lectures to Christchurch Presbytery were delivered in 1956. It is likely that the text for the initial
eschatology addresses was completed before Rex’s ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’. The similarity in their
wording and content suggests that the papers must have been composed in parallel or at least very close
together.
\textsuperscript{780}Cf. RA049, Helmut H. Rex, ‘Christianity and History’, lecture to retreat group, 1948: p.7.
\textsuperscript{781}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXV.
\textsuperscript{782}RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXV.
Rex's description of Cullmann's hermeneutic serves to underscore the apriorist label he offers. He cites examples of periods in history which do not fit into Cullmann's schema, and dryly suggests that if Cullmann's theory is, as described by some of his critics, 'a gnostic theology of history' - "it can only be said that it produces very little knowledge". In the end Rex discerns little to recommend Cullmann's approach. "As an instrument of interpreting the Old and New Testament it falls down completely because of its unrepentant apriorism".

Rex also attacks Cullmann's lack of clarity on critical issues. In a manner reminiscent of his later criticisms of Barth, Rex scolds Cullmann for his use of traditional language. Rex offers examples from Cullmann's eschatology in which it is unclear whether the traditional terms used are intended to be understood literally, historically, symbolically or figuratively. Rex is unforgiving of naive interpretation and even less impressed by theological luminaries who add inconsistency to their list of sins. He summarily dismisses Cullmann in this regard:

In a manner, Cullmann says, "That is what the New Testament says..." Whether we can believe it literally or in what sense we are to believe it, i.e. the real theological and religious questions are not raised. That is why Cullmann's work fundamentally disappoints. It is not serious. It remains an intellectual game which in no way 'engages' one personally: existentially, if you wish. He leaves untouched the questions which have worried modern man ever since the 17th century.

Rex's sharp criticisms of Cullmann come to a head over Bultmannian issues, and so it is fitting that in his 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction', this piece serves as the final appetiser before the main course and dessert - Rex's chapter on Bultmann - 'Bultmann's Epoch-Making Contribution to Hermeneutics'.

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783 Rex offers examples which illustrate that a rigid adherence to Cullmann's framework offers ludicrous results in the detailed outworking. See: 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVI. Maurice Andrew notes in BHR: p.85: "If Bultmann was Helmut Rex's 'hero' [...] his bête noire was Cullmann".

784 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVII.

785 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVII.

786 Rex's views on the ambiguity preserved in Barth's theology are expounded in Rex's book Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? This book will be discussed in chapter seven of the present thesis.

787 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVII.
‘Bultmann’s Epoch-Making Contribution to Hermeneutics’

It is the chapter on Bultmann in Rex’s ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’ that is the most significant as it is in this chapter the reader gains an appreciation of the extent of Rex’s commitment to the Bultmannian programme. Having alluded in his chapter on the hermeneutic circle to his affinity with Bultmann’s hermeneutic stance, here the full impact of this critical allegiance is aired. Reporting Ernst Fuchs’ view that Bultmann has “formulated the hermeneutic problem in a more radical form than anyone else since Schleiermacher”, Rex comments that this observation is “not exaggerated”. In his opinion Bultmann’s contribution to the subject of hermeneutics is epoch-making and therefore important enough to warrant its own chapter. In fact, the astute reader of Rex’s text will recognise that the course Rex plotted through the minefield of hermeneutics finds its natural conclusion in the work of Bultmann.

In order to understand why Rex considers Bultmann’s contribution so significant, we need to investigate his explanation of Bultmann’s thought - which Rex examines under three headings: (1) Demythologising, (2) *Das Selbstverständnis* and (3) ‘Eschatological’ Interpretation.

1.0. Demythologising

Rex begins his examination of Bultmann’s then controversial demythologising campaign by strategically posing the naive question of why it should have come about that advocating for demythologising has aroused such heated controversy. Demythologising is not something new; according to Rex the Christian tradition has practised it for most of its history. To illustrate this, Rex offers four examples: the first is uncovered in a close examination of Cullmann’s work; the second in a non-literal understanding of the story of Adam and Eve; the third in any allegorical interpretation of a miracle story; and the fourth in the New Testament itself. Rex believes that the reason Bultmann has inspired such passionate debate lies in the way he has formulated the hermeneutic problem:

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79RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXVII.
the plea for de mythologising has never been put in such a radical fashion before. The way Bultmann sees the problem is this: The people who wrote the New Testament (and the Old for that matter, too) lived in a totally different world from ours.\textsuperscript{790}

As he did earlier in his introduction to hermeneutics and in his material on eschatology, Rex again cites Bultmann's example of the 'three-decker universe' to illustrate the way in which the understanding of the early church no longer fits the contemporary world-view.\textsuperscript{791} Rex correctly notes that language of an 'ascent' into heaven and a 'descent' into hell can tend to alienate the contemporary interpreter. According to Rex:

To us, such conceptions are merely vestiges of a primitive mind, and their epistemological status is purely mythological. Their epistemological status is invalidated by the simple fact that they do not fit into the post-Cartesian world picture.\textsuperscript{792}

At this point in his explication of Bultmann, Rex again alludes to fundamentalism and the willingness or otherwise of the theologian to engage with the burden of knowledge accumulated by moderns since the seventeenth century. For Rex, it is the vital clue to understanding Bultmann's approach. "As far as Bultmann is concerned, he cannot but accept the modern world picture with all that it implies for theology".\textsuperscript{793}

As one who accepts the post-Cartesian world-view and is prepared to wrestle with its implications for theology, Rex explains that Bultmann has at times been misunderstood. Against some critics, and alongside others, Rex observes:

When Bultmann pleads for de mythologising, he does not wish to discard the mythical elements in Scripture altogether. He merely insists that they must be interpreted in order to yield their meaning for us. [...] The myth, in so far as it is a vehicle of the message of salvation, is accepted by Bultmann; what he objects to in the myth is the fact that the myth relates the message of salvation in terms that are taken from an objectified picture of the world, i.e. the world of objects as it is at our disposal.\textsuperscript{794}

\textsuperscript{790}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVIII.
\textsuperscript{791} A further example of Rex's use of this explanation is found in RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.3.
\textsuperscript{792}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVIII.
\textsuperscript{793} RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVIII. Cf. RTR, February 1960: p.11.
\textsuperscript{794}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVIII. Rex defended Bultmann against the charge of wishing to discard the mythical elements of Scripture altogether as a means of conveying religious truth. Rex records that this charge was levelled by Amos Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today (London: SCM Press, 1957) p.42; and that this charge was defended by Hermann Diem, Grundfragen der biblischen Hermeneutik (München: 1930) p.24.
Rex agrees with Bultmann's aims. He too, does not believe God should be envisioned in the “grossly anthropomorphic” terms of our world. Needless to say, controversy surrounding Bultmann’s assessment of the biblical myths is not the only point of debate in his theology. Bultmann’s investigation into the status of the historical accounts in the Bible is also a point of contention. In order to generate an understanding of Bultmann’s ‘de-historicisation’ (Entgeschichtlichung) of biblical material, Rex outlines in his ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’, relevant parts of Heidegger’s ontology. Bultmann’s reliance on Heidegger’s ontology demands this, as Rex explains:

Bultmann’s use of the term ‘history’ in its distinctly theological relevance, is borrowed from Heidegger. In his analysis of human existence (or to use Pascal’s term, the human condition) Heidegger laid bare the ‘historical’ as one of the fundamental ontological structures of man. That is to say, man exists as man only ‘in encounter’. The ‘encounter’ is with his own past which, far from being a dead end which he can safely leave behind, is, in fact, his ‘future’, i.e that which is before him, confronting him in such a manner that he must either accept or reject it. In other words, it involves him in a situation of choice. If, however, man wishes to avoid this historical encounter (because it is bothersome) following the ready-made patterns of custom and convention (without ‘choosing’ them, but simply falling into line or step, simply because that is the accepted line: what everyone else is doing: das ‘Man’!), then he becomes untrue to his human condition. It is because man is essentially ‘historically’ constituted that such a phenomenon as universal history or any other history generally so called, is possible. The ontological ‘history’ is primary; history, in its generally accepted sense is secondary.

Rex agrees with Bultmann’s belief that Heidegger has given a more adequate understanding of the human condition than any philosopher before him, and further, that other contenders for this title - Aristotle and Descartes - should come in for severe criticism for seeing human beings as one object among others with only powers of reason setting them apart. Not wishing to be perceived as a Heideggerian hagiographer Rex notes Heidegger’s own claim that he had simply given philosophical status to ideas implied in the work of Paul, John, Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard.
Presumably in an attempt to mitigate against criticisms from more conservative students suspicious of other disciplines, Rex explains his reasons for straying into the realm of philosophy: “Since theology is concerned with man’s encounter with God, it is only natural that a theologian is concerned to have his anthropology right”.799 Rex seems aware that his material would push the theological boundaries of some in his classes. This would only have become all the more true as he moved from anthropology into an explanation of Bultmann’s views on the resurrection.

1.1. Resurrection and kerygma

Bultmann’s thought on the resurrection is closely tied to his views on kerygma which in turn are linked to his scepticism concerning the historical Jesus.800 Although he avoids detailed discussion on this matter, Rex offers a nod of agreement to those Bultmannians who part company with their mentor over his scepticism concerning our ability to have knowledge about the person of Jesus. As it happens, Rex uses Bultmann’s historical Jesus research primarily in order to introduce the centrality of kerygma to Bultmann’s thought. “Bultmann insists that we have knowledge of Jesus only through and in the kerygma of the Primitive Church”.801 Although this approach does not settle the question of how much of the historical information is reliable information from the point of view of the historian, in Rex’s view the assertion of the centrality of the kerygma is a fortunate by-product of Bultmann’s scepticism. Rex admires Bultmann for the way he has helped, along with Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, to initiate a vital swing in twentieth century theology - a swing in a notably existentialist direction:

Bultmann’s emphasis has vitally contributed to the reorientation of theology after the First World War, helping to break up the influence of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule and Liberalism quite generally with their preoccupation with the ‘historical Jesus’ and his ‘inner’ or ‘religious’ life [...]. His theology is concerned with the Word of God as ‘Anrede’, that is to say, a word that we recognise as such only ‘in encounter’, i.e. when we let ourselves be existentially engaged by it as it judges and redeems us.802

799RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIX.
800Rex defines kerygma as “the message of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ” in ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXIXf.
801RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXX.
802RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXX.
As we shall see, Rex returns to the subject of encounter when he assesses Bultmann's notion of Selbstverständnis. As background to this task he clarifies what the kerygma is and how it could come about that Barth and Bultmann could differ over vital aspects of this proclamation. In order to make stark the contrast, he first explains the similarities. For a start both Barth and Bultmann were anxious to dissociate themselves from the liberalism exemplified in the thought of Harnack or Ritschl - as Rex states:

Now, the kerygma, as Bultmann understands it, proclaims the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. That is to say, its message is an event and not a set of lasting moral and religious truths. For Bultmann, it is more important that Jesus Christ lived, died and rose again than what he preached during his earthly ministry.  

Since - in line with his commitment to the axiom of analogy - Bultmann denies that the resurrection should be understood as an historical event, Rex explains that "the resurrection is to him no more than an 'interpretation' of the cross of Christ [...] how the disciples came to view the Cross once they had recovered from their shock". Rex observes that the reaction this position caused has demonstrated that it is easier to insist that something in the nature of an historical 'event' has happened in the resurrection, than it is to describe in what sense the adjective 'historical' might be applied to it.

Rex is impressed with Barth's questioning of Bultmann's premise that only what can be historically verified qualifies as an event (making use of the German distinction between Historie and Geschichte). Barth has already come in for criticism from Rex for being unreasonably dismissive in response to fair criticism, but Rex considers this questioning of Bultmann's premise a worthy one. In any case, Rex is clear that the solution to this issue is not simple. His assessment of this debate is worth quoting in detail since it serves to illustrate the way in which Rex is able to offer his students a taste of contemporary thought.
without providing them with neatly packaged answers. Rex wishes to invoke critical consciousness in his students and a sense of the importance of their pre-theological and theological commitments:

It is obvious that the issue between Barth and Bultmann cannot be resolved by argument. It involves presuppositions and fundamental commitments which are embodied in their respective theologies from the start. It is, so to speak, a pre-theological commitment which tends to be-in all of us, extraordinarily persistent. A change here (and the possibility of argument effecting it must, of course, not be excluded) amounts to a conversion. But it would be quite wrong to put the whole question aside simply by saying that it seems to be ultimately a matter of theological temperament how you decide this question of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. The matter is more serious than that. Karl Barth's position remains difficult and Bultmann's concern is a very real one.807

While Rex discusses this matter further, raising issues of language and translation, this need not concern us here. Rex finds that, having alerted his students to the issues raised by Bultmann's position, he can nevertheless safely assert that it contains no fatal flaws, and, in fact, offers a defensible position in light of the criticisms that have been examined. Rex thus indicates that he is willing to stand by Bultmann's judgement on this matter:

If Bultmann's opponents obviously have real difficulty in stating what precisely it is they claim that has happened, it must at least be granted that there is some justification in Bultmann's decision to withdraw to a position where he is on firm ground, and that is the kerygma of the Primitive Church. In that position one can confidently reply to the question, What had 'happened'?, the following: It happened that some of Jesus' followers believed that they saw him some time after the crucifixion and that they came to view the crucifixion in the light of that belief. That belief found its expression in the kerygma.808

2.0. Das Selbstverstàndnis

To further clarify Bultmann's hermeneutic position, Rex explores the former's concept of Selbsterstàndnis - a concept crucial to the task of interpreting and proclaiming the kerygma. Rex explains that the term had a "noetic-ontological and existential" reference:

807RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXI. N.B. the unusual grammatical construction in the third sentence (involving a hyphen, and an exclamation mark preceding a comma) is faithful to the original.
808RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXI.
That is to say, it is a matter of viewing one's condition, and that not in detachment - in the manner of a spectator - but in existential involvement, which implies a decision that gives our life its fundamental direction.footnote{809}

This understanding of Bultmann's is reminiscent of Sartre's *Projet Origine* - and of course, both have their origins in Heidegger. Such an interpretation of the human condition intends to negate the idea of distance between action and reflection. This understanding sees the stance each individual takes towards his condition determining his responses and permeating all their actions.

Rex introduces the term *Selbstverständnis* because of its bearing on the question of hermeneutics: "das Selbstverständnis is understanding, i.e. interpretation of my human condition, and to that extent a hermeneutic act itself."footnote{810} He approvingly records that according to Bultmann the Scriptures must be interpreted as expressions of *Selbstverständnis* - the only relevance the scriptures can have for us:

We are interested in them only because of their Selbstverständnis and its ability to engage us in a decision that affects our own life ('Anrede'). [...] Bultmann wishes to do justice to the 'historical' nature of man (i.e. his manner of existing in encounter).footnote{811}

Rex explains that Bultmann's approach to the Old Testament is consistent with this stated position. The discerning reader of Rex's 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction' is able to detect that its author is linking the many strands of the early chapters of this monograph together at this point. For example, Bultmann's stance is compared to the others closely examined in Rex's chapter on the Old Testament, and it is clear that thinkers have been selected by Rex because Bultmann's position contrasts or aligns itself with theirs at various critical points. In other words, when Rex declares that hermeneutics itself had become a matter of "for or against Bultmann",footnote{812} he is also giving notice of his intention critically to explore Bultmann's hermeneutic agenda.

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footnote{809}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXII.
footnote{810}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXII.
footnote{811}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXII.
footnote{812}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.IV.
Bultmann’s examination of the Old Testament conflicts with the traditional notions of Heilsgeschichte Rex has previously examined, and is instead aligned with the Lutheran dialectic propounded by Hirsch, as Rex notes:

Heilsgeschichte, as he understands it, is reduced to the moment of encounter when I let myself be engaged by the Selbstverständnis of the text in an existential encounter which judges and redeems as it is received as the Word of God. Like Emanuel Hirsch, Bultmann rejects the Selbstverständnis of the Old Testament as judged by the revelation in Jesus Christ.813

Rex relies heavily on Bultmann’s essay ‘Prophecy and Fulfilment’ when explaining the application of this Old Testament schema.814 For Bultmann’s Christian, an understanding of the pattern of promise and fulfilment involves an inner contradiction. Rex claims that when Bultmann asks - “How far, then, does Old Testament Jewish history represent prophecy fulfilled in the history of the New Testament Community?” and answers that it is “fulfilled in its inner contradiction, its miscarriage”815 - he is affirming that the people of God cannot be directly linked to any empirical race or people.

The impossibility of man gaining direct access to God in history is recognisable for the Christian, according to Rex, “because in the kerygma he has encountered the grace of God”.816 As we shall see Rex makes use of the term ‘grace’ in his explanation of Bultmann’s understanding of eschatology, the third of the three headings under which he discusses Bultmann’s work.

3.0. An eschatological taster (now but not yet!)

Rex also finds it helpful to use examples from the aforementioned essay ‘Prophecy and Fulfilment’ when offering definition for Bultmann’s use of the term ‘eschatological’. In

813RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXXII.
815 Rex cited Bultmann at length in this regard: “There is nothing which can count as a promise to man other than the miscarriage of his way, and the recognition that it is impossible to gain direct access to God in his history within the world, and directly to identify his history within the world with God’s activity [...] The encounter with the grace of God teaches man to conceive of God’s activity as eschatological in the true sense, that is, as an activity withdrawing him from the world; and it endows him with the possibility of faith as that of eschatological existence in the world and in time”. Rudolf Bultmann, ‘Prophecy and Fulfilment’ in Essays Philosophical and Theological (London: SCM Press, 1955) pp.206f. Cited in RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXXIII.
816RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXXIII.
doing this, he highlights the juxtaposition between common use of theological terms and Bultmann's understanding of those same terms. In Bultmann's work, he explains:

'\textit{eschatological}' appears to be set in contrast with '\textit{empirical}' and '\textit{historical}', but, of course, this must not be understood to imply a belief in the hereafter, since the hereafter is ruled out as a piece of mythology. On the other hand, Bultmann assures us that the new covenant, being a 'radically eschatological dimension', takes its members out of the world (p.196). Now, since we cannot leave this world: not even at the hour of death, it becomes somewhat puzzling what is meant \textit{by} the eschatological dimension.\textsuperscript{817}

In his typical fashion, Rex has offered a taster to begin a new section which serves to raise interest with more questions raised than answers provided. His disarming frankness elicits a response from his audience. Even where he provides 'old' or traditional answers, placing his answers in the context of new questions serves to introduce cognitive dissonance into the process.

Cognitive dissonance

What Rex is doing here may be understood as an attempt to connect with hearers who may otherwise simply have switched off when confronted only with traditional answers. An understanding of Rex's work as an endeavour to present important questions in a 'new' manner - with the aim of engaging an audience - is entirely in keeping with Rex's own understanding of the hermeneutic process. In such a model the disjunction - between 'new' questions raised by a speaker with whom they have developed sympathy, and the answers inspired by the tradition that he presents as a solution - will remain until the audience have processed and absorbed the meaning of the 'old' answers in the context of the 'new' questions. Rex, however, does not restrict himself strictly to 'old' answers. He explains that 'world' and 'eschatology' are two mutually exclusive forms of \textit{Selbstverständnis} in Bultmann's theology:

The individual who understands his condition in terms of 'world' views his condition as one of possibilities over which he has control; it is typical of this

\textsuperscript{817}RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXIII. In the 1958 text, the final sentence reads "[...] what is meant be the eschatological dimension". Breward's 1967 version has replaced the word 'be' with the words 'to be'. I have chosen to regard the word 'be' as a typing error and have replaced it with the word 'by'. Actually it makes little difference which option is chosen since the original intention of this somewhat awkward sentence is preserved in either rendition.
‘world’ that it is at man’s disposal (verfügbar). The human condition viewed as such allows you to come back to things: to take them up again at will: to refer back to them at your leisure. ‘World’, according to this terminology, is then not primarily the world of matter or objects (though it includes this) but a manner of regarding the human condition: in short, a form of Selbstverständnis.818

‘Eschatological’ interpretation is contrasted with this – as an interpretation of scripture “which implies a Selbstverständnis that views the individual as being in encounter with a reality that is precisely not at his disposal”.819 Rex considers that Bultmann’s hermeneutics and eschatology are so bound up that one must have a grasp of the one in order to wrestle with the other. The same might reasonably be said of Rex’s own hermeneutics and eschatology.

Given his recent return from a period of doctoral studies focusing on biblical and eschatological matters - in a Germany which was then the hotbed of hermeneutics - it is perhaps no surprise that about the same time as Rex was working on his ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’, he was also working on lectures on eschatology. Both of these interests flow naturally from his D.Theol. thesis and, as we shall see, both find their climax in his interpretation of Bultmann’s work.

Rex, Bultmann and grace

As Rex’s introduction to hermeneutics draws to its zenith, Rex makes an important connection between Bultmann’s understanding of eschatology and the concept of Selbstverständnis:

The Selbstverständnis is itself interpretation, and ‘eschatology in the true sense’ is simply the proper Selbstverständnis of the individual in his encounter of [sic] the judging and redeeming Word of God. That encounter takes place in the ‘now’ of grace. Like the mystics, Bultmann is very much preoccupied with the ‘now’: the moment of divine-human encounter, but unlike the mystics, Bultmann does not teach a method by means of which this encounter is brought about; it comes about in the time of grace alone: a grace that is in no manner at man’s disposal; and again, unlike the mystics, Bultmann does not base the possibility of the encounter on the belief in the essential identity of God and man ([the ‘divine spark’), but he rests it in the belief that it has pleased God to talk to us in the kerygma.820

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818RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXXIII.
819RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXXIV.
820RA130, Rex, ‘Hermeneutics’: p.XXXIV. Rex closed his section on Bultmann with a further eschatological
In other words Rex explains that in Bultmann’s thought (and he objects in no way to Bultmann’s understanding) Selbstverständnis is the correct response, in the moment, to God’s grace. It is worth noting at this point that, although Rex links eschatology and Selbstverständnis together in the moment of grace, it is arguable that he does little to demythologise the term ‘grace’ itself.

Rex’s use of the word ‘grace’ appears incongruent with his otherwise pervasive plea for demythologising. It appears without explicit definition but by implication equates to a ‘mystical encounter’ where God acts - in a presumably gracious and undeserved manner - towards humankind to restore right relationship. Although his publication is of the nature of an introduction, it must be said that in his explanation of Bultmann’s work, Rex’s use of the term ‘grace’ conveniently to tie up loose ends leaves the twenty-first century reader somewhat dissatisfied. The presence of such inconsistencies makes the demythologising project look superficial and incomplete.

As noted earlier ‘grace’ is also Rex’s explanation of the encounter with a ‘correct’ interpretation of the scriptures. As he explains in his article in The Reformed Theological Review “[t]he ‘objectivity’ of the Word of God is then an experience of grace which may or may not be released by an ‘objective’ interpretation of the text itself”.[821] Rex believes the measure of ‘objectivity’ - in the latter sense - achieved by the historical-critical method is in itself of little use:

The result of this objectivity is a better understanding of the biblical documents as part of Religionsgeschichte or phenomenology of religion. At this stage, the biblical interpreter appears to be faced with a dilemma. He has a method for what he is ultimately not interested in, or only in a preliminary manner, while he has no method for what is of ultimate concern, i.e., the Word of God.[822]

taster: “Bultmann’s is then an eschatology without a hereafter, but it is not an eschatology without a ‘future’ (‘Zukunft’). That term too takes on quite a distinct meaning with Bultmann, and therefore it must be mentioned in brief. As God does not hand himself over to us (not even in his word), he is real only as ‘Coming’, and in so far as he is ‘coming’, it is he himself who is our ‘future’, the term understood in its most radical sense. Consequently, as long as we understand our human condition as ‘open’ to God (Another significant term in Bultmann’s vocabulary!) our life has a future […].’ Hermeneutics: p.XXXIV.

[821] Rex, RTR, February 1960: p.16. That Rex is clear that a mystery of ‘grace’ is involved in correct understanding of God’s Word is emphasised at the end of Rex’s copy of the journal article (p.21) in the following handwritten thought: “N.B. The step from Religionsgeschichte to the Word of God. Hermeneutic alchemy? An attempt to find the philosopher’s stone which will turn base metal into gold”.

Rex addresses this problem in his article in terms of attempts to locate the Word of God through typology but he finally concludes that, since such revelation can only be said to occur through the Holy Spirit, the interpreter is no further ahead. Assuming this conclusion Rex asks:

If that is the case, is there any point in speaking of typology as a hermeneutic method at all? Is this not a covert admission that the historical-critical method is the only method available to us and that it is an experience of grace when in the course of its application to the biblical documents we are led from the realm of 'Religionsgeschichte' into the presence of the Word of God?823

Just what the difference is between the 'work of the Holy Spirit' and 'the experience of grace' is not explained. If, as it appears, a distinction is clear in Rex's mind, it must be said that this distinction fails to 'come across' today. Similarly, while Rex's distaste for the typological method on the basis that it is alien to the mentality of modern man may be true, but it begs the question as to its suitability to the postmodern individual.

**Bonhoeffer's non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts**

The final section of Rex's 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction' is only one page long. It offers a brief assessment of 'Bonhoeffer's non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts', and is reflective of the ambivalent manner in which Rex regards Bonhoeffer.824

Rex views Bonhoeffer's problem as a homiletic rather than a hermeneutic one, depicting Bonhoeffer's contribution to hermeneutics as "of a purely fragmentary nature".825 He describes Gerhard Ebeling's attempt to present Bonhoeffer's thought in a systematic form as "a most painstaking effort".826 Moreover, Rex implies that Bonhoeffer's work is a mere capitulation in the face of a rising wave of secularisation, stating: "It is as if Bonhoeffer declared in face of a position that is prima facie against the Christian faith, that is precisely as it ought to be on ground of the Christian faith itself".827 Thus, once he has explained

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824 Rex does not consider Bonhoeffer worthy of placement on a pedestal. See chapter one for an assessment of Rex's encounters with Bonhoeffer.
825RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXIV.
827RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXV.
Bonhoeffer's project in a matter of fact fashion, he concludes his introduction to hermeneutics in the following manner:

Bonhoeffer can call his 'non-religious' interpretation also a 'christological' interpretation - in so far as it is guided by the idea of a crucified Christ: the [stranger] in this world: who conquers the world just at the point when he is cast out of it. This is, of course, true enough in one sense, but if a frivolous analogy is permitted, Bonhoeffer's version of the theologia crucis reminds me of Lady Ollivier's words when she was recently ordered from the House of Lords, 'I was going anyway.' What else is it when Bonhoeffer declares in face of a world that manages well without God, 'The God who is with us, is the God who leaves us' (Mk. 5.34) [...]828

While it is clear that Rex does not view Bonhoeffer's attempt as a success, his description of Bonhoeffer's motivations reveals a degree of sympathy and understanding:

Bonhoeffer believes that he is carrying Bultmann's work one step further when he exposes the problematic nature of 'religious' language as such and not stopping short at mythology. In fact, he questions the whole conception of man as a 'religious animal' - or, in other words, the assumption that man is by nature disposed to God.829

Rex suggests that Bonhoeffer appears to accept the secularisation of modern man not only as inevitable but also as legitimate. The reader is not surprised when Rex, scathing of Bonhoeffer's stance, labels it 'fatalistic' - among the most damning labels an existentialist critic might choose to apply.

Matters of ultimate concern - 'our interests' today

So what today are we to make of Rex's introduction to hermeneutics? It is certainly still a useful introduction to the subject - deemed sufficient to be re-appropriated as a text for contemporary students for the Presbyterian ministry.830 But is there any advanced contemporary application for Rex's thought in our present context?

828 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXV. Rex continues this paragraph (the last in his publication) with the original German, and appropriate references as follows: "("Der Gott, der mit uns ist, ist der Gott, der uns verlässt", Die Mundige Welt, II, 79) or, "Before and with God, we live without God" (Vor und mit Gott leben wir ohne Gott", loc.cit.)]

829 RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXXIVf.

830 See earlier footnote.
Viewed from the perspective of the opening decade of the twenty-first century Rex has got it right - the historical-critical method has become our destiny. Even this present critique of Rex's hermeneutics is offered with historical perspective, and its insights are viewed with the intention of the text and author in mind as well as a discussion surrounding its place in debates of the time. In addition to this, reader-response and other postmodern offerings are made against a background of historical awareness - they are made in a self-conscious fashion - aware that they are one 'methodology' among others, being practised (and justified in the prefaces of countless academic works) in light of a particular historical context. It is hard to imagine the discovery of a completely new paradigm for hermeneutic thought. A 'tweaking' of the approach represented in Rex's work may be the best a contemporary scholar can hope for - reading Rex's text in the spirit in which it was written, and searching for the 'next step'.

In light of a concern to carry Rex's thought into the present day, it is worth considering whether the sentiment behind Rex's suggestion that each generation update its interpretation might be taken one step further and carried over into a critique of the 'modernist' obsession with the historical-critical method, and the need to differentiate what is historically verifiable from that which is not. Such a critique might be retrospectively applied to Rex's 1950s hermeneutic position.

Given the scepticism which is posited over and against all forms of 'truth' by postmodern approaches, one is led to propose that hermeneutic methods of the reader-response type may indeed be more intellectually appropriate for the twenty-first century hermeneutician wishing to learn from Rex's honest search for truth. Yet the historical-critical method cannot be completely disposed of. Other methods owe their existence to its relativising power. They have only arisen in their contemporary form since the historical-critical method exposed the lack of any legitimate claim to superiority among existing approaches, thus paving the way for less well known hermeneutical methods to lay their own claim to validity alongside others.

831 The basic 'self-conscious' awareness that postmodern methods share hints at the discovery of a new paradigm for hermeneutics. Even this self-consciousness is, however, derived from the historical-critical method.
Further questions about the appropriateness of the historical-critical method for today might be based on a re-examination of Rex's final argument for why the historical-critical method had become 'destiny' in his day. In his last argument for the adoption of the historical-critical method, he describes it as a contemporary manifestation of the Christological notion of a stumbling block. It is at least arguable that this is no longer true for the present generation. In responsible biblical studies in the twenty-first century, the historical-critical method has ceased to be regarded as the stumbling block it once was. Today it is regarded as a basic tool. If there is an advantage in employing a method that mimics the one constituted by the humanity of Christ for his contemporaries - a stumbling block as Rex suggests - then it is clear that a different interpretive method will be more appropriate for the present generation.

The place of the historical-critical method in contemporary hermeneutics will continue to be debated. It is not something this thesis is able finally to solve. What is most important to recognise is that fresh reading of Rex's work in hermeneutics continues to raise relevant questions in the twenty-first century. It continues to provide impetus to reform our thinking in this area.

The challenge to reform our thinking and find contemporary forms of expression for the Christian message is also a key characteristic of the work that will be analysed in the next chapter where we shall investigate the extent to which Bultmann is as important an influence on Rex in his eschatology as he is in his hermeneutics. Although he follows Bultmann's agenda we shall observe that Rex is equally careful to ensure that he does not let his admiration for his Vorbild prohibit him from critically appraising Bultmann's work in this area.

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832 Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XII, notes: “W. Vischer has drawn out attention to the fact that the skandalon or stumbling block which the historical-critical method presents in the way it shows up the human nature of the biblical writings, is essentially the same as that which the humanity of Christ constituted for his contemporaries".
Chapter Seven - Eschatology

The background

Rex's work in the area of eschatology forms his most voluminous public contribution to the traditional systematic agenda. His only book *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* (1967) concerned itself with eschatology as did his 1958 article 'Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?' published in *The Reformed Theological Review*. Prior to this Rex also gave two series of lectures on this theme - one to the Student Christian Movement and one to an annual Presbytery retreat attended by ministers from a number of regions in the South Island of New Zealand. Rex's work in the area of eschatology built upon previous themes examined in his *D.Theol.* thesis and upon concurrent themes he was exploring in the field of hermeneutics.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the personal circumstances surrounding Rex's engagement with eschatology, before proceeding to explore Rex's motivations and examine the response to his lectures. Basic issues in eschatology, according to Rex, are introduced in a discussion of Rex's Journal article 'Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?' Rex's eschatological thought is analysed in this chapter primarily through examining sections of the more detailed lectures he delivered to the Student Christian Movement on the subject one year prior to his piece in *The Reformed Theological*
Review, as well as through an assessment of material presented in the book he wrote at the end of his life: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

A number of factors contribute to Rex’s enthusiasm for eschatology which culminated in the publication of his book. First, as we shall see, the ostensible cause for that particular publication is a response to his wife’s interest in his thoughts in this area. Second, and derivatively, he may have viewed it as an opportunity to offer her comfort in a situation of his impending death. This is borne witness to by the simple inscription ‘for Renate’ that appears on a blank page separating the book’s two title pages. Third, there is a congruence between Rex’s life lived and the response found to it in his eschatology. In 1956, immediately prior to starting work in this area, Rex had a significant near-death experience. 833 This was followed by another near-death experience in 1961. 834 Both of these incidents contributed to his interest in an afterlife. In addition, Rex’s encounters with a less-than-perfect society in Nazi Germany and then in the response to his early years as a refugee will have done nothing to harm the appeal or vision of a utopian afterlife. 835 Fourth, and of particular significance, is Rex’s disagreement with Bultmann on the matter of an afterlife. Rex’s personal experiences of alienation coupled with an epoch despairing at its own destructive potential make his interest in existentialism not surprising. Existentialists in general felt that serious moments such as death spoke most directly to their situation. In Rex’s particular case it seems reasonable to imagine that he would have believed that a disagreement with Bultmann on such a serious matter warranted a considered response.

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? elicited thoughtful response from Rex’s contemporaries. It was reviewed in Landfall, The Reformed Theological Review, and twice in The Outlook. 836 As we

833 This experience is described in Rex’s own words in BHR: p.267f.
834 Rex’s letter to Bultmann indicates the strong effect of this experience in 1961. See: BHR: p.271ff.
835 Rex's history and context offer us the most important clues to his focused concern with the hereafter. Even today, those who profess distaste or indifference towards the idea of an afterlife are frequently the products of comfortable, highly educated backgrounds. Such people would see no need for the ‘escapism’ such a theory would represent. It is easier to see the appeal of theories of the hereafter for those who have lived in difficult and uncomfortable circumstances. As noted in earlier chapters of this thesis, Rex’s experiences in Nazi Germany and in wartime New Zealand were just such experiences. In addition, his life-long illness was punctuated by two mystical near death experiences and his struggle with terminal emphysema was prolonged.
shall see, Rex's book is significant for other reasons. Among them is his disagreement with
the scepticism concerning an afterlife that he finds manifesting the work of Tillich, Barth
and Bultmann. Equally significant is his engagement with the thought of the emerging
'atheist theologians' and his concluding acceptance of a more traditional (conservative)
understanding of the role of 'mystery' than he had previously allowed for in eschatology.
When we come to investigate Rex's book, it is well also to remember that it emerged into the
public sphere at a time when these issues were very much in the public mind.837

**Immortality of the soul, or resurrection of the dead, or what?**

Rex's most concise articulation on the subject of eschatology appears in the October
1958 edition of the Journal The Reformed Theological Review.838 In the article 'Immortality of
the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?' he uses his contemporary Oscar
Cullmann's high profile to gain leverage for his own theological ideas. Rex does not disagree
with Cullmann's complaint about the widespread mistake "of attributing to primitive
Christianity the Greek belief in the immortality of the soul".839 However, Rex wishes to
outline his own ideas about how a convincing contemporary case for the biblical notion of
resurrection might best be put. Cullmann's commitment, to the notion of 'the last day' and
an 'intermediate state' for those who die before it, forms little more than a convenient
platform for Rex to launch his own ideas.

Contrasting his own position over and against Cullmann's allows Rex to state a
cautious commitment to the value of demythologising and a frustration with Cullmann's use

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837Rex's book was available shortly before Lloyd Geering's *God in the New World* was published. Geering's book
was an attempt to explain the views he held which sparked what was popularly known as a 'heresy trial' and
Geering notes in his preface (p.11): "This book was nearly finished when there was published posthumously a
booklet written by my former teacher and late colleague, Professor H.H. Rex, entitled, *Did Jesus Rise from the
Dead?* In it he makes this comment, 'we live on this side of a rupture that divides the whole history of mankind
into two sections; the one extending from the cavemen to the men of the Renaissance, and the other covering
this post-Cartesian world of ours. On the surface it may seem preposterous to lump the caveman, Plato and
Michelangelo into one class, and the rest of us into another. And yet, so long as we fail to appreciate the full
magnitude of this fact, we have understood very little about the nature of the modern secular world'. It is the
nature of this rupture which I have been trying to outline in what follows, along with the reasons for it, and the
effect on the Christian faith". Cf. DJR: p.75.

838Helmut Rex, 'Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?' in *The Reformed Theological

in Rex, 'Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?' in RT, October 1958: p.73.
of ambiguous biblical language. "Exegesis is not identical with theology" declares Rex. Also significant is Rex's belief that the current fondness among Christians for the notion of immortality of the soul arises as a result of earnest questing. Although he will challenge the validity of this belief, Rex considers "[s]uch straining towards reality [as] a good and honest thing". The theological vista Rex describes in his 'response to Cullmann' allows him to put to himself the question he really wishes to address:

Does this mean that we are faced, on the one hand, with an 'acceptable' but unbiblical doctrine of immortality and, on the other hand, with a biblical but 'unacceptable' belief in resurrection?

This particular concern lies behind all of Rex's writing on eschatology. His attempts to do justice to Christianity as 'a way of life' and as a 'resurrection faith' are also influenced by his own near death experiences. In expounding a contemporary understanding of resurrection faith he is convinced also that it is essential to take seriously the intellectual revolution symbolised by the name of Descartes. This is all in line with his conviction that the world-view of the modern individual is theologically "extremely relevant".

The attempt to outline his eschatology is a natural extension of Rex's work in the existentialist arena. He is reliant upon Sartre's notion of the 'fissure' and seeks with different presuppositions to emulate Bultmann's thorough regard for the condition of modern man. Sartre's atheism means that Rex considers his work incomplete for the Christian; and Bultmann's work, in Rex's view, fails to give full expression to the Christian hope.

Rex admires both Sartre and Bultmann for the way in which they remain academically faithful to the courage of their convictions, that is, in their intellectual rigour in outlining their positions and the consequences that resulted. Rex seeks to do likewise and in doing so presents his vision of the Christian hope for modern man. Rex's vision of the hereafter can be viewed as a fulfilment of the human condition understood existentially.

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841 Rex, RTR, October 1958: p.74.
842 Rex, RTR, October 1958: p.74.
843 RA110, Rex, 'Five Talks on Eschatology: SCM Study Conference May 1957 at Christchurch: II. Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body': p.11. (Hereafter referred to as 'SCM-II').
seeks to be consistent with contemporary historical and philosophical insight as well as kerygmatic scriptural witness.

**A critical appraisal of Bultmann?**

If a contemporary publisher were to be inspired to print the early papers Rex wrote on eschatology an appropriate title might read: 'Bultmann's eschatology: a critical appraisal with an introduction to basic concepts'. Bultmann's eschatology was presented as the climax in Rex's assessment of eschatologies available in the mid nineteen-fifties. This point is emphasised in the title of a paper subsequently added to Rex's earliest series on eschatology. The paper was headed: 'Beyond Bultmann?' - the question mark highlighting Rex's own scepticism at the very possibility of any position superseding the work of his *Vorbild* on this theme.

As we noted when we examined Rex's hermeneutics, in many regards Rex's assessment of Bultmann's work has parallels with that of today's Jesus Seminar. Robert Funk, a founder of the Jesus Seminar, completed doctoral studies under Bultmann, and later wrote the introduction to the English translation of *Glauben und Verstehen*. Both Rex and Funk, profoundly influenced by Bultmann, appreciate Bultmann's scepticism concerning knowledge of the historical Jesus, yet both believe that Bultmann has gone too far. Rex estimates that a good deal more could be reliably known about the historical Jesus than Bultmann was willing to admit, and Funk's group have in more recent times set out to establish conservative estimates of what information about Jesus is historically reliable.845

As we shall see, Rex finds Bultmann's kerygmatic theology a good place to start and though the former maintains some form of belief in a hereafter he sees merit in the latter's realised eschatology. Although he admits to being unable to provide a convincing intellectual framework for this belief according to the scientific model, Rex attributes his parting with Bultmann at this point to a faith that does not wish to share Bultmann's 'historical agnosticism'. As it shall be seen when we come to examine his posthumously published book *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?*, Rex later came to press more urgently for the

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retention of metaphors for the hereafter under the influence of his near-death experiences. An examination of the theology in this later work will reveal that in this respect (and in its insistence on 'grace' as a final explanation) it is more conservative than that found in the earlier papers we examine.

As we shall see further, Rex is critical of other contemporary attempts at writing eschatology because he feels that they do not do justice to the condition of the modern individual. Although he believes Bultmann to be the exception, Rex's conviction that there is meaning to be found in history, and his belief in an afterlife, mean that his own conclusions are quite different from those of the living theologian he holds in highest regard.

Rex is urgently concerned that the salvation of the individual involving encounter with God be outlined in the most up to date and clear fashion. In the development of his own eschatology, he is attempting do justice to the condition of the modern individual and to the biblical hope. This is an ambitious task with many difficulties, not least of which was its implicit aim: identifying and explicating the “intention” of the doctrine of the resurrection.846 As we shall see further, at its most basic he sees it as a way of describing “our home-coming to God”.847

One of the most controversial aspects of Rex's approach is the apparent discrepancy between the first disciple's understanding of resurrection and Rex's notion of intentionality. The first disciples could not have 'intended' anything like Rex's Enlightenment-influenced understanding of their doctrine. This highlights the precarious nature of Rex's desire to “go beyond Bultmann in this matter and yet remain responsible in our way of stating things”.848 Yet the aim of re-presenting doctrine in a way which offers hope and inspiration to the contemporary world is admirable. Rex is clear that any attempt to go beyond Bultmann is dependent upon an act of faith.849

846 In the concluding paragraphs of Rex's second address, he invites his audience to consider the intentions of the two opposing doctrines of immortality and resurrection. The fifth lecture is where he develops his own eschatology, and here Rex devotes the greater part of it to considering “the plausibility of the intentions of the doctrine of the body”. RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.6.
847RA110, Rex, SCM-I: p.4.
848RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.1.
849Bultmann's system actively promotes such acts of faith. It is intended that these acts of faith are to be based
I am afraid, we are reduced to the declaration that we believe that the history of the human race is not merely a succession of fortuitous events: that it has meaning inherent in itself which justifies the introduction of the notion of Heilsgeschichte in this context. If we wish to say as much as that, we must, however, immediately add that it completely defies our knowledge to state how precisely this is the case. 

**Reception of Rex's addresses**

In its day, response to Rex's scholarly views was likely to be mixed. He was highly thought of among the progressive Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.) for whom he prepared the series examined in this chapter entitled 'five lectures on eschatology'. Membership numbers in the 1950s Presbyterian Church were divided evenly between 'conservative' and 'liberal', with the latter more sympathetic to Rex. Liberals dominated politically. Knox Theological Hall, the institution responsible for the initial training of Presbyterian ministers, was treated with suspicion by the church's conservative membership. Rex, as one of its principal figures would undoubtedly have been regarded similarly.

Those who controlled teaching appointments, organised retreats, and ran the church's publicity were supportive of Rex and his scholarship. The unnamed author of an *Outlook* article reporting on a series of lectures Rex gave on the same subject at a ministers' Presbytery retreat early in 1957 found that he was successful in re-expressing the doctrine of the resurrection in contemporary terms. As we shall see further, in many ways Rex's eschatology offers a promise of the fulfilment of the purposes of man. Personal integrity, self-realisation and encounter are all aims of the Christian existentialist, and they all find promise of fulfilment in Rex's eschatology. Rex generally offers a noble assessment of his audience's interest and in the case of these addresses on eschatology is reported to have told the men present at the Presbytery retreat that their interest was:

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850RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.1f.
851 Members of the S.C.M. recall being both impressed and intimidated by Rex's theology.
852 Anecdotes in *BHR*, and conflicts Rex had with more conservative students as recorded earlier in the present thesis, witness to the validity of this verdict.
853 An *Outlook* article on Rex's eschatology series for a Presbytery retreat earlier in 1957 reported as follows: "It is obvious from the vagueness in the minds of most Church people on the subject of things beyond death, and the extraordinary variety of opinions, that a re-investigation into the meaning of our terms is essential if we are to proclaim at all the message of the Christian hope. And Dr. Rex's visit to the Presbytery has done just this". 'The Doctrine of Last Things' in *The Outlook*, 12 March 1957: p.7.
characteristic of contemporary Protestant theology, an interest which could be traced back to the works of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. Their recognition that eschatology belongs to the essence of the Christian Faith set men to reconsider and re-interpret for themselves the traditional language of Scripture and the Church concerning the hereafter, and to rediscover what is the nature of man, and the nature and purposes of God, for their own comfort and reassurance. 854

**Five lectures on eschatology**

Rex delivered his series of addresses on eschatology to the Student Christian Movement’s May 1957 conference in Christchurch. These five lectures on eschatology represent an attempt to take seriously both the Christian hope, and the condition of the modern individual. The first two lectures focus on key concepts, thereafter, the then contemporary work of Oscar Cullmann and Rudolf Bultmann provide the focus for Rex’s discourse. Cullmann and Bultmann were well known for their work on eschatology at the time of Rex’s writing. The stances the latter takes towards the work of these two key figures provides a convenient point of entry into his eschatological programme.

Rex offers an opinion on Cullmann identical to that offered in his introduction to hermeneutics; that is, Cullmann’s work “fundamentally disappoints” because “it is not serious”. The work of Cullmann does not attempt to unravel the New Testament myths. Instead it remains for Rex “an intellectual game which in no way ‘engages’ one personally: existentially”, leaving “untouched the questions which have worried modern man ever since the 17th century”. 855 In contrast to his evaluation of Cullmann’s work, it is clear from these 1957 lectures on eschatology that Rex regards Bultmann’s as the best yet produced in this regard; 856 yet Rex is not convinced that Bultmann had preserved the whole substance of the Christian Faith. Rex is, however, impressed by the seriousness of Bultmann’s attempt to clarify the contemporary meaning of the New Testament.

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856 The addresses are loosely arranged from introductory material through more sophisticated treatments of eschatology. The fourth of the five lectures is entirely devoted to the work of Bultmann. The final address entitled ‘Beyond Bultmann?’ begins by questioning whether Bultmann is the last word on eschatology. “Is Bultmann the last word in eschatology? That is the question.” RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.1. This lecture presupposes that any advances in thinking on the topic of eschatology must build on, or successfully refute Bultmann.
Put succinctly, against the background of Bultmann, Rex's eschatology is the result of his efforts to do justice both to the human condition as described by Heidegger and Sartre, and to the New Testament hope. Rex's first lecture is an introduction to the topic and its early church roots. The second address examines the two most popular notions of the hereafter and their links to Hebraic and Hellenistic world-views. The third paper, focusing on Cullmann, introduces contemporary discussion and leads into the fourth, which concentrates on what Rex sees as the way ahead, the work of Bultmann. These first four lectures also help to illustrate that his own model, which he outlines in his fifth address, is informed by, and is a development of, the history of eschatological discussion to date. Rex places his own eschatology within a tradition that he has subjected to critical analysis.

Setting the scene

The first lecture on eschatology places the doctrine of the last things within the broadest of frameworks of religious thought, including animism and Zoroastrianism. More narrowly, Rex points out that it is misleading to speak even of Christian eschatology as if it were a unity. Rather, the New Testament and subsequent Christian witness reflect a variety of interests and understandings. For Rex, what unites Christians through the ages is their common preoccupation with eschatology:

The Christian Faith is a way of life (hee hodos, MT.22.16; Jo.14.4,5,6; Acts 9.2, etc) WHICH IS GUIDED BY CERTAIN HOPES CONCERNING THE FUTURE as they are created in the believer by the message of the apostles which in its turn was inspired by their understanding of the words and life of Jesus. In other words, we Christians are on the way to a goal, and as we are on the way the conditions of that way change, and the goal too (notwithstanding the fact that it always remains the same: our home-coming to God) is seen in different fashion by different generations of Christians.857

According to Rex, the Christian hope concerning the future stems only indirectly from the words and life of Jesus. Jesus' life inspired the apostles whose words in turn inspire the believer. This three step hermeneutic shows a cautiousness born of Rex's background in biblical studies, hermeneutics and historical criticism. This goes some way towards explaining the careful manner in which Rex words his approval of the ancient description of Christianity as 'the way'.

857RA110, Rex, SCM-I: p.4.
Rex’s cautious hermeneutic is given substance through an explanation of the manner in which focus and perspective act as the key determinants of the doctrinal specifics to which we adhere. He begins by outlining a number of eschatologies which have been included in the New Testament. In addition, he says, to the various influences of New Testament teachings on eschatology, our individual perspectives are further shaped by the different ‘traditions’ of the churches of which we are members. The overlap with Rex’s teaching in his ‘Hermeneutics: An Introduction’ is clear in his message that our perspectives are ‘handed on’ to us by our church communities. Also obvious to those familiar with the ‘hermeneutics’ material is Rex’s view that our focus on doctrine is finally also shaped by our own individual interests:

Now if you further ask, what determines the differences in focus and perspective, the answer is, our interest. The same street with the same objective data will yet organise itself differently in the mental picture of the people who happen to use it under the same conditions according to their different interests. For one the focus will be a collection of pipes in a shop-window, for another the three Volkswagen [sic] he happened to notice, for still another the street becomes a ‘curved’ universe (or paradise) because of the blonde in the black silk dress, and so on.

One of the key factors which shape our interest, according to Rex, derives from the fact that the end of this world did not come as soon as was expected in the New Testament testimony. Rex foreshadows the discussion in his second lecture of Hebraic and Hellenistic influences on Christianity with a brief discourse on the limitations of Martin Werner’s formulation of Albert Schweitzer’s thesis that a crisis developed in the early church as a result of ‘the tarrying of the End’. Rex agrees however that the Church has subsequently been forced to ‘adjust’ its eschatology on this account. The existence of different expressions of the Christian hope ‘side by side’ in the New Testament is depicted by Rex as a model useful for understanding our situation today. Different generations of Christians living in different circumstances view the biblical themes in different ways. Rex takes a positive view of this situation:

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858 RA110, Rex, SCM-I: p.8.
859 Cf. the example of the ‘cooked’ text in chapter six.
860 RA110, Rex, SCM-I: p.9.
861 Rex consistently uses the terms ‘adjust’ and ‘readjust’ to describe the change in understandings of eschatology that happened over time.
It might be argued that this state of flux is inevitable at the beginning of a movement when beliefs and hopes have not yet crystallised into their final clarity. This point of view will be naturally adopted by those who see in the trinitarian and christological foundations of the ancient councils of the church the consummation of Christian truth. I personally think that we do more justice to the state of flux in the doctrines of the New Testament when we view this state of affairs as inherently given in the Christian Faith as a Way of Life that has to be lived by people in ever changing condition[s]: people who undergo themselves considerable changes.

Rex supports this statement with the example of St Paul, about whom he asserts: "It is well known that Paul changed his ideas concerning the last things in the course of his life," before tracing the development in Paul’s eschatology through his letters to the Thessalonians, Corinthians and Philippians.

Searching for an appropriate analogy

As has been shown, Rex believes that the changing circumstances of man through the ages have demanded new eschatological metaphors. Rex also believes in the power of analogy to shape understanding of the human condition. To this end, he explores the understandings of the hereafter that have dominated the Western Christian mind since New Testament times, and also argues fervently for the future predominance of the analogy of the resurrection of the dead over the notion of the immortality of the soul. As we shall see, he favours a biblical existentialist analogy to the Platonist ideal of an eternal soul.

Despite his preference for the more biblical understanding of the hereafter, Rex remains aware that an analogy “is in as many ways as obstructive as it is helpful to our imagination”. It is for this reason that he later added a sixth lecture to this ‘five part’ S.C.M. series. It is likely that dissatisfaction with his previous efforts led him to introduce a dialectical twist to his eschatological thought, an aspect which had previously been lacking. In this sixth address he develops what he calls ‘an eschatology of polarity’. The doctrine of the resurrection is put forward as ‘the thesis’, and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as ‘the corrective’ which will “help prevent the thesis from taking an undesirable turn”.

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862RA110, Rex, SCM-I: p.5.
863RA110, Rex, SCM-I: p.5.
864This aspect of Rex’s thought is examined more fully in chapter eight. Cf. the analogy of the clock in RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.5.
865RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.10.
866RA110, Rex, ‘Five Talks on Eschatology: SCM Study Conference May 1957 at Christchurch: VI. Towards an
For Rex, an 'undesirable turn' is constituted by a too literal understanding of the thesis. This concern to avoid the dangers of literalism is echoed in his criticisms of Dogmatism and Biblicism in the first address of this series:

The one attempts to harmonise the different views into a rigid doctrinal system; the other harmonises by simply restating the different biblical views side by side if possible in their own biblical terms.⁶⁶⁷

In a typically existentialist fashion, Rex is concerned that inconsistencies not be glossed over. This does not mean that attempts to harmonise biblical or theoretical material should not be attempted; rather, Rex believes that justice is done to the material when this “state of flux” is kept in sight as “a significant theological factor”.⁶⁶⁸

**Immortality of the soul or resurrection of the dead?**

Other concerns addressed in Rex’s sixth lecture are foreshadowed in his second. The Greek idea of immortality of the soul and the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead are discussed extensively in his second lecture on eschatology. Rex considers any biblical material pointing towards a notion of the immortality of the soul scant and improbable.

The majority of biblical texts discussing the hereafter lend their weight to an expectancy of the general resurrection of the dead. But Rex announces that he is not satisfied with a biblical argument based entirely on scriptural probabilities nor with a naive understanding of tombs opening and the dead standing up and walking around as if nothing had changed. Again he draws attention to the need to develop an analogy appropriate to the contemporary situation:

You might, of course, object that what modern man thinks is irrelevant in a theological discussion: that it is merely our business to find out whether a doctrine can be justified on grounds of Sacred Scripture (admittedly our supreme standard of religious truth) or not. I intend to take up this question in my fourth talk. Here, I shall confine myself to the statement that I think it indeed theologically extremely relevant what modern man thinks. And I do think that the doctrine of the

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⁶⁶⁷RA110, SCM-I: p.8.
⁶⁶⁸RA110, SCM-I: p.8.
immortality of the soul is invalidated on the ground of our present-day understanding of the human psyche.869

The Platonic dichotomy between time and eternity is discussed by Rex and compared with the biblical view of eternity as 'extended time', and the difficulties each notion presents to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. In the conclusion to his second address, Rex invites the audience to lay aside the philosophical difficulties in the two doctrines he has explored, focusing instead on the intentions and implications of each. Rex depicts talk of the immortality of the soul as individualistic in its outlook on salvation, and incompatible with an 'I-Thou' relationship due to the suggested absorption into a greater spirit beyond death:

The whole tendency of the doctrine is, in fact, to make the individual lose his individual distinctness in the oneness of God. Whatever the merits of this idea are (It has had its undoubted appeal to the mystics of all ages), it certainly does not [do] justice to the Christian hope in the hereafter in its traditional formulation. That hope is quite definitely concerned with the continued existence of the individual in the hereafter.870

Rex also finds that the notion of immortality of the soul, presupposing an anthropological dualism, fails to do justice to the Christian belief in a Creator God. By way of contrast, the resurrection of the dead in the hereafter is seen by Rex to do justice to the 'psycho-physical' whole that is man. He believes it safeguards the collective aspect of the Christian hope, preserves the individual in his distinctness in the hereafter, and recognises that God created both body and soul on an equal footing, each in no way inferior to the other.871

Although Rex questions the validity of preoccupation with the hereafter in contemporary Protestant eschatology, he wants to say that this aspect of the Christian hope

869RA110, Rex, SCM-II: p.11. In his 1958 article, Rex explains what he understands by the final statement in the above citation: "To any person who has seriously opened his mind to the findings of modern psychology, the doctrine of immortality, far from commending itself as the more “acceptable” view, has become entirely unacceptable. In fact, seen in the light of modern psychological research, the belief in resurrection has a certain advantage over the doctrine of immortality in that it views mind and body as but two aspects of mortal man and consequently implies the death of the whole man and not merely one part of him. In other words, the biblical view of man is doing justice to the intimate interaction of mind and body which we cannot but accept as truth about ourselves, and it is quite realistic about death". Rex, 'Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?' in RTR, October 1958: p.74f.
870RA110, Rex, SCM-II: p.10.
871RA110, Rex, SCM-II: p.16.
is best understood in terms closely aligned to the biblical notion of the resurrection of the body. His third lecture on _Heilsgeschichte_ begins to explore the issues in a way more closely related to the concerns of the modern individual. In a manner consistent with his concern for 'perspective', Rex pitches the first two lectures at a level designed to address and stimulate their existing interest. He then outlines the general concept of eschatology within an historical framework, going on to discuss the biblical material before bringing the audience up to date with the third address on _Heilsgeschichte_. The fourth and fifth papers introduce the listeners to the issues as they are being discussed by contemporary eschatological writers - especially Bultmann. Having approached the audience on an elementary level, Rex then develops an argument based on what he sees as 'real issues' relating to the human condition of the modern individual.

**Eschatology and hermeneutic concerns**

How one interprets the scriptures, is one of the key issues Rex identifies for the modern individual. As we have seen this was important enough to him that he chose to develop a course on hermeneutics following his return from doctoral studies in Germany. The interest in the 'embodied' localised nature of truth (finding a different expression for each new group and generation) carries over from Rex's hermeneutic theory into his eschatology.

Although Rex's concern for the embodiment of truth does adumbrate the concern for the particular and localised expression of truth that is characteristic of contextual theologies today, it is not of the same quality. Rex is generally concerned with the 'generational' or 'individual' nature of truth. In fact, like Kierkegaard he is generally suspicious of 'groups'. Conversely, as we shall see further in his addresses on race relationships Rex does in some circumstances affirm social groupings based on common interests. Rex’s concern for hermeneutics features in most of his writing from the mid-fifties onwards, and features as he lays the foundations for a discussion of Bultmann's eschatology:

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872 In 1955 Rex introduced twentieth century New Zealand theological students to this significant European theological preoccupation. His work in this area has been critically examined in chapter six.
873 For Rex’s understanding of Kierkegaard see chapter three of the present thesis.
874 Cf. Chapter nine.
You will [...] remember that in my second talk I raised the question in passing [of] whether it is theologically relevant what modern man thinks or not. Let us turn then to this matter of interpreting the scriptures or the hermeneutic problem as it is technically called. It is, in fact, one of the most widely debated questions in the field of theology today. The theologian who has done more than any other single man to press home on [us] the urgency of this matter is Rudolf Bultmann [...].

Rex illustrates his understanding of Bultmann’s demythologising programme through the use of examples drawn from three sources: Cullmann’s theology, in early church scriptural interpretation and by the author of the letter to the Ephesians. Again, as we have seen when we examined Rex’s material on hermeneutics, he maintains that it is the “extraordinary forcefulness” with which Bultmann has expressed himself that makes his demythologising programme unique. Rex asserts that “the plea for demythologising has never been put in quite as radical a fashion by any responsible theologian as today”. In Rex’s assessment Bultmann’s demythologising programme is based on the fact that the authors of the New Testament “lived in a totally different world from ours. That is to say, their mental picture of it was completely different from ours”. As in his ‘Hermeneutics: An introduction” Rex cites the example of the three tiered universe, with hell below and heaven above, as an example of those biblical images whose “epistemological status is invalidated by the simple fact that they do not fit into our post-Cartesian world”. At the time Rex was writing, this was far from an uncontroversial statement. He deemed it necessary further to explain why ‘a responsible theologian’ like Bultmann would wish to regard some biblical material as ‘fanciful’ or ‘purely mythological’:

This raises the question whether it is legitimate to decide questions of theological truth in this fashion. The Fundamentalist, of course, settles this question with an emphatic No on the ground the ‘It is written’ is sufficient authority for him for a statement to be true in the literal sense. When the Bible says that Jonah dwelt for three days in the belly of a fish, then that is that. Let the zoologist hunt for the animal, the theologian finds it in the Bible. This fundamentalist attitude rests, however, on the unacknowledged premise that this is the way sacred scripture must be written; otherwise it forfeits this claim. But this is precisely the question. Principally, this question ought to be tackled in the wider context of the Incarnation though, admittedly, this introduces, to a certain degree, a circular argument since all

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876RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.2.  
877RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.2.  
878RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.3.
that we know about the Incarnation comes to us through the scriptures. The main trend of that argument would be: If it is true that Christ was man in every sense (but sin) and not merely a seeming man or a kind of superman, then it is very likely indeed that the documents which testify to the Incarnation are incarnate too, i.e. human documents in every sense of that word and their ‘sacredness’ is as little ‘obvious’ as the divinity of Christ. In other words, it needs an act of faith in both cases to recognise them as such.

If that is the case, then Bultmann’s argument can certainly not be brushed aside as irrelevant. The objection that the argument from incarnation is at least to a certain extent circular can, however, not be ignored. But I think ultimately the argument whether Bultmann is right or not in calculating our modern scientific picture of the universe into his theology is neither decided on grounds of logic nor of theology. That choice is, in fact, of such a fundamental nature that it must be its own justification. It depends ultimately on our sense of truth.881

Here Rex alludes to his previously discussed conviction that theology must take the world of contemporary man seriously. In this instance he is clear that this commitment is based upon an intuitive sense of what is right. One of the key thrusts in his theological programme is based on little more than a hunch, “a sense of truth”. This reader, however, is inclined to believe that both Bultmann and Rex are correct. As we discussed earlier, such convictions are of such a fundamental nature that they can not be defended by logic.

**Bultmann and allegory**

Rex’s defence of Bultmann against any potential allegation of being an allegorist are not entirely convincing. There is a sense in which Bultmann (like an allegorist) seeks a meaning beyond the ‘obvious’ objective text. His quest for existential meaning in the biblical text has some parallels with the ‘Platonist’ search for a ‘spiritual’ meaning behind the earthbound text.

Rex is frequently (and often unfairly) derisive of Platonism and, because it is something with which he associates allegorical interpretation, it is no surprise to the reader that he is dismissive of any attempt to cast Bultmann’s work in this light. Bultmann differs from the allegorists with their Platonist allegiances, according to Rex, because Bultmann does not wish to do away with the category ‘myth’, preferring instead to read myth on its

881RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.3.
own terms. Rex contrasts this with the allegorists whose “express purpose” is to discover “religious and moral verities behind the veil of ephemeral events”.

Rex may be accused of letting his sympathy with Bultmann’s approach allow him to contrast it a little too starkly with (unspecified) allegorists. As Rex acknowledges Bultmann has been criticised for replacing one ephemeral picture of the world with another. Following his explanation of Bultmann’s adoption of the contemporary scientific world-view for theology, he deliberately contrasts the ‘responsible interpretation’ of Bultmann with the allegorical method which “tends to degenerate into an exercise of hermeneutic ingenuity where the interpretation has little relation to the text”. In any case it is clear that Rex has made a case for Bultmann’s principled adoption of modern critical methods and declared his sympathy with Bultmann’s rigour.

Rex, Bultmann and Heidegger

Rex accepts Bultmann’s use of Heidegger when discussing and describing the human condition. He is careful to point out that the Heideggerian material Bultmann is dependent upon relates to the Heidegger of Sein und Zeit, a book which he describes as being “in a certain sense [...] a philosophical analogue to the ‘open statue’, relying on bits of wire and wood, in modern art”. Rex describes the Heidegger of this period as “engaged in laying bare what he calls the fundamental ontology of the human condition”, and finds compelling the suggestion that man’s condition must be understood as historical in structure. In the translation of philosophical terms into theological ones, Heidegger’s ‘authentic existence’ becomes Bultmann’s ‘eschatological existence’. Eschatology, in Bultmann’s sense, has no reference whatsoever to an order of existence that lies on the other side of death. Rex explains further:

What concerns us in the present context is that Heidegger has singled out the ‘historical’ as one of the fundamental ontological structures of the human condition. That is to say, man’s manner of existing is no other than historical; if it were not so

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882RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.4f.
883RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.5.
884RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.6.
he would cease to be man. It is that which distinguishes him from any other manner of existing (for instance the animal world). What then is the historical in Heidegger’s sense and in what sense is it constitutive of our human condition? The historical is to him essentially the past and that past is constitutive of our human condition in so far as it is continually ‘before’ (not ‘behind!’) us in such a manner that we must come to terms with it either by denying or affirming it. This situation is (ontologically) inevitable and constitutes our human condition.887

Heidegger, according to Rex, is concerned that each individual recognise that he stands at a distance to his ‘self’. Further; choosing or denying one’s past (self) determines one’s future. Such a decision is made within the parameters of history and is constitutive of the human condition. Bultmann’s eschatology allows the individual to choose either ‘openness’ to God, or ‘world’ - two different ways of considering reality:

‘World’ is reality as considered at man’s disposal. It is the sort of condition where you can come back to things: take them up again: refer back to them. ‘World’, in Bultmann’s terminology, is therefore not the world of matter; it is primarily a manner of regarding our human condition. The eschatological dimension is then a dimension outside the world understood in these terms.888

The ‘world’ under bondage to past custom and convention, das Mann in Heidegger (the ‘they’), stands in contrast to eschatological existence, which is open to the coming of God towards us as ‘future’. Unlike ‘world’, God is not at our disposal and so the individual must be constantly ready and ‘open’ to the possibility of God in the present. When the New Testament is demythologised after the fashion of Bultmann, the ‘now’ is found to be charged with Heilsgeschichte. The crucial eschatological decision (the Christ) confronts us in the immediate instant as the eschatological end of salvation history.889

Rex expounds Bultmann’s thought as it is found in the collection of his essays translated with the title Faith and Understanding. Bultmann’s essay on the Gospel of John reveals his understanding of its message as a realised eschatology.890 The choice between ‘life’ and ‘death’ is made in the eschatological now. The decision is already made in the way the Word is heard. According to Bultmann, sin is unbelief - a result of choosing the possibility of ‘being world’ over the possibility of authenticity. Authenticity, in this model, must be

889RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.9.
890Bultmann, Faith and Understanding p.165-183.
chosen again and again. In believing over and over, the individual is given back his possibility (life) and exists once more as a being-in-the-future. 891

**Beyond Bultmann?**

The fifth and final lecture in Rex's series delivered to the S.C.M. in Christchurch in May 1957, asks whether an eschatology that goes beyond Bultmann's is possible. The reason Bultmann's 'realised' eschatology has an 'extraordinary forcefulness' for Rex is that it “compels us to make clear to ourselves what it actually is that we believe when we accept the Christian kerygma as the Word of God". 892 Rex admires the consistency with which Bultmann has gone about the task of demythologising biblical eschatology. Before questioning the fullness of Bultmann's translation of the Christian Faith, Rex outlines the implications of this interpretation. It is important to recognise that clarity in this matter is essential to Rex's understanding of the Christian faith and the common human interests that are at the heart of it. According to Rex:

If it is agreed that there is no life after death and if it is further agreed that meaning in history (as traditionally understood) is a figment of the mind, then the kerygma can have bearing only on the condition in which I happen to find myself as a human being here and now. It does that both by elucidating it and redeeming it. That is to say, it enables me to understand or interpret that condition as it ought to be understood and it also opens it to the reality by which it is bounded without ever coming into tangible contact with it, i.e. God. [...]

Whether one can agree that Bultmann's translation of the New Testament mythology has preserved the whole substance of the Christian faith will largely depend on one's answer to the question [of] whether Bultmann's nihilism concerning the hereafter and his agnosticism concerning world history are really inevitable conclusions from his acceptance of his position as modern man. 893

As we shall see, Rex develops his own answers to these questions. In the context of his lecture on Bultmann, they are included to alert the reader to the possibility of alternative stances (which Rex develops and defends in subsequent material). We shall see further that Rex's strong conviction that ethics are impossible without modern men sharing "a world in

891 Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*. p.179. The traces of futurist eschatology contained in John's Gospel are attributed by Bultmann to a later redactor. For Bultmann, man's sinfulness comes as a result of worldly knowledge which leads the individual into the error of forgetting his created-ness. Authenticity (life) involves regaining human existence's potentiality to be.
common", and his equally strong conviction that a world in common is to be discovered in a shared historical existence, are behind his questioning of Bultmann’s historical agnosticism. Rex’s belief that Christian eschatology should present real hope to those who take the condition of modern man seriously prompts him to distance himself from the realised eschatology of Bultmann. He is not so willing to forego the notion of a life hereafter.

In ‘Beyond Bultmann?’ Rex offers his own understanding of eschatology which takes his own belief in a hereafter into account.894 Rex considers that Bultmann has placed too one-sided an emphasis on individual (when biblical material refers to both individual and collective) salvation, but declares that such a position is understandable given the lack of any inherently convincing theology or philosophy of history having yet been devised. As a consequence of this and out of deference to Bultmann, Rex states the provisional nature of his own eschatology. This said, Rex proceeds to argue his case with considerable conviction.

In his eschatology Rex considers that he is able to work constructively with the insights of both Bultmann and Sartre. This is despite some significant differences between each of their fundamental commitments and his own. In Rex’s theology, God is envisaged as the source of meaning and purpose in history. This is intended to offer a stable basis for ethics common to humanity. In this way, Rex clearly differs from Bultmann whom Rex describes as ‘agnostic’ in terms of telos to history. Equally, while Rex accepts Sartre’s analysis of the human condition, he finds that Sartre’s atheism prohibited any meaningful sense of common humanity.895

Allowing for a hereafter

Rex, in contrast to Sartre and Bultmann, allows for the possibility of a hereafter. Despite awareness of the obvious inadequacy of any analogies regarding the hereafter offered by one who has not died, Rex wishes to entertain the idea of a continued existence on the other side of death. He cannot help feeling that Bultmann has “closed the subject

894RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.7: “I shall nevertheless make an attempt to say what I think the hereafter is about if there is such a thing as the hereafter, as I believe there is”. It is interesting to note that the subclause ‘as I believe there is’ was added in ink after the typescript was prepared.
895This is closely linked to Sartre’s pessimism concerning the possibility of human love.
concerning the possibility of a life hereafter in the strict sense of that term too readily". Rex's argument rests on a refusal to strictly attribute the hereafter to the category 'myth', as he explains:

I am not as convinced as [Bultmann] that the very idea of a hereafter is mythological, however mythological the actual way of referring to that hereafter may be in the New Testament.

Rex freely admits that he is in no position to provide an irrefutable rational argument for his position. Rex recognises that rationality is internally limited but that that very fact opens the way for an act of faith. The claim to belief in the resurrection falls for him into a similar category as the claims of Jesus' divinity. They require of the believer an act of faith. Here Rex is fundamentally in agreement with Bultmann's position. The historicity of the Jesus accounts is not deemed an appropriate basis upon which faith may be built. On the other hand, the proclamation (kerygma) of the early church offers the basis for belief. It makes assertions of a different order which challenge the prospective believer in the now to make an existential decision. For Rex (as with Bultmann) the believer's decision can be defended neither by appeal to historicity, nor by appeal to reason:

The truth of such statements can only be appropriated through the category of the "leap" (to speak in Lessing's language). That is to say, we must be prepared to abandon our world of continuous and analogous thought if we wish to affirm the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and the belief in our own resurrection.

Having identified the nature of his commitment to a belief in the hereafter, Rex proceeds to explore its content. In typically droll fashion Rex offers the analogy of the church choir as an illustration of the inadequacy of all visualisations of the hereafter. To Rex, a self-confessed poor singer, the image of heaven as a perpetually singing church choir is a "tedious thought, and not very encouraging". This is Rex's way of illustrating the inherent difficulty of entertaining any concrete ideas concerning the hereafter. As we have said, he is not content to let the matter rest at this point.

Reshaping Sartre

896RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.6.
897RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.6.
898RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.6.
899RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.7.
Rex accepted the rudiments of Sartre's analysis of the human condition, but was not prepared to accept that all of Sartre's conclusions necessarily followed. The same basic analysis can theoretically lead to different outcomes if the assessment of environmental contributors differs. Allowing for the existence of God and of true love, a vastly more hopeful world is on offer for Rex's individual, despite his Sartrean roots. Rex couples with this more optimistic outlook a correspondingly greater emphasis on ethics and responsibility.

Sartre's twofold division between 'object' and 'consciousness' is the focus for Rex's understanding of the hereafter. It is the redemption of this 'fissure' between the pour-soi and the en-soi which forms the greater part of his utopian vision. He believes the antidote to this fissure is proclaimed in the biblical witness. The Christian journey is a journey towards the reunification of what is separated in man: God and World, Consciousness and Object. Rex shares Sartre's scepticism about this reunification happening in the course of a normal human life. He believes that the way we are made prevents the attainment of the identity for which we are craving. According to Rex this reunification can only be achieved through the perfect love and grace of God:

Those among us who are not tainted by the Sartrean pessimism concerning love, have had the experience that when love and grace look at us, we become 'ourselves': that we 'are at our best': that all that comes to the fore that we wish to be. Now, if even human love can have that redeeming quality and is able to bring our true self at least in sight, how much more God whose love is absolute and without error of judgement.

Sartre's distinction between the en-soi and pour-soi in the human self provides the detail to the general concept Rex wishes to convey in the remainder of his lecture. The human self in its twofold aspect of 'object' and 'consciousness', never coinciding, constitute the human condition as it is experienced in the course of a normal human life. The 'fissure' running right through the human self means that the law of identity does not apply to our

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900 RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.8: "This is as far as we need pursue the matter in Sartre. What is important to me in his thought is the way in which he has laid his finger on the fissure which runs right through ourselves and the way in which he has brought out the strong desire in man to overcome that fissure: to be one with himself: to experience his own identity."

901 RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.9.

902 RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.9.
human condition. "A man is never a man in the same sense in which a cat is a cat or a tree is a tree. In a sense, man is continually chasing after his self without ever getting hold of it".\textsuperscript{903}

In Rex's eschatology, the human condition is redeemed by God in a manner Rex believes to be congruous with the 'intention' of the doctrine of the resurrection. The statement "[i]f one loves God, one is known by him" (1 Cor 8.3) is read by Rex in conjunction with the address "[b]eloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when it appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3.2). It is clear that Rex hopes the Christian existentialist life he has lived will be fulfilled by a Christian existentialist hereafter characterised by full knowledge of self and God. The noting of any similarities between Rex's description of the hereafter and Christian gnosticism must be tempered with the recognition that Rex views knowledge of the afterlife to be elusive for all people. He is diligent in stipulating that he is involved in a speculative enterprise. His focus on the 'intention' of the doctrine is born of his broader demythologising bent:

I think, this is what is actually intended in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. We are thinking here of the hereafter in terms of a personal encounter between God and man which in its love redeems man to his true identity. Of course the notion of a personal encounter when applied to the hereafter can be no more than an analogy.\textsuperscript{904}

The Sartrean image of authentic humanity as a donkey chasing a carrot dangling from a stick tied to its head, is preserved in Rex's thought for the duration of human life on earth. The individual is always searching for the self: moving forward but never reaching an endpoint.\textsuperscript{905} Sartre does not allow for the possibility of true love, nor does he accept the existence of God. It is precisely acceptance of the possibility of God and love which allow Rex to reach quite different conclusions to Sartre, despite starting from the same point (with Sartre's 'fissure' between the \textit{pour-soi} and the \textit{en-soi}).\textsuperscript{906}

\textsuperscript{903}RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.7.
\textsuperscript{904}RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.10.
\textsuperscript{905}RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.8: "In other words, as long as man is true to his humanity, accepting his destiny, engaged in continually creating his self without ever becoming one with it: being for ever forced to look at it from the outside, pained at the thought that the self that perceives is not the same that is perceived. In the Sarene view of the human condition, not even love can redeem us from this calamity".
\textsuperscript{906}RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.9: "Now Sartre is perfectly right in saying that in this world we never attain to the
Rex's vision of the afterlife presents a resolution of Sartre's 'fissure'. Such a reunification of the *pour-soi* and *en-soi* was unthinkable to the proponent of existentialism upon whom Rex relied for this basic understanding of the human condition. The reader may be tempted to carry Sartre's metaphor one step further, and envisage Sartre's donkey savouring the carrot in the afterlife. While an amusing thought, it is one not entertained by Rex and would certainly have been antithetical to Sartre.

According to Rex, what is critical to the Christian faith concerning the hereafter is the maintenance, preservation and fulfilment of individual identity. For him the body as the *principium individuationis* provides the basis of the analogy of true encounter beyond death, between God and the individual. Correspondingly resurrection of the body implies involvement in a space-time continuum that, with its corresponding dichotomy between space and time, is not present in the Platonic notion of immortality of the soul. While this represents a coherent understanding of individual salvation, Rex is at a loss to explain the Christian hope in collective terms, freely admitting that it 'defies' his imagination. The guidance he provisionally offers on this matter involves a synthesis of Rom.14.17 and the image of the 'new Jerusalem' in the book of Revelation.

At this point Rex concludes the fifth of his five addresses to the S.C.M. on eschatology with the warning that he is 'breaking off' his lecture because he has nothing further to add to the many images and symbols which currently embody the collective aspect of the Christian hope in the hereafter. As previously mentioned, he subsequently added a sixth lecture "Towards an Eschatology of Polarity" to this set.

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Identity for which we are craving. The way we are made prevents it. Is it then, perhaps, in the hereafter that this longing will be satisfied? I do not wish to leave this question in the sphere of pure speculation. I want to pursue it in biblical terms.”

"We might then perhaps say that the Christian hope concerning the hereafter, in its collective aspect, means righteousness, peace and joy. We shall no longer wound each other, creating fear and sorrow, but everyone will receive his due so that there is a state of complete harmony and serenity. When I say that, I am using, of course, an anthropomorphism. Not that we can avoid anthropomorphisms in theology or even that we should avoid them... On the other hand, they are no more than pointer-terms; under no circumstances can they be regarded as descriptive.”
Towards an eschatology of polarity

This sixth address seeks to outline a certain compatibility between the notion of immortality of the soul and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Rex highlights the similarities between the two in their intention and consequence. He moots that the former provides a useful balance to the biblically necessary priority of the latter. Rex's view is that it will prevent a literal understanding of uncomfortable anthropomorphisms and will also remind the theologian that all talk of the hereafter is by way of analogy:

As Sartre has rightly said, the law of identity applies to the corpse but not to the living self. And yet when we speak of the hereafter, we predicate identity on the very opposite of a corpse: on the self that has life eternal. To say of a self that it is consciousness and that en-soi and pour-soi are completely congruous in that self amounts here to a contradiction in terms and yet, that is precisely what we are maintaining of the self in the hereafter. In other words, the statement involves us in a 'leap', i.e. from one order of existence to another. Of course, the same difficulty we have to face in our statements concerning God. Of him too we say that he is consciousness and that he is identical with himself. We see now that our difficulty concerning the risen self arises precisely from the circumstance that 'we shall be like him' (1 Jo.3.2).910

Rex's use of the phrase 'contradiction in terms' and the reference to a 'leap' has Kierkegaardian echoes.911 Here Rex postulates that the paradox of a seamlessly united en-soi and pour-soi, might be resolved in a 'leap' from one order of existence into another. This concept raises an immediate problem. If, as Rex has noted, Heidegger is right in singling out the 'historical' as one of the fundamental ontological structures of the human condition, then, at the end of historical existence, one would cease to be human.912 For this reason, Rex postulates space-time in the hereafter. This does justice to the notion of personal encounter implied in the notion of a resurrected body because the notion of resurrection involves the restoration of the psycho-physical whole that is man. Physically embodied personal encounter as we know it can then take place. Rex wishes also to reclaim from philosophy

910RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.12.
912It is interesting to note that Rex does not entertain the possibility that the person might become more, or less, than human at death. In contrast to biblical notions such as that involving the complete transformation of Man, Rex simply suggests that the individual would cease to be human. This raises serious questions about whether Rex is doing justice to the biblical material when he views it through existential eyes. Does he transform Paul into an 'anonymous' Sartrean?
(expounded in Rex's time by Samuel Alexander) the concept of Deity embodying space time itself.  

The notion of resurrection implies a certain discontinuity, and Rex turns again to the 'leap'. “However plausible we can make the transition from the here to the hereafter, we do not get around this ‘leap’”. The paradox resolved through a ‘leap’ seems strangely appropriate when the discussion is focussed on the unknowable.

A few comments are appropriate at this point as the evaluation of Rex’s 1957 lecture series draws to a close and before a discussion of his book Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? begins. Firstly, it is salient to remember that today’s reader of Rex’s eschatology is in a privileged position. Exposure to a different set of philosophical ideas and presuppositions offers another perspective on Rex’s work. Secondly, one observation which immediately arises as a result of this viewpoint is that any quest to get beyond ‘mythical’ language is a fraught one. This is particularly true since the arrival of deconstructionalist philosophies and postmodern understandings of language on the theological scene. Mythology expressed in contemporary language is still mythology. Attempts to translate myths may in fact cheat the new myth’s recipient of understanding that which is most important about myth: its status as ‘myth’. The dated language and symbolism which assist in both coding and classifying any original as ‘myth’ may be removed in a translation process. Such obscuring of the status of the original is all too common, and forms but another example of the truth behind the maxim: ‘to translate is to betray’.

Rex states that he is not interested in a literal understanding of life after death, and that all talk in this regard is by way of analogy. As indicated previously, in papers outlining

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913 RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.11. Further: “I think it most important that we reclaim this concept of eternity (clearly recognised in biblical studies) for systematic theology. The traditional Platonic dichotomy of time and eternity continually interferes with an adequate statement of Christian beliefs”.

914 RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.11.

915 It is worth noting that Rex’s deprecation of his own theory does not sit entirely comfortably with the thrust of his investigation. The model Rex presents of ‘space-time’ in the hereafter treats the subject with a certain ‘literal’ seriousness. If he is not interested in too literal an understanding of life after death, why does he choose to speak of preservation of the ‘psycho-physical whole that is man’? Why does he embellish it with references to the ‘the scientific view of reality’. The shape of Rex’s argument suggests that he is attempting to find an analogy with a good degree of literal application. In favour of Rex’s position it might be argued that he is attempting to provide a pragmatic picture of the Christian hope (ie. one to which modern individuals can reasonably relate). Such a picture would allow
the history of eschatology Rex raises a number of points in favour of doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and against the notion of the immortality of the soul. The former is more biblical, while the latter does not do justice to the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. The former does justice to the psycho-physical nature of personal encounter, and so on. It is difficult for today's reader of Rex's work not to sense that the detailed outworking of a contemporary eschatology of resurrection in this fifth paper is a little futile: as though one could prove the literal truth of an analogy. In response, Rex might well argue, as he does on another occasion, that he is testing the aptness of the analogy because "the discovery of an apt analogy is of the utmost importance in the discovery of truth".916

Rex continues his defence of the analogy of the resurrection in his book *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Rex is concerned to defend the resurrection as an 'event' central to the Christian faith. As one reviewer commented, it is an exploration of faith in a secular age at a time when Christianity in New Zealand was under suspicion for "not quite meaning what it appears to mean".917

**Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? - A response to Bultmannian eschatology**

*Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* was at the printing press at the time of Rex's death in March 1967 and it remains his most obviously tangible contribution to the world of published theology. The 'prefatory note' written by Renate Rex records the story of the inception of Rex's only book. It states that at his wife's request, Helmut Rex recorded thoughts on different themes in a notebook for her benefit. Having described his reasoned reluctance, he was finally persuaded by Renate to put the expanding volume of notes on the theme 'resurrection' into a form accessible to former students and friends, whom she was convinced would "like to hear from him".918

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916 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.5.
Rex introduces his short book with an investigation into ‘the nature of the question’. He begins by simply observing that the question ‘Did Jesus rise from the dead?’ does not arise for the believer who is convinced that the Bible presents a literal truth:

The question only arises for those whose sense of truth is not satisfied by an appeal to authority, and who are convinced, for the sake of truth, that they must not keep matters of faith apart from the intellectual climate of today. The axiom of this age is that man is the measure of all things - including God.\textsuperscript{919}

Immediately, as in much of Rex’s material, the influence of Bultmann is obvious to the attuned reader. Rex both respects and emulates Bultmann’s submission of faith to rigorous intellectual inquiry. It is to be observed that Rex’s own search for the ‘faith and understanding’ implied in the title of Bultmann’s first collection of theological essays, continues right through to this, his final work. Taken in its totality Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? might reasonably be considered his final response to Bultmann’s eschatology.

As we have already noted, Rex realises the importance of the secular climate to the task of theology. The believer who recognises that man has made himself the measure of all things is left with questions about its implications for the human condition. This recognition informs Rex’s starting point in his investigation of the resurrection. Essentially Rex is asking: ‘Can this first century resurrection event continue to shed light on the human condition in an age that no longer believes in miracles?’ The shift in world-view that accompanied the secularisation process is something Rex returns to discuss in his final chapter.\textsuperscript{920}

\textbf{The modern world-view}

Rex dismisses the gospel accounts of miracles as ‘purely legendary’. For Rex, “miracles do not happen except in the devout imagination of believers”.\textsuperscript{921} Accordingly, he makes an effort to distinguish the story of Jesus’ resurrection from other miracle stories recorded in the New Testament. In the tradition of Bultmann’s \textit{Sachkritik}, he criticises the

\textsuperscript{919}Rex, \textit{DJR} p.9. Rex will have been informed by the attitudes within scripture that parallel these stances. The appeal to authority is reminiscent of the Hebrew understanding of God’s Word as authoritative \textit{an sich}. Critical analysis of content is more closely aligned with the Greek idea of the \textit{Logos}. Cf. Bultmann’s essay ‘The Concept of the Word of God in the New Testament’ in \textit{Faith and Understanding} pp.286-312.

\textsuperscript{920}Cf. Rex, \textit{DJR} p.75.

\textsuperscript{921}Rex, \textit{DJR}: p.12.
New Testament authors for their lack of clarity in distinguishing between miracle stories and Jesus' resurrection - an event which Rex asserts to be of a qualitatively different type:

We must draw, then, a clear distinction between the resurrection of Jesus and the three resuscitations attributed to him. This is the more urgent since the New Testament authors do not draw this distinction in their own mind with the necessary clarity.922

Sachkritik is justified by Bultmann on the grounds that it was an exercise the evangelists themselves engaged in. In Bultmann's work, John and Paul are depicted primarily as theologians searching for the clearest and most relevant articulation of the gospel they carry. Their role as theologians justifies for Bultmann his focus on their work in his 'New Testament theology'. Today's theologian, in Bultmann's view, does the gospel justice in so far as he or she seeks to emulate the faithful search for contemporary expression of the kerygma it contains. Coterminal with this understanding is the recognition that faithful rendering of the kerygma also requires the discarding of outmoded forms of expression. Following Bultmann's lead, Rex regards miracles as, at best, irrelevant to faith in the contemporary world,923 or in Rex's own words:

One of the inalienable recognitions of secular man is that he lives in a natural universe which is subject to dependable laws, no matter whether these are defined strictly as laws or as statistical averages. This rules out all miracles if considered as violations of these laws. He who speaks in this context of the 'wonders' and 'marvels' of nature and the limitations of human knowledge and the continuous change in what scientists regard as facts is merely confusing the issue.924

According to Rex a miracle story is to be regarded as devotional literature from which an historically reliable account is not to be expected since “its prime function is to edify the believer and to draw our attention to the extraordinary on the historical scene”.925
Yet Rex wishes to allow the possibility of legends containing “valuable historical information”. In tentatively developing the suggestion that a factual basis may be discerned within examples of this literary form, Rex is not wishing to prompt a return to the nineteenth century liberal emphasis on the teaching and example of Jesus which developed alongside historical Jesus research. He agrees with the emphasis of Barth and Bultmann, finding it typical of the generation who followed the scholarly liberals, affirming the “central importance of the resurrection of Jesus for the Christian message”; yet he distances himself a little from Bultmann, who, in his reaction to his teachers “admittedly does too little justice to the influence of the man Jesus on his disciples”.926

Of miracles and resurrection

Rex differs from Bultmann too in making a distinction between the resurrection of Jesus and other miracles in the New Testament.927 This raises some important early questions for today’s reader. In what way is Rex’s distinction between a miracle believed by anyone passing (who happens to belong to a primitive world-view), and a miracle believed by only a few (who also hold a primitive world-view) a valid way of saying that the events were qualitatively different? Rex’s argument for the uniqueness of the resurrection of Jesus revolves around the assertion that ‘the resurrection did not happen for unbelievers’. The implications of this assertion warrant further investigation in light of Rex’s later claim that miracles are to be dismissed as purely legendary and out of synchronisation with the understanding of the natural universe possessed by the secular individual because they “do not happen except in the imagination of devout believers”. Could it not be the case that because both understandings do not fit into a contemporary world-picture, that neither is relevant for today? On what basis should we accept as somehow more legitimate, an event which was believed by a smaller subset of the population to be a miracle? We will have to look carefully to see how Rex’s methods for resuscitating the ‘outmoded’ resurrection accounts could or could not also be applied to the ‘outmoded’ miracle accounts.

926Rex, DJR: p.9.
927Rex indirectly acknowledges that Bultmann’s treatment of the resurrection differs little from his own stance on the miracle stories recorded in the Gospels. “Without that [the historicity of the empty tomb], it is more logical to argue, with Bultmann, that the belief in the resurrection had its origin in the disciples’ reaction to the crucifixion. In other words, that the mental state of the disciples after the crucifixion than about the fate of Jesus”. DJR: p.71. Cf. Rex’s opinion on miracle stories which is recorded on p.12: “miracles do not happen except in the devout imagination of believers”.

In any event, Rex declares that the resurrection is not an historical event in the way that the crucifixion was an historical event.\textsuperscript{928} Before examining the historical evidence surrounding the resurrection, Rex warns that much material recording the resurrection accounts will have the nature of legend. This, he says does not determine our belief for or against the resurrection of Jesus, rather, it is to be expected “since the resurrection of Jesus is by its very nature extraordinary”.\textsuperscript{929}

Having outlined some of his key assumptions, Rex begins his historical investigation with two sections examining the records of the empty tomb and the experiences of the disciples respectively. These two sections are grouped together in the first of the three chapters which is entitled ‘the historical evidence’. The second chapter, ‘the affirmation of faith’, builds a case for resurrection as an indispensable aspect of the Christian faith, while the final chapter, ‘the logic of the empty tomb’, deals with a number of challenges, raised by the modern world-view, to the belief in resurrection.

**The empty tomb**

Rex begins the main body of his text by arguing a case for the historicity of the empty tomb. In the flow of his argument he argues various points against Wellhausen, Barth, Bultmann, Bousset, Bornkamm and von Campenhausen, and finally affirms that the “wise historian will be content to admit that the tradition of the empty tomb contains, historically speaking, an unresolved mystery”.\textsuperscript{930} This element of unresolved mystery is key for Rex in clearing space for possible belief in the historicity of the resurrection. It is important to examine how he reaches this point. He opens his case for the historicity of the empty tomb with a persuasive plea for common sense:

A great number of scholars discount the tradition of the empty tomb as historical evidence. According to them [...] the belief in the resurrection created the tradition of the empty tomb and not the empty tomb the belief in the resurrection. This is nonsense. If the tradition of the empty tomb is legendary, then the tomb was not empty at the time when the disciples had their experiences of the risen Lord. This implies that Galilean fishermen and peasants of the first century were capable of

\textsuperscript{928}Rex, DJR: p.11.  
\textsuperscript{929}Rex, DJR: p.13.  
\textsuperscript{930}Rex, DJR: p.23.
speaking of resurrection with the dead body of Jesus in front of them. I would not even credit Philo’s Alexandria with that degree of sophistication”.

While Rex’s manner and tone are forceful, he unfortunately does not here allow for the possibility of a tradition developing later that would account for such a legend. Although not stated explicitly at this point, the reason Rex dwells on this matter is that he is taking exception to a view expressed by Bultmann in his *Theology of the New Testament*. In the first volume of this work Bultmann asserts the nature of the Easter faith’s inception to be incidental, “obscured in the tradition by legend”. He declares that the “accounts of the empty grave, of which Paul still knows nothing, are legends”. Rex does not agree.

Rex’s argument against Bultmann’s position draws support from Ethelbert Stauffer’s view that “there never was a Christian tradition concerning Jesus, nor an announcement of the resurrection without the evidence of the empty tomb”. Again Rex appeals to common sense - although his two appeals to common sense do not sit comfortably when placed alongside one another. Where previously common sense had dictated that the sophistication of Galilean peasants not be exaggerated, here, Rex argues that the ability of Jerusalem’s creed-writer’s not be underestimated.

The absence of any reference to a tradition of the empty tomb in 1 Cor 15.3-5 is to be explained, in Rex’s view, by its superfluous nature given that this earliest creed contains both references to Christ’s burial and resurrection. If the creed’s authors had introduced to the received formulation reference to the empty tomb “they would have merely been repeating themselves”.

Insights derived from form criticism are crucial to Rex’s argument. Martin Dibelius’ work regarding the speeches in the Book of Acts is scholarly work which demonstrates for

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932 The possibility of later development of traditions is discussed later in Rex’s text.
936 Rex, *DJR*: p.15. Rex argues this point firmly - perhaps without the necessary caution he urges of others dealing with the same material. His own warning about the precariousness of ‘arguing from silence’ (recorded on page 68) is directed against those who would argue the opposite case forcefully based upon the same limited evidence.
Rex the general trend towards legend in the received tradition.\textsuperscript{937} Despite significant legendary content, Rex is willing to cite material from Acts in support of his case for the empty tomb, on the grounds that accompanying kerygmatic material is regarded as historically reliable. Yes, the speeches are a literary creation, but they encapsulate the core of the Christian message. In linking this kerygmatic material to key pillars of the Church, argues Rex, the author of Acts was not interested in fabricating aspects of the message itself, but rather in ensuring that the message was linked to the authorities appropriate to its survival and dissemination. Thus he states:

It will appear, then, that we have no reason to doubt our right to quote Acts II. 22-36 in support of the historicity of the empty tomb, since the scriptural proof from Psalm XVI is closely linked to the kerygmatic material, and since we have no evident cause for denying to the scriptural proof the antiquity which we are led to assume in the case of the kerygma.\textsuperscript{938}

The priority of the empty tomb to the scriptural proof from Psalm 16 is argued by Rex. He sees the use of Scripture to clarify experience as both indicative of, and a response to, “the state of confusion and consternation” experienced by the disciples following Jesus’ crucifixion. It is for Rex an experience for which “the Gospel records permit no doubt”. According to this argument, the disciples had no expectation of a resurrection following the crucifixion. This understanding allows an interesting reading of the women’s experience of the empty tomb recorded in Mark 16.1-8. Rex presents a case for obscuration by the Gospel writer of “the original experience of ambiguity” captured in the final words ‘he was buried’. This different rendering of events is achieved in the scriptural record “because the angel supplies the interpretation which the women had to go without in the original historical scene”.\textsuperscript{939} According to Rex:

When the women were present at the actual scene of the empty tomb, this perfectly phrased interpretation had yet to pass through the crucible of doubt before it became the property of the primitive church.\textsuperscript{940}

Rex’s deftly worded challenge to the historicity of the scriptural account is convincing at this point and is further enhanced by allusion to the lowly status of women’s

\textsuperscript{937}Rex, DJR: p.16.
\textsuperscript{938}Rex, DJR: p.16.
\textsuperscript{939}Rex, DJR: p.17.
\textsuperscript{940}Rex, DJR: p.17f.
witness in first century Palestine. Nobody in the primitive church, says Rex, “would have invented a tradition which carried such a liability”. Indeed, while scholars’ opinions differ, they agree that these final words of the Marcan account offer valuable clues to its interpretation; “And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid”.

Rex is scathing of Wellhausen’s widely followed interpretation of the final words of the empty tomb account in Mark. He is summarily dismissive of Wellhausen’s claim that these words support a case for the late date of this tradition. Instead, Rex is convinced that the final verse of the Marcan account “has retained a most vivid trace of the women’s original experience of the ambiguity of the empty tomb”. He favours an alternative reading of the women’s silence recorded in verse eight, not found among the eminent scholars he cites. Rex agrees with Bultmann’s suggestion that this silence was borne of fear but believes it refers, not to a lack of communication with the other disciples, but to outsiders - those who had crucified Jesus.

Rex makes a convincing case for the implausibility of material which reports an immediate and refined understanding of the empty tomb by the first witnesses. His application of the historical-critical method leads him to doubt the historical validity of verse six and seven and their parallels in the other synoptics. Despite this, Rex continues to support a thesis of the historicity of the empty tomb:

This does not affect the authenticity of the empty tomb itself. Detailed historical accuracy is not in itself evidence of authenticity; a skilled narrator knows how to supply ‘authentic touches’. On the other hand, a record of a valuable historical tradition may yet have its share of faulty details.

Believing he has established his case beyond reasonable doubt, Rex asks why “so many scholarly writers insist on proving this tradition legendary”. His own answer to this question couples commitment to the historical-critical method with a “failure of nerve and

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941 Rex, DJR: p.19.
942 Mark 16, verse 8 as cited in Rex, DJR: p.18.
943 Rex’s dismissal of the viewpoint he attributes to Wellhausen is cursory. Perhaps unsatisfactorily, Rex refers his reader (in a footnote) not to Wellhausen, but to the related work of von Campenhausen.
944 Rex, DJR: p.18.
945 Rex, DJR: p.20.
946 Rex, DJR: p.20.
of imagination". Scholarly writers through the ages have been afraid to introduce supernatural elements into the burial story, preferring to believe that Jesus’ death completed his life story in the same manner as it would for any other human being. Rex the historian offers as illustration a number of attempts to prove this which are demonstrably implausible.⁹⁴⁷

Assuming that theories of theft and displacement carry little weight, Rex declares that the question ‘where is the body?’ remains unanswered. He is dismissive of attempts to postulate “a purely metaphorical concept of resurrection in the minds of Galilean fishermen and peasants of the first century”, labelling it absurd.⁹⁴⁸ Here, as elsewhere Rex is guilty of being overly committed to the binary opposition of literal and metaphorical. While he draws attention to the problems of ‘too literal an understanding’ in some passages, in this case he derides as ‘purely metaphorical’ any alternative understanding. It would be wrong to suggest Rex is not aware of the existence of a problem with binary oppositions but at times he seems content to remain within that framework. Thus, in this instance, those who offer speculation about a ‘purely metaphorical understanding’ - “In their fear of offending the canons of science […] opt”, in Rex’s view, “to offend the canons of history”.⁹⁴⁹ Nor is Rex above using ridicule; in typically Germanic style, Rex mocks Barth’s declaration that the legend of the empty tomb is “a legend that must be believed”, labelling it “a quaint piece of sophistry”.⁹⁵⁰

The experiences of the disciples

Barth is never far from Rex’s sights, and we will note the latter’s return to critically dissect Barth’s contribution at the end of the chapter. But he puts Barth to one side at the beginning of the next aspect of historical evidence to be examined, the ‘experiences of the disciples’. Rex begins this section by restating his belief that Mark 16.7 offers a later interpretation of events, pointing towards Galilee, Peter and the disciples’ witness. He assesses passages which relate the disciples’ experiences and draws a number of conclusions. Rex finds it a “fair assumption that the first appearances to the disciples of the risen Lord

⁹⁴⁷Rex, DJR: p.21.
⁹⁴⁸Rex, DJR: p.22.
⁹⁴⁹Rex, DJR: p.22.
⁹⁵⁰Rex, DJR: p.23.
took place in Galilee''. Following other scholars, he agrees that the tradition of Mary Magdalene as the first to whom Jesus appeared is plausible, but cautions that an appearance of Jesus to women at the discovery of the empty tomb is unlikely because it is "the wrong psychological setting". According to Rex:

The tradition of Mk. XVI. 1-8 would be inconceivable if the women had 'met' (Mt. XXVIII. 8) Jesus at the scene of the tomb. It even rules out the possibility that the women immediately inferred from the empty tomb that the Lord was risen [...]. On the other hand, it was only natural that the devout imagination of the primitive church should have come to attribute similar experiences to the women who discovered the empty tomb and to locate these experiences at the scene of the tomb.

As a consequence of his analysis, Rex concludes that a number of verses in Mark's account are to be dismissed as historical evidence. Their references to resurrection constitute prophecies after the event, and are indicative of the first attempts by the primitive church "to summarise the message of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus".

Piecing together a credible narrative of empty tomb and resurrection appearances is crucial to Rex's critique of what he calls Bultmann's 'historical agnosticism'. His reconstruction of the actual events and the order in which they occurred is the basis of his disagreement with Bultmann's position. In contrast to Bultmann, Rex does not think it is "immaterial for us to know how the 'Easter faith' of the disciples came about". In Rex's view:

Just as it is of extreme importance to know whether the empty tomb helped to create the 'Easter faith', so it is of supreme importance to know whether a mind preconditioned by prophecy and Scripture went prepared to meet the risen Lord in Galilee or whether an unwilling mind was eventually overwhelmed by the experiences in Galilee. Our analysis of the texts has shown, I believe, that the latter was the case.

Bultmann elsewhere suggests that neither the personality of Jesus nor the faith of the first disciples has any bearing on contemporary faith; one can never base one's own faith in

952 Rex, DJR: p.25.
953 Rex, DJR: p.25.
954 Rex, DJR: p.33.
956 Rex, DJR: p.33.
God upon someone else’s faith. Further to this, he says; for the contemporary believer what is truly important is the ‘faith which is believed’ (fides quae creditur) not the ‘faith by which one believes’ (fides qua creditur). To ask “how the Easter faith came about” is in Bultmann’s thought, to view faith as a human phenomenon. Rather, the theologian should concern him or herself with discerning the true content of the Easter faith. This is why Bultmann has said that it is of no importance for us to know how the Easter faith got hold of the disciples.

Assessing the historical evidence

Like many of those who followed in Bultmann’s footsteps, Rex is critical of his Vorbild’s refusal to place any value on possible continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Bultmann researched the historical Jesus extensively in his book Jesus and the Word, concluding that little could be reliably known about the historical figure. Yet Rex demonstrates just how important he believes Bultmann’s process to be through his own actions. That is, through a painstakingly re-examination of the historical documents and by continuing to engage in scholastic debate on fundamental issues of historicity, Rex is implying that it is not sufficient for the committed scholar to simply rest content with Bultmann’s conclusions. Or, to put it another way, the true follower of Bultmann is not to be recognised by his obsequious assent to his mentor’s conclusions, but by the alacrity with which he picks up the master’s tools.

957 R. Bultmann, ‘The Christology of the New Testament’ in Faith and Understanding pp.267ff. “At the moment when I doubt, the perception that someone else - even Jesus - has faith and love does not help me at all. [...] I can never base my faith in God upon the faith which someone else has. If the faith of the early Christian community had been faith in God in this sense, it would have been an illusion. Jesus would have been understood as a guarantee which relieved the individual of the necessity of a faith of his own”.

958 For further discussion on this point cf.: R. Bultmann, ‘On the Question of Christology’ in Faith and Understanding pp.117ff.

959 The proclaim must become the proclaimed, because it is the fact that he proclaimed which is decisive. The decisive thing is his person (not his personality), here and now, the event, the commission, the summons. When the primitive community called him the Messiah they were confessing that he was the decisive event, the act of God, the inaugurator of the new world.” Faith and Understanding p.284. Rex states in his introduction; “Bultmann admittedly does too little justice to the influence of the man Jesus on his disciples, but essentially he is right when he defines their faith as ‘Easter faith’.” It is interesting to speculate where an increased emphasis on the ‘influence of the man Jesus’ would lead for Rex. Perhaps it would serve as a basis for ethics. Sadly, despite this stated concern, Rex does not directly discuss ‘the man Jesus’ or ‘discipleship’ in this book.

960 Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, trans. Louise P. Smith and Erminie H. Lantero from the original German, Jesus, 1926 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934).
A further comment on the structuring of Rex’s material is warranted at this point. Against Bultmann’s ‘attitude of historical agnosticism’ Rex believes his “inquiry has shown that it is unnecessary to put oneself under such a self-denying ordinance”\textsuperscript{961}, but other than to claim that it is “of supreme importance”, he fails to forward an explicit positive argument for such a painstaking historical investigation.

In his central chapter Rex argues for the resurrection as crucial to the Christian faith, but in the earlier stages of his text Rex makes the reasonable assumption that the reader bearing a book entitled \textit{Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?} has significant interest in the question of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. Rex assumes in his readers a particular interest in, concern for, and focus on the truth of this matter. Were a similar book to be written today, one might expect to find at the start of the work a detailed explanation as to why this particular investigation into this one event in the history of this one particular religion might be deemed important enough for such a specific project.

Rex’s quest to delineate the historically reliable Jesus material is understandable as a project when examined in the context of his broader aim - to show the limits of reason in matters of faith. Rex takes earlier advice found in Bultmann’s essay ‘Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement’, very seriously. In it Bultmann argues for reasoned inquiry into matters of faith. While the possibility of knowing God through intellectual inquiry is dismissed by Bultmann, an irrational approach is not encouraged either. The value of reason is that it points to its own limitations, and the importance of faith in all that has to do with God. Bultmann asserts that it is “‘[p]recisely when reason has followed its road to the end, the point of crisis is reached and man is brought to the great question mark over his own existence’”\textsuperscript{962}. Rex can be seen to take this advice to heart in his persistence in asking the historical questions surrounding the resurrection. \textit{Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?} aims to show the limits of reason, and in so doing clarify the need for faith’s decision.

Rex believes that critical tools should be used in order to clarify the issues at stake and in order to prepare the ground for an informed faith decision. He is cynical about the contributions of other scholars who have avoided drawing conclusions from their critical

\textsuperscript{961}Rex, \textit{DJR}: p.33.
\textsuperscript{962}R. Bultmann, ‘Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement’ in \textit{Faith and Understanding} p.46.
research. Those who are prepared to defend a case are commended by Rex for their forthrightness, while those who paraphrase traditional formulations are described as appearing "to take an attitude of studied ambiguity".963 This emphasis on clear expression in contemporary forms is a reflection of Rex's commitment to the ideas encapsulated in Bultmann's demythologising programme.

Rex is prepared to state his case clearly. For him, the empty tomb is historically probable. The scriptural witness, when critically examined, reveals a multi-layered response to the events of Easter. Each layer corresponds to a different stage in the development of the 'Easter faith'. According to Rex:

We can see clearly from our sources that the disciples' reaction passed through the whole gamut of doubt, first, in regarding the empty tomb as evidence of resurrection; then in the reality of the visions of others; and finally, in the nature of what they saw themselves.964

These conclusions are outlined as a result of Rex's careful exegesis, and they form the basis of his sketch of what can be known about the resurrection. Rex believes his investigation to have been 'not unnecessary' despite finding the historical evidence "inconclusive so far as our question, 'Did Jesus rise from the dead?' is concerned".965 He has at least established a case for the priority of the empty tomb to resurrection faith. Rex maintains that:

This is as far as the historian can go. The believer will naturally not be satisfied to leave the question of Jesus' resurrection at this point. But as he sets out to probe further into what actually happened in the days after the crucifixion, he must realise that he is leaving the grounds of strict historical inquiry and is turning to other aids. Whatever conclusions he reaches will be shared, if at all, by believers only.966

Rex notes that this conclusion was inevitable, given that its starting point was an event of a similar nature; "the risen Lord appeared to believers only".967 For the reader unconvinced by Rex's earlier distinction, questions about the reasonableness of treating the resurrection separately from other miracle stories will therefore remain.

963Rex, DJR: p.35. Günther Bornkamm is commended for his forthrightness despite taking a stance at variance to Rex's own, while Paul van Buren and later Karl Barth are slighted for expressing matters unhelpfully.
965Rex, DJR: p.36.
966Rex, DJR: p.37.
967Rex, DJR: p.37.
As stated earlier, Rex has asserted that a miracle story is not to be treated as historically reliable since “its prime function is to edify the believer and to draw our attention to the extraordinary on the historical scene”; indeed “miracles do not happen except in the devout imagination of believers”. Given these assertions, today’s reader would like a clearer distinction to be drawn between the resurrection and other miracle stories, if one is to regard one event as an event in history in a qualitatively different way to the rest.

Rex ends the section of inquiry into the historical witness of the disciples by declaring it appropriate to speak of the resurrection as an event ‘in time’ or ‘in history’. According to Rex there is not sufficient evidence for the responsible historian to refer to it by the misleading term ‘historical event’. 968

The importance of belief in the resurrection

The central chapter entitled ‘The Affirmation of Faith’ concerns itself with the importance of being able to affirm the resurrection. For Rex, it is a question about which the whole of faith revolves:

The question, ‘Did Jesus rise from the dead?’ [..] touches the very core of the Christian faith. Unless it can be answered in the affirmative, the whole edifice of the Christian faith collapses including the Christian view of God. 969

Rex’s exegesis of the New Testament material concerning belief in the resurrection reveals that this belief was considered essential by its key authors. For them, without a belief in resurrection, there was no Christian faith. In fact, Rex records favourably Barth’s exegesis of Paul which shows Paul used the terms ‘God’ and ‘resurrection’ interchangeably. 970 Rex is convinced that the emphasis he discovers among the New Testament authors remains

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968 Barth’s use of this term, albeit for polemic purposes, is deemed to ‘confuse the issue’.
969 Rex, DJR. p.44. Rex cites as evidence a range of biblical material, including the following: “The ancient creed in I.Cor. XV. 3-5, to which we have returned time and again in this inquiry, leaves no doubt that it declares the death and resurrection of Christ to be the core of the Christian faith. ‘God’ in the specific Christian sense is the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This is confirmed by the early confessions of faith which we have in the New Testament. [...] And even the Gospels, which to a superficial reader might seem to be chiefly concerned with the life of Jesus, in fact share the primitive church’s emphasis on death and resurrection of Jesus as the core of its faith”.
fundamental to faith. Consequently this central chapter shapes an argument for the importance of belief in the resurrection. For Rex, resurrection must be affirmed by faith, if that faith is in any way to claim that it is Christian faith.

This chapter on the affirmation of faith surveys Paul’s attempts to rationalise belief in the resurrection. Rex summarises Paul’s logic. “If resurrection is an impossibility, then the truth is that Christ was not raised from the dead. In that case, any affirmation of faith in him is pointless”.\textsuperscript{971} It is this logic which leads Paul to use analogies to defend the reasonableness of the very concept of resurrection. Rex’s examination of Paul’s analogy of the seed indicates that he believes these analogies no longer stand up to scrutiny.\textsuperscript{972} By the eighteenth century such use of analogy was lampooned by critical writers. Rex’s use of Voltaire’s parody of such resurrection analogies leads him into a general discussion of the dangers associated with this method of argumentation:

Admittedly, Paul was notoriously clumsy in his use of analogies, but his example is a reminder of the dangers involved in using any analogy. Even in ordinary life, we discover that our analogies break down sooner or later. However, up to the point where they do break down they can serve a useful purpose, provided there is some kind of resemblance which, when put to the test, can be acknowledged without altogether relying on fancy.\textsuperscript{973}

Rex favours the retention of argument from analogy despite the aforementioned ‘dangers’ which prompted the paradigm shift in reasoned debate following the introduction of the scientific method. Rex is aware that the need to defend belief in the resurrection at all is not as widely felt as it was in the days when argument from analogy was common. Yet his assault on weaker defences of the resurrection, alerts the reader to the fact that Rex does not wish to hide behind walls of obscurantism. For him the world has changed irreversibly since

\textsuperscript{971}Rex, DJR; p.45.
\textsuperscript{972}Rex, DJR; p.41. Paul’s use of the analogy of the seed in 1 Cor 15.35-37 suggests that a bare seed, dead and buried later comes to life. A quite different body develops from the seed. Rex records the way in which he believes modern science has dated Paul’s argument: “Paul rebukes his opponent for not paying attention to the evidence around him; if he would use his senses, he would find the idea of a risen body less problematic than it is to him at present. The trouble is that meanwhile we have learnt to use our senses better than the apostle, so his argument no longer carries conviction. The seed, far from being ‘bare’ or ‘naked’, contains not only an embryo or baby, but a supply of food as well. The idea of the seed is simply not suitable to illustrate the idea that a living body can proceed from a dead body.” Rex is demonstrates a commitment to the very binary oppositions he is attempting to counter through the use of analogy. His criticism of Paul holds only when one is determined to show that the analogy is not literally true. If the reader does not view the analogy from the position of a ‘seed literalist’ it may continue to hold some merit.
\textsuperscript{973}Rex, DJR; p.41. For further comment on Paul’s use of analogy see DJR: p.90, footnote 122.
the impassioned defences of Paul in the first century and the equally confident analogies of Bishop Butler in the eighteenth century.974

The atheist theologians

Despite his own favouring of resurrection faith, Rex does not immediately dismiss Christians who follow Bultmann's lead in shedding faith in a future life. "For them, there is no 'hereafter' in the strict sense; the 'here', this side of death, is all there is to man's destiny".975 Nor are those theologians who "have in all seriousness begun to toy with the idea of theology without God, 'the atheist theologians'"976 to be shunned. Rex assesses the contribution of those who were later to become known as the 'death of God' theologians in the following way:

To them, 'nature' is the whole of reality; what we traditionally call 'the supernatural' is non-existent. In all this, they are simply voicing a feeling that is latent in those of us who have come under the grip of the 'secular' temper of this age, that nature is empty of God and that it constitutes the whole of reality.977

Not the 'death of God' theologians, but believers who yield to the temptation to 'muddle along', come under fire from Rex. In other writings, Rex's stern intellectual faith makes similar demands of the believer, and is equally damning of those whom Sartre calls 'Salauds', or 'rotters'.978 These believers who 'narrow down' the question of truth in order to 'satisfy the emotions are, in Rex's view, guilty of a pragmatism that is "an offence both to the dignity of truth and to the dignity of the human condition".979 Rex maintains that:

To this class of believers, truth is essentially a matter of satisfying the emotions; or it reduces itself to an appeal to the antiquity of our religious beliefs. What is ancient is true is an old axiom in religion, and in our Christian civilisation during the Middle Ages it dominated not only the sphere of faith but all spheres of knowledge. For us, this appeal to antiquity has lost its axiomatic nature precisely because secular man has recognised that he, and he alone, is the measure of all things. This is not a

974Bishop Butler's analogies are referenced and discussed in Rex, DJR: p.42.
976Rex, DJR: p.43.
977For example, in his 'Sunday Service' address Rex declares; "Every time and place represents its own challenge to the church. Some churches are called to fight political tyrants and dictators; others the moral corruption and irresponsibility of the privileged classes; this church has to rescue its members from drifting into a state of unreflective animal existence". Rex, 'The Sunday Service' in The Bulletin, October 1962: p.7.
978Rex, DJR: p.43.
sign of *hybris* [sic] on his part, but merely a recognition of the true nature of his human condition, from which there is no escape.\footnote{Rex, *DJR* p.43.}

This statement of humanity’s position shows that Rex held a consistent view of the individual’s role through to the end of his life. Rex’s announcement in the statement above, that man is “the measure of all things”, adds weight to the argument that his model of ‘Christ and our interests’ must be read with an emphasis on ‘our interests’.

The contrast Rex offers between those who take the quest for truth seriously and those who ‘muddle along’ is a device used by the author to remind the reader of the serious nature of the journey upon which they have embarked. It echoes Rex’s declaration in the first paragraph of this work, that the question posed in the book’s title “only arises for those whose sense of truth is not satisfied by an appeal to authority”.\footnote{Rex, *DJR* p.9.} And so Rex wishes at this point to “recapitulate exactly what it is that the Christian faith requires us to confirm, before continuing our search for possible aids in the affirmation of faith”.\footnote{Rex, *DJR* p.43f.} The material subsequent to this statement of process focuses on the New Testament resurrection material we have covered above. Never a traditional ‘systematic’ theologian, Rex reveals his bias towards ‘New Testament theology’.

**The analogy of the resurrection**

His emphasis on the authority of the New Testament leads Rex to favour belief in resurrection rather than “belief in the immortality of the soul” which he estimates “the majority of believers would choose” and which he says has “simply come to pass for Christian tradition”.\footnote{Rex, *DJR* p.45.} For Rex, belief in immortality is able to be dismissed with the declaration that it “is Greek in origin, and has no support in the New Testament”.\footnote{Rex, *DJR* p.45.} He sets up a contrast between the popular view, which “appears to guarantee a ‘tidier’ or smoother transition from the here to the hereafter”, and the educated view which “in the light of...”
modern psychology" finds that "the whole view of the immortality of the soul carries little conviction". 985

Rex does not here describe why the whole view of the immortality of the soul carries little conviction in the light of modern psychology. He simply asserts that resurrection implies a "realistic view of death" as 'the end' which "in no way offends our modern consciousness". 986 Rex takes agreement on this matter for granted, but balances these claims with a recognition that belief in the resurrection is by no means straight forward for the 'modern consciousness'. While he explained these matters in an earlier article,987 the failure to here substantiate his claim that modern psychology favours his viewpoint must be viewed as an oversight.

A 'break' between the here and the hereafter is implied in the notion of resurrection. For Rex this "implies a 'hitch' in the identity of the individual being that embarrasses us". 988 Rex insists that this embarrassment was already present in the New Testament community, and the struggle with this issue is recorded in stories such as that of 'doubting Thomas'. The nature of the risen Christ's body is also the subject of other New Testament accounts. While Rex "does not wish to follow Paul in his detailed exploration of the manner and existence of the new body", he affirms Paul's recognition that "the 'body' implied in the resurrection is absolutely and entirely transcendent in nature and origin". 989 For Rex both the Gospel accounts and Paul intend us to recognise that "the 'form' of the risen Lord was essentially different from the human form of his previous life". 990 Rex puts the matter in the following way:

The body of the risen Lord is the same and it is not the same; it is the same in so far as he is the same person, and it is not the same in so far as it is not the resuscitated corpse.991

985 Rex, DJR: p.46.
986 Rex, DJR: p.46.
988 Rex, DJR: p.46.
989 Rex, DJR: p.48.
990 Rex, DJR: p.47.
991 Rex, DJR: p.47.
Recognition that at some point all analogies break down when discussing the nature of the resurrected body, is repeated when the notion of resurrection as an 'eschatological event' is examined, since we do not know of an imperishable body. In light of the critical discussion he has introduced, Rex wonders whether there is any point in speaking of a 'body' at all. Despite substantial difficulties with the analogy, Rex offers an emphatically positive answer to his own question:

The answer is 'yes', since the believer wishes to affirm that the disciples saw something and not nothing, and that what they 'saw' was the same Jesus whom they had known before he appeared to them as the risen Lord. But given this, we must add that in using the term 'body' we speak merely analogically, using analogy now not in the exploratory function which we rejected, but in a limiting sense.

In his concern to speak 'analogically' Rex follows Bultmann, who wishes through the process of demythologising, to convert mythological forms into forms accessible to contemporary readers. Rex effectively sums up his approach to the question of faith's affirmation thus far with a reference to the via negativa, of the medieval scholars and mystics. The total inadequacy of language to describe God and God's actions relativises all our attempts. This is the message Rex has effectively conveyed in the first half of this central chapter. In this vein he offers a rephrasing of the central question captured in his book's title:

An empty tomb; the experiences of some Galilean fishermen and peasants, not unlike those of any bereaved person who has still to get used to the vacuum created by the loss of a loved one; and an historical mystery; are we to [stake] our salvation on these?

A constructive interpretation of the resurrection

The appearance of this summary mid-way through the central chapter of his book, signals a shift in Rex's emphasis towards a constructive interpretation of the resurrection. The introduction to this shift begins with a discussion of Pascal's famous wager. Rex cites Erich Frank's *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth* which presents "the true
intention" of Pascal’s wager. In order to avoid wasting our lives in indecision, trying to prove by reason that which cannot be so proven “Pascal says, let us take the risk, let us boldly dare to believe, even though merely on the strength of a vague probability”. Rex concurs with the sentiment of Frank’s interpretation:

Whatever theological definition we may attach to faith, it is essentially a matter of will. At some point we must decide whether or not we are going to trust God.

For Rex, the situation of the secular individual has increased the role of the will in matters of faith. Consequently, unlike the simpler faith of previous generations, secular man must be content with the faith he can afford. In Rex’s opinion, Pascal, Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard have summed up the human situation as it is experienced by secular man. “Their condition is ours, and in that condition we can only repeat the words of the father of the epileptic child, ‘I believe; help my unbelief’”. Bultmann would argue against such a position that it reduces faith to another human work, but here Rex anticipates such criticism with sage advice; “[i]n matters of faith and theology, however, as in other spheres of life, it does not pay to live beyond our means”. While this statement appears to privilege ‘our interests’ above the ‘Christ’ in Rex’s theological model, the caveats Rex places on such an understanding of the will’s role in faith reveal a concern not to let faith become merely another human work. According to Rex:

Kierkegaard emphasised that faith ‘is not a form of knowledge, but a free act, an expression of will’. This was obviously the only way in which he could afford faith, and we added that we today arrive at our faith in a manner not very different from his. And yet I hesitate to accept the statement that faith ‘is not a form of knowledge’, especially as Kierkegaard links this qualification of faith with the statement that faith, by its nature, is ‘absurd’, that is, unreasonable. By putting a premium on believing the unbelievable, faith becomes simply a kind of sophistication.

Essentially Rex is saying that we can no longer free ourselves from self-consciousness about our human condition. We should not attempt to forget it in order to

remainder of the chapter.

mimic a primitive 'absurd' naivety, pretending the individual has not made himself "the measure of all things"; nor should we seek to abandon faith altogether in an attempt to free ourselves from unfashionable instincts. Our sense of truth demands that we examine the detailed questions of faith even after the 'leap' of faith has been dared: 1001 "[t]his also determines the measure of the disagreeable ditch which we are prepared to cross". 1002

Historically, attempts have been made to bridge this plausibility gap. Rex identifies the 'life' of Jesus constructions of the previous generation with an earnest attempt by those liberal theologians to describe a theology 'they could afford'. 1003

**God at the root of all mythology**

Bultmann does not go as far as his liberal forebears and continues in Rex's view to affirm the divinity of God. His description of the resurrection as mythology attracts comment from Rex. Bultmann's dismissal of the possibility of a hereafter is worthy of serious consideration, according to Rex since "there are few people today who know how to proclaim the message of the crucified and risen Christ as powerfully as Bultmann". 1004 As Rex believes few of the contemporary faithful "take the cosmological eschatology, with the last trumpet and all the rest of it, literally", he asks why all believers do not follow Bultmann and also do away with the associated concept of resurrection:

> Why not take the traditional beliefs in the future state and gear them to the human condition here and now? Does not Bultmann's message derive at least part of its tremendous force from this determined reorientation away from the hereafter to the here? Why not? This leads to yet another question. Why does Bultmann continue to cling to God and why does he continue to recognise his transcendence? Why has he not included God in his programme of 'demythologising', and translated the concept of God in terms of the human condition? Why is he loath to take this last step as some of his more recent critics have urged him to do? Is the concept of God not at the root of all mythology? This question certainly applies to Bultmann's God who is not the anaemic 'philosophers' God' of whom Pascal warned his own generation, but the 'coming God' of the kerygma, who demands from us a response

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1001 The term 'leap of faith' was used by Kierkegaard to describe a self-conscious response to 'the disagreeable ditch' between faith and reason which Lessing had previously described and confessed he could not cross. See earlier footnote.
1004 Rex, *DJR*: p.56.
to his proclamation. Obviously Bultmann feels that our human condition depends on the existence of God.\textsuperscript{1005}

These pertinent questions were to be taken up by other followers of Bultmann - most notably by the 'death of God' theologians in the 1960s. It is clear in historical perspective that Rex was asking questions that were not being asked anywhere else in New Zealand at the time.

Rex’s many rhetorical questions lead to his key question: “[i]s there no reason for retaining the notion of the hereafter with the concept of God?\textsuperscript{1006} Rex implies that arguments which could be forwarded to explain Bultmann’s reluctance to desist from a belief in the existence of God might equally be applied to belief in the resurrection. After all, Bultmann confirmed Barth’s exegesis of Paul: the terms ‘God’ and ‘resurrection’ are interchangeable.\textsuperscript{1007}

Rex’s questions of Bultmann point to Bultmann’s inconsistency in dealing with the terms ‘God’ and ‘resurrection’. Rex asks: “Does not Bultmann’s message derive at least part of its tremendous force from this determined reorientation away from the hereafter to the here?” Rex wonders why Bultmann attempts removal of one cluster of myths but retains the other. He asks: “Is the concept of God not at the root of all mythology?” Rex insinuates that Bultmann is incongruously treating one essential of the faith differently from another. Bultmann is willing to demythologise ‘resurrection’, but not willing to demythologise ‘God’. According to Rex, the same considerations should apply to both terms. As with ‘God’, the eschatological language surrounding ‘resurrection’ does not inevitably imply that the notion of the hereafter is mythological.\textsuperscript{1008}

Bultmann’s acceptance of Barth’s exegesis on the interchangeability of the terms ‘God’ and ‘resurrection’ is the climax of Rex’s dialectical process. If these terms are interchangeable, and the line of Bultmann’s argument leads to the conclusion that our human condition depends on the existence of God then, contra Bultmann, our human

\textsuperscript{1005}Rex, DJR: p.57f.
\textsuperscript{1006}Rex, DJR: p.58.
\textsuperscript{1007}Rex, DJR: p.58. Rex references Bultmann’s position on this matter with the following footnote: “Bultmann, \textit{Glauben und Verstehen}, Tübingen 1933, I. 57: ‘Ich halte all das für richtige Interpretation des Paulus’.” See earlier footnote for further details.
\textsuperscript{1008}Rex, DJR: p.58. The questions in this paragraph (previously cited) also appear on page 58.
condition must also depend upon the resurrection. If both God and resurrection are essential to the faith, as Rex believes he has demonstrated, then it is the task of theology to elaborate and clarify both concepts for the edification of the believer.

This chapter on 'the affirmation of faith' rapidly gains momentum as Rex begins linking his case for the resurrection as fundamental to Christian faith, with the existence of God. A denial of the resurrection is a denial of God, and *vice versa*. If Jesus' resurrection is to be affirmed, Christians must be willing to accept the possibility of resurrection in general; and, if Jesus did not rise, neither is there any hope of a general resurrection.\(^{1009}\) Rex contends that failure to affirm either of these beliefs has significant consequences for faith:

If, in accordance with this logic, there is no hereafter in any real sense, then the life-giving Christ is not a living Christ. Is this not an intolerable conclusion? How can Christ be life-giving if he is not himself alive? Does he 'live' by giving life? Is that the only sense in which he can be said to be the risen Lord today? If that is so, why do we continue to speak of him as the risen Lord?\(^{1010}\)

In this passage, the author's hopes and fears are laid bare. Although he respects the efforts of his liberal forebears to 'construct a faith they could afford', Rex admits that such a faith does not satisfy him. He wants to be able to affirm a 'life-giving' Christ and a 'risen Lord'. For him the two are inseparable. If Jesus' resurrection cannot be professed, the transcendence of God must be denied. In that case it would be preferable to avoid "mere ritual recital" and "come out into the open and admit that Jesus was only a more powerful Hillel or Shammai or (if you wish) Socrates of Palestine?"\(^{1011}\)

As will be shown - the complex nature of Rex's concern is revealed in his not wishing to affirm the literal truth of the resurrection in the sense in which the 'doubting Thomas' account would suggest. But neither is he willing to do away with the resurrection. Together with this, he demands clarity of expression. It could be argued that his reinterpreted (or better: 'redefined') resurrection is not a resurrection at all in the sense

\(^{1009}\)Rex refers to 1 Cor 15 as a witness to Paul's understanding of Jesus' resurrection and our resurrection as one and the same thing. Rex begins also to build his argument for his final chapter. In his final chapter he will defend the resurrection - starting with the assumption of an empty tomb and reversing the following sequence found on p.58: "If there is no resurrection, then Jesus did not rise; then the tomb was not empty. Each step follows logically from the other. It is this logic which Bultmann and others have incorporated into their theology": Rex, *DJR*: p.58.

\(^{1010}\)Rex, *DJR*: p.58.

\(^{1011}\)Rex, *DJR*: p.58f.
understood or intended by the Gospel writers. His attempt to justify, using biblical material, something other than what the material’s original authors intended, highlights the arbitrary nature of the canon and Rex’s belief that the hermeneutic intention of the original author is of little importance in his understanding of the developing tradition. In Rex’s thought the revelation is not yet concluded and every time scripture is opened the possibility of fresh revelation is present.

Rex acknowledges that his argument for the resurrection may be wrong. Yet neither the prospect of death being the end, nor the possibility of basing his life on a spurious message disturb him to any significant degree. Rex’s wry sense of humour informs his thought at this point as he offers an aside over the prospect of Christianity offering an erroneous hope:

For many centuries, men believed that the earth was flat and that it was the centre of the universe. Yet they were no worse off than they are now that they know the truth. Our sense of irony may even delight at the thought that so magnificent a phenomenon as Christian civilisation should be based on so illusory a foundation.\(^{1012}\)

This matter-of-fact comment on the western history of ideas contains a glimpse of the typically dry wit remembered by Rex’s students.\(^ {1013}\) By declaring the myth itself to have positive ‘here and now’ societal effects quite aside from the factuality of its content, Rex is covering his bases. Resurrection has already been deemed by him essential to the Christian faith. The importance of presenting a convincing concept of the resurrection has been established. The remaining pages of this central chapter are devoted to outlining a case that will be familiar to readers of Rex’s previous addresses on eschatology.

**Building on Bultmann and Sartre**

Rex outlines Sartre’s theory of identity (‘a cat is a cat’) and describes the consequences of the ‘fissure’ that separates the individual from himself. When man remains

\(^{1012}\) Rex, *DJR* p.59.

\(^{1013}\) Another incident recalled by Rex’s students has him telling a story in class about an early church Bishop returning to his home town to discover he had been deposed. On the blackboard behind Rex as he told the story was a picture of the cartoon character Mr. Chad (the English forerunner of the American ‘Kilroy’) peering over a wall. Beneath his picture Rex had scrawled the words: “Wot no see?” This dry humour was noteworthy in a period at Knox Theological Hall in which both students and lecturers still addressed one another using formal titles.
loyal to his human condition this fissure removes him from the experience of the cat. In Rex's words "[he] has to 'choose' his self, without the prospect of enjoying the identity of the self he chooses and the self he experiences". Sartre is rightly reported to accept this condition "with a will" avoiding the temptation to which the majority of moderns succumb, scrambling "to shelter in anything that holds out the semblance of security of identity, settling down in a condition one rung above the cats". Rex expresses respect for Sartre's choice as he does for the work of Martin Heidegger "from whom Sartre learnt a great deal". But Rex wishes to take the matter a step further. He sees this analysis as penetrating, but also as lacking a fulfilling conclusion. According to Rex:

We accept this analysis as one of the profoundest attempts to come to grips with the human condition in our time. Both thinkers, however, carry the goal of transcendence and the quest of identity no further than this side of death. [...] Bultmann [...] accepts this analysis and plots his own position within its limits. The question is, however, are these limits not also the limitations of this analysis?

In addition to the analysis of contemporary philosophers, Rex favours guidance from more traditional Christian sources. Famous words relating to Augustine's conversion suggest to Rex a fulfilment of the human condition beyond death: "Thou has made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee." As we have already noted, Sartrean analysis promises a never realisable yet perpetual quest for fulfilment of the human condition in the here and now. As in the S.C.M. lectures on eschatology we examined above, this condition has its realisation, for Rex, in the hereafter. Here he asserts that:

We must therefore seek our identity on the other side of death, in the hope that we shall know the self that God already knows. Paul says, 'If one loves God, one is known by him' (I.Cor. VIII.3.). When speaking of 'knowledge' in this context Paul thinks of divine election. In extending our quest for identity to the hereafter we choose, in fact, the self that God has chosen.

Thus, Rex moves in a few short steps towards his conclusions once he feels he has demonstrated the importance of a credible understanding of the afterlife to Christian faith.

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1014 Rex, DJR: p.60.
1015 Rex, DJR: p.60.
1016 Rex, DJR: p.61. The citation's first omitted section locates Rex's understanding of Heidegger and Sartre: "For Heidegger, in his book Being and Time, the human condition is 'Being-Towards-Death' and Sartre, holding out the prospect of 'identity' locates it in death".
1018 Rex, DJR: p.61.
Sartre's most compelling analysis of the human condition begs fulfilment in the Christian faith. Paul's equation (as described by Barth) of the terms 'God' and 'resurrection' hover behind Rex's interpretation and hint at possession of divine knowledge accompanying resurrection. Rex concludes the central chapter of *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* with a statement of faith regarding this fulfilment of the human condition:

> Once our affirmation of faith includes the 'knowledge' which God has of our self, the category of the 'leap' is no longer adequate to describe it. In the Johannine version of Peter's confession at Caesarea-Philippi, the apostle says, 'Lord, to whom shall I go? You have words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.' (Jn. VI. 68, 69). Here, Peter not only commits himself to Jesus Christ, but acknowledges him as 'the Transcendent'. When we are able to stake our claim as unhesitatingly as Peter in the 'transcendent', our affirmation of faith is no longer a 'leap', but an experience of grace.\(^{1019}\)

This ending to Rex's central chapter retains an ambiguity in its phrasing. The final sentence is framed as a future possibility, one which Rex has previously stated as other than the experience of the modern individual. In his introduction, Rex states that "One of the inalienable recognitions of secular man is that he lives in a natural universe which is subject to dependable laws".\(^{1020}\) Rex uses this statement to rule out miracles as violations of natural laws. The world of secular man is depicted as a rule governed, predictable, reasonable and 'disenchanted world'.\(^{1021}\) Yet Rex's ending appears to allow for the possibility for some type of mysterious transfiguration. The possibility of the 'transcendent' is allowed as an 'experience of grace'. This unannounced appearance of the term 'grace' in an otherwise analytical text leaves the reader wondering whether Rex is unwittingly engaging in the 'studied ambiguity' he so detests, or more likely, is somehow unaware that he might be accused of avoiding an obvious confrontation with the previously stated 'inalienable recognition'. Presumably he believes he is introducing a legitimate third option.

Failure to explain his use of the term 'grace' is an obvious weakness in Rex's work. It is quite possible that Rex understood 'grace' in terms similar to Bultmann, that is, as an inalienable recognition that we are justified by God (forgiveness) and that we are not justified

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\(^{1019}\) Rex, *DJR*: p. 61f.
\(^{1020}\) Rex, *DJR*: p. 12.
\(^{1021}\) Rex, *DJR*: p. 76.
by our own work. In any case, Rex's omission of an explanation for his use of the term means that the contemporary reader cannot have any certainty about this matter.

The tomb as a cipher

The final chapter of *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* is entitled 'The Logic of the Empty Tomb'. It proceeds by way of a series of provisos to an affirmation of faith similar to that with which the previous chapter closed. Among other things, its author feels that the implications of an empty tomb have not been fully appreciated.

Having demonstrated the historicity of the empty tomb, Rex finds that the disciples' understanding of these appearances does not allow for the kind of spiritualised interpretations which contemporary interpreters place upon them. He suggests that the 'spiritualisation' of these experiences comes as a result of the mistaken attempt to interpret them in light of the later Pauline 'visions'. The resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples, close in temporal proximity to the empty tomb defines for Rex the genre 'resurrection appearance'. This viewpoint has implications for faith. Consequently Rex maintains that the final chapter is directed at two classes of reader:

he who is not fully convinced of the importance of the empty tomb for his faith, and who continues to think of it mainly as a question of Christian archaeology; and he who feels that the present inquiry ought to have closed with the affirmation of faith as its natural climax. 1022

The first class of reader is addressed when Rex insists that the empty tomb is important to faith. For him, it is not merely a question of archaeology. He believes that the empty tomb “emphatically points to the hereafter and the transcendent”. 1023 The tomb functions to safeguard the true meaning of the resurrection for Rex; “The fact that the tomb is empty dramatically poses the question, what happened to the man Jesus after his death”? 1024 The tomb, as an experience within the range of natural events acts as a cipher, pointing beyond itself to another order of events. Rex feels that this emphasis is lost where focus falls predominantly on the disciples' experiences; more so when these experiences are

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removed from “their proximity to the empty tomb” and brought into “closer proximity to Paul’s vision on the Damascus road”. 1025

For Rex, the approximation of the disciples’ experiences with those of Paul has unfortunate consequences, as we shall see further. For now it is important to note that Rex regards the tomb as more than merely of archaeological concern. He will develop this argument further in order to persuade his ‘first class of reader’. The ‘second class of reader’ is also addressed early in the chapter, with an acknowledgment of the importance of reason to the ‘tempted and troubled’ faith of today.

The importance of reason

Because Rex the historian knows that throughout western history “faith has always been accompanied by doubt”, 1026 he wishes to impress upon the reader the importance of addressing doubts and criticisms which may arise in response to the affirmation of faith with which the previous chapter closed. Rex anticipates that profound questions will be asked of faith in a secular environment:

We no longer live in the Age of Faith, and in the last two centuries the reasons for doubting the foundations of our faith have become so strong as to impress even the most determined believer. Certainly, no true believer, in any age, has regarded his faith as a secure possession. 1027

Rex views this exploration which makes “greater allowances for the pressure of the secular age on our faith” as a “necessary sequel to the affirmation of faith”. 1028 This claim is influenced by Rex’s thought on the history of ideas. In Rex’s reading of the history of ideas, the revolution in thought that took place in the seventeenth century changed the world almost beyond recognition. According to Rex:

[W]e live on this side of a rupture which divides the whole history of mankind into two sections; the one extending from the cavemen to the men of the Renaissance, and the other covering this post-Cartesian world of ours. On the surface, it may seem preposterous to lump the caveman, Plato, and Michelangelo into one class, and the rest of us into another. And yet, so long as we fail to appreciate the full

1025 Rex, DJR: p.63.
1026 Rex, DJR: p.64.
1027 Rex, DJR: p.64.
1028 Rex, DJR: p.64.
magnitude of this fact, we have understood very little about the nature of the modern secular world.\textsuperscript{1029}

Key to understanding this difference is the concept of enchantment. "Prior to this divide, the natural universe provided a theatre for demons, angels, and gods, as well as for man".\textsuperscript{1030} In the post-Cartesian world, the individual finds himself alone on the stage. The natural world was once 'enchanted' but now finds itself 'soulless', 'like a machine'. This 'world of disenchantment' raises previously unimaginable questions of faith. It is precisely these questions Rex aims to address in his final chapter of \textit{Did Jesus Rise from the Dead}?

Rex recognises himself as a product of the modern world. It is important to note that this shapes his questions in a way no longer fashionable in academic circles exposed to the varied phenomena commonly grouped under the moniker 'Post-modernism'. Rex quests for 'the truth', critical of those who do not take a stance, and assuming that the accumulation of scholarly research and debate will one day lay bare the facts of the matter at hand. It is crucial also to recognise that this approach in no way leads to a simplistic argumentation. Rex is aware of differing opinions and contradictory indications. He reaches convictions based upon the probable implications of available evidence. Yet he appears motivated by an unswerving belief that a contemporary expression of 'the' truth of a matter is possible - if the correct approach is taken and the investigation is thorough. According to Rex, truth is constituent of our very humanity:

\begin{quote}
[S]uch is our human condition that we must answer to the challenge of truth, if we do not wish to lose our dignity - even if that truth runs counter to our most cherished convictions and beliefs.\textsuperscript{1031}
\end{quote}

\textbf{A new reformation}

Rex's \textit{Vorbild} Bultmann realised that the scientific work of theology is endless because "our concepts develop endlessly". Bultmann maintains that each generation must express the truth afresh - "to be intelligible, interpretation must use new concepts".\textsuperscript{1032} In

\textsuperscript{1029}Rex, \textit{DJR} p.75. It is this passage that Lloyd Geering cites in \textit{God in the New World}: p.11 (see earlier footnote). It is also a sentiment Rex expresses similarly in many of his papers: Cf. especially Rex's two papers: RA116, 'Faith and Reason in the Seventeenth Century', and RA142, 'Intellectual Revolution'.

\textsuperscript{1030}Rex, \textit{DJR} p.75.

\textsuperscript{1031}Rex, \textit{DJR} p.74.

\textsuperscript{1032}Bultmann, \textit{Faith and Understanding} p.154.
light of the changing understandings of secular man, Rex expresses a similar view. In this way both thinkers exhibit a strong sense of their reformed heritage. According to Rex if we are no longer able to accept the tradition view of the resurrection:

then we are called to a radical re-interpretation of our faith if that faith is to remain intellectually, morally, and emotionally convincing to the present generation of Christians and those to come. 1033

For Rex, the degree of re-interpretation required warrants the term ‘radical’. In the past interpretation has been “gradual, cryptic, subliminal”, now, because of the ‘rupture’ in history more drastic measures are required. No longer is it enough to be “merely interpreting the tradition”. 1034 Theology must be carried out in a modern and rigorous fashion.

Bultmann describes theology’s methods as scientific. 1035 In this way of thinking, what makes the work of the theologian or hermeneutician holy is not the secular method employed but rather that “the theological character of the investigator’s work is borne by the New Testament itself, which he merely serves”. 1036 The scientific nature of the theological task is similarly assumed in Rex. The search for truth demands honesty about the results of scientific research. According to Rex, theology, to be relevant, must be dealing with the ‘facts’:

Here, the accumulative effect of the tremendous advance in man’s scientific knowledge during the last centuries and his increasing appreciation of the truth about himself as a natural phenomenon manifestly appears to weight the evidence in favour of the belief that death is the end. Naturally, there can be no proof that this is the case. And I should say that most people living within the orbit of the modern secular world would add that this probability amounts to virtual certainty. 1037

Rex correctly identifies the contemporary affinity of faith and doubt. The secular world-view is all pervasive in the post-Christian west. If a faith wishes to remain credible to people who exist within that world-view, it must face its challenges. As we have said, this is

1033 Rex, DJR: p.74.
1034 Rex, DJR: p.75.
1035 Bultmann, Faith and Understanding. See for example: pp.154, 164, 324.
1036 Bultmann, Faith and Understanding p.164.
1037 Rex, DJR: p.74.
what Rex is aiming to achieve with this final chapter. In this vein it might seem strange that
the economy of explanation gives priority to a discussion on the ‘logic of the empty tomb’
over a reasoned understanding of the resurrection appearances themselves. For Rex “the
whole point is that these appearances receive their distinct identity from their temporal, if
not their local, proximity to the empty tomb.” He insists that failure to correctly
understand the emphasis and priority of the biblical material leads to a blurring of the
distinction between the experiences of the disciples and the experience of Paul. For Rex
such a false conception of scriptural priority offends the canons of biblical theology:

It is essential to insist on this difference, because, as we said, the true meaning of
Jesus’s resurrection is at stake. Theologians who wish to spiritualise the idea of
resurrection see in an assimilation of the disciples’ experiences to Paul’s their
opportunity for attaching to the whole complex of events a meaning which they can
more easily accept.

Further, since only a witness to the resurrection could be an apostle (Acts 1:22) Rex
asserts that the primitive church, “judged Paul’s experience by the disciples’ experiences and
not vice versa”. Emil Brunner and J.A.T. Robinson receive short shrift from Rex as
contemporaries who have “approximate[d] the two classes of experience” in attempting to
spiritualise the resurrection appearances.

Stumbling block or affordable faith?

Rex proceeds by negative argumentation in his critique of Brunner and Robinson.
He is clear about the consequences of failing to follow the biblical priority on the earlier
appearances, but he does not explain how a reasoned understanding of the resurrection
might result from an account faithful to his exegesis of the biblical material. Although he
does not say it, it seems that his primary aim is to forestall all efforts at making the

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1038 Rex, DJR: p.64f.
1039 Rex, DJR: p.66.
1040 Rex, DJR: p.67. Cf. p.68: “We must clearly distinguish [...] between the disciples’ experiences and Paul’s,
and we must be quite clear as to which of the two must be the criterion of the other”. Rex outlines his
exegetical argument for the authoritative priority of the disciples’ witness on pp.65f.
1041 Rex’s critique of Brunner and Robinson is found on pp.66ff. Conspicuously absent in Rex’s appraisal of the
treatment exegetes give to this material is the possibility of a reciprocal reading between the disciples
experiences and Paul’s. Rex’s search for a biblical priority is witness to the earnestness of Rex’s desire to avoid a
‘spiritualisation’ of the resurrection appearances.
resurrection seem reasonable. Following Bultmann, he manifests the Lutheran suspicion of attempts to remove the stumbling block of faith.

There is a tension in Rex's thought between the ultimately unsatisfactory 'affordable' faith of the liberals and the temptation to 'live beyond our means'. Neither is viewed positively by Rex. Attempts to 'remove the stumbling block of faith' belong to the former category.

While it might seem judicious to venture that Rex's critique of Brunner and Robinson was fuelled by his Lutheran convictions, it is clear that the structure of his critique is shaped around issues of critical method. In this vein, he offers advice to scholars who have "more or less categorically declared that Paul was unfamiliar with the tradition of the empty tomb". 1042

Arguments from silence are always precarious: they are particularly precarious when we are dealing with the purely occasional literary output of a man, of which our knowledge is not even complete [...] At all events, scholars must remember one fundamental rule of interpretation: that the apostle wrote his letters not to answer their questions but those of his correspondents. Today we may find it difficult to imagine that Paul could have spoken of resurrection without mentioning the empty tomb if he had been familiar with its tradition, but this is our own difficulty and not his. 1043

Of course Rex here opens himself up to the charge of ignoring his own advice when he argues for Paul's knowledge of the tomb largely from silence. 1044 In his defence, it might be recalled that he builds his case for the empty tomb from other sources, in the light of which he offers considered speculation on Paul's situation.

The text moves quickly from criticism offered to other scholars in a typically confrontational German academic style, to a statement framed in anticipation of a critical response to Rex's own position. He reminds readers that "for the first believers any reference to resurrection simply implied the empty tomb". He has already ruled out the possibility of the Gospel records carrying a later tradition unknown to Paul. Pointing out

1042 Rex, DJR: p.68.
1043 Rex, DJR: p.68f.
that the Gospels were written after Paul's death is deemed "no argument" because, in Rex's view, it "ignores oral tradition". 1045

Satisfied that he has argued the importance of the biblical priority on the earlier resurrection appearances as definitive of apostleship, and having highlighted the negative consequences of failing to recognise this priority, Rex switches to a discussion of the value of the tomb as a 'sign'. Rex maintains that:

To the believer, the empty tomb signifies the fact that there is an event which is sustained by a transcendent order of existence lying outside the range of man's natural experience.1046

The 'true' theological significance of the empty tomb - disagreeing with Tillich, Barth and Bultmann

Rex's description of the empty tomb as a cipher which points to a 'greater mystery' warrants critical consideration, particularly in the light of a jibe at theological contemporaries, many of whom, he says, "pass on the debased counters of metaphor for the true coinage of faith". 1047 While Rex offers praise to the earnest liberals who attempted to "construct a faith they could afford", he remains critical of those whom he believes are reluctant to declare their hand, 1048 preferring to stake his claim squarely on the existence of a transcendent God.

The distinction between 'metaphor' (viewed negatively with typical Lutheran suspicion) and 'sign' (employed positively) is frequently drawn upon in Rex's text. In most texts, the use of the language either of 'metaphor' or 'sign' indicates a desire on the part of an author to invoke in the reader a sense of the content and context of an 'other' which is beyond precise description. Rex prefers (following Bultmann) 'analogy' to 'metaphor', of which the latter has a form more closely linked with 'myth'.

It appears that for Rex, the tomb is a sort of theological signpost which reminds the faithful reader to ask the vital question: what happened to the man Jesus after his death? For Rex's believer, "the purely historical mystery takes on a character which points to a mystery

1045Rex, DJR: p.68.
1046Rex, DJR: p.69.
1047Rex, DJR: p.82. Rex uses a variation of his faith metaphor of coinage in his 'letter to Bultmann', trans. BHR: pp.271-274.
1048Cf. my discussion of Rex's dealings with Karl Barth's 'studied ambiguity'.
in the profounder sense". It is difficult to interpret this passage as anything but a faith statement. Rex seems to argue for the tomb as a key signpost on the correct road of faith, without which one could be distracted or misled by false questions or emphases. The empty tomb is a sign for him that the events after Jesus' death, though taking place and interpreted within the world of history, are sustained by a transcendent order.

Rex indirectly argues for the retention of a significant element of mystery within our understanding of the resurrection. An example of this is found in his view that the disciples did not associate a simple resuscitated corpse with the empty tomb and neither should we. For Rex, a focus on "what precisely did happen to the physical body of Jesus" distracts from a "true appreciation of the nature of these events". He finds Paul Tillich guilty of precisely this theological misdemeanour.

Tillich, Bultmann and Barth, regarded by Rex as "the three leading theologians of our time", have their theological views critiqued by Rex as his case progresses. In his view, each of these theologians has failed to appreciate "the true theological significance of the empty tomb". Tillich is criticised because, according to Rex, preoccupation with what happened to Jesus' physical body leads him to dismiss the whole tradition. Similarly Barth has "given unqualified expression to the importance of the empty tomb as a sign" but is not as concerned as Rex is as to whether the story of the empty tomb is historical or not. Rex places his own viewpoint alongside these theological giants. For him, the historicity of the empty tomb is vital as he clearly states:

I have no doubt in my mind that the empty tomb can be a 'presupposition' for the resurrection only if it was empty in reality and not just according to some legendary account.

Rex maintains that Jesus' resurrection appearances to the disciples can only be genuine history if the tomb was empty. Bultmann's position is more favourable than
Barth's if the empty tomb is revealed to be only legendary according to Rex. He attributes
Barth's ambivalence on this matter to his lack of belief in the hereafter. 1055 For Rex, the
tomb must be "really empty" in order to "fulfil its function as a 'sign' pointing dramatically
to the hereafter". 1056

When it comes to the nature of resurrection belief, Rex indicates that he is at odds
with theology’s big names. He devotes several paragraphs to exegesis of Barth’s work in
order to demonstrate that Barth, like Tillich and Bultmann, shares the "presupposition, that
man has only one life to live, and that it is here". 1057 Although he thinks otherwise, Rex does
not find the prospect of these key theologians being correct too frightening to contemplate.

**Bultmann’s de mythologised eschatology**

The apostle Paul considered the possibility that humans’ own existence is the current
immanent one, but his thoughts on the matter are dismissed as melodramatic by Rex. 1058
Rex recalls the more measured example of the Sadducees who, in Paul’s own day, lived lives
"of dignity and poise" despite not believing in resurrection. For Rex however, resurrection
is a defining aspect of the Christian tradition. Because he considers it indispensible,
plausible explanations of resurrection faith bring great relief - even if they differ from his
own. In this respect his admiration for Bultmann is plain:

The longer one exposes oneself to the weight of the knowledge which inspired, for
instance, Hume’s argument against miracles, the more one feels a sense of
tremendous relief as one turns to a radical re-interpretation of the resurrection such
as Bultmann’s. Here is no empty tomb to account for; in so far as there are ‘events’
they are unequivocally located in the consciousness of the disciples; and finally, God
does not interfere. 1059

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1057 Rex, *DJR*: p.72. This discussion is found in *DJR*: p.72f.
1058 "If this life bounded by death is all that there is, should we not say with Paul that under these circumstances
there is nothing in the Christian faith and that, ‘if in this life we who are in Christ have only hope, we are of all
men most to be pitied’? The answer is, ‘not necessarily’. When Paul concludes, ‘If the dead are not raised, “Let
us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” ’ (1. Cor. XV.32), he gives way to emotion rather than reason." Rex,
*DJR*: p.73.
1059 Rex, *DJR*: p.76.
Rex offers an apologetic for Bultmann’s position, suggesting Bultmann’s God is far more worthy than Beckett’s ‘Godot’. Rex reports that “Bultmann’s people are making ‘decisions’ in obedient response to the Word of God, decisions which give structure and direction to their lives as they are on the road”. He describes the effect of Bultmann’s standpoint on the believer who is convinced of its value and, citing Bultmann, triumphantly rounds off with a flourish:

Bultmann’s believer is ‘open’ to the future, he has an ‘openness’ which endows him with a tremendous resilience against his own past and the hardening effects of custom and convention. For to quote his own words, ‘Faith as openness to the future is freedom from the past, because it is faith in the forgiveness of sins; it is freedom from the enslaving chains of the past. It is freedom from ourselves as the old selves, and for ourselves as the new selves.’

This citation is particularly significant, in that Rex seldom cites other authors at length except in order to illustrate a disagreement with them. True, Rex does wish to question aspects of Bultmann’s demythologised eschatology, but in its immediate context, the citation functions as an apologetic - arguing that, even in light of secular science, a plausible and edifying outline of resurrection faith can be offered.

Bultmann’s ‘demythologised’ version of biblical eschatology moves beyond the scriptural model. He argues its legitimacy on the basis of a tradition developing even within the scriptural material itself and suggests that it may be the most valid interpretation available in the current climate. Of itself, the fact that a leap away from the biblical understanding of the hereafter has been made does not make Bultmann’s eschatology unpalatable as Rex explains:

The recognition that there is no hereafter in any real sense of that word may simply be part of the business of growing up. In that case, it has to be accepted that no-one has ever seen God and that no-one ever will. But this invites the question

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1060 Although Rex does not explain his choice of this comparison, it was obviously a logical one to make. Beckett’s work was common currency as is evidenced by Rex’s reference on p.77 to a contemporary Time magazine article.

1061 Rex, DJR: p.77.

1062 Rex, DJR: p.77. The citation from Bultmann’s work is sourced from Jesus Christ and Mythology (London: SCM Press, 1960) p.78.

1063 Rex was of the opinion that one should not use the views of others unless these views had been made one’s own. Cf. BHR: p.243.
whether such a God is anything more than a *cipher* or code-word, which signifies our highest hopes and aspirations concerning ourselves and the world.1064

Rex's dispassionate critical stance is retained in his assessment on its merits of Bultmann's understanding of God as a 'cipher'. Such a 'God' would be the key to understanding ourselves, but would have no real existence outside ourselves. Yet the matter does not end here because according to Rex, Bultmann still wants to maintain faith in the actuality of God.1065 As Rex holds a similar stance he is sympathetic to Bultmann's position. This is true even when he radically disagrees with Bultmann, or is highlighting a flaw in Bultmann's theory. In these instances, Rex does not adopt the dismissive tone with which he deals with other theologians - particularly those whose forms of expression tend towards obscurity.

Rex reports in a neutral fashion Barth's belief that if the logical consequences of Bultmann's presuppositions were examined, the inevitable outcome would be a standpoint like that of Feuerbach. Feuerbach suggested one hundred years earlier that knowledge of God is merely man's knowledge of himself.1066 The relevant question Rex asks in this situation is "what if Feuerbach's analysis of religion was right?"1067 In this case, says Rex, "coming of age" would simply mean "acknowledging the fact that God is dead".1068 The empty tomb would take on an ominous meaning - the Christian faith would be based on an historical mystery wrongly interpreted by the first disciples. According to Rex:

> In that case [...] not only we, of the post-Nietzschean world, are 'God's widowers' (as Sartre put it), but the disciples are too; the only difference being that we today know out true condition while they did not.1069

Rex’s almost incidental comment on the difference between the disciples and contemporary believers reveals his strong modernist faith in the contribution of, and progress in, modern philosophy. He appears to allow for only two possibilities: either the traditional form of the Christian faith best expresses the truth of life, or philosophy in his

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1064 Rex, DJR: p.78. The language of 'growing up' is reminiscent of Bonhoeffer's religion-less Christianity with its talk of 'coming of age'. (Indeed Rex acknowledges Bonhoeffer as the originator of the phrase 'coming of age'). See the relevant discussion earlier in the present chapter of this thesis.
1065 Rex, DJR: p.79. Rex cites passages from *Jesus Christ and Mythology* pp.70, 72.
1066 Rex, DJR: p.79.
1067 Rex, DJR: p.79.
1068 Rex, DJR: p.79.
1069 Rex, DJR: p.80.
time has captured its essence. In such a strong modernist faith there is little room for other religions, past philosophies or radical future developments.

A dollar each way

Rex's existentialist convictions support his belief that our attempts at worship would not be wasted even if it were conceded that God were dead, and that churches have become ""the tombs and sepulchres of God", in which with Nietzsche's 'mad man' we sing requiem masses for God". The connections between existentialism and Christianity are not to be missed in Rex's explanation of this claim:

For the questions which our faith answered for us remain with us; they are a part of our human condition. As long as men are true to that condition, they will continue to ask, 'Where do we come from? Who are we? Whither do we go?' For essentially, man is a stranger in this world, and in his reflective moments he knows it. At the dawn of the modern age, Montaigne and Spinoza asked man who induced him to think of this world as established 'for his service and convenience'. And the theory of evolution reinforces this question, since the advent of human consciousness appears like a 'hitch' or accident in the evolutionary process, producing a factor which can turn against this process and interfere with it. Only the blasé will cease to wonder at the immensity of the mystery of human consciousness, and only the incurably dull mind will never think to ask, why is there something and not nothing?

In Rex's time, an understanding of the nature of man as a 'religious animal' allowed him to claim that these questions would always remain. Against the background of the history of ideas Rex has no difficulty asserting that those who did not ask the 'who and why' questions of their humanity are 'incurably dull'. The 'who and why' questions Rex envisaged were neither to be answered with the simple faith of 'primitive religions' nor were they to be dismissed as irrelevant as they might be in the postmodern climate. Rex posed these questions anticipating his own existentialist response; "Even if God were but a code-word

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1070 This observation should be tempered by the fact that Rex elsewhere acknowledges that each generation must find its own theological expression. See: RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XIX. Cf. RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.18.
1072 Rex, DJR: p.80. Cf. also DJR: p.59. As noted earlier, Rex suggests that, were it revealed that the Christian civilisation was built on an erroneous hope, it might be considered a delightful irony.
signifying the goals that assure us of our humanity, the use of that chiffre would be abundantly justified”. 1073

In Rex’s view, all hope would not be lost in a world without God. People would “continue to pursue thoughts and goals of a distinctly religious nature”. 1074 Bultmann’s talk of man’s ‘openness’ to the future could still be employed, but for Rex; “if God is but a chiffre, the empty tomb no longer spells any hope in the accepted Christian sense”. 1075 Biblical language that implied transcendence could be used in no more than a metaphorical sense.

**Implications of the ‘disenchanted world’**

As Rex rightly acknowledges, the realisation that Christianity has sown the seeds of its own demise offers little relief in a world lacking transcendence. For him, the present ‘disenchantment’ is attributable in part to “the Christian act of liberating man from elemental nature and its demons” which Berdyaev described. 1076 In Rex’s opinion, Paul’s view that “the Cross had ‘disarmed’ the world of demons and spirits” had almost inevitable consequences: “[f]rom ‘disarming’ the demons to a denial of their existence is a logical step.” 1077 Rex explores in his penultimate paragraph the possibility that this process of ‘disenchantment’ will not stop with the demons targeted by Christianity:

Now the time has arrived, and the ‘disenchantment’ has not stopped short at the Christian God who raised Jesus from the dead. In Col. II. 15, Paul said of the crucified and risen Christ, ‘He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them’ in the cross. Has man, set free by the Lordship of Christ, ‘triumphed’ in turn over his own liberator as he extends the ‘disenchantment’ to the God who raised Jesus from the dead? 1078

This penultimate paragraph hints at the possibility that the modern world is biting the hand that has fed it. Rex describes the possibility of God’s disenchantment as a very real question that “leads the believer into depths of doubt which are more than passing moods of

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1073 Rex, DJR: p.81.
1074 Rex, DJR: p.81. Rex cites the ideals of August Comte and Karl Marx as examples. He cites studies which highlight the religious nature of their programmes.
1075 Rex, DJR: p.81.
1077 Rex, DJR: p.82.
1078 Rex, DJR: p.82f.
scepticism". Where it might reasonably be asked whether Christianity has performed the function of a Wittgensteinian ladder which might now safely be disposed of, Rex prefers questions which beg affirmation of the value of retaining a living tradition. With respect to the suggestion that we have taken this 'disenchantment' too far, he asks: "Is this feeling by any chance the clue to our present predicament?" Again a positive answer is anticipated by Rex as questions follow in a stream-of-consciousness fashion:

In a world that has come under our control, have we taken on the part of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor? As the Grand Inquisitor cannot tolerate the interference of the life-giving Christ with his control of the church, are we in the same way to close the disenchanted world to the living Christ and his God, asking, 'Why art thou come to hinder us?' Or are we to keep man's world 'open to God', because we know that the question of God's existence is also the question of man's existence?

Here Rex is using Bultmann's 'open to God' language and sharpening Bultmann's phrase "the question of God and the question of myself are identical" to highlight the possibility that a loss of God implies a loss of those aspects of our humanity that distinguish us from other creatures. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the 'our interests' aspect of Rex's 'Christ and our interests' theological model is once again being given priority at this point.

A problematic affirmation

From the emphasis on 'our interests', an interest which dominates his scientific questioning, Rex shifts again to matters more immediately identifiable with the 'Christ'. The use of the adjectives 'life-giving' and 'living' to describe the Christ cue the reader to the imminent arrival of another statement of faith. Rex's language shifts away from the analytical style which dominates his text, towards the style of a sermon. The technical term 'grace' appears without further explanation in the book's final sentence. This is just its third appearance, and the first time since the concluding sentence in the previous chapter.

1079 Rex, DJR: p.83.
1080 Rex, DJR: p.83.
1081 Rex, DJR: p.83.
It is at this point that doubt recoils as if from an abyss and once more prepares a way for the grace that sustains our affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ as 'the Holy One of God'.

Rex has previously discussed the phrase “the Holy One of God” in terms of its implied transcendence. This final sentence allows for an experience of transcendence as a result of God’s free gift. To the reader of today, it stands in juxtaposition to what has gone before in terms of its employment of unexplored religious terminology. It assumes that the content of the term ‘grace’ is unproblematic and, further, that the reader will be able to connect it in their own record of experience with “doubt recoiling as if from an abyss”.

The use of these religious concepts at the close of the work may have two consequences for its interpretation. Comparison with mystical theology is invited in an initial encounter with these closing paragraphs. It proceeds by way of negative argument, asking questions which highlight wrong responses, and in turn, hint at the direction to search for right answers. Upon first reading, the believer may sense a freeness resulting from its apophatic style.

When read for a second time, the closing paragraphs can appear to be an example of exactly that kind of theology which Rex has described as typical of the work of Karl Barth. Rex’s final words appear to have the same kind of ‘studied ambiguity’ or ‘studied elusiveness’ that Rex has ripely criticised in previous pages. His challenge to leave room for re-enchantment appears in this view as a kind of escapism from that “inalienable recognition of secular man” described in Rex’s introduction. Rex leaves no room for an understanding of miracle which includes the violation of natural laws, and it is uncertain whether he has

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1082 Rex, DJR: p.83.
1083 Although Rex met Karl Barth and admired him deeply as a person, he felt that Barth’s theology lacked seriousness at times (Cf. Rex, DJR: p.71). Rex comments on this in RA003. A number of comments in DJR demonstrate a critical stance towards Barth’s work which could be conceived as harsh. This is not the case, since Rex would not have devoted so much attention to a writer whose work he did not respect. Rex states explicitly that he regards Barth, along with Tillich and Bultmann as the “three leading theologians” of his time (DJR: p.71). Nevertheless the following selected comments reveal a less sympathetic tone in Rex’s dealings with Barth than he would have employed when dealing with the work of Bultmann. When Rex uses the phrase “studied ambiguity”, Barth is implicated (DJR: p.35). He uses the description “studied elusiveness” specifically of Barth’s writing (DJR: p.73). The phrase “theology by punning” is linked to “some of the worst features of Karl Barth’s theology” (p.35). Barth’s description of the empty tomb as “a legend that must be affirmed” is scorned by Rex as “a quaint piece of sophistry” (p.23) and finally, Rex asks “Is Karl Barth’s theology but a ‘word-game’?” (p.70f).
1084 This secular individual recognises that he “lives in a natural universe which is subject to dependable laws”. Rex, DJR: p.12.
devoted enough attention to the notion of grace to make plausible for the reader a link between the tomb and the transcendent.

Logical inconsistencies aside, Rex impresses upon the reader the importance of a plausible understanding of the resurrection to Christian faith. For Rex, the resurrection is a defining aspect of Christian faith. A plausible understanding of the resurrection highlights for him the limits of reason and is a logical precursor to the 'leap' of faith. His theological model is intended to clarify the need for faith's decision.

*Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* acknowledges that the contemporary secular individual does not experience God in his world as his or her forebears did. It is an attempt by Rex to clear a space for encounter with the transcendent in spite of this situation. By acknowledging all of the difficulties, rather than sweeping them under the carpet, the seeker's mind is freed to focus on the possibility of the transcendent. The ending of the second and third chapters offers a statement of faith, effectively no more plausible than those beliefs Rex has dismissed as archaic or irrelevant, but the reader may feel more sympathetically disposed towards them - simply because Rex has spoken honestly and intelligently about the contemporary situation.

As we have observed, a reading of history that places emphasis on the way modern man experiences the world underpinning Rex's hermeneutics and eschatology. Rex believes that the way we approach the Christian scriptures and the events that they contain is shaped by a set of interests that has its origins in the advances in knowledge made in the seventeenth century. As we saw in his hermeneutics, Rex is convinced that in order to do theology one must in each epoch do it differently. To refuse this task is to settle for a theology appropriate to some time other than our own. For this reason, Rex explores the salient features of his own age in order to distinguish how it differs from that which preceded it. Just what the picture Rex builds of his current situation suggests about appropriate future directions for Christian thought and action is the subject of the chapter to which we now turn.
Chapter Eight - History of Ideas

Finding meaning in history

In this chapter we shall explore the way in which Rex's understanding of the philosophy of history is shaped by both existentialism and his Christian beliefs. For Rex existentialism provides the tools essential for modern individuals to engage with questions of meaning. Christianity informs his search for meaning in history. Like the thesis as a whole, the present chapter is structured in a loosely chronological fashion to enable the reader to observe shifts in emphasis over time. For this reason it begins with an examination of two papers written in 1940 then moves to one written in 1948 before finally concentrating on a cluster written in the mid-late 1950s.1085

In his early papers on the history of ideas Rex describes Christianity’s complicity in the evils of the age embodied in the ‘capitalistic distortion’ of the ideals of the French

Revolution. By 'capitalistic distortion' he means that money has come to be seen as an end in itself and not as a tool for achieving the greater good. Rex outlines what he believes is the role of the true Church; and that involves 'living the cross' which is explained in terms of an opposite to all that is summed up in the term 'religious mannerism'. Rex wants to see Christians build up an educated Christian mind and to implement their beliefs in everyday life.

Many of the concerns and emphases in Rex's expositions on the history of ideas are evocative of the thought of Russian essayist Nicholas Berdyaev. This is not surprising when one considers both Berdyaev's preoccupation with Russian literature, Christianity, social and existentialist themes. Like Berdyaev, Rex is against middle-class self-satisfaction and prefers to depict true Christianity as involving a journey; like Berdyaev, Rex is uncomfortable with the prospect of the ends of life superseding its means; and like Berdyaev, Rex accepts Christianity's part in the release of man from the powers and demons of elemental nature and is equally fearful of the tendency of the machine age to replace the image of God with the image of the machine. Both Berdyaev and Rex compare the demotion of man to the role of a cog in a productive cycle that becomes its own end. While Rex does not appear to be solely reliant upon Berdyaev in his treatment of any of these important themes, it is clear that he is familiar with Berdyaev's thought-world and is substantially in agreement with its main emphases. Rex shares Berdyaev's accent on the truth, love and freedom inherent in Christianity.

As we shall see when we come to examine his more mature thought, Rex argues that the main reason we study history is to learn about ourselves (a quest for self-understanding or 'Selbstverständnis'). In Rex's model of historical study our own contemporary situation is the key factor in determining our view of the past. He insists that the age in which we live, our national heritage and our religious affiliations necessarily shape the way we read the past.

1086 Housed in Otago University's Library collection is an extant copy of a useful introduction to Berdyaev's thought, *The Bourgeois Mind and Other Essays*, which was donated by Professor J.N. Findlay of the philosophy department in 1942. Rex completed a B.A. and then his M.A. thesis on Kierkegaard in this small department in the 1940s. It is probable therefore that he would have been exposed to Berdyaev not just in his personal reading but also in an academic environment. See: Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Bourgeois Mind and Other Essays* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934).
Further, recognising the influence of our perspective upon our reading of the past is the first step towards a richer understanding of that past.

Rex extensively explores significant shifts in western thought during the seventeenth century. This is because he views an understanding of the effects of the development of modern science on humanity’s self-perception as critical to comprehending our human condition. In Rex’s view the events of modern history and the science that accompanied it have served to displace God and humanity. Historical study as an act of self-understanding reveals how contemporary humanity came to be in its present displaced predicament and serves for Rex to underscore the importance of the solution he envisages.

Because Rex, following the atheist philosopher Sartre, envisages each human individual as a ‘freedom’, he believes it is important for each individual to enact this freedom and thereby escape the determinism cast upon humanity by the legacy of modern science. To put it another way, Rex is convinced that human beings do not, and should not, experience the world simply in terms of cause and effect. Each individual human being is an agent in shaping their own world and should avoid thinking of themselves as a mere cog in a machine that proceeds according to ill-defined ‘natural laws’.

During the course of this chapter Rex’s important commitments - to the concept of ‘meaning in history’ and to a belief in ‘historical progress’ - are examined. A picture is built up of Rex’s Christian convictions and existentialist commitments as the key determinants that shape his view of history.

This chapter will not attempt to evaluate the particular texts Rex chose to use in his teaching but will focus primarily on his attitude towards history and the development of his own philosophy of history. Rex moves from a strong Lutheran emphasis on responsibility towards a more Bultmannian existentialist position. To be observed in the

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1087 For the interested historian, file RA008 contains an enormous amount of material relating to library acquisitions in 1962/3. Perhaps of most interest are the book lists for students’ essential reading for different years. Much of the correspondence in this file indicates that Rex wishes the library to purchase additional ‘essential’ works once he has exceeded his allocation (including some suggestions as to how this might be achieved - approaching friends of the library etc.) RA004 contains copies of Rex’s exam scripts from 1957-1963. The exam questions are presented in a factual manner. They do not focus on theory of history and could reasonably be compared to present day exam scripts.
background all the while is a concern for eschatology which Rex believes to be at the heart of the Christian faith.

Although Rex is remembered for other interests (existentialism, literature, hermeneutics, eschatology and social concerns) by those who knew him, it is as a Professor of Church History that he was appointed by the Church. Rex emphasises the centrality of the ‘history of ideas’ but delivers relatively little to his students in the way of social history and its derivatives. He has more interest in the philosophy and history of thought than in the day-to-day life of different sectors of past societies. His enthusiasm for finding meaning in history is witnessed not just in his already noted distaste for Bultmann’s ‘historical agnosticism’ but also in his various addresses on the history of ideas. The two early examples we will examine were published in 1940 in the S.C.M. Journal, The Student. As we shall see, both are well structured and contain clear messages concerning Rex’s view of Christianity and its place in history.

**Christian complicity, evil and guilt**

Published in July 1940, the first of Rex’s S.C.M. articles ‘The Guilt of Christians in the Present World Crisis’ offers a depiction of the world as the victim of “the Capitalistic distortion of the ideals of the French Revolution”. Nazism and Bolshevism, commonly identified as the main evils of the day, are in Rex’s view to be relegated to symptoms of a greater disease. For him, they are not self-sustaining evils but are a reaction against something more sinister - a capitalism which “does not look at the resources of this world from the standpoint of common welfare, but of how to get the greatest possible profit out of them”. Rex evaluates this ‘distortion’ in the following way:

Liberty has been misused for an unrestrained individualism, ruthlessly employing its power in order to pile up money. Equality has become the common misery of all the outcasts of this economic world, which degraded labourers to a mere “thing”

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1088 Rex was very much a historian of ideas. In some ways we received a very narrow view of Church History. We received a wonderful introduction to the history of Dogma, but cultural and sociopolitical history came up short. Breward corrected some of that”. Source: Interview with Peter Matheson, Knox College, Dunedin, 18 December 2000.
called "labour." Fraternity became the cynical phrase with which the capitalistic world covered its insult against humanity.\textsuperscript{1092}

In Rex's opinion, the churches share the guilt for this situation by virtue of their inactivity. In its various alliances with worldly power, the Church "has abandoned her true character".\textsuperscript{1093} For Rex, the "true character of the Church is defined by the essence of her message".\textsuperscript{1094} Like Berdyaev, Rex believes Christianity should not be judged by the example of its adherents.\textsuperscript{1095} An examination of the three features Rex deems key to the Christian proclamation reveals his understanding of the basis of the true Church.

The true Church

The first essential for Rex is the Skandalon - the 'offence' which is necessarily implied in the Christian message. Rex notes that it is presented in the New Testament first as the hidden glory of Christ which requires faith and as such is not a self-evident fact to be comprehended. Another aspect of the Skandalon is the recognition that we go on crucifying Christ in our separation from God. Scandal is implied in our carrying the cross; thus walking the path of self-renunciation. Rex posits that Christian failure to observe the Skandalon in the Christian message has led to a situation where:

Instead of preaching the offence the Church has allowed herself to be distorted into a temple of religious self-righteousness - or into an insurance company for bourgeois security with God-Father as "guarantee" of the whole humdrumming business - or into an institute for preserving customs and fashions which the respective past generations fancied.\textsuperscript{1096}

\textsuperscript{1092}Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.4.
\textsuperscript{1093}Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.4. Rex cites examples from France, Russia and Germany to support his case: "The Fusion of State and Church (or society and church, which is even worse, as the example of all "Free-Churches" shows) has become fatal for Christianity. Because the Catholic Church had entered an alliance with the Absolutism in France, she had ultimately to share the fate of the absolutistic regime in the Great Revolution of 1789. Because the Orthodox Church in Russia had degenerated into an institution, which gave the Divine endorsement to the decisions of the cruel and unscrupulous czarist regime, she had to experience the same ruthless extirpation as that regime of which she had become a part. Because the Lutheran Church in Germany has always been inclined to put aside Christ's claim on the great world of politics, economics and culture, she had nothing to set against the vigorous scheme of the Nazis to reform all these spheres, and therefore she had to abandon her existence altogether and to become a mere department of the Home Office".
\textsuperscript{1094}Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.4.
For Rex the second essential to the Christian message - as described in the New Testament - is the Church as a new creation, in which national, racial and social differences have become irrelevant. Contravening this model, Rex sees the churches as dissolving in the decisive hour in favour of national interests and prerogatives, thus making a mockery of baptism into the Church catholic. He also sees the failure to live this essential part of the Church's role as a hindrance to ecumenical imperatives.

Finally, Rex's version of the essential Christian message involves the recognition that Christians are pilgrims and strangers on earth, having their citizenship in heaven. For Rex this is essential because it is only as such that Christians apply the fact of resurrection seriously to their present life. National, social and racial allegiances are accordingly to be regarded as temporal and irrelevant. Rex signals that adopting the mentality of the bourgeois surroundings is anathema. The Church's task involves instead a focus on caring for the outcast.

The capitalistic mind as the real evil

In light of its failure to live up to the purposes Rex outlines, he believes it is time that the 'Bankruptcy of the Christian Church' be declared. In the face of a world war Rex pleads for the currency of truth with a palpable sense of urgency:

Considering the present world-crisis the time has gone when we could afford that politeness which was content with half-true statements. And it is this same world-crisis which forces us to abandon all lamentations about the wickedness of the world which does not want to accept Christ. We have ultimately reached that stage where we can no longer avoid examining our own faithlessness, our own disobedience, our own lack of love and truth. We all are involved in the guilt of this disastrous crisis, and there is not one exception! There is no doubt, that to-day we experience the Divine Judgment, and there is no doubt either that this judgment "must begin in the house of God."^1097

It is obvious from statements like this that Rex has an enviable clarity about the 1940 situation and the role of Church and society in its emergence. He is equally convinced that:

^1097Rehbein, 'Guilt'; p.5.
the first condition for any successful cure is that the Church uncompromisingly starts to reform herself and to point to the capitalistic mind as the essential evil of this world and to proclaim emphatically that "the love of money is the root of all evil." 1098

As we shall see when we examine Rex's later topical papers, he believes firmly in the power of education to initiate social reform.1099 He wishes to lead people "to think of the resources of his world as a stream of common wealth" rather than as a possession "used for personal gratification, a perpetual series of banquets and other enjoyments" 1100. In order to do justice to the sacrifice of those who currently "go into an utterly inhuman war to fight for humanity" those who are left behind are urged to "cure the real disease, while [the armed forces] are fighting the symptoms of it".1101

Central to Rex's argument is the conviction that if the perfect society were modelled, every other society would mimic it rather than trying to come up with alternatives. In Rex's view a society which was the embodiment of the ideals of the French revolution - liberty, equality and fraternity - would become a persuasive argument against all other flawed attempts at creating ideal societies (such as Nazism and Bolshevism).

Rex concludes this article with an evangelical rallying cry for apocalyptic preaching, the inspiration for which he attributes to Karl Barth.1102 In Rex's schema, such apocalyptic preaching requires a shift away from the deplorable bourgeois complacency he associates with contemporary Christianity. Preaching the "offence of the cross" rather than the "honey-sweet Jesus" is Rex's recipe for preventing "men from sacrificing their lives that money-makers may prosper and a golf and bridge-playing society, suffering from l'ennui may

1098Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.5f.
1099See especially Rex's paper on race relations examined in chapter nine of the present thesis.
1100Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.5.
1101Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.5.
1102Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.6: "To outroot the evil in its essence, the Church's preaching has to become 'apocalyptic' in its very literal sense, namely: "revealing" the unbridgeable gulf between the transcendent God and our human mind, so that there remains only this one alternative: Either that we cry to the mountains and rocks: 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,' - Or that we surrender our thoughts, our will, and our feeling unconditionally to Christ as the one medium which leads to justice, peace, and truth.

"The first to see this alternative was K. Barth. We live now in a time when we are simply forced to recognise his theology as the one legitimate interpretation of our own Christian existence, being a last desperate cry for Christ, realising that there is definitely no longer a visible Christianity."
be the profiteer of their sacrifices". In light of the Second World War, Rex calls the Church to radical repentance and prayer:

Only if we enter this repentance, [shall we] be allowed to pray to God that this present judgment may not be final, but a purifying judgment, and that he may give us another chance to try to realise a Christian life in our Western world.

Rex's vision of a repentant Church looking to provide leadership in the formulation of a better society also features strongly in the 'partner' article he wrote for the S.C.M. This follow-up article - called 'Christianity, Past and Future' - was published in *The Student* in 1940 two issues after 'The Guilt of Christians in the Present World Crisis'. Whilst the first piece focuses on sin and its natural derivative 'guilt', the second represents Rex's assessment of the more positive aspects of Christianity's influence through the ages. In the first Rex declares the 'capitalistic mind' as 'the' evil and 'the' manifestation of sin in our age. In the second he is able to summarise Christianity's historical achievement in the phrase "A GENERAL HUMANIZATION OF LIFE".

**Christianity's contribution to a general humanisation of life**

Rex's description of the general humanisation of life which he sees as Christianity's legacy reveals those aspects of society Rex regards as most important. The first part of his three part article tells the story of Christianity's influence on world history, through the early Church, to the middle ages and the reformation. Rex argues that in the early Church Christianity had an effect on civil legislation, the lot of women, and on social conditions particularly as they related to the poor and the unfortunate.

According to Rex's article the whole of society was guided by the Church in the middle ages. He views art and scholastic distinction as the heirs of this period. Yet more influential was the philosophical legacy of the Reformation which influenced the French and American constitutions. Rex argues that caring for the disadvantaged as a social

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1103 Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.6.
1104 Rehbein, 'Guilt': p.6.
1105 Rehbein, H; 'Christianity, Past and Future', in *The Student*, 7th issue, September 1940: pp.8-10. (Hereafter: 'Christianity').
1106 Rehbein (A.K.A Rex) re-emphasises this in 'Christianity': p.10.
1107 Rehbein, 'Christianity': p.9.
responsibility rather than merely as an act of charity is an idea which was emphasised in the Reformation period. Further, he sees that in this period the stress on freedom of conscience unwittingly initiated the epoch of free research. Rex also credits this period with having a hand in the development of the study of biblical languages, and consequently interest in communications with the East; literature; classical music and the fine arts. In Rex's own words: “We owe the advantage of being educated to a genuine religious attempt at raising man to full responsibility before God in all spheres of his life”.

Rex cites Berdyaev approvingly in support of the thesis that Christianity has also been influential in the sphere of the unconscious and subconscious. Rex believes that the modern emphasis on scientific thinking has released people from their attachment to superstition. Further, Rex indicates that the ‘General Conscience’ has been affected by Christianity with awareness that the poor and unfortunate should not be treated inhumanely.

In light of his many examples Rex then makes the aforementioned claim:

This is in a few words what Christianity has actually ‘done’. If we try to bring this achievement under one formula, we could say the mediation between God and Man through Jesus Christ has had as its effect A GENERAL HUMANIZATION OF LIFE - in spite of modern world wars.

Rex does go on to question this thesis by recording a number of evils perpetrated in the name of Christianity, but finally dismisses these evils as the result of ‘the stains of sin’: “if we would insist on the ‘perfection’ of our Christian achievements, we would have to abandon them all”. He asserts that perfection cannot be demanded of our efforts, especially in a non-Christian world.

Reforming the Christian mind

Part two of ‘Christianity, Past and Future’ poses the question “WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY TO DO?” Rex begins this section by stating that Christianity must preach
the Gospel forcefully and free of human distortion. It should not adopt secular guise or be purely a social gospel. Preaching the cross where "divine truth, justice and love meet one another" is important Rex contends, but it is not an invitation to talk elaborately about the 'atonement' as Rex thinks this has been done enough. "What, then, have we to do? TO LIVE THE CROSS!" suggests Rex. Putting egotistic desires to one side, Rex argues that one is to go the self-renouncing way of Christ.\textsuperscript{1112}

Rex believes the achievement of self-renunciation - the subordination of personal desires, national loyalties and class distinctions to the purposes of God - is achieved "through the reality of re-birth". He uses this biblical language advisedly and spells out exactly what he means by it. For Rex, rebirth involves a three-fold task "to develop a very definite Christian mind".\textsuperscript{1113}

First, an intellectual orientation which leads to an understanding of the Bible as the authoritative word of God over our personal life, and "Bible Study", not as a religious convention, but as a necessity on which our whole existence depends. Secondly, we must learn the art of meditating over our own life. [...] And thirdly we must put an end to the suspension of religion in our every-day life.\textsuperscript{1114}

It can be seen that Rex's understanding of the Christian life is driven by his intellect. This parallels neatly his interest in history which traces the development of thought. His concern with meditation, which we shall see again in his address on the Sunday Service,\textsuperscript{1115} forms something of a corrective, but it receives far less attention in his writing than does the study of the development of systems of rational thought. Rex's interest in everyday Christianity is rooted in his Reformed background, from which he learned that Christianity needs to be constantly reformed if it is to be relevant. This is a point he addresses in the final section of the 'Christianity, Past and Future' article.

Before proceeding to develop the theme of the necessary reform of Christianity, Rex adds a proviso to his projected program of rebirth: that "this practice must not be confined to our individual life".\textsuperscript{1116} Rex will not permit the use of a 'programme', nor will he accept

\textsuperscript{1112}Rehbein, 'Christianity': p.9.
\textsuperscript{1113}Rehbein, 'Christianity': p.9.
\textsuperscript{1114}Rehbein, 'Christianity': p.9f.
\textsuperscript{1115}See chapter nine of the present thesis.
\textsuperscript{1116}Rehbein, 'Christianity': p.10.
that the corporatisation of this would be successful, since the Kingdom of God cannot be erected by Christianity here on earth.\textsuperscript{117}

Reflecting his later more cautious style, Rex is able to be more definite about that which Christianity stands against. Thus he repeats the finding of his first article: Christianity is opposed to the evil of capitalism. According to Rex Christianity involves constantly swimming against the current.\textsuperscript{118} On a more positive note, Christianity, for Rex, has the duty of extending its influence to the whole of life:

That the world may live in harmony, we must protest against its natural ways of solution, pointing to the supernatural and transcendent basis on which it must be based in order to achieve results.\textsuperscript{119}

Rex’s interest in the transcendent is again alluded to - here as the basis for harmony - but it is always an elusive quality in his work and not something he is prepared to pin down. Here too, there is a sense of paradox: Rex favours in his record of history those Christian thinkers who have valued intellectual rigour (from a twentieth century perspective) above sentimental attachment to existing forms of thought - a point which seems to be at odds with his stance on the transcendent. Rex’s theological heroes are all reformers of one sort or another so it comes as no surprise that the final part of this, the second of Rex’s early articles on Christianity, calls, like the first, for significant change in the Church.

\textbf{An attack on ‘mannerism’}

Writing in 1940, Rex considers church rituals to be utterly meaningless. He describes a situation which sees church members partaking in different denominational strains of traditions which are no longer appropriate; it adopts the form of its past but betrays misunderstanding of its heritage in the content that fills that form. Rex suggests that Christianity has become “self-sufficient and self-interested, avoiding every useful application”,\textsuperscript{1120} and describes contemporary Christian life as nothing more than ‘religious mannerism’:

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\textsuperscript{117}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10.
\textsuperscript{118}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10.
\textsuperscript{119}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10.
\textsuperscript{1120}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10.
Our whole Church-going is nothing but virtuosity: we know everything; we stand, we sit, we sing, we pray, we “listen,” we hand the collection-plates round with the same virtuosity as we handle the individual or the common-cup. We know everything - except what it means and why all this is still there.\textsuperscript{1121}

Rex is convinced that the current situation as he sees it continues to exist because Christians have failed to engage their twentieth century intellects with religious truth.\textsuperscript{1122} The convincing new synthesis Rex has in mind appears to manifest itself organically, “[j]ust as the Gothic man of the Middle Ages was a perfect synthesis of Christianity and creative form-will of the young Germanic peoples”.\textsuperscript{1123} Scant on detail, Rex’s proposed new synthesis is depicted as a result one might reasonably anticipate from the attempt to re-think the ‘Divine truth’ with the twentieth-century mind. Rex hopes it would fund the imagination of liturgists, artists, writers and architects, manifesting itself also in the individual Christian life.

These early examples of Rex’s overview of western history emphasise Christian responsibility in the world. A corresponding focus can be noted in the material Rex wrote around the time of his M.A. on Kierkegaard, whose thought emphasises humanity’s relationship of responsibility before God.

**Christianity, history and the centrality of the resurrection**

Rex’s 1948 paper, ‘Christianity and History,’ was delivered one year after his M.A. thesis was submitted and one year before his inaugural lecture at Knox Theological Hall in Dunedin. All three of these documents contain critical evaluations of the thought of Hegel and Kierkegaard, but this lecture is a significant landmark in Rex’s historical thought for two main reasons: first because it links the general history of thought with the specific philosophical work Rex was engaged with at the time, and second because, as we shall see, it contains a different point of view than that which he would later adopt. On some points, however, Rex was as sure as ever. Although he would use different words over the course of his lifetime, his belief in the centrality of Resurrection faith to the Christian religion would remain. Thus in ‘Christianity and History’ Rex argues:

\textsuperscript{1121}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10.
\textsuperscript{1122}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10: “And the reason for this is that we have not bothered to rethink the Divine truth with our own XXth century mind, and that we have not tried to re-express the same truth in our XXth century form - and that we have altogether abandoned thinking and forming, leaving all this to some theologians and “liturgical” movements”.
\textsuperscript{1123}Rehbein, ‘Christianity’: p.10.
At the core of the Christian religion we neither find a set of 'eternal verities' nor a code of divine commandments, but an historical event: the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. That is, the heart of our religion touches the time-line; in other words, it is part of the telic kingdom. Or, to express it still differently, the essence of Christianity is eschatology.1124

Rex notes dualisms in western thought and how that part of the dualistic understanding which relates to the 'Cyclic' kingdom has traditionally been considered evil while that associated with the 'Telic' kingdom has been considered good.1125 Carl Jung’s attempt at a balance between Anima and Animus is noted, and attempts at reversal by writer D.H. Lawrence and philosopher Ludwig Klages are criticised as having emphases which “run right counter to our Christian religion”.1126 Rex argues that Christianity, in its origins, was hostile to the cyclic kingdom and that, “there is a distinct difference between the Christian conception of the telic kingdom and the Greek conception of it in that the former is intrinsically bound up with the time-line while the latter ignores it”.1127

Rex’s argument that Christianity is essentially an historical religion moves from the scriptural background through to a discussion of the Catholic Church. His section on the Old Testament presents a case for placing more emphasis on historical development rather than on its dealings with moral issues. Focusing too much on the latter, in Rex’s view, leads to a pendulum-like view of history which may introduce “the popular fallacy that history repeats itself”.1128 Rex’s treatment of the New Testament material is noteworthy for its

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1124RA049, Helmut H. Rex, ‘Christianity and History’, lecture to retreat group, 1948: p.2. (hereafter: ‘Christianity and History’).
1125RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.1. Rex lists: body and soul; flesh and spirit; eros and agape; soul and mind; Anima and Animus; and, feminine and masculine.
Rex states his assumptions at the beginning of the lecture: “The following discussion is based on the assumption that man is essentially a citizen of two kingdoms. On the one hand, he is caught up in the movement of birth, copulation, and death. This movement is cyclic; it does not lead anywhere; after it has passed through a fixed rhythmic change it returns to the beginning from which it started. “Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return”: this cycle will be man’s destiny “while the earth remaineth” and “seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and night and day” will alternate in their own cyclic movements. The essence of this kingdom is reproduction. On the other hand, man is caught up in a movement which is intrinsically bound up with the reality of time. Man is carried along on the time-line; and the essence of time is that it moves on, inevitably, towards an end, a ‘telos’.”
1126RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.2.
1127RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.2.
1128RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.3.
positive regard for the work of Oscar Cullmann whose thought Rex would later subject to ridicule.\footnote{RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.7 states: "most valuable contributions in this field [eschatology] have been made by O. Cullmann at Basle. In his little book, 'Le retour du Christ' (1945), Mr. Cullmann has been most emphatic that the nature of the Christian religion is eschatological, and that an eschatology to which the time-line is essential. Eschatology, so he demands, is not a hope in something above as contrary to something down here, but a hope in something that will be then as contrary to what is now. [...]". Rex would later become highly critical of the time-line proposed by Cullmann. The former's criticisms of Cullmann are dealt with in chapter six and seven of the present thesis.}

**A teleological philosophy of history**

According to Rex a number of reasons exist why "an imposing philosophy of history as an explication of the essence of our religion" was not developed in the middle ages.\footnote{RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.11: "The following were some of the reasons: (1) the dark ages, which followed Augustine's death, hardly provided the intellectual climate for such an undertaking; (2) as a consequence of the trinitarian and the christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries, the church had accepted doctrinal formulations that were least suited to express the historical element in Christian religion (in face of this fact, a production like the 'Heliand' had no chance of reforming or 'Germanising' the Christology of the church); (3) the continued prestige of Greek philosophy first in the form of Neoplatonism and then in Aristotelianism which, in scholasticism, was responsible for the prevalent interest in eternal verities, and, in mysticism; for a complete denial of the divine significance of the time-line. Eschatology, under these circumstances, became the exclusive concern of obscure sects who had no chance of survival in the face of the domination of the medieval church (e.g. Joachim of Fiore)".}

Rex examines the later evolution of such theory in the central passage of his lecture, framed as a separate chapter and entitled "Hegel's Philosophical Interpretation of History". In the opening section of that chapter Rex contends that while historical awareness was reawakened with the reformers and their immanent eschatologies, the beginning of the modern age did not produce any literary reflection which might count as a philosophy of history. Rex's distinction between historical scientists "concerned exclusively with 'historical data'" and the philosophers of history who "bring the question of meaning to that data" is important to this argument:

Doubtless, the eighteenth century had its prominent writers of history. But the question is, did it betray any awareness of history in the defined sense? That is to say, did it reflect its own historical contribution philosophically interpreting it as part of a universal meaning process - a contribution which was, in fact, enormous [...]? This question has to be answered in the negative; and the reason for this is as follows. It has been said that times of eschatological hope are times of strain and stress when people begin to look into the future for some relief and start to inquire
into the meaning of their destiny. I believe, that this generalisation answers pretty well to the actual historical position.\textsuperscript{1132}

Rex argues that, as a settled period, the eighteenth century had no need for deep probing. Only with Hegel did a clear philosophy of history arise. Rex describes in detail Hegel's triadic system and concludes that his survey "reveals that Hegel's dialectic of history depends upon selection. By no means the whole of history is considered, but only what Hegel deems relevant to the historical process".\textsuperscript{1133} Rex is clear that Hegel omits elements of history not by accident but by design. In Rex's opinion this is not a sufficient philosophy of history:

We should have thought that a philosopher of history would aim at universality so far [as] the scope of his work is concerned; and further, instead of ignoring the vast number of contingent factors, he should have been eager to leave out not one of them. For is not history essentially determined by contingency, and is not the very task of any philosopher of history to wrestle with this contingency in order to make it yield a meaning that does not defy continuity?\textsuperscript{1134}

Suspecting that Hegel does not have an underlying concern for the individual data of the historical fact, Rex is critical of the \textit{a priori} Hegel introduces. Rex describes the latter's work as "a history already complete, which needs only to be clothed in names and dates".\textsuperscript{1135} Rex presents an outline of Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel which will be familiar to the

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1132}RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.13.
\item \textsuperscript{1133}RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.18.
\item \textsuperscript{1134}RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.18.
\item \textsuperscript{1135}RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.19. On page 21 Rex finishes his chapter about Hegel with a series of rhetorical questions arising from his survey of Hegel's thought that serve to underscore this criticism: "The following suggest themselves in face of Hegel's execution of a philosophy of history: (1) Does the exclusion of whole sections of the human race from the purview of history not overthrow Hegel's monism which, after all, is an essential part of his philosophy of history? (2) Does not the remark that the civilisations of Peru and Mexico were 'altogether natural' and that they collapsed at the advent of the Spirit, introduce a dualism that too defeats Hegel's dualism? (3) Does not the contention that history begins only with the historians and that we must consequently distinguish between prehistory and history introduce a subjective element that overthrows the claim of 'objectivity'? If, further, the real is the rational and if yet not the whole of 'reality' is rational, where does the irrational come from? (4) Is Hegel's distinction between essential and non-essential factors in history really different from the predisposition of the historiographers? Or, is not the only difference that Hegel uses one analogy (taken from the field of logic) and the historiographers other analogies taken from different fields? (5) Finally, is Hegel's philosophy of history, then, purely speculative thought or has it any bearing on existence externally to the mind of the individual thinker?" Rex's critique of Hegel's model of history is outlined in further detail in chapter three of the present thesis.
\end{itemize}
reader of earlier chapters of the present thesis. 1136 Rex then poses the question central to his paper on ‘Christianity and History’:

Is, then, the opposition between thought and existence as irresolvable as Kierkegaard thought it was, or does there remain some ground for believing that Hegel was right - at least in principle - when he maintained that the rational is the real, in other words: that history is a reasonable process? 1137

In the conflict between Kierkegaard and Hegel Rex observes “two versions of the telic kingdom in conflict with one another: the Greek and the Hebraic”. 1138 In Rex’s opinion, Kierkegaard, while not wholly Greek in outlook, discovered the spirit in eternal verities. Hegel, by contrast, found the movement of the spirit in the time-line. Thus, Rex asserts: “Hegel viewed the telic kingdom truly eschatologically”. 1139 Both in Rex’s view were guilty of a “one-sided emphasis on this telic kingdom in contrast to the cyclic kingdom”. 1140

The possibility of meaning in history

Rex asks whether the philosophy of history might be regarded as no more than a speculative undertaking. His question centres on the introduction of purely subjective factors into any attempt at an objective reading of history and whether this rules out any attempt at discovering meaning in history. Further, Rex asks rhetorically, “can subjective reason ever penetrate the bounds of its own subjectivity and arrive at statements that have objective validity”? 1141 Rex believes that one’s answer to this question will depend on one’s general epistemological point of view vis-a-vis ‘realism’ and ‘idealism’. Rex’s subsequent examination of the nature of historical data and the sense in which history can be regarded as a science is the kernel of a discussion we shall evaluate in detail below when we come to the introductory lecture on Church history that Rex delivered ten years later.

The end of Rex’s investigation into these epistemological matters is punctuated by the observation that despite many attempts the ‘realist’ interpretation of sense-perception

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1136 Rex forwards Kierkegaard’s criticisms of Hegel in a manner entirely consistent with elements of his M.A. thesis.
1138 RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.29.
1139 RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.30.
1140 RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.30.
1141 RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.30.
has never been effectively disproved. Ultimately Rex believes “that ‘realism’ is right in the interpretation of perception”. His final conclusions in this 1948 lecture are signaly relevant in that they reflect the underlying concerns and tensions that would sustain his writing in the fields of history, eschatology and existentialism in the years that followed. Rex concludes:

(I) Human existence partakes in two kingdoms, the telic and the cyclic. The question of their relationship to one another remains problematic though it is certain that the Christian religion gives pre-eminence to the telic kingdom, and that here the Telos is conceived not in terms of eternal verities, but as intimately bound up with the time-line for its fulfilment.

(II) Hegelianism is so far the most courageous attempt to trace the movement of the spirit along the time-line though the detailed execution of the plan remains ultimately unsatisfactory.

(III) In spite of the trenchant criticism which Kierkegaard offered of Hegelianism, as regards fundamentals he is further removed from Christian eschatology than Hegel.

(IV) In our own time, we witness the presence of the somewhat unorthodox offspring of both Hegelianism and Kierkegaard's ideas: the former, in the form of Communism which is essentially eschatological, and the latter, in Existentialism which shares with Kierkegaard his contempt of 'thought' over against the immediate experience of 'existence'.

These concluding comments of Rex's are particularly noteworthy for their uncharacteristically high estimation of Hegel's contribution and their description of existentialism as "the somewhat unorthodox offspring" of Kierkegaard's ideas. Rex never ceases to acknowledge the valour of Hegel's attempt, but, as we shall see, he certainly does come to regard existentialism as significantly more than an "unorthodox offspring". In fact, for Rex, existentialist interests later become the mark of a correct approach to matters historical.

Rex is also clear that the study of history is in and of itself beneficial to the pilgrim on the journey to self-knowledge. His first Church history lecture each year was devoted to the philosophy of history. The occasion of Rex's first lecture is well remembered in its

\[1142\text{RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.32.}\]
\[1143\text{RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.31.}\]
\[1144\text{RA049, Rex, 'Christianity and History': p.32.}\]
various editions by his students over many years. Rex used it as an occasion to ask questions pertaining to the philosophy of history that - on available evidence - appear unlikely to have been posed in any specialist history courses in New Zealand universities in the 1940s and 1950s. It is to the 1958 version of this lecture that we now turn our attention.

**Introducing students to history as an act of self-knowledge**

The 1958 edition of Rex’s ‘first’ Church history lecture, like others before it, begins with frequently given reasons for the study of history: simple curiosity about other people’s lives in the past; the search for lessons to apply to the present; an attempt to find out what actually happened in historical events, and; the search for a comprehensive philosophy of history like that of Hegel and Marx. Although all of these “uses of history can be justified at least in their motives if not in their results”, Rex argues from the very outset of his lecture that they do not touch on our ‘primary’ reason for concerning ourselves with the past:

> For we study history first and foremost in order to know ourselves. The study of history is primarily an act of self-knowledge: It is its motive and strictly speaking also its subject matter.

Rex believes that no-one would be interested enough to study history if it did not have some bearing on the present, or, more specifically, “if it did not include some piece of information that concerns us personally”. Rex is also convinced that self-knowledge is not only the motive but also the subject matter of history. In making this distinction he draws attention to the way in which he sees the historian’s role differing to that of the natural scientist: “The natural scientist is able to observe the object of his knowledge as distinct from himself as observing object”. This clear distinction between subject and object means for Rex that another scientist could take the place of the first one with no

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1145 Both Lloyd Geering and Albert Moore vividly recall the impact of this lecture on them when they were first year students at Knox Theological Hall. Source: Interview with Albert Moore, 9 June 2000, and, interview with Lloyd Geering, 31 May 2002.

1146 RA068, Rex, ‘Introduction to Church History: The Early Church’, annotated typescript, 1958: p.1. (Hereafter referred to as ‘Church History’)

1147 RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.1.

1148 RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.1.

1149 RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.2. Rex alludes in the same paragraph to “the whole advance in modern science since the 17th century” which, as we shall see further, is one of his most frequently discussed historical themes.
significant alteration in the result of the research. Rex argues that the same cannot be said of the historian:

In his case, the rigid distinction between subject and object simply does not apply. The two are, in fact, inseparably one. The historian gives of his own person to the object of his study. He cannot help it for [the] focus and perspective which bring the object into view are his own (The alternative is that the object does not come into view at all: that he sees nothing) and, on the other hand, the object 'engages' him: involves him existentially, giving of itself to the observing object.\(^{1150}\)

Making a distinction between chronological knowledge and historical knowledge,\(^{1151}\) Rex gives four reasons why the historian’s work must be regarded as subjective.\(^{1152}\) Firstly, one’s own associations and involvements shape the reading of the past. The perspective one adopts is determined by one’s own basic commitments. Secondly, the material the historian is working with is always fragmentary and the survival of these fragments is often determined to a large extent by chance. From these fragments history is inferred and, thirdly, where inference is not easily made, guessing and hypothesising are sometimes called for. The fourth reason the historian’s task must be regarded as subjective involves the actual construction of the historian’s account. The material must be assembled according to quite deliberate decisions made by the historian. This involves value judgments,\(^{1153}\) with the result that some matters are stressed and others are left in the background.

Rex rejects the suggestion by ‘numerous’ historians “who have claimed in the past and who continue to claim in the present that the ‘objectivity’ of historical knowledge is essentially not different from that of scientific knowledge”.\(^{1154}\) The predilection among these historians for tracing cause and effect arises, in Rex’s view, as a result of their willingness to insist on the separation of subject and object. If cause and effect can be spoken about in history, says Rex, it cannot be spoken about in the same way as one speaks about cause and effect in the sciences:

\(^{1150}\)RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.2.
\(^{1151}\)Rex acknowledges that the subjective nature of interpretation applies to a lesser extent to simple chronology.
\(^{1152}\)RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.3.
\(^{1153}\)RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.3: “Judgments which depend on his [the historian’s] own standards of value, on his own interests, on his own ability or lack of it to recognise what is important and what not.”
\(^{1154}\)RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.3f. Rex does not name any of the ‘numerous’ historians of whom he speaks.
The laws of cause and effect can be verified only by experiment and that is precisely
a method of verification which is not open to the historian since his material is of
necessity unique and not at his disposal for experimentation.\textsuperscript{1155}

Rex’s reliance on Sartrean anthropology makes for him the suggestion that subject
and object can be separated in the study of history even more absurd since “the most
important factor in history is after all man and man is - to quote Sartre - a freedom”.\textsuperscript{1156}
Although Rex acknowledges that it is possible to view a human as an object in the physical
universe, able to be treated in the same way as any other object, he believes that “such a view
will always disregard what is most characteristic of his condition as man”,\textsuperscript{1157} that is, his
freedom. In line with Sartre’s thought Rex explains that “this freedom interferes with all the
laws of cause and effect”.\textsuperscript{1158} Further:

not all of man’s motives are known even to himself - let alone others, which adds to
making the identification of ‘causes’ a very hazardous business indeed. And what
applies to the ‘causes’ in history is equally true of the ‘effects’. Was the cultural
backwardness of Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries an outcome of the Thirty
Years War or not? And if so, what precisely in the Thirty Years War contributed to
it? The decimation of the German population or the strengthened position of the
hundreds and thousands of little princes, counts and barons whose existence made
a cultural metropolis like London or Paris impossible? How can that question ever
be answered with the finality of the scientist? Is it not obvious that it is simply
nonsense to claim an independence of subject and object in a case like this?\textsuperscript{1159}

In his reading of history Rex situates himself alongside R.G. Collingwood, Bultmann
and Gogarten, all of whom “strongly denounc[e] the habit of distinguishing subject and
object in historical knowledge after the manner of the natural scientist”.\textsuperscript{1160}

\textbf{History and Selbstverständnis}

Rex introduces the concept of \textit{Selbstverständnis} as a “kind of party badge for the
school of Bultmann” and describes it as “a manner of viewing one’s condition in existential

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\textsuperscript{1155}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.4. See also RA049, Rex, ‘Christianity and History’: p.30.
\textsuperscript{1156}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.4.
\textsuperscript{1157}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.5.
\textsuperscript{1158}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.5.
\textsuperscript{1159}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.5.
\textsuperscript{1160}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.6. Rex cites from R.G. Collingwood’s \textit{The Idea of History} (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 1946); and references Rudolf Bultmann’s \textit{History and Eschatology} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh
involvement, implying a decision that gives our life its fundamental direction".\textsuperscript{1161} It is in his description of Bultmann's philosophical position that Rex's own reliance upon it comes into view. Rex's description of Bultmann strongly resembles his own opening statement in his 'Introduction to Church History' lecture:

For Bultmann, the documents of the past are of interest only in so far as they are expressions of a Selbstverständnis in which we can recognise an attempt of coming to terms with our own condition.\textsuperscript{1162}

In a manner similar to Bultmann, and also Heidegger, Rex regards the human person as an historical being existing in continuous encounter with his or her past. Rex's reliance on the thought of Bultmann and Heidegger is made clear in his explanation of Selbstverständnis:\textsuperscript{1163} “[i]t is a manner of viewing one's condition in existential involvement, implying a decision that gives our life its fundamental direction”.\textsuperscript{1164} The idea of Selbstverständnis as the goal of historical study plays a pivotal role in Rex's understanding of the nature of human freedom and the difference between authentic and inauthentic responses to the human condition.\textsuperscript{1165} Although he again distances himself from Bultmann's 'historical agnosticism',\textsuperscript{1166} Rex outlines the idea of authentic and inauthentic encounter with

\textsuperscript{1161}RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.6.
\textsuperscript{1162}RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.7.
\textsuperscript{1163}Rex's understanding of Selbstverständnis is examined in chapter six of the present thesis. It forms the basis of his eschatology, hermeneutics and history.
\textsuperscript{1164}RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.7.
\textsuperscript{1165}RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.7: "In fact Heidegger has furnished Bultmann with his concept of history. For Heidegger, man is essentially an historical being. That is to say, he exists in a continuous encounter with his past. A past which is by no means a dead end trailing behind him, but, on the contrary, that which is always ahead of him and with which he must come to terms if he wishes to realise his human condition in the full sense of what it means to be human. This encounter with his own past and the necessity of choice it implies is what Heidegger calls the 'historical'. It is part of the fundamental ontological structure of man and distinguishes him from the animals who simply are what they are, falling into the ready-made patterns of behaviour of their species. Of course this is how the majority of men behave. Heidegger calls this the 'un-authentic' [sic] manner of existence; Sartre calls people who fall into this pattern of behaviour 'salauds' = rotters, because they run away from their human condition. Heidegger insists that he does not wish to pass any value-judgment on those who follow the rule of 'das Man', but the mere fact that he calls the one manner of existence 'authentic' and the other 'un-authentic' implies, I should think, a value judgment". The handwritten marginal notes on Rex's lecture script offer supporting texts and references from Bultmann's work. Rex's appropriation of Heidegger and Bultmann's view of history is discussed further in chapter seven of the present thesis.
\textsuperscript{1166}RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.7: "I believe that Bultmann is quite justified in [his] attitude to both Historicism and Philosophy (or Theology) of History though I believe that he is over-stepping his criticism when he categorically denies that what we call universal history has any meaning whatsoever. We do not know. That is all we can say." For further discussion of Rex's view on Bultmann's 'historical agnosticism' see chapters one and seven of the present thesis.
the past because he believes it supports his view that "the only fruitful occupation with the past is that of Existentialists like Bultmann and Heidegger".  

Rex agrees with Bultmann's claim that it is "because of the presence of the 'historical' in this [Heidegger's] primary sense in man that there is such a thing as history in the generally accepted sense", but believes that Bultmann's emphasis on the confrontation with the kerygma in the present does not do sufficient justice to Heidegger's emphasis on the individual's continual encounter with his own past.

**Interacting with our past for the sake of Selbstverständnis**

The title of the second section - and therefore presumably the second lecture - of Rex's lecture notes offers a clear indication of its content. It signals an attempt to apply, to the specific historical situation, the idea of man as essentially an historical being. The opening section is simply entitled 'Why Study History?', the second bearing the more comprehensive title:

**THE FACT THAT WE ARE N.Z. PRESBYTERIANS OF THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY IS ALWAYS AHEAD OF US. IT IS THE 'PAST' WE MUST COME TO TERMS WITH AS IT CONFRONTS US ALWAYS ANEW. IT FURNISHES THE FOCUS AND PERSPECTIVE THROUGH WHICH WE MAKE THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OUR OWN.**

Rex connects the size of one's world and the richness of one's personality. Far from being value-neutral, Rex's model of history assesses the personalities of those involved in historical research according to their desire and ability to come to terms with history:

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1167 RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.7.
1168 RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.8. Rex quotes from Bultmann in a marginal note: "But although the history of the nation and the world had lost interest for Paul, he brings to light another phenomenon, the historicity of man, the true historical life of the human being, the history which every one experiences for himself and by which he gains his real essence". Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1957) p.43.
1169 RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.8. Presumably Rex acknowledged Bultmann's own recognition that a problem existed in this matter since he offers the following marginal note sourced from Bultmann: Man "comes into every new situation as the man he has become through his previous decisions. The question is whether his new decisions are determined by his former decisions. If he is to be really free in his decisions then he must also be free from his former decisions, in other words from himself as he has become in his past". Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1957) p.44.
1170 RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.8f. N.B. Rex's original text was in capital letters and was also underlined.
We want to know about the past just as much as is necessary to understand ourselves. Of course, there are arid personalities and there are rich personalities. The arid person's world is small and reduced; it extends neither far into the past nor does it reach out far afield in the present; the rich person does extend himself in both ways. Consequently his world is big. **Man and his world are inseparably one: to know him you must know his world.**  

Rex believes that the amount of material included in an historical study considered as an act of *Selbstverständnis* will relate directly to the richness of the personality involved. The nature of the material studied is determined by *a priori* commitments. Accordingly, when Rex proposes to teach his course at a level designed to facilitate a reasonably high level of *Selbstverständnis* in his students, he is assuming in them a reasonably rich personality. Consistent with his high expectations of those involved in church leadership,  

Rex considers it proper to focus not on the amount of material that would facilitate *Selbstverständnis* in a 'representative' N.Z. Presbyterian but rather in "an ideal [...] reasonably attainable at least among the leaders of the Church".

### 'Our interests' shaped by time, location and faith

There are three factors Rex outlines as important in determining the nature of the material to be studied in an historical endeavour considered as an act of *Selbstverständnis*. Not only are they indicative of his approach to history, they might also be considered as key determinants for an attempt to construct a fuller understanding of the term 'our interests' which is basic to Rex's theological approach.

The first factor Rex describes is the age in which we live. For him it is the twentieth century, a century that has built on various scholastic advances that have occurred since the seventeenth century.  

The second is our national heritage. Rex describes this for his students in the following way:

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1171RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.9.
1172Rex admonishes church leaders who engage in 'sloppy thinking'. This is witnessed to in his 1940 attack on 'religious mannerism' in *The Student* as discussed above and in his lecture on the 'Sunday Service' which will be examined in the following chapter.
1173RAQ68, Rex, 'Church History': p.9.
1174In this instance Rex uses a negative example (the fundamentalist) to describe the results of not accepting one's fate as a member of the present age. Rex's understanding of the implications of the advances in thought in the seventeenth century is discussed in greater detail later in the present chapter.
We are New Zealanders. That is to say, in the case of the pakeha, we are people of a western heritage who happen to live in the Far East. We share our cultural tradition with Western Europe (more particularly Britain) and the Americas (more particularly Canada and the USA) and with all those parts of the world to which western man has extended his rule and where he has left his mark. At the same time, we live in Australasia at a period in history when the Asian peoples are coming of age and begin[ning] to arrange their destiny according to their own ideas and ideals. For Rex the involvement in both East and West is an important determinant in the selection of historical material. As our national commitments determine our field of historical interest, so too do our religious commitments. Christianity and Presbyterianism, in particular, affect Rex’s selection of material for historical study as an act of Selbstverständnis. Significantly - in a period of New Zealand Church history characterised more often than not by growth - Rex situates his Presbyterian audience in a non-Christian environment:

We happen to live in a world in which man has learned to manage without God extremely well - or so at least many of our contemporaries would say. This secularism is either intolerant (militant rationalism) or tolerant-neutral (indifferentism [sic]). Outside New Zealand, the non-Christian environment is either Asian in culture and religion (inc. the Mohammedan import to Asia) or Communist. Communism is, of course, not confined to Asia. It is today all over the world the main alternative to the Christian Faith apart from an unreflective materialism which is characteristic of no age in particular.

This realism in Rex’s thought is all the more pertinent for the contemporary reader who can identify a fortress mentality now even more deeply embedded in sections of today’s Church. This awareness of an all-pervasive secularism is absent in many theological texts published before the death of God theology in the 1960s and is a witness to Rex’s keen judgment of cultural trends. Rex’s clear and realistic acknowledgment of the secular situation around him also underpins his ‘situational’ writings as we shall see.

The hermeneutic circle and history

Thus, for Rex it is our a priori commitments - our current situation - which determine the nature of the subject matter of any historical study which might be considered an act of Selbstverständnis. Correspondingly ‘our interests’, as they pertain to Rex’s theological model,
are determined by our historical situation. In the case of Rex's students this historical situation is described firstly in terms of the age they live in, secondly in terms of their nation's heritage and geographic location, and, thirdly in terms of their religious affiliation and the heritage of that organisation.

Rex observes a tension between the traditional way in which history is taught - from past to present, and the way in which our interests shape our reading of history - from present to past:

it would be [...] wrong to think we gain a more adequate view of the past by worming our way back into ever remoter centuries, or, to change the metaphor, by unrolling the past like a carpet, beginning with the end that lies open at our feet, moving with it until we have reached the opposite end of our original position. It is a notorious fact that it is far more difficult to write the history of the immediate past which we still remember as the present of not so long ago than of a period which we can view with some detachment. Nor can it be, for instance, convincingly argued that we understand the Reformation better coming from the Age of Enlightenment than proceeding toward it from the Middle Ages [...] On the other hand, we cannot help looking at it also from the angle of the 18th century (and all other subsequent centuries for that matter). If we disregard them in our picture of the Reformation that picture would remain a mere curiosity which in no way could existentially involve us and become part of ourselves.¹¹⁷⁸

Rex's conviction is that history as an act of Selbstverständnis involves both movement from past to present and from present to past. Here Rex's view of history parallels his view of hermeneutics. Both are viewed as quests for Selbstverständnis and both involve a movement from the parts to the whole and back again. In the case of history he notes that: "[i]n a sense, the two movements occur at one and the same time even if the one should be more in the foreground of our consciousness than the other".¹¹⁷⁹ Rex's penchant for phenomenology leads him to comment on the metanarrative upon which any reading of history is based, whether from past to present or vice versa:

In both cases there is a suggestion of cause and effect that is in itself problematic in its application to the subject of history; and in both cases it is implied that history has a meaning which comes to view as we watch the progress of events, no matter whether we place ourselves at the beginning of history or at its end.¹¹⁸⁰

¹¹⁷⁸RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.12f.
¹¹⁷⁹RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.13.
¹¹⁸⁰RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.13.
A qualified defence of progress

Rex does wish to offer "a qualified defence of progress". Having cited David Hume's criticism of the Deistic account of the history of religion, Rex comments that it "was a defence of the idea of progress over against the idea of degeneration" and further that "[g]enerally speaking, this defence appears to be justified by the events". This statement is important because it is the clearest one Rex makes on this matter. While existentialism appears to adumbrate the postmodern in its focus on individual truth, it is clear that within an existentialist framework Rex is able to adhere to a more characteristically modern belief in progress in history. It is important to keep in mind that Rex does not here argue for a 'natural theology' or a type of Heilsgeschichte. A tension is maintained in Rex's historical thought between progress in history and the Lutheran emphasis on the ultimate inadequacy of all human activity without the redemptive action of God.

Elsewhere, as we shall see, Rex appears to assume a belief in historical progress, but nowhere is it made more explicit than in his 'Introduction to Church History' where he is prepared to claim that:

Whatever reverses the history of mankind shows (and they are numerous) the overall picture shows a progress not only in technology and knowledge but also in civilisation and culture, including an advance in humanity and civility.

Factors such as a general improvement in standard of living, a reduction in superstition and a general improvement in manners lead Rex to believe that a cautious case

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1183 The closing paragraph of RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution', will be examined later in the present chapter as an example of Rex's thought which, while not explicitly stating it is so, appears to hint at a belief in progress.
1184 RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.14. Rex continues: "There is a kind of historical snob who is [forever] lamenting the deterioration of manners and of the forms of civility and the art of living. Such a man usually selects a few instances from the privileged [social] elite of the past and compares them with the average standard of civility in the present. I too know that my bungalow does not compare with the palace of the Duke of Savoy in Vienna, but I also know that it is incomparably superior to what people of my class lived in around the year 1700; and my street is considerably cleaner than the Duke of Savoy's. Again, today I can count in almost any tradesman on a degree of civility that would have been truly remarkable in a Victorian gentleman. And though there are still a great many superstitious people in the world our age as such is no longer superstitious. In so far as this element of progress is quite real in the history of mankind (including the history of the church) we view the past from a 'superior' point of view".
for progress can be made. He finds "no reason why we should dispute this from a false sense of humility", but he warns against smugness:

On the other hand, it does not automatically imply that we are better men than the men of the past - or better Christians. Man certainly progresses more slowly in morals and in his humanity than in any of the other spheres of his activity.

Rex believes every century has made its contribution to progress in history. Rex corrects a prejudice common in his time by suggesting that even the medieval period contributed a great deal towards 'progress' as it might be understood by a modern New Zealand Presbyterian. Indeed, Rex is careful to state that those centuries closest in proximity to our own are not necessarily to be regarded as the greatest contributors:

In the case of the Church, the greatest 'contribution' so to speak was made right at the beginning. Even if we should leave the person of Jesus out of consideration it would still be true that the apostle Paul has been surpassed by no one in his contribution to the Christian Faith. However great men like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin were, they were all but his commentators. On the other hand, none of the contributions are 'timeless'; that is why they all need re-interpreting so as to become our own (per contra, eternal verities need not interpreting; they need only be recognised).

Rex develops his argument that each century has contributed something to the advance in history by referring to the various contributions that shape a current Presbyterian student's view of Church history (the original audience of Rex's 'Introduction to Church History'). It is natural, in Rex's view, for modern Christians to want to compare their own faith with that of those described in the scriptures. Yet Rex emphasises that early Church history is viewed through modern eyes:

[...] it is interpreted by us to become our own. As Presbyterians our Faith is vitally determined by the work of the 16th century reformers and again their work is viewed in the light of what knowledge we of the 20th century have attained. It is the only way of making their work our own.
For Rex the study of history appears to consist in a never-ending process of checking and cross-checking. “[T]he fund of knowledge that has become our destiny” - the advances in scientific knowledge since the seventeenth century - is in Rex’s estimation vital to the effective interpretation of history for today, but “that standard is by no means absolute and it is being checked by comparing it with preceding centuries, in particular the Reformation and the first century”. Rex proffers as an illustration the checking of liberal theology following the First World War. He regards the interest in eschatology in his own time as a direct result of this “renewed interest in the Bible”.

**New interpretations for new generations**

The final section of Rex’s ‘Introduction to Church History’ highlights the role interpretation plays in the study of history when viewed as an act of Selbstverständnis. Rex depicts the study of history as man’s attempt to study himself at a distance, as the relevant heading in his lecture notes suggests:

Selbstverständnis presupposes a certain detachment: you can view yourself only from a certain distance. Such an attitude implies an element of humour and tolerance without which our humanity would not be complete. The study of history is therefore also in this sense a most human activity.

Calling to mind the example of the Medes and Persians, Rex finds a redeeming effect simply in the recognition that what were once taken to be unchangeable laws have proven to be themselves the product of change. Yet the proviso he attaches to this redeeming effect reveals the same attitude of concern at the possibility of a world without absolute standards that is revealed in his writings on Sartre.

This recognition can of course be made a fetish of; in that case, the result will be an historical relativism where everything becomes a matter of passing customs and...
conventions without any absolute standards left to judge them. But [as] open as
history is to this abuse it need not necessarily fall a victim of it. Responsibly
handled it is a source of life and progress and growth.1195

Following this positive view of the benefits of historical study, Rex examines more
directly the role of interpretation in its construction. The significant point Rex makes is that,
due to Christian faith having its foundation in an historical event, it requires ongoing re-
interpretation. Of the event which is at the foundation of the Christian faith, Rex says:
"there is no authentic interpretation which will do for all generations alike".1196 Further:

this does not mean that every generation starts from scratch in its task of
interpretation; it does take the interpretations of previous generations into account;
in other words, it places itself in a line of interpretation, or, as we say, it follows a
tradition. Such a tradition can be more or less authoritative, and it tends to be
particularly binding in matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical usage. But however
authoritative such tradition happens to be it should never be forgotten that tradition
is only the interpretation of a past generation and that in the case of the Christian
Faith any previous generation including Jesus' own contemporaries is not essentially
in any different position compared with subsequent generations.1197

Rex rightly states that the classical doctrines of the Trinity and of Christology were
not available to the first three centuries of Christians. If they were able to express their faith
in other ways, says Rex, the possibility that we might express our faith in different ways
should at least be entertained: "We shall not cling to such forms as if the very substance of
our faith depended on them".1198

To support his view that tradition should never be viewed as an absolute Rex offers
the Presbyterian "phobia of episcopacy" as an example. If we look at the sixteenth and
seventeenth century roots of this fear with perfect detachment, he notes, we may be able to
admit "that the causes of that phobia have passed and that the reasons with which it was
once defended have been recognised as false".1199 In both the case of the doctrine of the
Trinity and the arrangements regarding episcopacy, Rex finds it quite possible that we would
wish to defend the tradition that has been handed down to us, though for reasons quite

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1193RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.17.
1196RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.18. Cf. RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XIX.
1197RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.18. Rex indicates appropriately that this thought is derived from the idea
of 'the disciple at second-hand' as described in Søren Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments, trans. David F.
1198RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.18f.
1199RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.19.
different to those supplied by previous generations. Important for Rex is the process of detached examination and the resulting ownership of the end product, as he further illustrates with respect to the trinity:

A unitarian formula has nothing shocking in itself for us once we have learned to view the trinitarian formula with historical detachment. On the other hand, we may well return to the formula which tradition has handed down to us, but in that case it will not be a mere piece of tradition: it will be a piece of tradition which we have taken hold of by our own interpretation.\textsuperscript{1200}

Reforming the faith

In a 1961 letter Rex makes an even stronger statement on the overestimation of historical doctrines by systematic theologians:

The tradition of [the theologian's] church as formulated in the confessions is primarily of historical interest but not of normative interest. To reverse this order means ignoring the whole work of church history.\textsuperscript{1201}

This statement and the ones which follow it demonstrate Rex’s keenness to impress upon his students - and in this case former students - the importance of a faith open to continual reformation. Rex does not restrict such advice to the study of history. According to Rex constant reinterpretation and re-expression is also the necessary medicine if one is to avoid the chief failings of systematic theologians, who “too frequently treat as absolutes doctrinal formulations that have their meaning in a distinct historical setting”.\textsuperscript{1202} Liturgists too are urged to be more accountable. The distaste for what he calls ‘religious mannerism’, which we have observed as a feature of Rex’s early writing, is maintained throughout Rex’s work, as we shall see when we come to examine his lecture on ‘The Sunday Service’.\textsuperscript{1203}

Rex believes that neither we nor Paul would express our faith according to the traditional formulations if we were in a position to formulate the faith afresh today.\textsuperscript{1204} Although Rex is also clear that we are not able to begin again without our history, his

\textsuperscript{1200}RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.19.
\textsuperscript{1201}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961.
\textsuperscript{1202}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961.
\textsuperscript{1203}Rex’s lecture ‘The Sunday Service’ is examined in chapter nine.
\textsuperscript{1204}RA149, Letter from Helmut Rex to F.W.R. Nichol, 9 July 1961.
attempts to re-express and clarify or challenge traditional doctrine indicate an ongoing desire to reform the faith.\footnote{1205}

The remaining section of the extant text labelled by Rex: ‘Introduction to Church History’ describes, by way of examples, how a dispassionate view of the Christian faith may lead contemporary Christians toward critical engagement with their past. In this process they may discover, among other things, that “the Christian faith has been notorious for its lack of tolerance”.\footnote{1206} It is unfortunate that this text ends abruptly, though it seems that the most important content of these lecture notes remains. The series of examples that follows Rex’s theoretical explanation of history as an act of \textit{Selbstverständnis} is sufficient to indicate how Rex’s model is intended to work in practice.

Rex believes a full understanding of the historical factors underpinning modern man’s human condition is necessary for the modern individual to confront his situation honestly.\footnote{1207} However, although the nature of the human condition is mentioned, the addresses examined on this topic focus primarily on the historical origins of this condition.

The origins of our modern human condition

Taken together the papers detailing the history of modern man illustrate Rex’s concern to find a way through the faith and reason debates that first raged in the 17th century. These concerns also influence his work in hermeneutics and on eschatology. His education and faith demand intellectual honesty and biblical consistency. Rex attempts to delineate reason’s parameters and applies Kierkegaard’s language of the ‘leap’ when the boundary between faith and reason is crossed.

Rex’s “Five Talks on Eschatology” delivered at an S.C.M. study conference in May 1957 at Christchurch are examined in another chapter of the present thesis.\footnote{1208} In them Rex makes some clear connections between an existentialism derived from Sartre, eschatology influenced by Bultmann, and the common condition of modern man. These papers serve as

\footnote{1205}Rex’s 1961 ‘Credo’ is a good example of this. Cf. ‘Credo’, in BHR: pp.263-266.\footnote{1206}RA068, Rex, ‘Church History’: p.20.\footnote{1207}It might be argued that there are here parallels with the controversial missionary practice of first convincing the ‘native’ of the reality of his sin before offering conversion.\footnote{1208}This series of paper is found in RA110 and is dealt with in detail in chapter seven of the present thesis.
but one pertinent example of the way in which Rex's existentially influenced history of ideas pervades many other aspects of his work. To take one specific example, in the third address of this series Rex discusses *Heilsgeschichte* and is particularly critical of Cullmann whose work on the subject was popular at the time.

In a manner strikingly different from the 1948 treatment of Cullmann's thought, examined earlier in this chapter, Rex is highly unsympathetic towards Cullmann. Introducing hermeneutical issues to his criticism of Cullmann, Rex suggests that Cullmann's use of traditional biblical terminology tends to obscure rather than clarify scriptural issues for the modern individual. In this way, according to Rex, Cullmann fails to address the key questions worrying modern man:

[I]n a manner, Cullmann says, "That is what the New Testament says..." Whether we can believe it literally or in what sense we are to believe it, i.e. the real theological and religious questions are not raised. That is why Cullmann's work fundamentally disappoints. It is not serious. It remains an intellectual game which in no way 'engages' one personally: existentially, if you wish. He leaves untouched the questions which have worried modern man ever since the 17th century.1209

The belief that the world of modern man should have a serious impact on theology is one Rex demonstrates consistently from the time of his adoption of the historical-critical method through Lietzmann's influence.121 For Rex intellectual honesty demands that one take seriously the changes to man and his world that had occurred as a result of the intellectual revolution in the 17th century.

Along with many of his academic contemporaries Rex is convinced that the world of man had changed qualitatively since the events of the 17th century. He also believes with many that a corresponding, necessary and healthy change in the understanding of man and his place in that world is not yet widespread. According to Rex the significant and necessary changes in accompanying intellectual outlook are restricted to a few of his contemporaries among the European existentialist thinkers and their followers.

121See chapter one of the present thesis.
Among those he regards as having come to terms with the new world of man Rex views Heidegger as “by far the most outstanding of the continental existentialists”, going so far as to admit his inclination “to think that he [Heidegger] is the first philosopher in the European tradition who has understood what it means to be a human being”.

Existentialism and progress

One question arising out of this, which Rex does not directly address, is the following: if one accepts that the human condition has to be understood differently since the events of the 17th century, one is left wondering what to make of the lives of those who lived prior to that, in particular, the lives of those who first formulated the Christian Gospel? Perhaps Rex has chosen his words carefully, admitting *not* that Heidegger was the first man, but that he was the first *European philosopher* to understand the human condition correctly. This would also be consistent with Rex’s partiality for great novelists, who he felt were able often to give better expression to the human condition than were philosophers.

Rex is extremely concerned that the insights of Heidegger, Sartre and the other existentialists not pass his corner of the world unnoticed. It is interesting to compare this viewpoint with his sharp criticism of Hegel’s understanding of the human race’s development towards ‘absolute spirit’. This forms another example of the tension in Rex’s thought between a qualified belief in progress and a commitment to the notion that no human action is justified without God’s grace.

Although he labels himself a Christian existentialist, at no point does Rex classify himself simply as an existentialist. This is important since most existentialists have a strong...

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1211 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.15.
1212 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.15. “Martin Heidegger [...] has expressed the view that neither Aristotle nor Descartes had formulated an adequate view of man. In short, that the whole European tradition was mistaken in its idea of man and that it took Heidegger to put it right. This appears on first sight like a singularly complacent piece of megalomania. And yet, I think that Heidegger’s claim is not without foundation. I am inclined to think that he is the first philosopher in the European tradition who has understood what it means to be a human being”. RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.15. Heidegger’s influence is on Rex through Bultmann is explored further in chapter six and seven of the present thesis.
1213 Personal correspondence from Rev. J. Allen, 27 November 2000. Rex’s use of literature for theological purposes is examined in chapter five.
1214 On the one hand, Rex does not share Hegel’s unambiguously modernist belief in human progress. On the other hand, one gains a sense from reading Rex’s work that he believes contemporary man is in a much better position to understand the human condition and its relation to God than has ever previously been the case.
sense of tragedy and this is notably lacking in Rex’s work. His sympathy with Sartre’s tragic depiction of the human condition is tempered by his strong faith in an afterlife. He doesn’t share Bultmann’s agnosticism with regard to meaning in history nor does he share Sartre’s atheism. Yet his commitment to their insights is indicated in his preference for existentialities over abstractions, and in his dedication to teaching their thought to his audiences. His self-description as a Christian existentialist is perhaps most apt in the sense that it locates Rex somewhere between the two - with a foot in both camps. It is clear from his papers on Sartre that he retains optimism about the possibility of successfully integrating the two systems of thought.

Rex’s choice of the metaphor of ‘the road’ to describe human history offers the suggestion of definite direction if not of final destination. It is a reappropriation of the ancient Christian self-description of “the way”. Rex favours this metaphor in many circumstances. He describes his own theological path as a road travelled (the road of kerygmatic theology and Christian existentialism). In an address to the S.C.M. in December 1959 Rex chooses for his closing comment a citation from the *Atlas of Western Civilisation* which, picking up on this metaphor, contains a reminder that Western civilisation has long favoured a belief in the meaningfulness of individual contributions within a broader human purpose:

> In the meantime, it remains for us to reflect that “Western Man is always on the road: whether or not he is aware of his destination, he never stands still; he is mindful solely of the past because he knows how little begins and ends in himself (R.G.C.); he has never believed in a meaningless cycle of destiny, for he is always moving forwards - and his road is thereby made not easier, but more purposeful (F. van der Meer, Atlas of Western Civilisation).”

Although Rex here appears to be supporting an understanding of ‘progress’ in history, consistent with his earlier stance, it is important that he chooses to close with a citation. In so doing he avoids disclosing his own thought on this matter and from entering

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1215 This material from file RA003 is discussed in chapter one.
1216 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.18. Evidence internal to the citation indicates that the initials R.G.C. refer to Collingwood. Rex was familiar with Collingwood’s work.
further debate. As already noted Rex does believe that it is possible to find meaning in history.\textsuperscript{1217}

Quite aside from the subtleties of Rex's stated position, any argument for a generalised progression of humanity towards 'fullness' is difficult to prove. The twentieth century's two world wars have not made such a task any easier. Rex is well aware of the difficulties presented by the atrocities of recent history to any talk of progress.\textsuperscript{1218} The outcome of an investigation into man's progress in history is inevitably entirely dependent upon the categories chosen to measure this 'fullness'. To argue this case successfully one must have a pre-established philosophy of history that is in alignment with the current developmental focus of its proponents. This is something Rex himself recognised in Marxism.\textsuperscript{1219} It is at this point that Rex's stinging criticism of Hegel and Cullmann as apriorists leaves him open to sharpest critique.\textsuperscript{1220}

\textsuperscript{1217}See Rex's introductory lecture to students examined above. Cf. also RA110, Rex, SCM-V: p.1f.: "I am afraid, we are reduced to the declaration that we believe that the history of the human race is not merely a succession of fortuitous events: that it has meaning inherent in itself which justifies the introduction of the notion of Heilsgeschichte in this context. If we wish to say as much as that, we must, however, immediately add that it completely defies our knowledge to state how precisely this is the case".

\textsuperscript{1218}Rex discusses this matter fully in RA068, Rex, 'Church History': pp.13f. He begins that discussion with pertinent examples: "The course of history is sometimes viewed as a story of 'progress' (a view particularly popular in the 19th century) and at other times as a story of degeneration (the Deistic picture of the history of religion in the 18th century). In a sense, both views are one-sided, since the history of mankind does not only show 'progress' but also reverses. The men of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were more skilful in the art of stained glass windows that the men of the nineteenth century [Rex's marginal note refers to the Cologne Cathedral]. The Germany of the beginning of the nineteenth century was less brutal than it was twenty years ago. On the other hand, the artists of the thirteenth century travelled in ox-carts while the artists of the 19th century used the railways; and the German Romantics wrote by candle-light while the Nazis signed their decrees under electric bulbs".

\textsuperscript{1219}"Marxist man feels at home in the natural universe and in history alike; the one providing him with the basis from which to start and the other the rhythm which carries him along in the march of history". RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.18.

\textsuperscript{1220}Of Hegel, Rex says: "He had an abstract skeleton of history complete and all he needed was to clothe it with names and dates. And here, his selection was completely arbitrary. Only the facts that fitted into the celebrated pattern of 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis' were considered. The rest was dismissed as 'a superfluous mass, which, when faithfully collected, only oppresses and obscures the objects worthy of history'". Rex, 'In Defence of the Individual' in \textit{Lanfall} 10, June 1949: p.115. Of Cullmann's work Rex says: "This kind of viewing the Heilsgeschichte has been called by some of its critics 'geschichtstheologische Gnosis' (Diem, \textit{Grundfragen}, p.17): a gnostic theology of history. I shall not pursue here the implications which Cullmann's system has for a philosophy of history. Only so much may be said, if it is a 'gnosis', as some of its critics have called it, then it can only be said that it produces very little knowledge. As an instrument of interpreting the Old and New Testament it falls down completely because of its unrepentant apriorism". RA130, Rex, 'Hermeneutics': p.XXVf.
A further example of Rex’s avoidance of direct statements about belief in progress is found in his address on the Sunday service where Rex speaks of every time and place representing its own challenge to the Church. There is no suggestion that this challenge comes as a direct result of ‘progress’. His writings on the topic of eschatology offer a vision of man at one with himself and in a state of complete development but Rex makes it clear that such a state is only to be anticipated after the death of the physical body. Given the occasional and fragmentary nature of Rex’s writings we are fortunate to have one clear statement on this matter. In summary we can say that Rex indicates a willingness to live with the ambiguous nature of historical witness and a desire to exhibit cautious faith in the notion of ‘progress’.

Although his eschatology expresses the conviction that all things are to be resolved in death, this does not appear, in Rex’s thought, to free man from his present striving. The effect of Rex’s mien of earnest persistence upon his theology is not to be underestimated. It is this same aspect of his demeanour which leads him later to declare that “[t]his church has to rescue its members from drifting into a state of unreflective animal existence”. Rex’s concern that the discoveries about the human condition made in response to intellectual developments in the 17th century should not be forgotten, or that their true significance go unnoticed, lead him to touch on the subject of the human condition in a wide variety of addresses.

A clear knowledge of sources and a careful attention to word and emphasis help to convey the importance Rex places on his audience gaining an interest and understanding of this key period in the history of ideas. The events of the 17th century are most clearly addressed in two of his papers. Delivered in 1955 the first, Faith and Reason in the 17th

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1222 Rex was familiar with Kierkegaard’s work which explored themes of paradox. In fact, he favoured an understanding of the individual based on unresolved tensions, proposing a balance between the aesthetic and ethical arguments for the defence of the individual in his M.A. thesis on Kierkegaard. See chapter three for further discussion on Rex’s interaction with Kierkegaard’s work. Similarly in his work on Sartre, Rex indicates that he favours an understanding of human beings as individuals living with unresolved tensions. This matter is discussed further in chapter four.
1224 His later lectures, investigating the thought of Sartre, Kafka, Dostoevsky and others, more often than not focus on a particular novel, play or series. This is discussed further in chapter five.
Century, is significant because it describes the events and people that Rex considers most relevant in the development of modern man’s intellectual situation. The second paper, The Intellectual Revolution, originally delivered in 1959, focuses on ideas dominant among mid-20th century thinkers. The paper’s argument for rooting 20th century thought in the humus of 17th century change is signally relevant and will be examined later in the present chapter.

Faith and reason in the seventeenth century

An overview of Faith and Reason in the 17th Century provides insight into the importance Rex places on intellectual freedom, an escape from the ‘Platonist dynasty’ and the honest pursuit of truth. The paper is structured with a three and a half page introduction in two parts, the first of which offers an outline of the 17th Century intellectual climate. Rex puts 17th century thought in the context of that which preceded and followed it. Many of the changes came as a culmination of centuries of questioning. Whilst he acknowledges the arbitrariness of drawing a line in the history of European thought, Rex says the 17th century marks change more significant than any other since the Christianisation of Europe. According to Rex:

To begin with, the gradual acceptance of Copernicus’ hypotheses did not only demand a complete reorientation in man’s conception of the physical universe; taken from the centre of the universe and cast to its periphery, man had to reconsider his own condition well. Further, the remarkable advances in the study of mathematics and astronomy convinced the men of the 17th cent. that the natural universe was ruled by law and order. A conviction that gained the force of an axiom. While the Middle Ages looked on any suspension of the ordinary course of nature with eager anticipation as a manifestation of God’s fatherly interest in his children on earth, the men of the 17th cent. became increasingly embarrassed at the thought of such an interference on the part of the Almighty.

An explanation of the title ‘Faith and Reason’ is offered in the second part of the introduction: a division between religion and science had not yet developed. Rex identifies as pivotal the battle between those proposing the right to free inquiry and those maintaining the pre-eminence of traditional authority. According to Rex, in the midst of this struggle modern man began to ask questions about marvels and miracles asking ‘Is it so?’ where

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previously he had concerned himself only with questions of the 'how can it be?' type. Rex draws attention to the fact that it has been more difficult since the events of the 17th century to accept on traditional authority the premises of any given inquiry. "The Law of Nature both in the physical universe and in the sphere of morals and religion became the standard by which all traditional authority was in future measured'.

It is important to note Rex's desire for careful interpretation of history when seeking to realise the true significance of the changes in thought in the 17th century. It is equally important to know what he means by this. For Rex careful interpretation of history involved the historical critical method and close analysis. Using these methods Rex concludes that counterparts for many of the key thinkers who "helped usher in the modern age" can be found in other centuries. Rex sees a change in tone and emphasis as crucial to an appreciation of seventeenth century changes in thought.

A genealogy of thought from the middle ages to modern existentialism

In telling the story of modern man's intellectual struggle to come to terms with his new position in the world, Rex is careful to highlight some of the blind alleyways which have been explored. It would appear that Rex includes these in his story to assist his audience in realising the myriad of approaches that present themselves to the modern individual in his struggle to come to terms with this new world. Their depicted failure to offer any useful conclusions also provides an explanation for the singular importance Rex places on the existentialist solution to the problems encountered by man in this new world. Its importance is implied in its claimed ability to confront a crisis where many before have failed. Here Rex reveals himself as a man of his time in his assessment of the existentialist 'solution'. Viewed from a twenty-first century perspective, existentialism and related philosophies appear as a link in a chain of vital but flawed attempts to comprehensively

\[1228^{\text{RA116, Rex, 'Faith and Reason': p.2.}}\]

\[1229^{\text{RA116, Rex, 'Faith and Reason': p.4.}}\]
explain the human condition. In this regard some of postmodern philosophy’s more modest claims appear to present a fairer view of reality.\textsuperscript{1220}

Francis Bacon and the French priest Nicolas Malebranche’s attempts to hold faith and reason apart feature in Rex’s catalogue of blind alleyways. He discusses these efforts to understand the modern human condition under the heading ‘Extreme solutions’. Both thinkers, says Rex, attempted to shelve the problem of relating faith to reason by encasing them in two hermetically closed worlds.

The third of Rex’s three ‘extreme’ solutions examined is Edward Herbert of Cherbury’s attempt to replace revealed religion with natural religion. Cherbury’s attempt to distil the ‘innate ideas’ suggested by reason and common to all true religions is used by Rex as an illustration of the “precarious nature of the concept of ‘law of nature’ or ‘natural law’ when applied to morals and religion”.\textsuperscript{1231} It also serves for him as an example which “shows that the new thinkers of the 17th cent. were more radical in their intentions than in practice”.\textsuperscript{1232} It was as difficult at this point in history as at any other for the key thinkers to shake free from what Rex labels Neoplatonism’s “insidious shackles”.\textsuperscript{1233}

Pascal and the Deists

Rex identifies Blaise Pascal as one thinker who did manage to think outside the Neoplatonist square, stating that an understanding of faith as a gift from God enabled Pascal

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{1220}Cf. Jacques Lyotard. In his seminal work, Lyotard identifies incredulity towards metanarrative as postmodernity’s defining point [pxxiv] and further states that “The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation”. Lyotard, \textit{The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge}, trans. Benington and Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) p.37.
\textsuperscript{1231}RA116, Rex, ‘Faith and Reason’: p.7.
\textsuperscript{1232}RA116, Rex, ‘Faith and Reason’: p.7.
\textsuperscript{1233}RA116, Rex, ‘Faith and Reason’: p.7f: “It was not as easy as all that, to get away from the traditional authorities. It was all very well for Descartes to set out to doubt everything. It was not so easy to do it. To use Descartes’ own metaphor: He had emptied the whole basket to sort out the rotten apples. But as he filled his basket again, he overlooked some of the rotten apples, i.e. the NeoPlatonic apples. This persistence of NeoPlatonism is one of the remarkable facts in the history of European Thought. When I say that, I have not in mind the thinkers who deliberately choose to be Platonists. I refer to the more cryptic influence of NeoPlatonism in such thinkers as Augustine; the medieval Aristotelians like Thomas Aquinas; and in the 17th cent., the new thinkers apart from the Cambridge Platonists. It were [sic] men like Leibniz, Descartes himself, and even the discerning Spinoza who carried on in the NeoPlatonic tradition when they distinguished [for example] different degrees of existence: arguing that the more perfect a thing is, the more it is, and making use of this notion in their proofs of the existence of God, oblivious to the fact that ‘a fly, when it exists, has as much being as God (S.K.).’”
\end{quote}
to do greater justice to the essence of the Christian religion than his contemporaries. Abandoning the God of the natural universe, Pascal concentrated on the 'hidden God' revealed in history and handed down in the Christian tradition. According to Rex:

> [t]he point to observe, is this: Pascal ascribes to Faith the same cognitive status as to the axioms of science and, for that matter, to our moral standards of value: All three have their basis in something other than discursive or demonstrative reason.\(^{1234}\)

Pascal is identified by Rex as the one significant thinker in the 17th century who recognised that all proofs of God presuppose their premises. Each of the three fields of knowledge listed above build their truths "on ultimate axioms which we accept as true without being able to prove them."\(^{1235}\) Rex says that as a consequence of this realisation Pascal got on with finding God revealed in the scene of history rather than in the pages of philosophy.

Rex’s focus on Pascal is significant. It offers an indication of the importance Rex places on escaping the perceived evils of Platonism. It might be argued, that Rex’s attempts to do so reveal that he is still caught within their grasp and, that a deliberate ‘acting against’ merely draws attention to the continued grip of lingering Platonic tentacles.

When the Deists questioned the value of external evidences such as miracles at the end of the 17th century, Rex suggests that they were mounting a significant challenge to previously accepted wisdom - and presenting a new hermeneutical principle. Rex’s case for the Deists embodying the tremendous shift in thinking that the 17th century represents more closely than any other single group is convincing. Rationalists in the strictest sense, the Deists’ refusal to treat sacred literature in any way differently to secular literature is aptly depicted by Rex as heralding a new era in biblical scholarship.

The contributions Rex chooses to highlight in his conclusion reflect his own hierarchy of values. Those who explored the blind alleyways do not receive the attention he reserves for Pascal and the Deists. Rex admires the fierce search for truth, a search which for him typified the Deists. He draws attention to their influence as one that might easily be

\(^{1234}\)RA116, Rex, 'Faith and Reason': p.10.

\(^{1235}\)Pascal cited in RA116, Rex, 'Faith and Reason': p.10.
overlooked. Indeed Rex is correct - from a twenty-first century perspective it can be observed that their axioms have today achieved the status of common sense. It is easy to forget that the acceptance of such fundamental principles was hard won and changed the course of intellectual history. Many did suffer personally for their belief in disciplined honesty.

Having accepted the challenge of the Deists Rex appears keen to impress the importance of Pascal's contribution upon his audience. He assumes revisiting Pascal will prove a profitable exercise from a perspective enhanced by all that has preceded the mid-20th century. Though it is not explicitly stated in his paper, there is perhaps something more important to be found for Rex in Pascal's thought: intellectual freedom. Pascal's ascription of the same cognitive status to the axioms of faith, science and moral values provides Rex with a basis for exploring history, the human condition, God and all that is of ultimate value, no more dependent on discursive or demonstrative reason, than are the building blocks of the sciences. In any case Pascal's ideas are the ones he identifies in his conclusion as being of ongoing interest to the theologian. According to Rex:

As we look back on the 17th cent. from where we are now, we can but gratefully accept the heritage of that century as our destiny. It has had an enormously liberating effect on the human mind and has imposed on us standards of evidence the adherence to which has [been] repaid abundantly in man's quest of truth. It would be disastrous for the theologian to play off the Age of Faith against the Age of Reason, cultivating a sense of nostalgia which is wholly unworthy of his station. If we are today more interested in Pascal than the Deists, it is because we can afford to enjoy the enduring recognitions of that most outstanding thinker of the 17th cent. since we have accepted in all sincerity and openmindedness the challenge of the Deists in our biblical studies.1236

The seeds of an escape from Platonism in Pascal's search for the God in history, together with the advances in man's quest for truth in what Rex would indubitably have described as 'the disciplined honesty' of the Deists and the promise of intellectual freedom which accompanied the escape from traditional authority are for Rex the key offerings of 17th century thinkers. As far as Rex is concerned all of these factors herald the need for a new understanding of the human condition: a significant step towards fulfilment of which is made in Heidegger's philosophy of 'Being'.

The way in which Rex conducted the *Faith and Reason* discussion illustrates an important point. At times he is a little cavalier in his approach to history, as if Pascal was the solution for which Rex has gone about creating a problem. Rex appears to view history as a convenient source of stories and illustrations, the emphases of which could be subtly altered according to the lesson currently to be learnt from them. This estimation is consistent with Rex's own views expressed in his 1958 introduction to Church history. As we have seen, Rex identifies not the quest for recording exactitudes and minutiae but the search for self-knowledge as the primary motivator in the study of history. This stance provides evidence to support an hypothesis that Rex's approach to history is governed by his *a priori* commitments. Indeed, existentialist thought leads Rex to a certain view of history rather than history suggesting an existentialist solution to Rex.

Four years after delivering his paper on *Faith and Reason in the 17th Century* Rex was asked in 1959 to deliver a paper to the S.C.M. in response to a number of questions put by the coordinator of its summer camp: "What are some of the dominant ideas current amongst mid-20th century thinkers? How do they differ from those of a previous age? What is their impact on religious faith? and on Christian teaching?" For his lecture Rex adopted the title offered by the S.C.M.: *The Intellectual Revolution*. The paper offers a useful synthesis of Rex's thought on the history of ideas and it highlights the emphasis Rex placed on a full knowledge of the events of the 17th century for a correct interpretation of the condition of modern man.

**The intellectual revolution**

Intent on capturing the attention of his audience Rex introduces his 1959 address with a story which he links to one of his key passions - hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. With a simple illustration Rex shows that the way history is written is influenced significantly by the individual historian and his or her interests. The critical and

1237 RA068, Rex, 'Church History': p.1.
1238 RA142, 'programme outline'.
1239 The paper Rex delivered was selected with two of the many others delivered at the conference for subsequent publication in the S.C.M. journal. See: Helmut Rex, 'The Intellectual Revolution' in *The Student*, number 2, April 1960: pp.2-12.
learned eye is vital to discerning the implications of historical developments as they relate to the present age:

When Louis XVI witnessed the Paris mob in 1789 he is reported to have said, "This is a revolt"; to which one of his attendents [sic] replied "No, sir, this is a revolution." This little incident illustrates well the difficulty of interpreting the events of your own time.  

Rex quickly weighs up the contemporary situation offering two conflicting views within as many pages. On the one hand he distances himself from the title of his talk. "I have been asked to report on 'some of the dominant [sic] ideas current among mid-20th century thinkers' under the heading 'The Intellectual Revolution'. Frankly, I am not aware that a revolution is on". On the other hand Rex tentatively adopts the title of the address, given that all talk about an event or period in history is open to the perspective of the interpreter.  

Rex's defence of his claim to be unaware of any contemporary revolution in thought is cursory. Talk of 'revolution' is in a sense justified to describe the intellectual situation of his time, claims Rex, if one is to use the term in comparison with previous centuries: radical change is seen to be occurring, with the spectacle of a 'displaced God' and 'displaced man' dominating the mid-twentieth century intellectual scene. Defence of this claim through a careful construction of its history monopolises the first half of Rex's Intellectual Revolution address.  

One of the key points Rex wishes to make in this lecture is that his twentieth century situation owes its existence to the legacy of the seventeenth century. In order to underscore this point he outlines the contrasting situation prior to that period. The classical antique and middle age periods were characterised by a strict belief in providence which was in the hands of the Almighty. It was then accepted that God had created man and generally agreed that...
the world had been created for man’s benefit. This world-view was conducive to a belief that man and man’s interests were central to the function of the known universe. Montaigne in the sixteenth century and Spinoza in the seventeenth century challenged this belief. The long term effect of this challenge was to drive man away from his sense of centrality. Man was sent scurrying towards the periphery of the known universe. It seems Rex cannot state the impact of this displacement strongly enough:

Here in the seventeenth century, we witness indeed a revolution of unparalleled magnitude in the history of European thought if not in that of the whole human race. It forced man, radically to revise his traditional view of himself and his interpretation of his own condition. It is in fact the one intellectual revolution with which we are still concerned; everything else are [sic] but repercussions of what took place in the seventeenth century.1244

**Owning the disenchanted world**

Rex follows this strong statement with a good example of his conviction that learning and life are intricately and inseparably bound together. He prompts the audience to recall that his address was prepared with their interests in mind, reminding them that the very reason for this lecture in history is to contribute to their own individual development and ability to do justice to their human condition. Faithful to his own hermeneutical stance, Rex considers it more fruitful to place the intellectual situation of the mid-20th century into the wider perspective of the intellectual revolution which began with the events of the seventeenth century, suggesting that his audience regard this address not as “a conducted tour through a philosophical museum, leading you from show-case to show-case” but as “your own personal story as modern men which constitutes your destiny, with which you have to come to terms”.1245 The intellectual revolution in the seventeenth century is connected with the names of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Descartes, and more generally with the tremendous advance of the natural sciences in that age, particularly in the field of mathematics and physics.1246 The new laws of evidence and verification influenced the way in which truth was measured.

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For Rex one other factor must be mentioned to appreciate the full magnitude of the intellectual revolution in the seventeenth century. Its influence and internal logic creates an image of the world as inanimate and devoid of the mystery with which it had once been endowed:

It is commonplace that human thinking proceeds by way of analogies. In fact, the discovery of an apt analogy is of the utmost importance in the discovery of truth. Hitherto one had conceived of the universe as animate; the world had a soul, like man; with that assumption, it was meaningful to refer to the world as a macrocosm and to man as a microcosm. Man could be thought of as 'a small world', and the world as 'a large man' or, at least, animal. In such a world, animate itself and cluttered up with angels, demons and goblins, natural science had no chance. A simple change of metaphor in the seventeenth century gave expression to the revolutionary change in the history of ideas and helped forward the tremendous advance in mathematics and physics. This was the metaphor of the clock or machine. When Descartes and his contemporaries began to look at the natural universe as a machine, they created the modern world which has become our destiny: a world-picture for whose truth the evidence is overwhelming, established as it is by millions of experiments which all conspire to corroborate the fundamental assumptions on which it rests. This world is a 'disenchanted world',[1] with no room for demons and angels, not for miracles, because this world is essentially a 'closed' world, which does not contradict itself in its laws.1247

According to Rex the new analogy of the machine had serious historical repercussions for both God and man. In a manner of speaking - the two became 'unsettled'. No room was left for an active God in a world that was running like a perfect machine. Rex claims that man began to view himself as an object in a way analogous to the way he viewed the world: looking at himself from the outside as if he were external to himself.

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1247RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.5. Rex's original text contains a footnote [1]: “cp. Balthasar Bekker, a pupil of Descartes, 1634-1698, author of the World Bewitsched [sic] in which he contests the belief in witchcraft and magical powers.”

Rex expounds the 'change of metaphor' thesis again in his set of lectures to Christchurch Presbytery in 1961. In the address from that series on Dostoevsky, the following is recorded: “‘The whole purpose of man’ writes Dostoevsky, ‘surely consists in proving to himself that he is a man and not a cog in a machine’. This is what the underground man is after.

“The metaphor of the machine had been introduced in the seventeenth century, and its introduction had brought about a tremendous liberation of man. By learning to think of the natural universe in terms of a machine, he had finally rid himself of the power of demons which had threatened his soul from the Dark Ages to the Renaissance, and had come to possess a ‘disenchanted world’ of which he made himself increasingly master. But what began in the seventeenth century as a tremendous process of liberation threatened by the middle of the nineteenth century to end in a new enslavement. Ever since the seventeenth century, western man increasingly developed the habit of approaching his own condition by the methods which were proving spectacularly successful in his approach to the natural universe. This was in itself no mistake. As a living organism, man is after all a natural phenomenon, and the methods of natural science are applicable to him too. And, as a matter of fact, in such fields as physiology, psychology, and sociology the application of these methods has contributed much to the understanding of man. But they do not touch the core of man. It is with this core that Dostoevsky is concerned”. RA119, Rex, 'I. Dostoevsky: God-Man or Man-God': p.11.
In light of the situation he has described, Rex discusses Hegel’s proposed solution to the situation of a displaced God and a displaced man. In Rex’s view Hegel’s philosophy of history ignored, to a certain extent, the capricious and chaotic elements in history, choosing instead to see a logical order behind them. Rex believes Hegel placed man and God in a new position of significance as the key players in the unravelling of history. But according to Rex “this new home proved temporary only, for both God and Man. It was built on the foundations of Hegel’s own logic which did not stand the test of philosophers and historians alike”\(^\text{1248}\). The new more rigidly scientific approach to history practised by historians in the 19th century discredited the Hegelian understanding, writes Rex, but it was a long time before any new theory was put in its place. Rex is convinced that the various shades of humanism which flourished in its wake were linked to an ill-defined general belief in cultural progress.

**New threats to man’s self-understanding**

To complete the contemporary picture Rex paints the influence of Spinoza, Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud in broad brushstrokes. For Rex each of them proposed or gave voice to a new threat to man’s self-understanding. According to Rex each contributed to a ‘closed’ understanding of man and his place in the natural order. Darwin identified an internal purpose in nature. In Rex’s view this took things one step further than Spinoza’s dismissal of the teleological argument for God’s existence had done:

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\text{Nature did so to speak blindly what hitherto one had thought to postulate (imply) the existence of a divine mind. I think that this development contributed more than any other single factor to the disappearance of an active belief in the existence of God (Agnosticism). When Nietzsche at the close of the century announced the 'death of God' he merely formulated in a striking manner what was actually the case.}^{\text{1249}}
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The nature of Rex’s comments on the death of God is indicative of the depth of his commitment to finding a theology relevant to modern man. He is not interested in dressing up old models in new clothes. A new theology in the existentialist mould is on his agenda because he is convinced that the world of contemporary man is utterly and entirely different from the world of man before him.

\(^{\text{1248}}\text{RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.7.}\)

\(^{\text{1249}}\text{RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.8.}\)
Freud is introduced as the figure who offered the final coup de grace to man's self-understanding. Man, at the mercy of powerful drives, was to use the rational nature which set him apart from the animals merely to furnish rationalisations for his actions. Man had no firm ground on which to construct an argument for his superiority in any sense.

Freud's contribution, says Rex, brings us up to date with the contemporary setting. At this point the reader is aware that the entire first half of Rex's lecture is devoted to outlining the significant contributions of thinkers from the seventeenth century through to Freud. This serves to highlight the magnitude of the problem and serves as a backdrop for the dramatic, and as yet undisclosed, existentialist solution. In case any in the audience have missed this point Rex is careful to offer a reminder:

Perhaps, you think, it has taken us a long way to get here. In that case, I wish to remind you that in my opinion, the perspective in which we have to see the contemporary setting, is of greater importance than a detailed description of the situation itself. Because it is the perspective which illuminates the situation and endows it with significance. Possibly, you may share none of the ideas of mid-20th century thinkers, which I am going to quote, but you do share the dilemma out of which they have arisen. It is your own dilemma as men of the mid-20th century, and that is really the one important point that I would like you to see.12

Rex here emphasises what for him is an extremely important point: that the contemporary setting determines our view of the past. No less significant is the admission to placing greater importance on seeing the contemporary setting in the correct perspective than on offering a detailed description of the situation itself. Here he is admitting that historical particulars are lower on his scale of values than adopting the correct viewpoint of history. As we have already stated this exposes him to the kind of critique he makes of Hegel's a priori historical model. As also in his hermeneutics, this concern for perspective was one of Rex's key interests and it goes some way towards explaining the broad brush-strokes he uses when painting his history of ideas.

Responses to displacement - linguistic analysis and existentialism

Rex's basic thesis, the perspective he is seeking to share, is that "[t]he dominant [sic] thought of contemporary thinkers reflects the situation which I have described: a situation in

12SORA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.9.
which both God and Man are ‘displaced’.” Rex proposes to examine two responses that seek to address this situation: the school of linguistic analysis and existentialism. Making comparisons between these two schools was not common in the late 1950s and Rex’s approach is likely in this regard to be unique to theological education in the New Zealand situation.

The origins and influences of linguistic analysis are discussed, particularly the influence of Wittgenstein. His suggestion that meaning and value are attached to the world from the outside leaves no room for questions of ultimate significance. Wittgenstein, “essentially a tortured mind”, is given credit by Rex because “the question of meaning still bothered Wittgenstein; particularly the question that there was something and not nothing.” His British counterparts are given short shrift for “pretend[ing] to see nothing odd in their situation”. In particular Rex ridicules G.E. Moore, the man he describes as “that bland philistine”.

Rex mentions an analogy used by Voltaire in his *Candide*, that of the market gardeners, and draws his own parallel analogy for the linguistic philosophers: a little laundry business. They take other people’s washing and refuse to ask any questions of it, priding themselves in returning it clean, “except of course for such tattered rags as fall to pieces under their treatment”. He links this laundry business to the “spirit of a philistine suburbia”. Rex’s assessment of the logical positivists of the 1950s marks a shift in the focus of his lecture. Having outlined the perspective he deems correct for understanding history, he begins to explore the matter of philosophy and its relation to everyday life. He makes a link between the linguistic analysts (in this case logical positivists) of his day and the New Zealand situation which shows his disapproval of world-views that have no place for questions of meaning:

To the philistine, the question of meaning is taboo, and in suburbia, the question of meaning is undesirable. In this setting, the question ‘why?’ is positively indecent. As New Zealanders you will appreciate this attitude particularly well, for to ask ‘why’ is to suggest a ‘world-view’ (Weltanschauung), and the moment you show a

1251 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.9.
1252 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.12.
1253 RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.12.
hankering after a world-view, people begin to feel your pulse or look at you with social disapproval as if you were a philosophical Teddy Boy.\textsuperscript{125}

Rex is critical of any and all who would naively follow the path of the linguistic philosophers - the philosopher, scientist, church-goer and atheist alike. He is highly critical of the contemporary situation. In his view the distractions of custom and convention blunt the sword of truth, leaving vital questions unasked. "With nobody left to raise the question of meaning, the world is handed over to the scientist and the philistine".\textsuperscript{126} For Rex this situation is not only contemporary but to be regarded as characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century. He finds that to that extent the school of linguistic analysis reflects twentieth century man's situation well. Rex is rather more partial to the state of affairs on the continent where people are not so happy to "leave everything as it is" after the fashion begun by Wittgenstein. Rex sees the legacy of romanticism informing continental existentialism and it is fair to say that a certain romanticism is evident in his portrayal of the existentialist movement:

[T]here is a certain toughness and stoic endurance in our contemporary existentialists which lends a certain élan and nobility to the manner in which they adjust themselves to the spectacle of a displaced God and Man. In so far as they accept their position as 'the widowers of God', they resolutely take over his own job and create a world of their own where they have a chance to do so, i.e. in their own self.\textsuperscript{127}

As we have seen, the thoughts and solutions of the existentialists are of considerable moment for Rex from the mid-forties, when he studied Kierkegaard, until his death in 1967. To Rex the life and message of the existentialists is to be considered favourably when compared to the bland existence of everyday man. Their call to be truthful to the human condition constituted by freedom endows life with greater significance. In Rex's view it is a contribution invaluable also to the study of history:

Fascinated with the spectacle of the 'closed' universe and in the habit of viewing his own self in analogy to the 'closed' universe, modern man had become blind to the one region where the universe remains 'open', i.e. in his own self. The restatement of this simple truth is the invaluable contribution of the continental existentialists,

\textsuperscript{125}RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.13.
\textsuperscript{126}RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.13.
\textsuperscript{127}RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.14.f.
and considering the blind alleys into which the study of man has led since Descartes, the term 'revolution' is, perhaps, here not out of place.\footnote{RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.14f.}

According to Rex man is to be understood not as an 'idea' but as a story. "By enacting his story, he makes the world his own. The 'world' that emerges in this fashion is man's own world; it is not identical with the natural universe. But in so far as it is his own world, it is his own creation and responsibility".\footnote{RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.16.} Man's existence as an historical being singles him out and offers him the opportunity of an 'open' world. An open world offers the possibility of meaning.

Finally, in the last few pages of his Intellectual Revolution address Rex offers some comments on the influence of linguistic analysis and existentialism on theology. As far as the influence that linguistic analysis has had on theology goes, Rex maintains that it has had virtually no impact, although he finds that it might usefully provide a reminder that the language of theology stands in urgent need of clarification.

Where the need for clarification of the usage of theological language has been felt at all, says Rex, it is attributable to Bultmann's demythologising programme.\footnote{Rex also identifies a common concern for clarification of theological language in Bultmann and the British School of linguistic analysis. See: RA110, Rex, SCM-IV: p.7.} Bultmann's acceptance and understanding of Heidegger's existential interpretation of the human condition and consequent insistence that each theologian should take "into calculation all that has happened in the course of the intellectual revolution that is symbolised in the name of Descartes" is valued highly by Rex.\footnote{RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.17. Cf. Helmut H. Rex, 'Problems of religious knowledge' in Landfall 53, September 1960: p.300.} It marks Bultmann out as someone who will not hide from the sword of truth behind the masks of custom and convention:

That means, that Bultmann and his pupils have resisted the temptation to return to the former 'homes' of man and see whether they are still habitable. They know that they are not; they take their position as 'displaced persons' seriously; and more, they also accept the fact that God has been 'displaced'. The result is that the traditional distinction between the 'natural' and the 'supernatural' has become meaningless.\footnote{RA142, Rex, 'Intellectual Revolution': p.17.}
The one place the question of meaning is not out of place for the Bultmannians is “in the history of the individual believer as he is confronted with the challenge of the Word of God in the Christian Message. Or to put it differently, as we accept responsibility over against the future in the light of the Gospel, we endow our lives with meaning.” The limitation of meaning to the life of the individual is something which Rex finds ‘intolerably restricted’. As Rex has little sympathy for the ‘solution’ of the linguistic analysts it is up to the existentialists to provide meaningful answers. In this respect he identifies the breaking of the constrictions of existentialist individualism as a key issue yet to be resolved. Rex is convinced of the value of searching for a firm intellectual framework to support the long favoured belief in the meaningfulness of individual contributions within a broader human purpose.

Perhaps because he never finally resolves the issue of meaning, Rex engages more frequently in his latter papers with specific ‘contextual’ issues. Rather than attempting a systematisation of his work, Rex devotes himself to one-off lectures or articles on topics like alcoholism, homosexuality, race relations and modern heresies. This concern for the ‘situational’ nature of truth is consistent with his existentialist understanding of the gospel and the nature of the interaction between God and man. It is to these later papers that we now turn.

1264 The obvious exception to this trend is Rex’s book which was written after his retirement.
Chapter Nine - 'Situational Theology'

Applying Christian existentialist strategies in local context

Rex attempts to address contemporary social issues with the same 'affordable' approach that he employs in his treatment of more traditional theological topics. Drawing on specific case studies, this chapter illustrates how Rex's 'one-of' or 'situational' approach with its existentialist underpinnings is able to offer 'fresh' insight in a variety of contexts. An example of this 'freshness' is the perspective Rex offers as early as 1956, which values Maori language and culture as more than of 'weekend' interest. This is a viewpoint not expressed in published material until the early 1960s. In this and other examples examined in this chapter we shall explore how Rex models the way an astute theological mind can contribute at the cutting edge of critical thought on contemporary issues. The papers we shall evaluate in order to flesh this picture out further are Rex's addresses on race relations, alcoholism, Teilhard de Chardin and the Sunday Service.

Recently there has been much talk of developing 'New Zealand' or 'contextual' theologies.\(^{1265}\) Such theologising concerns itself with successful patterns and strategies for

doing theology in a specific place, seeking to highlight what has worked in the past, and what might work in the future. This is a worthy endeavour, but it must be noted that the first step towards successful theologising (contextual or other) involves the development of an understanding of the discipline of theology and its history. The ability to critically analyse work within this body of knowledge forms the natural next step.

Any attempt to map theological trends and strategies is dependent upon an understanding of past or existing approaches. Proper analysis of existing theology draws attention to predominant emphases. One factor, for example, which is immediately striking about theology done in New Zealand, is its dependence on overseas trends and models. Contextual theology is itself an imported concept. This is indeed the case with Helmut Rex. Developments in European philosophy provide the analytical tools for his analysis of New Zealand’s endemic problems.

The freshness of Rex’s more globally applicable approach raises the question: Has ‘New Zealand theology’ to date often concentrated too closely on ‘New Zealand’ at the expense of ‘theology’? Rex’s ‘situational’ theology, though focused on concrete situations and issues has a wider application since it concentrates in the first instance on factors common to the human condition (‘our interests’). It is open to assessment and adaptation half a century later since it is not too contextually focussed to be refereed by theologians in other contexts or too narrow to have universal implications.

Of course, theology is always done in a context. There is no text without a context. Like philosophy, theology concerns itself with the search for truth. Although truth is encapsulated in its various contextual forms, insights into the truth derived in one context can be profitably translated into another. Without the possibility of such translation, communication across cultures and between peoples would be impossible. And what is true

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1266 On the difference between the two disciplines it was once quipped that: “A philosopher is someone who goes into a dark room at night to look for a black cat that isn’t there. A theologian does the same thing, but comes out claiming he found the cat”. Nick Philips, ‘The Case of the Naked Quark’, TWA Ambassador Magazine, October 1980.
on the macro level of cultures can equally be said of communication between individuals. Without the potential to translate and communicate an individual experience of truth, worthwhile human interaction would remain an impossibility.

Rex delivered a small number of significant public addresses on issues directly relating to New Zealand society. These addresses will be collectively referred to as Rex's 'situational' writings. These lectures used insights derived from the study of culture and philosophy to provide insightful analysis into some key problems facing New Zealand society. In these lectures Rex occupies himself with the task of expressing truth in a form that was meaningful in the contemporary cultural context. Rex shares with many other existentialists the concern to piece together the defining features of a humanity birthed in the rubble of the modernist edifice.

Rex is highly critical of contemporary responses to the mid-twentieth century situation. He is as dismissive of theologians and philosophers who seek to bandage the rubble together as if nothing had happened, as he is of thinkers who seek to abandon the quest for meaning altogether. In this thesis it has been argued that Rex identifies in existentialist analysis of the human situation the tools to answer the question of human purpose. The interesting question to ask is, why this is the case? Why is Rex such a passionate evangelist for his particular brand of Christian existentialism? What is he reacting against? Is his approach merely a bi-product of his experience of dislocation? Why does he adopt this stance when his New Zealand contemporaries favour more traditional approaches?

Whether or not Rex believed at the time of writing that he was winning the battle against ignorance of the human condition, he felt that it was at least "something real and worthwhile to tackle". History suggests that Rex and his few existentialist allies lost the battle for influence in New Zealand. Our current social climate resembles British-American neo-liberal Individualism more closely than it does European existentialism.

1267 A crisis of confidence in the notion of progress followed after the two world wars. Previously held systems of meaning were increasingly lacking credibility.
1268 See chapter six and seven for further discussion of Rex's critical responses to Cullmann and Barth in this respect.
Many of Helmut Rex’s key concerns are a natural response to his context. Even today, a dispassionate viewing of New Zealand society would reveal similar issues. Many of the matters Rex addresses are ongoing. Against the background of Nazi Germany, Rex is concerned with the apathy of New Zealanders and their *laissez faire* approach to the democratic system. He is well aware of the prevalent anti-intellectualism in New Zealand and notes the tendency of behaviour in such an environment to resemble that of “gadget happy primates.” He is concerned that our citizens develop their potential, and fights against what he considers “the spirit of a philistine suburbia.” To fund this battle Rex seeks a ‘myth that sustains’, giving expression to this myth in those writings which seek to find meaning in history, purpose in eschatology and vitality in the Sunday service.

Certainly, Rex is an evangelist for a certain type of existentialism that was increasingly popular in Europe in his time. As we have seen, this existentialism pervades his work. Rex is deeply concerned that his students occupy themselves with the question of meaning. An existentialist perspective underlies his work in the history of ideas; it also shapes his eschatology, and it is influential in his choice of literary texts to be studied by students. Therefore, it is not surprising that the reader can identify existentialist themes in the analysis contained in his ‘situational’ writings.

While there is a predictability about the appearance of certain themes in Rex’s writing, it is important to notice that he does not attempt to organise his writings systematically. The occasional and fragmentary nature of Rex’s writings is one of their distinguishing features. This is, at very least, an indication of Rex’s ability to live with unresolved tensions and paradox. Ill-health aside - he could at any stage have placed his thoughts in more systematic form, yet it is argued in this thesis that Rex does not favour such a tightly structured approach. Rex himself indicates awareness of the problematic nature of the systematic undertaking in his 1961 letter to Frank Nichol, and deems what we are labelling a ‘situational’ approach, to be the best way of addressing contemporary

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1270 “Gadget happy primates” is a comment Rex has handwritten on ‘Evangelische Akademien’ typescript (RA112: p.4.). Next to a typed comment about the meeting of a particular group in the German ‘Evangelische Akademien’ Rex has handwritten: “The levelling effect of the N.Z. cult of ‘matiness’ - the fear of being different in contrast to the enjoyment of originality”. Rex developed this line of thought further in his address on alcoholism as we shall see below.


social and ecclesial concerns at that point in time. This is consistent with the emphasis he places on theology being done, not according to a 'pre-ordained' ecclesial framework but, with 'our interests' in mind.

Although Rex's interests are broad, as we shall see, they are always able to be linked to what he identifies as religion's task: to rescue man in his humanity. Societal issues which impair man's ability to realise his full humanity drive Rex's specific concerns.

The 'situational' topics

Lloyd Geering notes that when he joined Knox Theological Hall as one of Rex's colleagues at the start of 1960, Rex had already taken a strong personal interest in Maori culture and appeared to be aware of a resurgence that was to become more prominent later. Rex's interest in things Maori goes back further than this. In 1952 and 1953 Rex participated in a series of meetings concerned with Maori and church. He also promoted the establishment of a Maori theological College in Ohope. By 1956 he was already inspiring his own students to discover more about things Maori.

In 1956 Helmut Rex delivered two addresses to the Maori Synod on 'Race Relationships'. As we shall see further, Rex identifies education and awareness of one's racial and cultural history as crucial for the development of a people. These lectures were important for members of the Synod and were discussed widely. James Irwin, who has written a history of the Presbyterian Church's struggle to come to terms with the Maori it sought in its missions, argues that Rex's addresses were significant to the development of an increased emphasis on the importance of autonomy for Maori:

1273 BHR: p.16.
1274 BHR: p.11.
1275 See: Grace and Truth: p.151.
1276 The 1956 Annual report of the Theological Hall Students Union (THSU) records that at the THSU retreat Rex spoke on "The Church and the Maori". Further "Arising chiefly out of Dr. Rex's talk at the retreat, and discussion at the General Meeting, the Committee has approached the Senatus regarding the possibility of sending a deputation of Hall students to the Maori Theological College during the May vacation. Unfortunately arrangements could not be made this year, as the Maori students were going on deputation work during the vacation." OA204, '1956 Annual report of THSU'.
1277 Rex entitled these addresses 'Race Relationships I' and 'Race Relationships II' respectively.
In 1956 the Rev Helmut Rex, Professor of Church History at the Theological Hall, attended the May meeting of Te Hinota Maori where he gave two lectures on race relations, called by A. Moore and M.E. Andrew, editors of A Book about Helmut Rex; [sic] 'Race and Humanity' and 'Maori and Pakeha and the Future'. His aim was to assist Maori members to be as aware as it was hoped the Pakeha church would become about this crucial matter. He tried to make it clear that in talking about race relations the problem is not about 'race' but about 'relations' and pointed out that there could not be true equality between Maori and Pakeha until there was social equality.1279

Irwin regards the emphasis on relationships as useful and traces its development from Rex to the present day.1280 Two further examples can be placed neatly into the 'situational' category along with 'Race Relationships': 'Alcoholism' (1957) and 'Homosexuality' (1962). All three lectures contain analysis of an issue with which New Zealand society was at that time struggling to come to terms. All three offer an attempt, through existentialist analysis, to promote a deeper understanding of the common human factors contributing to society's struggle.

As we shall see further, with a brief analysis of Rex's lecture on Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary approach to eschatology, Rex's demythologised existentialist approach is able to offer a 'situational' response in encounter with unmistakably theological topics. Addressing the National Council of Churches, Rex draws on the philosophy of history, Heilsgeschichte, Hegel and Wittgenstein in his assessment of de Chardin's contribution to eschatology. Finally, the 'Sunday Service', which focuses on church worship, might also justifiably be added to this collection of 'situational' writings. Although the 'Sunday Service' lecture is also aimed at church leaders, its careful analysis and concern to educate people about the practical implications of the human condition rightly understood, has significant parallel with the other 'situational' lectures. In a similar vein, Rex writes on heresies, baptism and creeds.1281 References to the New Zealand situation in each of these addresses on traditional theological topics are evidence that Rex handled each in a one-off 'situational' way. His sermons are similarly focused on the interests of their audience.1282 It is surely no

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1279 Irwin, 'Rise and Fall': p.280f.
1280 Irwin, 'Rise and Fall': p.346f.
1281 Cf. RA005, RA122, BHR: p.263-266.
coincidence that these writings take place alongside Rex's developing interest in hermeneutics.1283

Major case study - 'Race Relationships'

The Maori Affairs Department's journal *Te Ao Hou* was the pre-eminent vehicle for the airing of Maori concerns in mid nineteen-fifties New Zealand. The journal both mirrored and stimulated contemporary Maori thought. In this case study, it is argued that Helmut Rex's 1956 'Race Relationships' addresses to the Presbyterian Church's Maori Synod are a 'situational' response to the (racial) determinism he identifies in *Te Ao Hou's* (then) contemporary analysis of the 'race problem'.

Race relations in New Zealand in the decades immediately following the Second World War were shaped by three key features. The first is the pattern of migration of Maori away from traditional rural homelands into the towns and cities.1284 Second, there were lingering tentacles of Victorian theories of race which shaped the way in which Pakeha ideals were held as normative,1285 and third, the renewed assertion that New Zealand's future identity would be reliant upon an embracing of the ideal of 'one nation'.1286 All three of these themes are found in *Te Ao Hou*, a magazine first published for the Maori purposes fund board by the Maori Affairs Department in 1952.

With articles in both Maori and English, *Te Ao Hou* stepped into the void created by the dearth of publications in the Maori language since 1933. The magazine was edited by Eric Schwimmer, a Dutchman who later published the anthropological study *The World of the Maori*.1287 Schwimmer, sympathetic to Maori concerns, suggested that the magazine should serve as a 'marae on paper', a place where Maori could discuss any subject that affects the

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1283 Rex began teaching a course on hermeneutics in 1955 and his introduction to hermeneutics was completed in 1958. See chapter six of the present thesis.
1286 The 1940s and 1950s are viewed in retrospect by many Pakeha of the time as a period of 'racial harmony'. This is a result of the absence of any strong claims to Maori self-governance. Leading Maori in this period sought success in a way that did not confront the Pakeha social and economic ideals.
general good. The magazine was intended to be a vehicle of expression which would help fertilise the seeds of a Maori renaissance.

Like Schwimmer, Rex was an immigrant interested in matters Maori. By the mid 1950s his name, as that of a respected Christian academic, would have been familiar to many in the Dunedin area, all Presbyterian clergy within New Zealand, members of the Student Christian Movement and the Presbyterian Church's educated laity. It is perhaps then no surprise that he was invited to speak at give key addresses at the Maori Synod's annual meeting just two years after his involvement in the establishment of its theological college.

As we have seen, Rex's 1949 inaugural lecture, and his sermons, as well as his literature lectures from the 1950s onwards contain themes and asides which reflect Rex's interest in New Zealand's sociology. In them he gives expression to his conviction that theology should proceed first and foremost from the interests of its audience. Influenced by German hermeneutic theory and having recently taken up a professorial chair, all of Rex's 'situational' pieces follow his return from doctoral studies in Tübingen in 1954.

The discourses on 'Race Relationships', the first of what are referred to as Rex's 'situational' pieces, although reported only briefly in The Outlook issue of October 1956, appear to have remained a part of popular memory. It is tempting to speculate that the interest they generated was in part responsible for a variety of articles on 'Maori issues' which appeared in the two editions of The Outlook printed immediately after Rex's addresses.

It is surely significant that of The Outlook articles, James Irwin recalls only Rex's addresses in his PhD thesis examining the history of the Maori Synod. These recollections are contained in a chapter discussing the inauguration of the Synod, which records the involvement of those influential in the developing awareness of the need for

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1289See section on 'Our interests and Christ' in the introduction to this thesis.
1289The Rev. C. Robert (Bob) Spracklett was the editor of The Outlook during this period.
1290The September and October editions of The Outlook for that year contain separate articles each entitled “Is there a Colour Bar in New Zealand?” In addition, there are two articles related to work in the Maori Synod in September, and one in October.
1291Irwin, 'Rise and Fall': p.280f. N.B. On the strength of their friendship, it is likely that Irwin was influential in the decision to invite Rex to deliver his 'Race Relationships' addresses at the Synod meeting in 1956.
genuine biculturalism in the Church. Irwin reports Rex's views without significant critical comment. The space devoted to them in his thesis, however, encourages the reader to presume that he regarded them as important to the life of the Synod. As we have noted previously, a more critical review of Rex's work is found in A Book of Helmut Rex. Its editors, Albert Moore and Maurice Andrew, have attempted to place Rex's work within its context. The inclusion of both addresses on 'Race Relationships' in this eclectic book indicates the editors' rightful regard for their importance in an assessment of Rex's scholarship.

In preparation for his addresses Rex consulted all fifteen published issues of Te Ao Hou. His response to the material can be clearly seen in his message to the Synod. The first half of his first address Rex attacks theories of racial determinism and affirms an existentialist understanding of the human condition. In the second half of the address Rex stresses the primacy of 'relationships' to a productive investigation of race relations. Rex focuses on an examination of 'racialism', its history, contemporary manifestations and underlying causes. The second part of this first paper is an explication of human relationships gone wrong. Rex describes one group using tools of domination and exclusion to destroy the freedom of another in its quest for economic, political and social power.

Rex's second address focuses on the possibility of good human relationships and challenges Maori to play their part in the realisation of full human freedom. Rex warns Maori against the danger of 'inverted racialism' - which carries the prospect of becoming enslaved to outworn racial ideology, and the risk of 'oversensitivity' - attributing racist intentions to Pakeha where none are present. In the quest for the realisation of individual autonomy that Rex associates with full humanity, he challenges the tribal basis of Maoritanga on the basis of contemporary anthropological understandings which locate tribal structures in the early phase of a people's development. Consequently Rex asks whether a time

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1294 The Hewitson Library, Knox College, Arden Street, Dunedin, possesses these copies of Te Ao Hou complete with underscoring and marginal notes in Rex's characteristic style.
1295 These studies are today recognised as eurocentric. They were based on the assumption that the peoples studied (frequently Pacific people) belonged to an 'earlier' (and consequently - it was believed) unilaterally inferior stage of human development. The application of these studies to peoples of the Pacific (from whom they were originally derived) highlights the circular nature of this argument.
might come when *Maoritanga* would exist without the tribe. Because Rex sees history (not race) as the key to a people's soul, he advocates historical education as the foundation upon which future race relations should be built, believing that a people must be 'full of its historical destiny' if it wants to move towards a truly human future.

Before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the ‘Race Relationships’ lectures, it is important to recognise that Rex is addressing a church audience - the Maori Synod of the Presbyterian Church. The absence of any noticeably theological language is a feature of Rex’s style and attachment to Bultmann’s program of demythologising. In this address and others of its type, Rex is outlining an accessible version of the Christian hope. Rex is concerned to offer a Bultmannian-type understanding of resurrection life. As we shall see, he achieves this through an appropriation of Sartrean analysis and the message of an ‘open’ world. Rex is keen to stress the choice each self-aware individual is able to make in the 'now'.

**Te Ao Hou - The New World**

The journal *Te Ao Hou* (English - The New World) was intended to be a magazine for the Maori people, providing “interesting and informative reading for Maori homes”. Although the journal’s editors stress that the “Maori, in general, earns his living in the same way as the Pakeha”, in a world without Maori culture, they also state that there are ways in which the Maori could spend leisure time developing Maori recreational and artistic interests, thus making “life in a predominantly Pakeha world more satisfying”.

The following examination of two articles in *Te Ao Hou* is intended to illustrate something of the flavour of this publication when Rex wrote his lecture. At the time Maori viewed the journal as a sympathetic voice. As one might expect - from a twenty-first century perspective the journal appears a little dated. The subsequent increase in awareness of the importance of biculturalism and bilingualism certainly lend their weight to a conclusion that

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1296The name *Te Ao Hou* which translates into English as 'The New World' reflects the naive optimism which characterises the journal. The title seems to acknowledge a new start is necessary, whilst avoiding any implication that the past or present situation might be a source of legitimate grievance.

1297Citations in this paragraph are all taken from Erik Schwimmer's editorial on page one of the first edition of *Te Ao Hou*, No. 1, Winter 1952.
Rex was, in the main, well ahead of contemporary opinion and analysis - as does the waning of importance of theories of race to the race relations discussion.

By today's standards the editorials in the 1950s editions of *Te Ao Hou* are condescending and eurocentric. Maori are talked about in the third person, and the tone is 'preachy'. The swift reassurances of a person's aptitude at work or study, despite being a Maori, stand out glaringly in the third millennium - yet there can be little doubt that the intentions of the editor, and the Maori Affairs department in general were well-meaning. It is hard to believe that their goal of closing the economic gaps and creating social unity would not have been shared by most Maori they attempted to represent.

Rex's reliance on the Maori Affair's Department's magazine implies a regard for its worthiness as a publication. Although he offers no doubt about the sincerity of its authors intentions, his use of the material is far from uncritical. The content of Rex's addresses suggests that he constructed them in response to the values and emphases in *Te Ao Hou* - which identified itself as the voice for (rather than of) educated Maori. Rex reacts against *Te Ao Hou*'-s underestimation of the importance of Maori culture and history to its people. For

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1298 Examples of an implicit belief in the inherent superiority of the 'European way of life' are not difficult to find in Erik Schwimmer's *Te Ao Hou* editorials e.g. "No New Zealander today would agree that New Zealand is in any way part of Asia but nothing could be more important today than to foster the growing fellowship between the Asians and ourselves, by policies such as the Colombo Plan and by social, cultural and intellectual contacts. To the Maori, this fellowship may even have added attractions, because it is so widely recognised that the Maori's remote ancestors were themselves Asians and that cultural and language kinships can still be recognised. Today's great struggle in Asia to develop backward village communities and raise huge populations to western economic standards is perhaps faintly echoed in the Maori adoption of European educational and economic standards". E.G. Schwimmer, editorial in *Te Ao Hou*, Vol.3, No.4, 1955: p.1.

1299 Cf. Unknown Author [possibly the editor - Erik Schwimmer], 'Advice from Opunake' *Te Ao Hou*, [Vol.1], No.3, Summer 1952-1953: p.14. (My italics). - An interview conducted with a group of youths at a school is reported in the following way: "We had a good deal of discussion on the extent to which Maori Culture flourished today. Some suggested it was dying, and the language, too. We asked the head prefect, Albert Wharemata, which language seemed to him the most suitable for expressing his most fundamental utterances, and this boy - whose achievements in the pakeha world so far have certainly left nothing to be desired - answered without hesitation, 'Maori definitely.' Yet the Taranaki community from which he comes contains many successful farmers, and is more modern in outlook than the average."


1301 Rex treats all of the published material in a serious fashion, at no time belittling articles based on an analysis of the human condition fundamentally different from his own. He references his use of material from *Te Ao Hou*, and is explicit in his gratitude to Laughton. At one point he explicitly refers to the Maori Affairs Department. He calls their methods into question, but says "there can be no doubt that it is the sincere intention of the Dept. of Maori Affairs to eliminate all economic discriminations between pakeha and Maori [...]"). RA158, Rex, 'Race Relationships II': p.13. (Hereafter referred to as 'RRII').
example, and as we shall see further, he refuses to depict cultural pursuits as merely the stuff of weekend leisure time.

**Race relations in *Te Ao Hou***

Published in July 1956, the last *Te Ao Hou* editorial available before Rex’s addresses to the Maori Synod is titled ‘race relations’. It offers an example of the tensions operating beneath the journal’s surface. Despite a valiant attempt to reconcile the Maori voice, including its patiently expressed discontent, with the success driven rhetoric of official policy - the reader is left with an impression of growing conflict in race relations. The political stance of the Maori Affairs department predicates an opening declaration that foreign visitors to New Zealand are frequently amazed by the “excellent relationships they notice between Maori and European”. This ‘independent’ viewpoint of the generic foreign observer is used as a tool by the journal’s editor, Schwimmer, to stress the importance of maintaining the impetus of “developing good relations”.

Equality of New Zealand citizens before the law means for Schwimmer that “Generally, Maoris can play any role in the community for which they are educationally, socially and culturally fitted.” This, in his view, sets the climate for the more difficult task of fully accepting the ‘other fellow’ as a human being. In this context, he borrows words from Sir Apirana Ngata to indicate that this difficulty existed not only for the European but also for the Maori.

Further into the editorial, cracks appear beneath Schwimmer’s official gloss. He admits the existence of ignorance, prejudice and harmful consequences, and the protest that current views are not always correct seems a little weak to the contemporary reader:

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1302 Schimmer, editorial in *Te Ao Hou*, Vol.4, No.3, July 1956: p.1. The similarity borne by the title of Rex’s address to that of E.G. Schwimmer’s editorial is noteworthy.


1306 Schimmer, editorial in *Te Ao Hou*, Vol.4, No.3, July 1956: p.1: “Sir Apirana Ngata, in a speech to the Polynesian Society in 1947, stressed that not only the European but also the Maori still did not fully accept ‘the other fellow’. ‘It takes a long time’, Sir Apirana said, ‘to make up your mind that he is a human being - longer perhaps than you realize.’”
If we were honest with ourselves and recognised our lack of understanding, the harm would perhaps not be so great. But few people do: it is far more common to accept the first idea that comes along 'all Maoris are lazy' or 'all pakehas are mean' - and judge our fellow men of another race as if such rules of thumb were absolutely true and trustworthy. Instead of making a real effort to understand the 'other fellow', who may in fact be a most industrious or generous individual, we close our eyes and remember merely some current belief - sometimes partly right, often mainly wrong - about all Maoris or all pakehas.\footnote{Schwimmer, editorial in \textit{Te Ao Hou}, Vol.4, No.3, July 1956: p.1.}

The fact that tensions existed beneath the official face of Maori Affairs Department policy is perhaps not surprising. As a government department, it was keen to present itself as progressive and successful, both to those it claimed to represent and to the broader voting public. As we shall see, Rex is much more up front about the existence of a 'problem' than is \textit{Te Ao Hou}.\footnote{RA158, Rex, 'Race Relationships I': p.9. (Hereafter referred to as 'RRI').} There is also a notable lack of paternalism in Rex's writings. He is adamant that there are decisions to be made that nobody can answer "except you Maoris".\footnote{Cf. RA158, Rex, RRII: p.5.} We shall further see that this background of paternalism provides Rex with the perfect canvas upon which to outline his existentialist convictions.

\section*{Laughton on Maoritanga}

Of particular importance to Rex's addresses are the 1954 Spring and Winter editions of \textit{Te Ao Hou}\footnote{J.G. Laughton, 'Maoritanga' in \textit{Te Ao Hou}, Vol.2, No.4, Winter 1954: pp.10-12; J.G. Laughton, 'Maoritanga: Part II' in \textit{Te Ao Hou}, Vol.3, No.1, Spring 1954: pp.17-18.} which contain, in two parts, an article written by The Very Rev. J.G. Laughton on \textit{Maoritanga}. Laughton, a key figure in the development of the Maori Synod of the Presbyterian Church, lived his life among the people of Tuhoe. This means that his writing is well informed. Laughton's articles are refreshingly free of the condescending tone which jars with the twenty-first century reader of the journal. Laughton identifies language, art, community, religious life, and the importance of tribal lands as five key aspects of \textit{Maoritanga}, and they feature in the definition he offers in the first part of his article:

The keynote to Maoritanga is the fact that the Maori race has distinct racial personality, and what we have come to term Maoritanga is the expression of that distinctive personality in language, poetry and art, customs and usage, rite and ceremony, work and play. Maoritanga, secondly, is the recognition of that distinctive racial personality and the accompanying pride of race, and the corresponding demand that the sacred rights of that racial personality shall be
recognised and safeguarded. In the third place, Maoritanga is the action taken to
secure provision and satisfaction for that racial personality.\textsuperscript{1311}

Laughton's articles are particularly important because they are a key source of
information for Rex's 'Race Relationships' addresses.\textsuperscript{1312} Although he approves of the basic
picture Laughton paints of Maoritanga,\textsuperscript{1313} Rex questions some of Laughton's basic
assumptions. Firstly Rex calls into question the necessity of tribalism for Maori identity, and
then secondly he emphasises the individual's freedom of choice. The way in which both of
these challenges implicitly undermine Laughton's concept and language of 'racial personality'
will be more closely examined anon.

Material in the second part of Laughton's article (appearing in the Spring 1954
edition) was in danger of creating controversy. Consequently, in contrast to the first part,
the introduction to part two is supplied by the journal's editor:

This is the conclusion of Mr Laughton's essay on the surviving elements of Maori
Culture, often referred to as Maoritanga. The elements he referred to in the last
issue of \textit{Te Ao Hou} were language, art, social structure and religion. The views
expressed in this article regarding Maori land are Mr Laughton's own and in some
instances are contrary to considered Government policy which is supported by
many Maori leaders. It should be stated that power does exist at present for Maori
groups to form incorporations, thus maintaining a common ownership and yet
allowing the land to be made fully productive in accordance with the national
interest.\textsuperscript{1314}

At this and other points in the journal, the conflict between \textit{Te Ao Hou}'s status as an
official government publication and its stated aim "to be a Marae on paper"\textsuperscript{1315} becomes
apparent. The article was published, but with an explicit disclaimer. The Maori Affairs
Department's Hunn report later carried this 'official stance' on land issues into its
recommendations - again preferring 'the national interest' to the stated desires of Maori
spokespersons. Tellingly, Schwimmer's editorial in the edition following part two of
Laughton's article once again attempts to put a positive gloss on the race relations situation.

\begin{footnotes}
\item RA158, Rex, RRII: p. 5.
\item RA158, Rex, RRII: p. 5: "You have every right to be proud of your language, your arts, your social manners
(or etiquette), your strong religious sense, and your attachment to the soil. All this has fashioned your soul and
has made you one of the most charming and intelligent people of the earth".
\item Laughton, 'Maoritanga: Part II' in \textit{Te Ao Hou}, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1954: p. 17.
\end{footnotes}
He opens with the declaration that it is “remarkable that the rapid growth of the Maori population has done so little to cause strain in Maori-Pakeha relationships”, which he quickly follows up with a warning, presumably inspired by repercussions from Laughton’s articles that: “The only danger signal - and it is a faint one - is a certain amount of friendly discussion heard lately about words like segregation and Maoritanga”.

In the text of his race relations addresses, Rex makes his reliance on Laughton’s material quite explicit and indeed notes the debt he feels to Laughton for his understanding of land issues and Maoritanga. His discourse places elements of individualism underpinning his existentialist analysis in discussion with the outline of Maoritanga offered by Laughton.

‘Race Relationships’ - Helmut Rex’s response

As we have seen earlier in the present thesis and in line with his interest in the individual (an issue explored more fully in his M.A. thesis on Kierkegaard) Rex opposes all forms of determinism. According to Rex, theories of race place limitations on each who adheres to them, restricting the freedom of the individual. In this respect Rex’s response is directed against articles in Te Ao Hou containing talk of ‘heredity’, of the ‘true to-type Maori’, and so forth. It stands in contrast to Laughton’s use of the language of ‘racial personality’. It is for reasons of individual freedom that Rex floats the idea of a Maoritanga freed from ‘tribalism’. He opposes both cultural determinism since this encourages the individual to fit into a pre-conceived mould, and attempts of one people to limit the destiny of another.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Rex is deeply interested in the relations individuals have with each other. There is little doubt that a fascination with human relations lies behind Rex’s preoccupation with literature and the insights of depth psychology for example, and we have noted that this interest is derived from Rex’s reading of existentialist philosophy and the gospel. In line with his interest in human relationships, it is worth noting that Rex’s use in his lectures of the term ‘race relationships’ rather than ‘race

1318 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.5.
relations’ appears to be an intentional strategy adopted to underscore his previously stated belief that:

[...] the problem of God is a human problem concerning the relations of men with each other. For to say that there is a God means in the last resort that we believe that life has a meaning from which the lives of individuals derive their meaning in a world they have in common.1319

The first half of Helmut Rex’s first ‘Race Relationships’ lecture is concerned with providing support for his conviction that “with us humans it is not our race that matters but our history.”1320 He goes about this task, firstly by explaining contemporary racial theory which examines humanity’s parallels with the animal world, before then going on to outline an existentialist analysis of the human condition.

**Rex on anthropological theory**

Rex opens the address with a synopsis of anthropological racial theory. Examining the lectures as a whole, one can see that this is done in an effort to shift the race relations discussion away from one based largely on racial characteristics to one based around a Sartrean influenced understanding of what is common to humanity. By first addressing the identifiably ‘status quo’ issues of the race relations discussion, Rex enters the topic at the level of his audience’s interest. Then, having demonstrated the inadequacies of the current racially based discussions, Rex is free to shift the focus for the rest of his lectures towards more creative solutions.

Rex’s conviction that races vary little in their aptitudes is underscored for him in his reading of anthropology. The dangers of categorising people according to racial theory that result from an incorrect understanding of anthropology appear all too familiar to the German refugee. Rex uses the Nazi custom of correlating the terms ‘race’, ‘blood’ and ‘soul’ as an illustration of these dangers. Here, according to Rex, factors of race, aspects which have only “a very remote importance for the formation of our character”, are attributed an inflated importance by those who sympathise with this model. Proper perspective insists, in

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1320 RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7.
Rex’s view, that “[r]ace can be no more than one among many raw materials on which man leaves his mark as he shapes his historical destiny”. 1321

In the analysis of anthropological racial theory, Rex relies upon Professor Robert Lowie, who was regarded by his contemporaries as an authority on the subject. 1322 Lowie’s theory which Rex faithfully relays, determines that there are four races which constitute separate ‘breeds’. According to this theory Polynesians (including Maori) are deemed a mixture of the first three races.

Rex elaborates on Lowie’s conclusions to emphasise what he calls his first “very important point”. Stating his case more succinctly than Lowie, Rex argues that not only the Polynesian peoples, but “all peoples as they exist today on earth are of mixed race. There are no pure races among men; we are all mongrels.” 1323 This revelation of the ‘mongrel’ nature of humanity pre-empted Rex’s declaration that this situation, far from being tolerable, is to be encouraged. Rex’s reading of the history of ideas leads him to believe that historical progress is achieved through the cross-pollination of locally cultivated thought. According to Rex:

Now, while it is a tragedy for a dog to be a mongrel, it is not so for a human. On the contrary, nothing is so stimulating for the development of the human race as contact with other people, and nothing as harmful to the members of the human race as isolation. If history teaches us one lesson, it is this: the human race depends for its welfare on the interchange of ideas and institutions and finally intermarriage while isolation condemns it to stagnation. 1324

History provides plenty of examples of migration and intermarriage. Rex maintains that ‘even’ the Jews, “who have insisted on their racial identity more than others” are far from a pure ‘breed’. 1325 It is to the topic of intermarriage that Rex returns at the end of his first address. For him, it is the final test for determining whether racial equality exists or
He believes that the vast majority of 1950s' New Zealanders would prefer their offspring to marry someone of the same race, but he indicates that the reasons for this may not be 'racial' - a point he promises to return to in his second address.

Racism and the importance of history

While Rex is willing to admit of racial prejudice that "there is less [...] in this country than in any other country similarly placed", and that "There is no doubt about it that the old colour prejudice and race discrimination are dying", he identifies racism in long established attitudes:

My general impression is that pakehas discriminate against the Maori still today to the extent that they assume quite generally that a pakeha is a decent chap until they have proof to the contrary, while of the Maori they expect that he proves himself first before they are fully satisfied that he is a decent chap.

This general attitude is for Rex an example of 'racialism', a problem that Rex does not think will be solved through a focus on the racial aspect of race relationships, but rather, through those aspects of our humanity which separate us from the animals. In this vein, the first lecture is concerned with building an argument for history as basic to one's humanity. It will be seen that this argument provides the building blocks for the stress in Rex's second address on the importance of mutual historical understanding for the benefit of future race relations.

Where racial theory's use of the terms 'breed' and 'race' cause us to view humans as animals, humanity's uniqueness is recognised in its sense of history according to Rex. "Animals have no history; they have race; only men have a history". In order to enhance understanding of the issues involved, Rex repeats his message in a number of forms:

1326RA158, Rex, RRI: p.15.
1327RA158, Rex, RRI: p.15.
1328 RA158, Rex, RRI: p.14. Rex cites as examples of the dying of race discrimination - firstly, the majority Western response to South African apartheid, secondly, South Africa's proposal to send diplomats to the independent Gold Coast, and finally, the formal advances in race relations in the USA.
1329RA158, Rex, RRI: p.15f.
1330RA158, Rex, RRII: p.12.
1331RA158, Rex, RRI: p.5.
1332RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7.
Man must have a future in order to be able to live as a man. When a people looks to the future we say that it has a strong 'historical' sense: that it is full of its 'historical' destiny; then it will also be able to look back to the past: its 'history'; that is to say, then it will have a story to tell that is worth telling, a story that may cover many centuries: a story that is expressed in myth, legend, saga, tradition, record, genealogy and handed from generation to generation.\textsuperscript{1333}

Openness to the future is what Rex deems in the first instance to be the essential distinction between humans and other animals. In the second, the nature of that future is the feature which distinguishes one people from another. Openness to the future involves a sense of continuity. The individual must be able to make decisions against a background of personal and communal history. Thus, for Rex, the story of a given people is also what singles them out from other peoples. He insists that “[i]t is our history that is important to us humans and not our race, for it is to our history that we owe our soul and not our race”.\textsuperscript{1334} Consequently Rex believes that an appreciation of the Maori soul is to be most adequately gained from historical sources: the arts, customs, myths and legends of Maori.

Making decisions against a background appreciation of one’s individual and cultural history distinguishes human existence from a “state of animality and apathy” argues Rex.\textsuperscript{1335} He expresses these same sentiments in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, juxtaposing an ‘open’ and a ‘closed’ world. The open world of the individual is characterised by a free welcoming of new stimuli which may come in the shape of new ideas, cultures and behaviour patterns. Conversely, paternal benevolence offered by a conquering people with its consequent reduction in responsibility and freedom, closes the world of the subject or slave people. In this case, it “is the master who opens and shuts the door. The slave is no better off than a pet animal”.\textsuperscript{1336}

Rex considers that it is “not entirely unjustified” to speak of man in terms of ‘breed’ or ‘race’, citing human similarities with other mammals as a justification for this view. However, in a style that will become familiar to the reader of Rex’s later lectures on ‘Alcohol’ and the ‘Sunday Service’, Rex prefers to focus on the ‘open world’ which separates man from the ‘closed world’ of the animals. In line with existentialist dogma Rex believes that

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7.
\item RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7f.
\item RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7.
\item RA158, Rex, RRI: p.11.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
humans can change their situation "leaving their own skin" while animals are "hide-bound in the most literal sense of the term".  

According to Rex, for human beings to be human rather than merely animals they must be able to 'leave their skins' - that is, they must be in a position both to understand their situation and to change it. While a surface reading of Rex's text finds emphasis falling on understanding of the human condition rather than change; Rex presumes correct (existential-historical) understanding to be both precondition and catalyst for meaningful change in the lives of individuals. His unwillingness to describe the exact nature of resultant change is typically existentialist and arises from the belief that the authentic decision of any given individual is dependent upon the specific historical situation.

The human condition in a nut-shell

As his earlier article on "Existentialist Freedom" aptly demonstrates, Rex relies heavily on Sartre for his understanding and exposition of the human condition. In this first 'Race Relationships' address Rex makes perhaps his clearest statement about the human condition. Although his understanding builds upon the thought of Sartre and other prominent existentialists, the expression is unmistakably 'Rexian'. In a few brief paragraphs Rex offers a synopsis of the concepts he is most passionate about dispersing. This view of the human condition is one he seeks to convey in many sermons, in his teachings on

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1337RA158, Rex, RRI: p.5: "[I]f we wish to get a proper idea of what is the true nature and condition of man we must not look to what man has in common with animals but to those features which single him out from the animal world and put him in a class all by himself. Of these the most important difference is this: The animal lives in a closed world while Man lives in an open world. What does that mean? It means that the animal cannot leave its skin, while man can do precisely this (It demands much effort and determination on his part, to be sure, but the important point is that he can do it). Of the animal it is true to say that it is 'hide-bound' in the most literal sense of that term".

1338Sartre gives expression to this existentialist tenet succinctly in his novel The Age of Reason (part one of Sartre's tetralogy Roads to Freedom). The narrator offers discussion of freedom by explaining the Philosophy Professor Mathieu's ideas, as a context to his student Boris' ponderings: "[... ] in the philosophy class there had been a good deal of lively interest in Communism, and Mathieu had evaded the issue by explaining what freedom was. Boris had promptly understood: the individual's duty is to do what he wants to do, to think whatever he likes, to be accountable to no one but himself, to challenge every idea and every person. Boris had constructed his life on this basis, and he kept himself consciously free [...]. As to freedom, there was no sense speculating on its nature, because in that case one was then no longer free." J.P. Sartre, The Age of Reason, trans. Eric Sutton (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947) p.163.

1339Lanc!fall 19, Sept 1951: pp.209-216. See chapter four of this thesis for a detailed discussion of Rex's articles on Sartre.
existentialism, and in his situational writings. According to this view there are two features, unique to human beings, which dictate that the human world is an open world:

1/ man alone can take himself and look at himself (like a picture) and pass judgment on what he sees: he alone among all creatures can approve or disapprove of himself; and not only that: he can also set to work and make of himself something that is more to his liking and of which he can approve more readily; and

2/ man can do all this, because he has in addition the ability not only to look at his own person or at this, that and the other person, but he is also able to form a picture in his mind of what all these individual men have in common and so he comes to think of mankind as a whole (and in a similar manner he is able to handle other spheres of his experience).  

Rex labels the first ability man's 'freedom', and the other his 'power of abstraction'. He is keen to stress that these two are humankind's unique possession, and uses dry humour to understate the sense of surprise which would result from a demonstration of these qualities by a dog. The free reign of these faculties is of paramount importance for Rex. He is passionate about expounding the virtues of their employment, and the consequences of their restriction. For Rex, these faculties result in the individual's ability to:

[...] create new worlds for himself: [Man] can conceive of new ideals: devise new institutions: inaugurate new behaviour patterns: cross the barriers of his own individual upbringing and of the customs of his own people and move among people of a different class and nation, shed old habitats and acquire new. In other words, his world is open and not closed. In fact, his whole life depends on his world being kept open. Close his world, and he sinks into a state of animality and apathy. He becomes like one who is not much better than an animal, and sometimes something worse than an animal.

These last words of warning adumbrate the nature of Rex's understanding of the problem he is addressing. Racism is, for Rex, part of a broader phenomenon which involves the prejudice of one group prompting action which has the effect of closing another group's world. The second half of his first lecture is therefore devoted to exploring the nature of discriminatory relationships. Rex sees difficulties in relationships arising as a result of the "barriers that men erect in their competitive struggle for wealth, social station and political

1340RA158, Rex, RRI: p.6.
1341RA158, Rex, RRI: p.6.
1342RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7.
Accordingly, Rex sees the problem of race relationships arising as a direct result of the imperialist expansion of the 19th century. Rex depicts the race factor, opportunely seized upon by the power-holders at a time when self-conscious racial theory was beginning to emerge, as purely contingent. Rex asserts that the relatively recent means of maintaining the subjugation of a conquered people through the attribution of inferiority to their colour or race, has been used as an effective weapon by the white conquerors to destroy the subject people's self-respect, "plunging the iron right into their soul".

In contrast to the positive gloss put on the race issue in New Zealand by the editor of *Te Ao Hou*, Rex states that there is a problem with race relationships in this country. Having discussed the limited value of discussion based on race for an appreciation of the human condition, Rex stresses the nature of the relationships between Maori and Pakeha. It is his clearly stated opinion that "[t]he problem does not lie with the race but with the relationships".

**Race relations then and now**

Rex's description of theories of 'race' as a convenient weapon used for the purposes of colonial expansion is echoed in current analysis. More recent studies of race relations in 1950s New Zealand have benefited from decades of debate, reflection and perspective. The similarities they bear to Rex's critique is a credit to his critical faculties and clear-sightedness.

Angela Ballara traces the history of Pakeha prejudice against Maori through a critical reading of race issues in the editorials, articles and letters of newspapers of the day.

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1344RA158, Rex, RRI: p.11.
1345RA158, Rex, RRI: p.9: "It proved convenient and effective to those who were the cause of the strain and who were in a position to lord it over the rest of mankind".
1347RA158, Rex, RRI: p.9.
Linking this information with a detailed assessment of official policy yields a consistent pattern of stereotyping and prejudice. More often than not, prevailing attitudes were fuelled by unacknowledged eurocentric convictions. Particularly influential, in Ballara’s opinion, were theories of racial determinism, which formed the background against which the British Empire acted in its colonisation of New Zealand. The prevalent belief that ‘coloured’ peoples belonged to a lower order according to nature, influenced the attitudes and interactions of settlers in New Zealand.

By the mid 20th century few New Zealanders recognised the intrinsic equality of races, preferring instead to attribute eurocentric valuations of ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ to the various cultures of coloured peoples. Paternalistic Europeans sought to ‘raise’ the status of various races to that of their own ‘race’. Actually they were seeking to make others conform to the European way of doing things. In this way, many confused equality with conformity. Remnants of the connected belief that civilising the world was ‘the white man’s burden’ are identifiable in the strands of benevolent paternalism found in Te Ao Hou, the official publication of the Maori Affairs Department. It is significant that the racial determinism that this kind of paternalism fed off was identified by Rex even in the mid nineteen-fifties as he prepared his addresses for the Presbyterian Church’s Maori Synod. Although writers expressed views similar to Rex’s in the 1960s, Rex himself was clearly ahead of social opinion at the time of writing.

Breaking barriers

Rex cites various examples of restrictive social and political barriers which “are erected by those in power” and have to be “broken down by those who do not belong”, before declaring that there is a difference between the examples he has quoted and the working of the same pattern in the case of race relationships. In contrast to other forms of imposed social hierarchy, Rex finds that “[t]he barriers which the white man has erected in

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1350 Ballara: pp.170-175.
1351 Ballara: p.113. See ‘The Burden of Inequality’: pp.111-118 for a broader discussion of prejudice around this period.
1352 RA158, Rex, RRI: p.12.
order to eliminate the coloured man as a competitor are infinitely more difficult to break down." Rex offers the following four reasons for holding this view:

1) the white man is economically far stronger than the coloured man because of his tremendous superiority in the handling of tools (this is particularly obvious when a people who has just emerged from the stone age is confronted with a people who has left not only the stone age far behind but even the first difficulties of the industrial revolution);

2) the white man's social superiority (through his economic and political power he insists that the most despicable member of the white race counts for more than the most exalted member of the coloured race);

3) the white man's political power (as the conqueror he is also the ruler);

4) the stigma which the white man has put on skin colour other than his own closes to the coloured man those chances of breaking down the barriers which the Scotchman [sic] still has in an Irish community or the Catholic in a Protestant community.  

Rex's bald language here may grate a little in our more politically correct age. It is important to recognise that he has, in the first part of his address, gone to great lengths to stress that restricted access to social, economic and political privilege is not a result of inherent or biological racial inferiorities. Rex's second address reveals education as the key to removing existing barriers. It is, however, worth noting at this point, that Rex appears to assume that a shift from tribalism to individualism is an 'inevitable progression' that 'primitive peoples' will make once they are exposed to its 'superior ideals'.

Rex's text contains another underlying assumption. He envisages the Pakeha/European world as an 'open world' to which Maori would wish to aspire. It is based on his conviction that a combined rather than segregated future is desirable for New Zealand.
possibility not seriously explored by Rex is a Maori assertion of autonomy. These convictions and the reasons behind them are made more explicit in Rex’s second address, but it is important to note their existence at this stage.

Before summing up his first lecture, Rex describes the steps in the process to equality to be gleaned from twentieth century history. The racial barriers, reports Rex, disappear first in the political sphere, next in the economic field, and finally in the realm of social status. The latter two are closely connected in Rex’s mind “particularly in a new country where wealth counts for more than learning”. It is this process which Rex hopes to speed up through the proposals contained in his second address.

‘Race Relationships II’

The analysis of race relations offered by Rex in his first lecture provides the basis from which the second lecture proceeds. He emphasises this in the opening paragraphs of the second address which begins with a brief summary of its antecedent, outlining the three major points Rex believes he has ‘agreed’ upon with his audience. Firstly, speaking of man in terms of race has been dismissed as unhelpful because it assumes a view of man as one animal alongside others, rather than providing a focus for understanding ‘what it really means to be a human being’. For Rex, a focus other than race must provide the answer to the problem of race relationships. Secondly, having dismissed ‘race’ as the primary category for discussion of the race relationships problem, he stresses the centrality of human relationships to a solution. Rex’s analysis of the problem locates its kernel in the conqueror’s desire to eliminate competitors in the quest for economic, social and political status. Thirdly, “racialism [...] a creed that takes the superiority of one’s own race for granted and that looks with hatred or contempt at any other race” is shown to have been one of the most effective weapons of western imperialism in this struggle for power. “It was the iron that

to the dominant racial theory of the time, this meant Renate (Rex’s wife) was considered to be ‘of Jewish descent’.

plunged right in to the coloured man's soul, because it robbed him of his self-respect and marked him out as irredeemably inferior".1359

A loss of self respect

Rex extrapolates from the conclusions of his first address. He is convinced that the white man's political dominion and economic exploitation are less influential in the coloured person's contemporary situation than the wounds racialism inflicts on their people's legitimate pride. A loss of self respect is the reason why it continues to be difficult to look at the issue of race relationships dispassionately. Similarly, Rex believes that a sense of shame affects the white man's understanding of race relationships - a shame of injustice done. The shame of the perpetrator "is not always openly acknowledged but [...] is nevertheless there".1360

Rex argues that the fears associated with being an oppressed minority cause the white man further difficulty in attempts to look at issues of race dispassionately. He has "a sense of fear; both fear of being outnumbered by the coloured man and fear of retaliation".1361 Rex believes that a characteristic of fear is its self-fulfilling nature; indeed, for him, it is the worst of all motives:

There is no power as destructive as fear. You all know that fear can paralyse us to such an extent that we can no longer act. But fear can also force us into aggression. You observe a fierce aggressive look in the face of a man. What is behind it? Maybe, his fear that you will pass him by without greeting him; maybe that he is afraid that you are despising him for his shabby clothes; maybe that he is afraid that somebody will take his job from him, and there [are] hundreds of such fears that can force him into an attitude of aggression.1362

Rex allows an understanding of the human condition influenced by depth psychology, Jungian analysis and existentialism to cast light on other academic pursuits. As we have seen, in this regard, he is influenced particularly by Künkel, Hesse, Sartre and Kierkegaard.1363 It is therefore not surprising that he uses psychological understandings to

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1360RA158, Rex, RRII: p.2.  
1361RA158, Rex, RRII: p.2.  
1363RA003, Rex, Untitled response to Breward: p.9f. See introductory chapter, chapter one, chapter three and chapter four of the present thesis for discussion of these influences on Rex.
highlight the unhelpful contribution of 'fear' to the issue of race relations. This is a good example of Rex's ability to identify the immediate 'human' interests that underlie the academic task as he envisions it. Also effective in relating effectively to an audience, is Rex's narrative style. On the subsequent page of this lecture, Rex relates a personal story which draws attention to the value of a detached viewpoint.\textsuperscript{1364} His style is often inductive, citing particular examples which back up a general case, as here in the example of an observed 'look' on the face of a man.

According to Rex, the spirit of resentment is no less destructive than the spirit of fear. Where these potentially destructive forces are present, a 'creative' rather than 'negative' attitude is called for.\textsuperscript{1365} From Rex's self-pronounced position of detachment, he identifies the danger of 'inverted racialism' as the 'negative' approach needing to be avoided. He defines inverted racialism as:

that attitude of mind where the coloured man fights back with the same weapons with which he has been originally attacked by the white man, proclaiming now the superiority of his own race and looking down on the white race as inferior, pursuing \textit{[sic]} a policy of segregation and frowning upon the practice of intermarriage.\textsuperscript{1366}

This is a mistaken approach in Rex's view, and is not to be confused with a justified pride in one's own race of the sort necessary for the recovery of self-esteem. By "covering up his deficiency by turning to aggression, using the weapons which the white man is at long last prepared to discard", the reactionary coloured person is deemed to enter a "new servitude and dependence" and becomes "the slave of the pakeha's outworn ideas".\textsuperscript{1367} Rex is convinced that were Maori to go about claiming their inalienable rights to human dignity in this manner, it would represent a major tragedy for New Zealand.

\textsuperscript{1364}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.3: "When I was travelling home from England on the Ruahine they were organising one night a question and answer game. One of the organisers, an unmarried Anglican priest, asked me whether I would be willing to answer some of the questions that dealt with marriage. To which I replied, "Why not answer them yourself, after all, you can talk about marriage with a far greater detachment." Now, if there is any advantage in my position, it is that I can talk about the relation of Maori and pakeha with far greater detachment".

\textsuperscript{1365}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.4.

\textsuperscript{1366}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.3f.

\textsuperscript{1367}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.4.
Rex asserts that the coloured man’s proper recovery of self-esteem is vital for both races as a basis for true partnership. Rex’s emphasis on partnership hints at his desire for genuine biculturalism - a desire less apparent in official government publications of the period.

Justified pride, *Maoritanga* and individualism

Having described a negative approach Maori might take to race relations based on what he regards as an inadequate method of recovering self-esteem, Rex outlines what he thinks constitutes a justified pride in one’s own race. It is not only as a counterbalance that he offers this appreciation of Maori history, culture and values, but also as a means of adding weight to the next challenge in his address.

The proximate challenge to the tribal basis of *Maoritanga* calls into question one of the culture’s basic presuppositions. It is a challenge which could otherwise easily be dismissed by a Maori audience familiar with well meaning advice given by Pakeha only superficially aware of Maori values. The way Rex labours his challenge reveals his deep-felt sense of its moment. He acknowledges that “it is inconceivable to think of the Maori without his tribe. The two belong together. The loyalty to the tribe is part of his soul”. This follows Rex’s appreciation of the Maori arts, etiquette, religious sense and soil attachment as described by Laughton. Rex believes that these factors have “fashioned the Maori soul” and made the Maori “one of the most charming and intelligent people of the earth”. This gravity underlies Rex’s challenge which he frames in the following form:

Now, I want to put to you a question which I am not prepared to answer. In fact, I cannot answer it, because there is nobody who can answer it except you Maoris. Do you think that Maoritanga and tribalism belong together forever or do you think that there will come a time when it will be possible to have Maoritanga without the tribe? Perhaps, the whole question seems preposterous to you.

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1368 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.4.
1369 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.5.
1370 Te Ao Hou articles in No. 8 & 9.
1371 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.5.
1372 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.5.
Rex insists that the philosophers' task is to ask questions which "make us sit up and look with new eyes at what we took for granted".\(^{1373}\) What is an impossible thought today may be a relevant question for tomorrow. The social organisation of other peoples is also determined by tribal loyalties, argues Rex. The matter is not as simple as the complete identification of \textit{Maoritanga} with tribalism, nor on the other hand is it yet possible to imagine \textit{Maoritanga} without the tribe.

\textbf{\textit{Maoritanga}} without tribe? A naive question? Timely or time-conditioned?

That Rex offers no specific references to support his assertion of the inherent superiority of an individualist ethic is illustrative both of contemporary consensus among social theorists, and the extent of Rex's concurrence with this common view:

Anthropologists and political scientists teach us that the tribe is a primitive form of social or political organisation which, as a people advances in civilisation (I do not mean now western civilisation but any civilisation) it will leave behind and replace by other forms of political and social organisation which look at the individual rather than at the tribe, the clan or the family as the important unit in which these individuals organise themselves on grounds other than blood relations (and attachment to the soil), such as political parties, guilds of arts and crafts (or in more recent years, in trade unions), where they live in cities rather than on the soil and where they organise themselves in clubs and form individual friendships based on common interests.\(^{1374}\)

While much of his address appears prophetic, the lack of critical questioning on this point reveals the time-conditioned nature of Rex's lectures. In our postmodern age, an assumption that one culture is more advanced than another would not be left unchallenged.\(^{1375}\) Such a view would, at very least, require a rigorous defence. Indeed, the bold confidence that the term 'anthropology' once embodied has since dissipated with the recognition of certain eurocentric assumptions. Much early and important anthropological study was conducted on Pacific peoples. More than mere passive observation, the ideological overlay that anthropologists applied to the collected data was later peddled by them as scientific fact to the very Pacific peoples who were originally the objects of

\(^{1373}\)RA158, Rex, RRII: p.5.
\(^{1374}\)RA158, Rex, RRII: p.6.
investigation. Rex fails to highlight the circular nature of this exercise. Like any social science, the findings of anthropology rest on its presuppositions.

Given current scepticism over the notion of societal progress, and a lack of faith in 'objective' criterion that would support the claim that a change in social affiliations might be regarded as a 'progression', the view propounded by Rex appears naive. Further, the social decay recognised in such works as Charles Taylor's *Ethics of Authenticity* illustrates the limitations inherent in a society shaped by the more individualistic attitude Rex is espousing. What has resulted from a withdrawal from 'tribalism' is not a society founded on common interests, but a society of atomised individuals functioning in the first instance as productive cogs in a capitalist wheel.

Taylor points out that the freedom represented by the 'triumph' of liberal democracy is something which has a tendency to lead its citizens toward apathy, instrumental reason and a lack of heroism indicative of a lesser humanity. But Rex did not live to see the extent of this apathy's development. Were he alive today, he might (on the basis of a similar ideal) have identified a 'regression' from the social involvement that characterised the post-war West, towards the isolationist individualism of our society today.

Rex tells his audience that the type of society he has outlined is "the kind of society in which the pakeha lives". Anticipating audience concerns, he proposes a number of caveats to an understanding of a society where, as Rex might put it, the individual's sense of purpose has reached the degree of determination necessary to exchange the ties of blood for those determined by interests and convictions. Firstly, such a shift from tribal loyalties to social patterns based on common interests will not happen overnight, nor should it be expected to, for "that is not the way history takes its course". Secondly, the suggestion that "the Maori lives in the tribe and the pakeha is an individualist" is a misleading one. It is not to be anticipated that an individualist's society will be completely free of familial loyalties. Thirdly, it is to be noted that the generalised 'world of the pakeha' of which Rex speaks is

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1377 A paraphrase of Rex's description of 'the kind of society in which a pakeha lives'. The original is found RA158, Rex, RRII: p.6f.
1378 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.7.
also misleading if it is not acknowledged that the various European peoples manifest blood loyalties, kinship and 'clannishness' in varying degrees. From the examples Rex outlines to support this thesis, he draws the conclusion that just as New Zealanders of European descent have “retained a good deal of their original character, so naturally the Maori would retain a good deal of what is characteristic of him now.”\textsuperscript{1379}

Rex insists that the pattern of individualist society which could develop with roots in \textit{Maoritanga} would be considerably different to Pakeha society. He asserts that any decision regarding the future relationship of \textit{Maoritanga} and tribe must be made by Maori who “alone can know whether the Maori at some future time will be able to leave the tribe behind and yet remain a Maori”.\textsuperscript{1380} Rex believes it important that these questions are examined by those effected by their outcome with as much detachment as possible, for Maori must be able to decide “what [it is] to be a Maori: what belongs to the heart of Maoridom and what is only a passing phase in his [sic] development”.\textsuperscript{1381}

An assessment of the value of this challenge must be central to any critique of these ‘Race Relationships’ addresses. To what extent was Rex’s suggestion that Maori examine the necessity of tribalism to \textit{Maoritanga}, legitimate? Is there merit in placing the notion of the ‘responsible individual’ at the pinnacle of civilisation, or is this simply to impose a Eurocentric notion of ‘higher’ culture where it is unwelcome?

Reducing emphasis on tribal loyalties in favour of individual concerns assumes a primacy of the individual that corresponds with Rex’s existentialist convictions. The tension between the Maori individual’s interests and the concern for \textit{whanan} responsibilities was beginning to be expressed in the relevant post-war New Zealand literature - as those with saleable skills joined the migratory movement towards the towns and cities. Although this movement towards the towns and cities corresponds with Rex’s understanding of ‘advance in civilisation’ he wants Maori to be fiercely self-conscious in their decision making process. To his credit, Rex repeatedly emphasises that the important choices relating to \textit{Maoritanga}'s links with tribalism are only able to be legitimately made by Maori:

\textsuperscript{1379}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.7.
\textsuperscript{1380}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.7.
\textsuperscript{1381}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.7.
The question that you will have to ask yourself in all honesty is this: Is this tendency towards tribalism a sign that the Maori is returning to his roots (in other words: a sign of strength) or is it a sign that he is afraid to come to grips with the world of the pakeha and fight courageously for his status in this country (in other words: a sign of weakness)? That is the important question to which you will have to find an answer sooner or later.\footnote{RA158, Rex, RRII: p.8}

The Maori Synod was clear five years after Rex's lectures that "the fundamental basis of Maori life is the tribe, not the family".\footnote{A Maori View of the Hunn Report, ed. Maori Synod of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1961) p.4.} This was reported in its strong response to the 1961 'Hunn Report' - a response which appears to be influenced in its focus and emphases by Rex's addresses.\footnote{The "Principles underlying the Argument of this Book" are found on page four of A Maori View. Many of the eleven points listed were raised in Rex's 1956 addresses. This is perhaps not surprising given that both were concerned with race relations, however, the order in which they are arranged hints at a reliance on Rex's text. The first is an unequivocal assertion of the equality of Maori and Pakeha before God, the second an assertion of the way relationships should be conducted in the resolution of race problems. Underpinning principles three to eight are beliefs in the value of tribe, culture, land and justice. The last three principles outlined bear strong resemblance to the concluding pages of Rex's second lecture. An awareness of the need for 'a sheet anchor for stabilisation in this period of transition' underlies principle nine. Principles ten and eleven could almost have been written by Rex himself, reading respectively: "That every Pakeha and Maori should strive to overcome every tendency to racial tension" and "that the primary civic need of the Maori people today is education".} Perhaps the primary importance of Rex's lectures is in the clarification it provides of the issues involved. In them Rex is careful to affirm that the responsibility of deciding future direction must lie with Maori themselves.

Rex assumes from his Maori audience unanimous agreement with his assertion that Maori must seek involvement and influence in the Pakeha world.\footnote{RA158, Rex, RRII: p.8: "You will all agree with me that one of the major tasks that face the Maori today is to come to grips with the pakeha world [...] if there is any change to come, it will be slow and gradual as you make your influence felt in the wider life of the community".} He does not, however, have an entirely rosy picture of the Pakeha world, accusing its members of "thoughtlessness and ignorance" and of possessing "crude manners".\footnote{RA158, Rex, RRII: p.9, 11.} In a section of the paper that was later crossed out, Rex considered the Pakeha understanding of sexual morality, sharing his conviction that it was an attitude influenced by fear and guilt and symptomatic of a people "sick in [the] mind".\footnote{RA158, Rex, RRII: p.11. Cf. Rex's comments on sexuality in New Zealand in his alcoholism address: RA001, Rex, 'Some Thoughts on Alcoholism: by the Rev. Prof. H.H. Rex, Knox College, Dunedin', original transcript, 1957: p.5. It is interesting to wonder what motivated Rex to edit significant portions of pp.11-12 from his second address on Race Relationships. Occasional 'crossings-out', frequent footnoting, and brief marginal notes and underlinings are familiar to the reader of Rex's typescripts, however such substantial editing...} These examples support Rex's statements that he believes much in
society needs criticism and change and his stated hope that Maori will one day "quite actively help to bring about these changes". He urges his audience to "meet the pakeha and cooperate with him" in order to make their "contribution to the common destiny of this country", but warns:

I know there is much in the ways of the pakeha that hurts your feelings, but it would be quite wrong to be over-sensitive and to suspect insult where, in fact, you are merely the victims of thoughtlessness and ignorance.

To underscore this point, Rex uses as an illustration a story of the frustration felt by the Pakeha majority living in a street where one Maori household becomes the focus of Maori community life. Frequent singing late into the night leads the neighbours to "wish the Maori would leave the district". This wish, suggests Rex, could be an illustration of racial prejudice "but most likely it is no more than a strong desire to have some nights of uninterrupted sleep". For Rex, it is imperative that insult to race not be suspected in every case where friction arises between two peoples.

**Solutions - overcoming economic discrimination through education**

Rex believes that in a country of New Zealand's age social status is largely dependent on economic status. As a vast majority of Maori belonged to the lower income groups, he finds it natural that some people will "look down on them", but warns that one should not rush to the conclusion that the same people would not look down on anyone who belongs to the same income group regardless of race. Rex's is inconsistent on this point. Despite acknowledgments made elsewhere, he does not here allow for the involvement of racism as a contributing factor in the development of the socio-economic status of the individual. The of a finished typescript is quite uncharacteristic of Rex. It remains to speculate that Rex recognised inconsistency in his own approach. The more modestly expressed criticism of Pakeha etiquette and manners which remains in the final text is certainly more in line with his calls for greater understanding of the heritage and corresponding intention expressed in the actions of other peoples. The accusation that the "pakeha is sick in his mind" is deleted, while the milder contention that he has "crude manners" and would "most likely [...] be quite shocked if he knew that his forms of behaviour are hurting you" remains. RA158, Rex, RRII: p.11.

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1388 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.9.
1389 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.9.
1390 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.9.
1391 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.10.
contemporary situation is more aptly described as one resembling the conundrum of the 'chicken and the egg'.

In a section entitled 'race relations and education', the final part of Rex's second address, he continues to build upon the analysis offered in his first lecture. According to Rex:

A comparative study of race relationships shows that the colour bar and the racial barriers disappear first in the political sphere; they disappear not quite so readily in the economic field. The position of the Maori in this country is a good illustration of this general tendency in race relationships. Even today his economic status has not yet caught up with his political status. Last of all follows equality in social status. The latter is closely linked to economic status particularly in a new country where wealth counts for more than learning. But there are other factors. Old prejudices die hard.

This assessment of the situation forms the basis of Rex's conclusions. The climax of his two addresses is a section which maps a path towards greater equality in New Zealand. Education and wealth, while not synonymous, are linked in Rex's mind. The former is desirable per se, and the latter is often a pleasant derivative. Rex asserts that his Maori contemporaries are generally aware of the benefits of some forms of education. "[T]he Maori today realises how important a knowledge of his own history is for a better understanding of himself". Rex is not so sure that the benefit of a general education is realised. Reported in Te Ao Hou, the conclusions of the Maori section of the National Council of Churches in 1955 add support to his claim that "it is very important that the Maori learns to understand the pakeha through his history, just as it is very important that the pakeha learns to understand the Maori through his history. All this needs education".

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1392 That is, are Maori discriminated against because the majority belong to lower income groups or do they belong to lower income groups because they are discriminated against?
1393 Curiously, Rex here prefers the term 'race relations' to 'race relationships'.
1395 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.12.
1396 Unknown Author [possibly the editor - Erik Schwimmer], 'Problems at Otiria' in Te Ao Hou, Vol.3, No.3, 1955: p.21. Cited in Rex: RA158, Rex, RRII: p.12f. The author of the article in Te Ao Hou states: "It is very interesting that the Maori Section should have laid so much stress on the raising of the Maori standard of education when discussing the race relations problem. It seemed to indicate that the Maori clergy is worried not so much about 'racial' differences in this country as about remaining educational differences. If that is so, what is often called the racial problem could be largely overcome by removing social and educational differences"
1397 RA158, Rex, RRII: p.12.
Again, Rex cites other sources in support of a view that depicts power and money as the cause of racial conflict, and education as the solution:

Race problems are an incident of world economics and the race relations a code of behaviour developing out of the contact and conflict of economic interests of the groups identified as racially different. All the psychological phenomena of group tensions, taboos and fears, direct and indirect aggression urges, jealousies and hostilities are incidental to this basic fact.\textsuperscript{1398}

Thus Rex is able to say that "racial discrimination is, accordingly, basically economic discrimination".\textsuperscript{1399} With this Rex implicitly questions the effectiveness of the Maori Affairs Department's programme to "eliminate all economic discriminations between pakeha and Maori". For Rex, economic equality is achieved, not through a simple redistribution of wealth, but through education: As a rule jobs requiring a greater level of skill pay better, and better education opens the "road to more respected positions in the community". Even where the financial rewards for certain unskilled jobs are greater, in Rex's opinion, the educated individual can have no doubt about who has the "intrinsically more worthwhile job".\textsuperscript{1400}

Rex cites another \textit{Te Ao Hou} article in support of a thesis that "the basic educational needs of Maori and pakeha are identical".\textsuperscript{1401} While it is possible to speculate that the original editorial intention contained an assimilationist undertone, Rex's understanding of these words is qualitatively different. Although he hopes for a day when Maori and Pakeha


\textsuperscript{1399}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.13.

\textsuperscript{1400}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.14.

\textsuperscript{1401}This 'resolution' is cited by Rex - in RA158, Rex, RRII: p.14. It is sourced from page forty-one of an article with an unknown author [possibly the editor – Erik Schwimmer] entitled 'Achievement of a conference' in \textit{Te Ao Hou}, Vol.4, No.2, 1956: pp.37-44. Details of the conference's mandate are sketchy, although the article's author is keen to convey the elevated status of those who sat on the committee. The article was written to convey the resolutions of a 'conference' held in Wellington in November of 1955 the purpose of which was to discuss the future of the education of the Maori child. On page thirty-eight the article records that the committee "decided to ask the Minister of Education" to make some very fundamental changes. The cosy relationship between the minister, the committee and the department's official publication (\textit{Te Ao Hou}) warrant detailed analysis that is beyond the scope of this essay. The article states: "When the Minister of Education, the Hon. R.M. Algie, approved of the committee's ideas about the future education of the Maori child he requested that the resolutions and recommendations should be published in full in a magazine circulating among the Maori people. Because of the unusual importance of these new ideas, \textit{Te Ao Hou} is very pleased indeed to make its space available for a presentation, both in English and in Maori". (p.39f.)
will share in the life of ‘one nation’, what he envisages by this is a New Zealand shaped and stimulated by two cultures:

I do not think that New Zealanders will ever become one mixed race in which both Maori and pakeha have lost their racial identity. Nor do I think this is desirable. There is great charm and stimulus in diversity.\textsuperscript{1402}

However, by advocating that ‘one mixed race’ is not desirable, Rex appears logically to conflict with his previously stated views about the positive ‘mongrel’ status of man. While it is easy to read Rex’s vision of stimulation and intermarriage between cultures sympathetically, this logical inconsistency is surely an oversight and detracts from his argument.

The diversity Rex proposes is not characterised by segregation or division. He supports the idea that Maori and Pakeha should attend the same school, or at least have passed through the same school system. Having received most of his education under the German system, Rex makes reference to his own increased appreciation of the lot of his students once he himself had experienced the New Zealand University system from their perspective. This type of common bonding yields “a stronger chance of understanding each other even in situations of conflict”.\textsuperscript{1403}

In his desire for communication and understanding, Rex demonstrates a strong pragmatic bent. This is also revealed in his approach to the English language. A sound appreciation of English and other languages is for Rex the key to higher education for Maori and Pakeha alike “because the great seats of learning are outside New Zealand in Europe and America”. It is there that the Maori will complete an education that promises higher status in the community.

**Advocating bilingualism in the 1950s**

Rex’s insistence that English is absolutely necessary for the future Maori student does not inhibit him from taking a broader view of the situation than many of his Pakeha contemporaries. He also maintains that “The educated Maori of the future will be

\textsuperscript{1402}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.17.
\textsuperscript{1403}RA158, Rex, RRII: p.15.
bilingual hoping that "the educated Maori of the future does not think that he can do without the Maori language." According to Rex:

If Maoritanga is to live on into the future, then it is necessary that the educated Maoris claim it as their own. If Maoritanga were to survive only among the people who are left behind in the villages then it will be doomed.

Rex completes his address with a warning that "Education will not automatically procure equality of status for the Maori". Pakeha jealous of Maori success in more coveted professions may revert to racist weaponry, and it is not out of the question that Maori may turn to what he has called ‘inverted racialism’ in their fight for equality. If these dangers are to be avoided, Rex maintains, “it is up to both Maori and pakeha to see that it does not happen”.

If Rex’s second lecture ends rather undramatically, it is because the conclusions align themselves well with the analysis he has done in the course of the two papers. The addresses work well together as a whole, and tend to hold the attention of the reader through the coupling of a unique approach to a contentious issue with an unapologetic style. His openness in exploration maintains a constructive tension in the narrative that allows him to champion seemingly contradictory views. Thus he affirms the value in his closing paragraphs both of distinctive racial identities and of intermarriage - reminding his audience in the same breath that “we humans are all mongrels and there is no disadvantage in that nor is it a cause of shame”.

Race Relations - Implications for the practice of theology in New Zealand

Rex's theological approach is practical and portable, appropriate to a New Zealand situation suspicious of any overarching system. To this extent it does not matter whether the audience consists of graduate theological students or members of concerned groups such
as the Church Service Society, Al-Anon, or the Maori Synod of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. Rex's crafted synthesis bears enough resemblance to the piece of 'No. 8 Fencing Wire' of (rural) 'urban mythology' to be acceptable to thoughtful practical folk of 1950s New Zealand. In addressing concrete realities, Rex demonstrates awareness that a response limited to slick intellectual answers would be of little practical use. This he had already made clear in his 1952 radio address on Joyce Cary's play *Mister Johnson*, in which, as we have seen earlier in this thesis, Rex argues:

> In face of all these [race relationship] difficulties, some people, with the best of intentions, exclaim, If people were only reasonable, everything would be so simple ... This is, next to prejudice, about the worst attitude one can adopt, because it leads to a hopeless muddle, since reason functions only on convictions which we hold for other reasons. Or to put it more simply: reason is not in a position to tell us what we must do when we are faced with a moral problem such as the relation of races.

In place of an oversimplified 'reason', Rex's approach proposes deeper understanding of humanity, cultural values and human relationships. This strategy, however, is not plucked out of thin air. It relies upon insights derived from Rex's life-time commitment to learning, which, as we have seen, involved the thought of European thinkers such as Sartre, Hesse and Künkel. Understandings of anthropology, philosophy and sociology feed into Rex's demythologised 'situational' theology.

Rex's lectures are both ahead of, and of, their time. The strength in Rex's approach is to be located in the consistency with which he asserts the vision of a future society where responsibility is shared between Maori and Pakeha in all aspects of life. The reader is able to sense that the partnership he desires is a true partnership of equals. Rex outlines the importance of the recovery of self-esteem among the Maori people. His repeated stress on the necessity of Maori determining their own future through educated decision making (informed by a sense of historical destiny) underscores this point. To this end, he is happy to play the naive enquirer and correspondingly reluctant to assume status of authority on matters Maori.

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1 Al-Anon is a support group for the families and friends of alcoholics.
1 RA047, Rex, "'Mister Johnson' by Joyce Cary (4XD)", final page. Cf. chapter five of the present thesis.
1 As we shall see, Rex adopts a similar approach in his address on Alcoholism. It seems reasonable to be
A major weakness in Rex's approach is its inconsistency with respect to the use of anthropological theory. It is incongruous that the use of anthropological differentiations to examine race issues is discredited as inconsequential and even unhelpful in his first address, when other anthropological conclusions are seemingly adopted without question in the analysis of 'tribalism' as 'primitive' in his second. Rex might say in his defence that in both he is reliant upon, and regards as authoritative, the findings of contemporary anthropology; yet the absence of critical questioning in the second case must be noted. Alone changes in anthropological theory subsequent to the time of Rex's writing mean that these addresses, though they were a worthy contribution to the discussion in their day, show signs of age. Needless to say the race relations conversation in New Zealand has since progressed.

It is argued in this chapter that these race relations addresses, while addressed to a church audience, are an example of demythologised theology. These addresses adhere to Rex's criterion for relevant theology. In the words he would later use to describe relevant theology, Rex here "starts with questions that agitate our minds today and from there feel[s] his way". On this basis, the criterion his former student, Albert Moore, applies to Rex's theological influence might be applied to this 'situational' piece for comparison. Moore has suggested that the influence of Helmut Rex on students of theology might be summed up in three ways:

First, he mediated something of the intensity of his German heritage in theology and wider European culture. This was at a time when Germany was still at the forefront of theological pioneering [...]. Helmut Rex helped to transplant some of the key movements for their implications to be developed on N.Z. soil. Secondly, as he found himself at home here he was able to impart a respect for our local potential and encourage students not to be over-awed by the big names of overseas schools and teachers. [...] Helmut Rex came to serve as one of the catalysts toward greater theological self-reliance and insight into our own N.Z. situation.[...]

Finally his own quest for self-understanding and readiness to learn and change continually set a personal example for the pursuit of truth in theology.

In his 1956 addresses on race relations Rex displays all of the qualities attributed to him by Albert Moore in this summary. Firstly, despite Rex's wariness of the limited role

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speculated that he approached his lecture on homosexuality in the same way.

1414 A.C. Moore, 'The Contribution of Helmut Rex to Theology in New Zealand' in BHR: p.67f.
reason can play in such discussions, his addresses aim to convey the findings of contemporary continental scholarship. His analyses of racial theory, racism and the human condition, provide the basis upon which his model of hope for future race relations is founded. In this, Rex is demonstrably “transplanting key movements for their implications to be developed on N.Z. soil”.

The extent to which Rex’s analysis and input helped to shape the Presbyterian Maori Synod’s very well written *A Maori View* of the Maori Affairs Department’s 1961 ‘Hunn Report’, may remain a mystery. But Moore’s description of Rex as a catalyst is certainly apt. Reports of the time, and the existence of popular memory suggest that these lectures provoked further thought and discussion in the area of race relationships. Also, by entering into dialogue at the level of a fellow enquirer, and by placing Laughton and Schwimmer alongside Sartre, Lowie and Künkel, Rex can be seen to be imparting a respect for local potential.

Moore’s final point can best be demonstrated over a period of time, however, particular qualities are demonstrated in the lectures themselves. Rex’s addresses contained views that stand in sharp contrast with the ‘official’ line of the Maori Affairs Department represented in *Te Ao Hou* and the ‘official’ line of The Synod’s Moderator, The Rev. J.G. Laughton. It cannot be for reasons of personal popularity that he challenges leading voices in Maoridom of the 1950s. This readiness to challenge the status quo of current and even educated opinion offers “a personal example [of] the pursuit of truth in theology”. That Rex’s addresses to the Synod are fondly remembered stands as a tribute to his personal integrity and mana among the people of Tuhoe.

Helmut Rex’s way of applying theological and philosophical insights to the politics of everyday life was new to theology in New Zealand. His 1956 addresses to the Maori Synod modelled Bultmann’s demythologised theology in the New Zealand situation. This

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1415 The Rev. L.M. Rogers, principal of *Te Wananga a Rangi* theological school, was a key influence in the writing of the synod’s report. *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand 1961*: p.216a, 221a. He died in 1984. Members who sat on the committee are also deceased. At the time of writing, the fragmentary remains of the Maori Synod’s archival material had not yet been lodged at the Presbyterian Archives at Knox College Dunedin. At this stage, it remains to be speculated that the ‘principles underlying the argument of this book’ outline on page four of *A Maori View*, were formulated with an eye on Rex’s lecture notes (see earlier footnote).
message of hope had much in common with Bultmann's realised eschatology. Individuals were encouraged to recognise and enact their human freedom, thus inaugurating a new age of human relationship. Rex's already cited ideas about the relationships between individuals lent itself equally to discussion on the relationships between races:

It is only when people come to believe that the meaning of their own lives is bound up with the rest of the human race that they will discover the standards of value which will enable them to live in a world in common.1416

Alcoholism

As has been noted above, Rex frequently draws comparisons with animals when the question of choice, or freedom is involved. An example already cited in the examination of Rex's 'Race Relationships' addresses shows that he prefers the term 'history' to 'race' because he is convinced that "with us humans it is not our race that matters but our history. Animals have no history; they have race; only men have a history."1417 Similarly, in his lecture delivered in 1957 to the Al-Anon Family Group, Rex's paper begins with the observation that alcoholism is a human problem, for it is humans that get drunk, and not animals.1418

Like his race relations papers Rex's 1957 address to an Al-Anon group on alcoholism is a significant example of the application of his Christian existentialist insights in a concrete local situation. As such its validity as an example of theology done in a specific context will be examined. Rex's thesis is that there are a number of significant social factors which contribute to alcoholism in New Zealand. Whilst not wishing to negate the responsibility of the alcoholic for his predicament, Rex argues that the individual alcoholic is better understood against his social background.

In the lecture, Rex discusses the function of alcohol as an exciter of the 'yes' function in man. He speculates as to the reasons some individuals become alcoholics while others do not, and draws attention to the specifics of the New Zealand cultural background that make the local alcoholic's situation more problematic than that of those at risk of

1417 RA158, Rex, RRI: p.7.
1418 The lecture was originally given to a South Dunedin Group and was later published in 'For Ministers Only'. The archived copy is a revised version of the former and served as a transcript for the latter. See: H.H. Rex, 'Some Thoughts on Alcoholism' in For Ministers Only, Vol.9, No.9, November 1957: pp.2-10.
alcoholism in Rex’s culture of origin. Rex assumes in his address that the alcoholic is a male and his coverage of the drinking culture makes links to ideas of masculinity in New Zealand.

A human problem

As he does in his paper on the problem of race relations and in his diatribe on the Sunday service, Rex views the problem first as a manifestation of the human condition and therefore tied up with issues potentially common to the whole of human kind. Since the problem is tied up with our very humanity, Rex implies, it follows that the solution must also be linked with that which distinguishes us from animals:

[...] the use of alcohol is bound up with the manner in which we human beings are made, for we are made very differently from the way animals are made. This is a point frequently overlooked since Darwin taught us to see in the ape our own ancestor. [...] The animal enters upon its stretch of life virtually readymade: its life is governed, as we say, by its ‘instincts’ [...] In contrast to the animals we enter this world anything but ready-made. The making and moulding of us humans is a long and arduous business.1419

Consistent with his Christian existentialist commitments, Rex argues that in a sense each individual is self-made:

In a sense, man is his own creator. He creates his own ideals; he chooses his own set of friends; he makes his own world. In this rests our dignity, raising us far above the animals, but it is also a tremendous burden under which not infrequently we break down.1420

From this starting point Rex outlines a sympathetic understanding of the human condition as experienced by the alcoholic. He cites passages from Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov* and the psychologist William James’ Gifford lectures to explain the function of alcohol.1421 Its powers to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature are noted and Rex

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1419 RA001, Rex, ‘Some Thoughts on Alcoholism: by the Rev. Prof. H.H. Rex, Knox College, Dunedin’, original transcript, 1957: p.1. (Hereafter ‘Alcoholism’).
is at pains to stress its power as “the great exciter of the Yes-function in man”. Rex also draws upon the work of Joyce Cary, the novelist he had earlier lectured on:

All drunk men at a certain stage of release have this desire, to create some extraordinary impression. They lose their timid fears of ridicule and criticism. They pour out their secret thoughts and innocently reveal themselves as philosophers, dreamers, saints and poets.

From the basis of these descriptions, Rex outlines the tragedy of - the alcoholic - one who needs to drink to induce a feeling of well-being or blunt self-criticism: one whose qualities most likely “do not equip him well to face the hard business of living with its tough competitions; its humdrum duties; and the dull ideals of suburban respectability”. When drinking - with inhibitions lowered - the individual man is bound together with other men and a sort of truth is realised in this bonding. Rex argues that the drunkard enjoys an enhanced ability to make believe, boosting his hopes for love, tenderness and the pursuit of visions and dreams, but; ultimately for the alcoholic the ingestion of alcohol is destructive. The alcohol “alienates even those who were once prepared to love and cherish him”. The outcome for the alcoholic is the very opposite of that which he wished to achieve.

A New Zealand problem

Since Rex has invited his audience to view the alcoholic as one who seeks refuge in a world of make believe when he discovers the hardships encountered on the way to creating his own world, it is not surprising to discover that his address involves some speculation about the type of personal difficulties that may drive some to drink and others not. Rex’s analysis of the local context and the difficulties it presents to the alcoholic drive a convincing assessment of 1950s New Zealand. The portrayal’s directness is distinctively ‘Rexian’:

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1423 See chapter five. Rex also cites Cary in his race relations lectures as has been shown above.
1425 RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.3.
1426 RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.6.
1427 RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.3.
1428 RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.2: “Some make a success of life despite [the] odds, others succumb. But man does not so readily give up his ideals, his desire for friendship, and his plans of building a world of his own. When the actual circumstances of life prevent him from achieving this, he begins to make believe and to dream. It is from this angle that I invite you to look at the problem of alcoholism tonight”.
we must take the customs and conventions of our own New Zealand society into consideration if we wish to see the alcoholic’s problem in its social ramifications. In New Zealand alcohol has an extraordinary social importance. [...] This is due to the fact that drink in this country is always a moral issue. [...] If [New Zealanders] drink, they will usually drink in a spirit of defiance or with a bad conscience. One thing only the New Zealander seems to be incapable of, i.e. to be completely natural about his drink and to accept civilised drinking as of course.1429

Rex correctly asserts that this situation leads to a clear division in the entire male population of New Zealand into two classes: “those who drink and those who don’t”.1430 In this model the consumption of alcohol becomes the criterion for judging who is socially ‘in’ and who is socially ‘out’. Rex observes that most men drink but recognises this as only the first step in an analysis of the situation. Two other characteristics of the average New Zealander contribute to the significance of this fact:

The average New Zealander likes to be a good chum: he likes to be together with his fellows, and he likes to conform. The way of the majority is also his way. He hates to be different. If the majority drink, then that determines also his own personal behaviour pattern. To this must be added the other national characteristic: the average New Zealander is an emotionally inhibited man. Though he likes to be with others and talks a great deal, he does not easily open up about himself. In fact, he is virtually a stranger to himself, for he does not cultivate the habit of reflecting about his own motives, likes, and dislikes. He calls this being ‘introspective’, and he dislikes being thought of as ‘introspective’.1431

Rex’s analysis of New Zealand society demonstrates a nuanced rather than a simplistic existentialism. His willingness to see factors contributing to the individual’s predicament as significant - beyond their being merely a canvas against which the individual makes free choices - reveals Rex’s theologically informed response to societal matters one worthy of consideration for adoption and adaptation in the present day.

Drawing on many sources

Rex’s willingness to distil insights from a variety of other disciplines is illustrated in this paper on alcoholism. It allows him as a theologian to offer critique of society that is more widely accessible than that offered by those of his theological contemporaries who adopted a ‘suspicious’ Barthian approach to culture - remaining safely within the preserve of

1429RA001, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.4.
1430RA001, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.4.
1431RA001, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.4. Rex makes a similar comment on the New Zealander’s fear of introspection in RA003: p.10, Q.12.
‘traditional’ theology. His pastiche-like approach to addressing complex social issues is also informed by acute social observation and wider reading.\textsuperscript{1432} Yet Rex’s broad approach yields some results which in historical view appear to be little more than common sense. A good example of this is Rex’s apposite description of the experience of New Zealand men in public bars as similar to that experienced by other men in religion and in open and confiding friendships.\textsuperscript{1433} It is well to remember that the apparent simplicity of his conclusions is borne as much the process of evaluating the worth of a variety of psychological and social methodologies as it was of careful analysis of the material itself. The sentiment of Ian Breward’s observation of Rex’s theological teaching applies equally in this context:

Students did not often appreciate the work which lay behind Rex’s modesty of judgement because of his desire for accuracy. Only rarely did he permit himself witty asides or trenchant comments, which had all the more impact because they were so different from the carefulness and exactness of exposition which he believed to be enforced by his teaching office. There was no place for tendentious opinion from one who was a doctor of the church. It was only in private conversation that he permitted himself a freedom of comment which was fascinating and showed an immense knowledge of individuals and movements of ideas which he couldn’t really use in his general lectures. The margins of his many books and the copious underlinings show the care with which he read and also the width of his reading.\textsuperscript{1434}

As in his investigation of other human phenomenon, Rex interests himself in the situation surrounding the presenting problem - alcoholism - on different levels. From the macro level of New Zealand’s social background as a significant contributing factor to the plight of the alcoholic, Rex shifts to examine societal patterns as they express themselves at the micro level of day to day relationships. This is evinced in Rex’s description of the third key factor he sees affecting the New Zealand social situation as it pertains to the alcoholic’s condition: the separation of the sexes.\textsuperscript{1435} Rex observes that alcohol is used as a social tool to overcome the barriers imposed, both by this strict social division, and by the guilt and shame

\textsuperscript{1432}Wider reading is witnessed to here by references to psychologist William James, novelist Joyce Cary and also in Rex’s references to New Zealand as ‘a man’s country’. Cf. RA001, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.5. The term ‘man’s country’ indicates a familiarity with New Zealand social history of the time. For comparison see John Mulgan’s novel \textit{Man Alone} (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1939) and the more recent social history: Jock Philips, \textit{A Man’s Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History} (Auckland: Penguin, 1987).

\textsuperscript{1433}RAQ01, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.4.

\textsuperscript{1434}Ian Breward, ‘Church history’ in \textit{BHR}: p.58.

\textsuperscript{1435}At least one other social factor needs considering if we wish to understand the alcoholic’s problem fully. This is bound up with the fact that in New Zealand the sexes live apart and that, even today, the mere mention of sex makes the average New Zealander feel ill at ease or even guilty”. RA001, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.5.
surrounding New Zealand sexuality. Rex draws implications for individual relationships from his depiction of the ills of New Zealand society.\textsuperscript{1436} He then returns to the macro level to examine the causes of difficulties in these individual relationships:

For [the alcoholic's] relatives and friends too are products of our way of life in this country. They too like to conform to the very patterns that have proved a real danger to the alcoholic - or possibly they may react in resentment against this pattern: the social pressure on drinking: the fact that their men never open up: that this is a Man's country: that the men always prefer to be among themselves: that they merely tolerate the company of women. It is important to recognise that such reaction patterns exist in oneself, and also that they are not very helpful in making the best human relationships. I think that most men long for the love and warm protection of woman, but most men are too shy to admit it because of wrong ideas about what it means to be male: to be 'masculine', etc.\textsuperscript{1437}

Rex promotes the individual's 'journey to selfhood' as the solution to society's collective ills.\textsuperscript{1438} This approach to the problem rests obviously upon Rex's Christian existentialist faith commitment. It is likely also behind his expressions of distaste at relationships based on convention and 'suburban respectability'.\textsuperscript{1439} While clearly stating that he does not wish to shift blame from the alcoholic to his environment, Rex is at pains to confront the role of boredom in the plight of the alcoholic. Rex's criticism of society's push for respectability at the expense of individual expression should be viewed as a further example of Rex's dislike of the will of the collective taking priority over the development of the individual.\textsuperscript{1440}

In the end, Rex explains the alcoholic's predicament in terms of the individual's personal history and their relationship to a social environment not entirely conducive to ideal human development. Rex's way forward involves, firstly an attempt at self-understanding in order to reveal the conflicts of the soul which contribute to the alcoholic's desire for solace

\textsuperscript{1436}One of the six sections in Rex's paper is devoted to 'The Alcoholic's Relatives and Friends'. RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.5f.
\textsuperscript{1437} RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.5.
\textsuperscript{1438} "For the alcoholic's relatives and friends must not only understand the alcoholic's problem fully if they wish to be a real support to him and help to bring joy and happiness back to his life. They must learn to understand themselves". RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.5.
\textsuperscript{1439}RA001, Rex, 'Alcoholism': p.6.
\textsuperscript{1440}See chapter three.
in drink; secondly, effective communicative relationships; and thirdly, the discovery of new interests in which the alcoholic may take pride and find a new sense of worth and vision.\textsuperscript{1441}

Implications for contemporary theological method may be drawn from Rex’s omnivorous attitude towards resourcing his understanding of the human condition and the compelling nature of the resultant argument. Although society has changed in the intervening years, his description of New Zealand society’s ills in the 1950s and its associated problems has recognisable parallels today. Rex’s lecture on alcoholism, reads surprisingly well nearly fifty years hence.

**Teilhard de Chardin - The history of ideas, evolution and theology**

Rex delivered a paper on Teilhard de Chardin to a National Council of Churches conference in 1961. The intention of this paper is to equip an audience with the background necessary to make a worthy assessment of Teilhard’s theological thought. While Rex is obviously in sympathy with Teilhard’s attempt at uniting the projects of science and theology with an accompanying emphasis on uncovering meaning in history, he is unwilling to wholeheartedly endorse its findings. From the text it is clear that Rex regards Teilhard’s impact as significant even just five years after the author’s death:

Teilhard de Chardin’s book *The Phenomenon of Man* has created something like [sic] a sensation. It will probably come to rate as one of the books of our generation. Its author, a Frenchman, [...] was both a distinguished professional scientist and a member of the Society of Jesus. As a scientist he felt committed to the theory of evolution without qualification.\textsuperscript{1442}

Rex considers it important that when this Jesuit is writing, he is not writing as a theologian or a metaphysician but as a scientist. The significance of Teilhard’s work, in Rex’s opinion, is found in the attempt to deal with matters that are at the heart of faith:

\textsuperscript{1441} Essentially Rex is advocating that the alcoholic himself can help his plight by exercising his freedom. Boredom is seen as a likely cause of most drinking. As in his papers on literature, Rex here finds Dostoevsky’s maxim that “Boredom, rather than idleness is the root of all evil” a useful one. The alcoholic must find something that interests him; that fulfils him to his own satisfaction. RA001, Rex, ‘Alcoholism’: p.7. Exercising the freedom to decide for oneself what one does makes the individual more fully human, and happiness is a derivative.

The truth, however, remains that the fact of evolution is as worrying to a Christian today as it was a hundred years ago when it came to impress itself with the force of a new overwhelming insight on the minds of European men. For once we expose ourselves to the full force of the evolutionary theory, the traditional doctrine of God as the creator becomes problematic, and so do beliefs in divine providence and in the infinite value of the human soul. Instead of the creative artist we are confronted with the groping of blind chance. The question is whether a Jesuit's interpretation of the evolutionary process will be able to allay our fears. 1443

Indeed, it is in the framing of key questions that Rex is able to shape the issues he deems most important for his contemporary Christian audience. By framing questions in such a manner, Rex gives his audience a 'hook' upon which to hang Teilhard's views. To put it another way; Rex provides the lens for his audience's assessment of Teilhard de Chardin:

In this talk we shall not concern ourselves with the details of interpretation since they must be left of necessity to the experts. We shall consider here merely the general evaluation of the evolutionary process as given by the author. Here the discussion centres round the question of 'direction' in the evolutionary process. Is the evolutionary process 'directed' or not? Does it purposefully head towards a goal or not? Must we confine ourselves to a mechanical interpretation of the universe or is there room for a teleological interpretation? Or, to use the technical term, are we justified in introducing the concept of 'orthogenesis' in this context or not? These are the vital questions in which we naturally have an interest. 1444

Teilhard's view, held contrary to the majority of his scientific contemporaries, that evolution is to be understood in terms of 'direction' or 'orthogenesis' is the focal point of Rex's address. For his audience he explains the scientific jargon associated with Teilhard's thinking and adopts a critical distance in his evaluations. As one influenced by Sartre's thought Rex, not surprisingly, appreciates Teilhard's separation of consciousness and reflection from the life of animals and plants in the 'noosphere', yet he is more cautious about the 'directive' element in the evolutionary process being located 'within' rather than 'without'. Rex identifies links between Teilhard's thought on this matter, and thinkers he has examined in his work in other fields:

So far as T.'s method is concerned one cannot help [but] be reminded of Hegel and also of the modern students of Heilsgeschichte. As Hegel viewed the whole history of mankind from the vantage point of the Prussian State and v. Hoffmann and his more recent followers view the course of history from the vantage point of the

1443 RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.2.
1444 RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.3f. Orthogenesis is a view on evolution according to which variations follow a defined direction and are not merely sporadic and fortuitous.
Incarnation, so T. views the whole process of evolution from the vantage point of Man. This is certainly a natural position to take.\textsuperscript{1445}

In the final analysis, Rex does not share this perspective, and for this reason is not able to adopt Teilhard's optimism about the future of humankind. Teilhard's commitment to 'orthogenesis' and its visibility in the 'Christian phenomenon' is something Rex finds 'courageous' especially "in the face of the broken manifestation of 'agape' in the actual life of the churches and so-called Christian civilisations".\textsuperscript{1446} The barrage of rhetorical questions Rex offers at the suggestion that there is reliable evidence of progress in history reveal a more Bultmannian stance on this matter: "We ask, is 'agape' not an eschatological reality? Something that defies being pointed to as a phenomenon? Something that we can lay hold of but in an act of faith? [...]".\textsuperscript{1447} For Rex, even the gathering at which he speaks (National Council of Churches) is evidence of the "broken reality of 'agape' and its ambiguous nature when viewed as a phenomenon".\textsuperscript{1448}

In Rex's opinion, it "is certainly very gratifying to see both the Christian faith and the heritage of the West built into an evolutionary system which stretches over the vast expanse of millions of years".\textsuperscript{1449} Yet he confesses that Teilhard's proposition would be more reassuring if it could be demonstrated to rest "on the experimental basis of science".\textsuperscript{1450} Ultimately, Rex believes that the question of whether Teilhard's structure rests on a scientific basis is a hermeneutic one:

It touches the very nature of interpretation. Can any number of phenomena have a meaning apart from the one that man attaches to them? "The world is everything that is the case": that is the first of Wittgenstein's seven propositions in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. The meaning is not in the world, but is attached to it from outside. That means in practice, by man. The only other alternative is God. But since God is not a 'phenomenon' [...] he cannot enter the scientist's account which must by necessity be confined to the world of phenomena.\textsuperscript{1451}

\textsuperscript{1445}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.5.
\textsuperscript{1446}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.12.
\textsuperscript{1447}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.12.
\textsuperscript{1448}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.13. Here Rex is clearly mindful of the specific context in which he is making his address.
\textsuperscript{1449}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.13.
\textsuperscript{1450}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.13.
\textsuperscript{1451}RA048, Rex, 'Phenomenon': p.13f.
Rex identifies “our view of man” as most crucial in an evaluation of Teilhard’s thesis,\(^\text{1452}\) drawing out the implications of Teilhard’s view of man as “nothing else but evolution become conscious of itself”.\(^\text{1453}\) Today’s reader can see some of the seeds of ‘process-theology’ in Teilhard’s thought as well as the thorns that accompany it.\(^\text{1454}\)

For Rex, the merit in Teilhard’s work is to be found in the attempt to take the situation of modern man seriously. Since the fears which come from evolution’s threat to traditional beliefs in creation, divine providence and the infinite value of the individual soul “do not appear to be allayed by T.’s account of evolution”,\(^\text{1455}\) Rex contends that there is value in Teilhard’s attempt to put science and religion side by side:

An eschatological picture that does not lack verve. At a time when our own traditional eschatological images have worn threadbare and fit us but awkwardly as modern men, because we can no longer assimilate them with any degree of conviction in a literal sense, we owe Teilhard de Chardin gratitude at least for providing us with an eschatological picture that demands to be taken literally by us not in spite of our being modern men, but because we are modern men.\(^\text{1456}\)

It is important to observe the way in which Rex offers a great deal of praise to the attempt to produce a plausible eschatology despite his disagreement with its fundamental underpinnings. Like the directing of many of his own energies to this task, this praise of Teilhard’s attempt is a witness to the moment Rex attaches to such efforts. If nothing else, Rex’s audience is left with an impression of the importance of an intellectually sound eschatology to the Christian faith.

The Sunday service - implications from the history of ideas

The ‘Sunday Service’, an address given in November 1961 at the Annual Meeting of the Church Service Society in Dunedin, was a courageous lecture of the ‘emperor’s new


\(^{1453}\)Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, with an introduction by Sir Julian Huxley (London: Collins, 1959) p.221, cited in RA048, Rex, ‘Phenomenon’: p.14. Rex continues: “Is man as reflective consciousness inside evolution or outside it? Is he, as T. believes, essentially ‘evolution’ or has he been cast off the process of evolution, surveying it from the outside? If we could adopt T.’s point of view, then we would be justified in saying that in man the evolutionary process has become so to speak self-interpretative, and this is precisely what T. is saying”.

\(^{1454}\)Any implied suggestion that a visible phenomenon can be identified with the reality of God’s action is necessarily problematic.

\(^{1455}\)RA048, Rex, ‘Phenomenon’: p.15.

\(^{1456}\)RA048, Rex, ‘Phenomenon’: p.16.
clothes' variety, and is perhaps the most widely remembered of Rex's public addresses. Aware of the potential for treading on some very sensitive toes, Rex felt the burden of responsibility for some weeks beforehand. Carrying the draft copies around with him was something he likened to having a bomb in his briefcase. The 'Sunday Service' contains a strong emphasis on the contribution of historical factors to the contemporary crisis as Rex sees it. He builds upon his understanding of the intellectual revolution in the 17th century.

Essentially, Rex has a simple message to deliver in this address. Although not dissimilar to many messages he had delivered before, it presents itself as more threatening to its audience because it is direct, authoritative, and focuses on the one thing in which they all have vested interest: the Sunday service. Without surrendering integrity, its challenge could not easily be sidestepped by the church leaders who faced it. In choosing to focus on the ministry of the Word, Rex is offering a thorough critique of that of which the Presbyterian Church is most proud. The address is threatening because it is delivered by someone recognised and respected in the 1960s as a senior intellectual within the church, and it allows for no exceptions. From the very beginning of the address Rex uses strong and direct language:

This is a very personal talk. I shall voice my own reactions to the ordinary Sunday service. It is also in some ways an angry talk, because quite frankly I find the Sunday service a bore. As I leave the church I feel frustrated, cheated, and generally bad tempered. I avoid talking to people after church. There is one feeling uppermost in my mind, 'Let's have lunch and forget about it!'

At its most basic, Rex announces that New Zealand's Presbyterian clergy are failing to effectually carry out their most fundamental task: the task of preaching, failing to elevate the everyday "into the light of the eternal". Effective preaching is deemed vital, because Rex is certain that "[u]nless our lives can be taken up into a divine story we wither away". And most importantly for Rex, this story must be intellectually cogent. People will "no longer be told that God is found under gooseberry bushes", for the story "must carry

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1457Interview with Albert Moore, 197 Signal Hill Road, Dunedin, 9 June 2000.
1458See chapter eight.
conviction. On that everything depends." 1462 Essentially this is another manifestation of Rex's broader thesis that the problems in our society arise from the fact that we have not yet properly understood our human condition. 1463

The tone of this address indicates that a failure to consider and respond to the human condition is unacceptable among the clergy. For Rex, the Sunday service which clergy prepare must address the 'man come of age'. 1464 The Service which does not make people rejoice in their human condition fails because "[t]he ultimate end of religion is to save man in his humanity. Nothing more nor less". 1465

**Saving man in his humanity - the central role of the sermon**

The contemporary failure of the Church to "save man in his humanity" comes as a result of its history. Rex believes most people in society have not yet faced their human condition square on. As we shall see, church leaders are not exempt from this critique. In fact, over generations, this falling short has in the church become the norm. This is the crux of Rex's critique:

As it is at present, nothing serious can be said from the pulpit, because the whole situation is unreal. The Church now pays for the fact that it has never honestly faced the tremendous revolution in thought at the threshold of the modern age. 1466

The revolution of which Rex speaks is the intellectual revolution he spoke of in his address on *Faith and Reason in the Seventeenth Century* in 1955 and in his lecture on *The Intellectual Revolution* given to the SCM in 1959. By 1961, it is something he is able to sum up quite succinctly. He uses the term 'seventeenth century' as a shorthand term for the significant changes in human thought which began to happen at that time, "sing[ing] it out as the watershed in the history of the human race. Up to that century [...] everything was...

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1463 "This anthropocentric approach is the more in need as modern man has taken up some wrong clues about himself, with the result of shedding what is characteristic of his true condition. That is, his power of reflection. The fact that he is endowed with a consciousness of a unique kind. An endowment that enables him to judge his particular situation and all the contributing factors that go into the making of it in light of universal ideas. An endowment that constitutes his freedom. A freedom that is the source of responsible choices and projects out of which a whole world emerges, man's world, the individual's own possession". Rex, 'The Sunday Service' in *The Bulletin*, October 1962: p.6.
possible; since that century, only the possible is possible". It is the fundamental failure of the Presbyterian clergy to address the changes in the understanding of the human condition implied in and derived from this new situation, which is Rex's key concern. He is directly applying the fruit of historical philosophical research to the interests of the twentieth century citizen:

This is my point. In the Sunday service I am forced to listen to sermons which assume that my condition today is not vitally different from that of the Puritans of the seventeenth century. There is no evidence in the sermons which I hear that the preacher takes seriously the fact that I live in a world that is totally and absolutely different (and I stress the word 'absolutely', because this is not just a matter of differences in degree and quality) from any other world in which men lived prior to the seventeenth century. Mine is a world without miracles. Mine is a world without providence as traditionally understood. Mine is a world in which the natural sciences hold the keys to the understanding of the natural universe. And that universe, in its mathematical and physical aspects, is one of law and order, and in its biological and genetic aspects, it is sublimely disinterested in the individual. This world, which is my daily destiny, is virtually ignored in the sermons which I hear, and that is why I feel frustrated, cheated and bored with them. They have no bearing on my condition as an individual who tries to fulfil his human destiny in this, the twentieth century.

Until the contemporary sermon is put in an intellectually honest setting, Rex believes modern man will not feel addressed by the Sunday service because "it is the sermon which makes the whole service intellectually convincing. If it fails to do that, then poison enters the rest of the ritual". Rex draws exact parallels with what Thomas Carlyle said of the Puritans in order to illustrate the ongoing nature of the problem. For Rex, as with Carlyle in his situation, it not so much the case that contemporary preaching fails to ring true, as it is that contemporary preaching is misleading. "Thus the old names suggest new things to us - not august and divine, but hypocritical, pitiable, detestable". Rex finds this true of the sermons he has heard.

1470 Although he does not specify his sources it is to be presumed that the Carlyle to whom Rex refers is Thomas Carlyle whose 19th century reactions to the 17th century Puritan pamphlets are chosen to add historical support to Rex's line of argument.
Excluding “digressions into politics and current affairs” which he regards as “usually not sermons but escapes from sermon making”, Rex divides the sermons of his day into two main types. The first he calls the “When-the-Israelites-left-Egypt” type of sermon, the second he refers to as “a piece of underhand demythologising”. The first type of sermon Rex describes focuses on biblical history. He dismisses it for offering only a “few commonplace truths and moralisms which I might have picked up from any woman’s magazine in the dentists waiting room”. The second type of sermon fares no better: “miracles, for instance, are turned into parables without admitting the trick”. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Rex views this second type of sermon as a direct affront to his condition as a ‘modern man’. Demythologising of this sort carries no conviction for him, and he is scathing of it:

Up to that century [the seventeenth century] everything was possible; since that century, only the possible is possible. This truth the hermeneutic tricks of the second type of sermon try to cover up by turning from the calming of the sea in the Gospel narrative to the ‘calming’ of the storms in our heart or by inviting us ‘to launch out into the deep’ in a general sort of way when the Gospel story quite specifically talks about fish.

From modernist critique towards ‘a myth that sustains’

This passage is a good illustration of Rex’s underlying desire for a certain type of intellectual integrity. On the surface, it is the ‘trick’ which Rex detests. On another level, Rex is suggesting the appropriateness of an entirely different hermeneutic. Beneath his stated concern, what he is actually proposing is that the preacher study the text and then put it to one side and begin afresh. Rex is willing only to allow the text to be used in a specific manner - a manner which begins with the subjection of texts to the historical-critical method. Following such historical-critical analysis, the text is to be put to one side and new language and thought forms are to be chosen to reflect the truths discovered through the analysis. In this respect, Rex shows himself to be an arch-modernist. Words are assumed to refer to definite objects, and methods which attempt to defer those meanings are treated with derision. To be fair, Rex is not speaking of sermons informed by the then embryonic
science of semiology. Rather, he is critical of the convenient avoidance of reason's insights by his clerical contemporaries. Turning miracles into parables without admitting the trick is, for Rex, "a method of slipping slyly from the seventeenth to the twentieth century by maintaining the illusion that we are still living in 'the age of faith'".\(^{1476}\)

For Rex, inadequate sermonising fails to undertake the important work of informing humanity about their common human condition. He insists that it is this very task which should underpin the work of his generation of ecclesial leaders, because Rex is convinced that the Church "has to rescue its members from drifting into a state of unreflective animal existence".\(^{1477}\) In order to fulfil this task, Rex believes that the contemporary preacher ought to "start with what can be known and concentrate on what is worth knowing".\(^{1478}\) This is made all the more challenging because Rex believes that God no longer is a partner in conversation:

Last century, the natural universe ceased to speak of God; in our century the same silence pervades the course of historical events. In this silence, without audible clues, I find myself. I the modern man. A man of the twentieth century. Everything is silent but myself. It is I who does all the talking. When I turn to the scriptures to listen to the Word of God, it is I who is speaking in the end. I listen to my own interpretations. In prayer too it is I who does all the talking. It is a conversation with a silent partner. In this silence I think and talk and I act and I reflect upon my actions and my words and my ideas. That is my condition.\(^{1479}\)

As a result of the Divine silence, the preacher's thinking must begin with man and not with God.\(^{1480}\) Preaching must seek to remind man that he is "endowed with a consciousness of a unique kind": that he has the "power of reflection".\(^{1481}\) The Sunday service must provide "a myth that sustains me in this frightening silence and a ritual that gives me strength to meet this silence and that makes me rejoice in my human condition".\(^{1482}\) This is an epigrammatic expression of the implications for faith of Rex's Christian existentialist theory. He expounds:

Here it must take its beginning. I want a myth which illuminates this condition of mine and a ritual that helps me fulfil it. This structure is the one certainty I have about my human condition. What does it signify? What is it there for? What does it point to? How did it come into being? How is it to be operated? How is it maintained? Etc. etc.¹⁴⁸³

Rex is concerned that the individual’s freedom is maintained and enhanced. For him, this freedom “is the source of responsible choices and projects out of which a whole world emerges, man’s world, the individual’s own possession”.¹⁴⁸⁴ Such statements reveal a sense of the urgency with which Rex approaches the task of fostering what he regarded as a worthy understanding of the human condition. That such an understanding has as its natural consequence the liberation of the individual and the expansion of his world, is something Rex takes for granted.

Beyond Rex’s primary concern to develop the individual, he maintains an active interest in the question of a world in common. This philosophical interest follows on naturally from his interest in development of worthwhile autonomy. His musings appear to be underpinned with a concern to comprehend and expound just how the expanded individual might use his humanity in service of the greater good. Sartre does not provide Rex with a solution, and so he continues to raise the question of a world in common in different forms in his different articles. It is obviously a question which occupies his mind on an ongoing basis. He alludes to it in his description of Carlyle’s contemporaries. Although they increasingly identified the kingdom of God with the earthly goals of missionary expansion and empire building, Rex suggests that one could still be inspired by the courage of their convictions and their sense of common purpose:

> These ideas still retained something of the force of the old myths. They gave to the individual a sense of direction and purpose transcending his own personal goals and needs, and they gave him a sense of belonging to a body that was held together by something more than collective selfishness. Above all, they were still able to say ‘Thus saith the Lord’, ‘This is the Lord’s doing’ because they entertained few doubts about the rightfulness of their way of life.¹⁴⁸⁵

The disappearance of God’s voice in nature and in prayer put an end to this human confidence. Rex perceives that displaced man requires a “myth to sustain him in this

frightening silence". Sartre cannot find it, but Rex believes that such a myth, which carries conviction can be found in the world of contemporary man. This world which emerges from the 'responsible choices and projects' born of human freedom, is the locus of Rex's hope. For Rex it is a "world continually challenged by the force of ideas, the brute facts of nature, and the pressure of other worlds". This intersection of these forces with the individual's own world creates a "situation which raises the question of a world occupied in common". Unfortunately Rex does not go beyond this taster. As we have seen, in his 1951 article on 'Existentialist Freedom' however, he indicates that the problem of a world in common will be solved when we recognise meaning and purpose common to our humanity.

According to Rex, belief in God is at its most basic, an affirmation of meaning in history: "that life has a meaning from which the lives of individuals derive their meaning in a world they have in common". The 'meaning' or 'purpose' or 'standards of value' held in common will, for Rex, be something other than the "petty moralising" commonly mistaken for religion. It seems then, that Rex is striving to identify (what are frequently referred to as) humanity's 'higher' virtues as those which epitomise the human condition faithfully rendered. The argument which follows from this is somewhat circular in character: If people were to recognise these virtues as a source of common 'purpose', 'value', and 'meaning', then, they would be a source of common 'purpose', 'value', and 'meaning'.

Rex is angling for acceptance of a broader understanding of humanity, one that recognises such values as courage, duty and honour. Values deemed worthy of esteem for their own sake - what might be called values with intrinsic worth. Rex's understanding of the term 'humanity', or 'the human condition' is imbued with such values. To the reader, it is therefore immediately apparent that Rex is referring to humanity neither in moral nor medical terms when he says that he does not wish to accept his human condition "merely in

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1490"I put these questions in a queer fashion in order to avoid the impression that I wish to reduce religion to the level of morality. One of my chief complaints about today's sermons is precisely that there is too much moralising - petty moralising at that - in them, under the cover of pretentious symbolism". Rex, 'The Sunday Service' in The Bulletin, October 1962: p.7.
a spirit of Stoic resignation” or again when he uses the phrase “whither away” to describe lives deprived of involvement in a divine story.1491 It is this ‘fuller’ understanding of humanity that Rex believes must be shared.1492

Creatures of habit

Rex regards the task of convincing the average New Zealand congregation that they are not fulfilling his understanding of the human condition, a difficult one because “they take their humanity for granted”.1493 He suggests that they would have never seriously reflected on what being human means.1494

If you told them that you can lose your humanity they would consider this possibility in moral or medical terms only. They would certainly not think of it as something affecting the very structure of their being; something that can be lost even through the ‘good’ habits which they have come to trust and accept.1495

Rex’s choice of the phrase: “the very structure of their being” is important. What is at stake for him is the entire philosophical understanding of our common humanity. Rex recognises a like-minded concern for dissemination of existentialist understandings of this condition, in a James McCord editorial in *Theology Today*.1496 Because an analysis of McCord’s piece reveals that Rex’s address is influenced by it, it is important to notice the stylistic differences between the two pieces. McCord focuses on the historical changes while Rex decides instead to outline a more philosophical analysis of the condition of modern man. Rex’s calculated avoidance of traditional theological categories and phraseology is also apparent.1497 This is indicative of Rex’s concern for demythologising as discussed earlier in this thesis.

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1492 Thus he says of New Zealand Christians: “[T]hey have to be told, if they are not to miss out on everything that is human in the full sense of the term”. Rex, ‘The Sunday Service’ in *The Bulletin*, October 1962: p.7.
1497 Rex uses the term ‘God’ sparingly, and then frequently within inverted commas to indicate that it is a traditional ‘mythological’ phrase. He does not use the term ‘Christ’ in this article, preferring to use the term ‘Gospel Narrative’ when referring to New Testament content.
After close examination of the 'Sunday Service' address, one might reasonably conclude that Rex spent considerable effort ensuring that the form (language and expression) of his 'Sunday Service' address was consistent with its content (a call for intellectual clarity and honesty of expression). The use of theological terminology by thoughtful individuals did not, however, preclude Rex from drawing upon their insights. What we know of Rex's beliefs, and the employment of two citations from McCord's editorial, indicates that Rex would concur with the sentiment of the piece. The editorial itself has an inspiring tone and, while focusing more broadly on the Church worldwide, has much in common with Rex's 'Sunday Service' address which was delivered shortly after the appearance of the aforementioned October edition of *Theology Today*. In his address Rex records and discusses McCord's use of citations from Albert Camus' posthumously published work *Resistance, Rebellion and Death*.1498

McCord quotes Camus, 'We are still waiting, and I am waiting, for a grouping of all those who refuse to be dogs, and are resolved to pay the price that must be paid so that man can be something more than a dog.' He means, of course, an animal of habit. In that sense, our New Zealand Christians tend to be 'dogs'. And you cannot tell them that from the pulpit. There is no point in that. They would think you were crazy. And yet, they have to be told, if they are not to miss out on everything that is human in the full sense of the term. I even doubt whether they realise what they are missing, though I do suspect in them a vague unacknowledged feeling of discontent.1499

This is the climax of Rex's lecture. In line with his stated belief that "the ultimate end of religion is to save man in his humanity", he is convinced that New Zealand Presbyterian parishioners must be challenged to face up to their human condition.

1498 McCord's article offers three characteristics of "the new" post WWII age. Firstly he identifies the emergence of a universal history. His description of this history illustrates the increasingly widespread acceptance of the Western model of history and examines its consequences. Secondly McCord identifies what he calls "the dawn of the metropolis and a new way of life" by which he means increasing urbanisation and the spread of secularist cultural ideals. Thirdly McCord suggests that the third feature of this 'new age' is the emergence of a 'new man' to person it. The 'race of new men' is intent on a 'reordering of mankind' and is 'claiming its own responsible humanity'. Finally McCord challenges the reader, asking whether we are "willing to accept this age as God's gift, enter it joyfully, and fulfil the mission of Christ to the world in the world?" 'The New Man in the New Age', October 1961: p.272. Cf. Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion and Death*, introduction and trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).

The challenge to the church

Rex is suggesting that without first being convicted of their existence as 'animals of habit', congregations will not be ready to receive “the myth that sustains”. Such an understanding is supported by Rex's later declaration that “at present, nothing serious can be said from the pulpit, because the whole situation is unreal”.¹⁵⁰⁰ That Rex regards the educating of congregations about their human condition as being of paramount importance is put beyond doubt when he argues:

Every time and place represents its own challenge to the church. Some churches are called to fight political tyrants and dictators; others the moral corruption and irresponsibility of the privileged classes; this church has to rescue its members from drifting into a state of unreflective animal existence. But this cannot be done from the pulpit. It can only be done by meeting your congregation in small intimate groups where discussion is possible. Where the spirit of dialogue rather than the spirit of catechism remains. Where truth is held in suspense, and where nobody is afraid of giving a 'wrong' answer. In such groups more profitable reading of the scripture could result than the readings in public worship. And the prayers too might become more real in such a setting as they grow out of a community that is probably 'waiting on God' in a more real sense than in the Sunday service.¹⁵⁰¹

The approach to adult educational process here outlined indubitably draws on Rex's investigations into the Lutheran Church's Evangeline Akademien.¹⁵⁰² His concern about the way in which this news is delivered underscores the importance he places on its successful reception. Rex wishes all to have access to a 'myth that sustains'. "What I have in mind is the immensity of the mystery of consciousness in a vast, silent, orderly universe. The illumination of this phenomenon and its preservation".¹⁵⁰³

A small note which precedes the published version of Rex's address clarifies his understanding of myth. The explanation draws attention to the emphasis Rex places on an intellectually robust faith. Faith and reason are to be considered together: "The word 'myth' in this talk is always used in the technical sense of an interpretation of life in its totality: a

¹⁵⁰²See RA112, Rex, 'Evangeline Akademien: notes and letter re; c. 1954. Annot. TS.'
total view of man's condition. As such it is a living faith. It is never used in the popular dictionary sense of a fairy tale or fiction".  

**The numinous**

Having stressed the importance of developing an intellectually sound faith, with existentialist underpinnings, Rex finishes his address with a corrective. The sixth and final page is devoted to Rex's claim that in the Sunday service he wishes his senses also to be satisfied. This short passage develops its own separate argument which proceeds by way of example and warning. Whilst speculative, it is interesting to posit that this is an afterthought, added for the sake of completeness. This change in the direction of his lecture is signalled with a minimum of words:

I am not pleading for a one-sidedly intellectual approach to religion. This has been a danger in reformed worship. When I go to church I wish to be claimed in my total being. Not only my intellect must be satisfied. My senses too wish to be satisfied. My sense of space, my sense of sight, my sense of smell, for instance.

Rex offers discussion on the search for the numinous. He pleads for an emphasis on what he refers to as "natural points of contact" warning that "[t]he numinous cannot be manufactured by light effects, voice production, and suggestion. Such phoney excursions into the numinous must be avoided". Genuine experiences of the numinous are frequently linked to the senses which, in Rex's view, are neglected in ordinary worship. Accordingly he labels as 'odd' the fact that the sense of smell is not utilised more often in church worship.

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1507 RA003, 'Untitled Response to Breward': p.1, Q.2. Rex speaks of his religious development as a child: "You might say, however that in a sense I was almost naturally 'drawn' towards religion. The form of worship (predominantly Lutheran in tradition) appealed to my sense of the numinous (which incidentally has been completely starved to death by our services out here) and religion, quite simply, interested me as a human phenomenon just as history in general".
1508 Rex, 'The Sunday Service' in *The Bulletin*, October 1962: p.8. Rex suggests that numinous experiences are more common outside the church setting: "I do not think that numinous experiences are altogether rare, but I fear they are mainly experienced outside the church building, and not always in strictly religious situations. Situations which have, however, a religious element in them, i.e. an element of transcendence. The most obvious example is the attraction and repulsion in the erotic situation, which is after all an important theme in the ritual of nature religions. I think it is worth studying such non-religious situations in which experiences analogous to the numinous occur. They are 'points of contact' which to my mind are not only legitimate to
While Rex’s discussion of the numinous and the senses gives support to his claim that he wishes “to be claimed in [his] total being”, it is clear from very early on in the address that he is primarily concerned with the sermon. The blame for the failure of the cultus “to give an ultimate meaning to the daily life” is laid squarely at the feet of the sermon.\(^{1509}\)

Here lies my discontent. It is that which I do not get in the ordinary Sunday service as it is conducted today. And that is the fault of the sermon. In our reformed tradition of worship the sermon is central. The Swiss and French reformed churches used to call \(\text{sic}\) the whole service after it, and rightly so, because it is the sermon which makes the whole service intellectually convincing.\(^{1510}\)

The ‘Sunday Service’ address then, weaves its way around Rex’s conviction that an anthropocentric approach to sermon writing is crucial to the integrity of the ritual. For Rex, the contemporary preacher “must start with man and not with God in his thinking”.\(^{1511}\) In fact: “The contemporary preacher can afford no other approach”.\(^{1512}\)

No other approach

A theological approach that starts with man (‘our interests’) and moves towards God (revealed in the ‘Christ’) is behind all of Rex’s theology, whether on traditional themes or what has here been called ‘situational’. Even Rex’s ‘Credo’, the most succinct expression of his theology - prepared in 1961 for the sub-committee of the Presbyterian Church’s Committee on Doctrine - is no different.\(^{1513}\) Nor would we expect his 1962 address on homosexuality to have adopted another approach. Unfortunately no detailed record of that presentation remains.\(^{1514}\) Former student and later lecturer in Religious Studies James Veitch records his impressions of Rex’s address to the Knox College Students Club:

Well before his time, he was dealing with contentious issues. I heard him give a lecture to the university students at Knox College on homosexuality. It was a packed audience that listened in silence to what he had to say and questions at the end revealed the tremendous ignorance that my contemporaries had. To Helmut

\(^{1509}\)Paul Tillich is cited here as an authority by Rex. Tillich’s view of the purpose of ritual is assumed, and Rex criticises its absence in his experience of the New Zealand Sunday service.


\(^{1513}\)See ‘Credo’ in BHR: pp.263ff.

\(^{1514}\)A short record is contained in BHR: pp.45-46. This record indicates that Rex favoured psychological explanations of homosexuality over genetic or hereditary ones and was concerned to expose popular myths.
Rex, on the other hand, it was something he had already come to grips with and thought through in terms of a positive Christian ethic.\footnote{James Veitch, ‘Frank he is and Frank he shall be!’ in \textit{In Search of Truth! Frank Nichol: Church Theologian}, ed. James Veitch, Wellington: Endeavour Press, 1994: p.38.}

That the students invited Rex to speak on a contentious issue and that they turned out in number is reflective of the esteem in which he was held by those who would not necessarily otherwise have had much to do with orthodox Christianity. Rex’s ‘Christ and our interests’ approach to theology offered no-nonsense explanations of issues that troubled ordinary citizens. His theology, though informed by great learning, was accessible to students from a variety of backgrounds. In Rex’s situational theology everyday societal concerns were examined with the aid of Christian existentialist strategies. Without pretence of supplying an overarching system, and using plain language, Rex’s situational theology, which moved from ‘our interests’ towards ‘Christ’, brought profane concerns into the light of the sacred.
Conclusions - ‘Our Interests and Christ’ Today

New Zealand was uninhabited when Christianity’s most formative events occurred. In this sense it is a young country. Its people frequently look to the lands of their forebears for their critical traditions, for appraisal and for appreciation. Often New Zealanders suffer under an inferiority complex borne of this youth. It is embodied in a need for affirmation from overseas observers. Tourists to New Zealand asked by residents what they think of the country quickly recognise that eagerly sought reassurances are a small price to pay for willing hospitality.

There are, however, signs that New Zealand is, as a nation, ‘coming of age’. Our film industry, for example, has had success with stories featuring a young protagonist struggling to assert her identity. Prominent examples such as *The Piano*, *Whale Rider* and *Rain* indicate a country that is beginning to give mature expression to its story.

This insecurity has been astutely exploited in a recent television advertising campaign run by ASB bank. Their advertisements depict telephone conversations between a goofy New York executive (Mr. ‘Goldstein’) who has been sent by his demanding boss (‘Sir’) to discover what it is that distinguishes this particular antipodean bank from international competitors. The bemused admiration of the young executive for both the bank and its country of origin introduce a ‘feel good’ factor that has made the advertisements popular with New Zealand viewers.
A tendency towards the aforementioned insecurity was reflected in teaching appointments to Knox Theological Hall up until the 1960s. Despite worthy New Zealand candidates (many of whom had furthered their education abroad) the majority of posts were filled by applicants from the British Isles. Since that time, the Presbyterian Church has, fortunately, recognised the value of local potential and has had the courage to support worthy 'internal' candidacies.

In some respects it continues to be easier for New Zealanders to listen to Rex as an authority because he came from elsewhere, yet Rex spanned the national / international divide. At the time Rex was appointed Professor at Knox Theological Hall he occupied an unusual space - between foreigner and local. Although he had immigrated as a young man (before being appointed to a teaching position at the Hall) he retained an attitude, manner and accent that identified him as different to those who were born in this place. His education and theological method were both international and local. He completed graduate and undergraduate qualifications in both Germany and New Zealand. He taught at a time between the modern and the postmodern. While he was an unashamed apologist for the modernist historical critical method, he was influenced by existentialism, a movement which foreshadowed aspects of postmodern thought. The extent of his pivotal nature will become yet more apparent as more detailed studies of the thought of Rex's most influential students are attempted. It is to be expected that such studies will make a link between the local and contextual focus of many of Rex's more academically prominent former students, and Rex's example of the earnest pursuit of truth in the New Zealand context.

Learning from Rex

Rex serves well as a New Zealand case study. He was among the first to wrestle theologically with a new situation of religious uncertainty. As a sensitive soul he was among the first in New Zealand to engage with the 'death of God' as it arose in Nietzsche, and atheism as it was presented in Dostoevsky. Thus Rex addressed questions that were later to become more widespread concerns. Although Rex's search for a way through the shifting sands introduced by the modern scientific spirit may not serve as a point-perfect map, it does provide useful compass bearings.
Rex was a catalyst. His most immediate and important impact, his personal and located impact as a theological teacher, lasted a little over twenty years. His influence, however, continues to be felt even today through the changed lives of his theological students, through the use of his hermeneutic text and not least through his far-sighted stewardship of collections held in the Hewitson Theological Library.

How are we to judge the value of Rex for today? What insights might one expect to gain from re-reading his papers? It is important to recognise that one cannot simply transfer his theological approach without difficulty into the present. The difficulties in existentialism which have subsequently been discovered cannot be ignored. Most significantly, one cannot return to an historical epoch where ‘the self’ or ‘the individual’ was a relatively unproblematic notion. This would rightly be viewed as naive in the wake of structuralism. An underlying commitment to an ‘essentialism’ of the individual has since been revealed in the many forms of existentialism.

Although one cannot transfer Rex’s approach directly into the present day, Rex’s insights may usefully be incorporated into contemporary theological strategies. That ‘existence precedes essence’, the lasting contribution of the existentialists, is a doctrine Rex helped to disseminate in New Zealand. His careful application of this learning, cast in his own unique perspective and coupled with a thoroughgoing intellectual rigour, allowed him to shed new light on social and ecclesial issues in New Zealand.

If theology in New Zealand wishes to do Rex’s memory justice it must continue to take stock of its own particular history (reflected in this and other similar projects) and develop further the courage of its convictions. Assessment of the contributions of its forebears will sure up the foundations upon which New Zealand theology takes its stand. Of course this developing tradition must not be too defensive to resist criticism from other lands where Christian theology is practised, but neither must it be too shy to enter international theological discussion with examples from its own practice.

1517 Cf. Maurice Andrew, Set in a Long Place: A life from North to South, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1999) p.342: Of Albert Moore: “We shared the knowledge of our debt to Helmut Rex (...).”
The importance of education

Rex played his part in imparting a sense of local potential. He encouraged his more able students to pursue postgraduate qualifications overseas and later worked alongside some of them as a colleague. Education was very important to Rex in his search for solutions to human problems. His belief in education and the empowerment this gives to the individual was based on a strong belief in the autonomy of the individual and a faith in his/her ability to make independent and objective assessments of the historical material with which they were faced. Ian Breward describes the beliefs that Rex promoted in his introductory Church History lecture:

Each year he gave an introductory lecture or two reflecting his current reading on the method and philosophy of history. Few of his students had heard of Collingwood, let alone Loewith, or Bultmann's attempt to show how the historically conditioned nature of Christian faith had profound implications for the Christian's approach to historical method, as well as for self-understanding. In the last resort, this theme was one to which Rex returned again and again. Study of the past had its own justification and fascination as an academic discipline. For the Christian it was part of the growth in freedom to live more responsibly which came from understanding God's world and word.  

Not limited to this one lecture, these beliefs manifested themselves more generally in Rex's approach towards the theological task. He viewed education as a means of building the necessary understanding for the Christian to shape responsible choices. Thus, faith and intellectual inquiry are not at odds with each other in Rex's thought. Like Bultmann, he was seeking to believe and to understand. Not everyone today shares the kind of optimism about education that Rex's work conveys. Academics in the social sciences have a tough job avoiding structural analyses which describe the homogenising tendencies of normative social discourse. Yet Rex's particular responses were frequently critical of 'usual' or 'assumed' understandings of being human, being religious and doing theology.

Rex's theological approach was formed in the period when the Nazis came to power in Germany. Along with other notable contemporaries in the Confessing Church of which he was a part, he developed a type of theology that concerned itself with transforming

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1518 Breward, BHR: p59f.
1519 Questions are now frequently asked about how history is written and in whose interests. Education's potential as yet another tool of oppression has been exposed. Nevertheless a broad belief in the value of formal education remains with few in the western world choosing to opt out of the education system.
culture. Rex's theological approach, which influenced a generation of theological students, contrasted strongly with that of John Dickie whose theology and personality dominated Knox Theological Hall prior to Rex's arrival. Dickie's theological approach, by contrast to Rex's might be characterised as 'church supporting culture'.

In their respective primes both Rex and Dickie carried well the authority of a titular professor. They were more than just 'teachers' to their students, rather they were models of the earnest pursuit of theological truth. For this reason Rex's exposition of Bultmann in the post-war years had a greater impact on his students than did that of his colleague John Henderson, who by all accounts gave a rather dry and uninspiring account of Brunner to the same generation of students.

**Four criticisms levelled at Bultmann's theology**

Rex's dependence on Bultmann leaves the former's work open to many of the criticisms made of his *Vorbild's*. David Fergusson's useful introduction to Bultmann identifies four key areas of criticism that have been levelled at the latter's approach. The first criticism, resulting from Bultmann's distaste for all forms of objectivising language, is that it is open to the charge of reducing theology to a sophisticated type of anthropology. That is, if there are no conditions laid out for what would constitute meaningful speech about God, it becomes only possible to speak about man. The second criticism is one that Rex also noted and that is that Bultmann (with his emphasis on the 'that' rather than the 'what' of the Christ event) did not adequately explain the importance of the historical Jesus to the Christian faith. The third area of criticism results from the challenge of other faiths. While Bultmann wished to posit a knowledge of God and God's grace to all people, his assertion, that authentic existence is only available through faith in the crucified Christ, negates the significance of the former knowledge. According to the logic of Bultmann's understanding, the majority of humans who have lived, possess at best only a 'question' about God, since they have not encountered the kerygma. Finally, Fergusson argues that Bultmann's theology reflects a private religion of the human subject. It does not provide a platform for criticism of worldly evils because it ignores the way in which particular social

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forces shape the situation of individuals. According to this charge Bultmann’s “emphasis upon the two possibilities of self-understanding that lie at the heart of existence tends to isolate the individual from the personal and social relationships that shape human identity”. Further, Bultmann’s individualist eschatology is characterised as unfaithful to the biblical idea of one’s salvation being tied up with the rest of creation. Arguably it also does little justice to the historical and future dimensions of salvation.

Rex in light of criticisms levelled at Bultmann’s theology

This thesis has focussed on Rex’s own theological syntheses rather than the rights and wrongs of the particular theologians and philosophers to whom he was indebted. Nevertheless it is important to recognise his heavy dependence on Bultmann’s approach and the difficulties that presents for adoption of his framework for constructing contemporary theological responses to particular situations.

Rex shared Bultmann’s Lutheran emphasis on the ultimate impossibility of all speech about God. Rex’s effort at recreating a plausible analogy of the resurrection may be viewed as an attempt to describe something of God since Rex saw a very close connection between the future, resurrection and God. In his hermeneutics Rex devoted a great deal of energy to the problem of speaking of God. There he outlined theories of interpretation for the scriptures - the record of man’s interaction with God. Aware of the difficulties of speaking of God, Rex began a great many of his papers by introducing Sartrean anthropology as an initial building block. As we have seen, this was because Rex was keen to start his ‘affordable’ approach with that which he considered readily accessible, that is, man and a corresponding anthropology. Rex’s attempts at introducing elements of mystery, his emphasis on grace and his faith-based assertions about the possibility of meaning in history were all efforts at finding language to describe God’s action in the world without succumbing to the accusation of using ‘objectivising’ language of God. On balance, Rex was successful in pointing to the ‘faith’ based nature of these assertions, but he did not find a satisfactory way past the problems highlighted by Bultmann’s critics.

152 David Fergusson, Bultmann: p.142. Fergusson acknowledges a debt to Moltmann for ideas presented in his criticism of Bultmann’s individualist eschatology.
As already mentioned, Rex, with many of Bultmann’s disciples, recognised the theological problem created by the latter’s strict division between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Rex’s theological model may be viewed as something of a corrective. With respect to ‘Christ and our interests’, Rex explained the Christ in terms of the historical Jesus and what was witnessed to him in the scriptures. Yet Rex did little explicit work in this area. His plea for more attention to the historical Jesus retains the status of an observation. Rex’s formal studies of New Testament biblical literature have a distinctly Pauline focus.

Rex addressed the problem of other religions that plagues Bultmann’s theological model. Rex’s was aware of the religious traditions in his ‘eastern’ context and he explicitly considered the eschatological perspectives of other religions. He also stressed the importance of the study of the phenomenology of religions to the contemporary theological task. Rex’s stated desire to find meaning in history through an ‘act of faith’ allowed for revelation of sorts to be located in other religions. That said, in his earlier work on Kierkegaardian themes he pointed out difficulties inherent in any ‘natural’ or ‘rights’ based theological approach. Typical of its time, Rex’s view of man as an essentially religious animal was given expression in his final work Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? when he considered that religious questions would remain even if it were shown at a subsequent time that the death of God theologians were correct. Further, Rex’s belief, that a greater understanding of the human condition was to be derived from literature than from philosophers and theologians, is indicative of both a strong faith in the possibility of revelation in the historical medium and a view that this revelation was not necessarily limited to the contemporary interpretations of religious professionals. In his hermeneutics Rex praised the typological method for its acceptance of the media of time and history as of intrinsic value for the revelation of God to man. Rex’s literature studies took agnosticism and atheism seriously.

1523 In a book review Rex praised fellow immigrant Peter Munz’s work in this regard: “One of its special merits is that the whole question of religious knowledge and its status is squarely placed in the context of the phenomenology of religion. In that it compares well with the intolerable parochialism of traditional theology as it still continues to be practised by the majority of professional theologians. Today, no theologian is worth consideration who does not take the whole of the history of religion into account as he constructs his system, whatever his personal commitments and convictions happen to be”. Helmut H. Rex, ‘Problems of religious knowledge’ in Landfall 57, September 1960: pp.296-300. Cf. Peter Munz, Problems of religious knowledge (London: SCM Press, 1959).
The accusation that Bultmann’s theology isolates the individual from the personal and social relationships that shape human identity is an apt one. It is also applicable to Rex’s approach. Rex’s theology lacks political teeth. Rex himself acknowledged the importance of individuals being able to share a world in common but was unable to describe how this might be realised except, perhaps, by implication, in the adoption by all individuals of an ‘authentic existence’. The individualistic nature of the kerygmatic encounter as understood by Rex meant that he was aware that he was only able to petition for changes of opinion (viz the appeal to Maori to free Maoritanga from tribalism). He was not able to assert finally that his understanding of authentic existence was more valid than that belonging to another. Thus, the apolitical nature of this theological approach is a double-edged sword since ipso facto it also protected from the accusation of suggesting that the action of God can be directly identified with any particular historical or political trend or event.

Five leitmotifs

In the introduction to this thesis it was suggested that Rex’s work contained five significant characteristics: an emphasis on ongoing reformation of the faith; an ‘affordable’ theological approach; concentration on matters of ‘ultimate concern’; a style of composition drawing on many sources and characterised as bricolage; and, a combination of personal impact and structuring that allowed for the possibility of ‘cognitive dissonance’ in an audience. Having laid out the nature of Rex’s theological approach and its emphases it is now appropriate to offer a final statement about the applicability or otherwise of these characteristics to contemporary theology done in New Zealand.

1.0. Reforming faith

Rex regarded the secular environment in which theology in New Zealand was conducted as important. He was convinced that the world after the seventeenth century was profoundly different from the world before and that this had implications for theology that many involved in religious life had not yet grasped. As a Christian seeking to give fresh contemporary expression to the faith, Rex took himself seriously as a legitimate interpreter in the line of Paul, Luther, Kierkegaard and Bultmann. Rex’s repeated attempts to give new expression to what he viewed as the central tenet of the Christian religion, the resurrection, form his most voluminous contribution in this area.
It seems likely that the weight of responsibility attached to the role of 'professor' kept Rex from being wildly speculative in his public work but he was prepared to offer considered suggestions as to future possibilities for interpretation of the Christian tradition. In his D. Theo! and in his eschatology Rex forwarded a thesis of the reunification of en-soi and pour-soi in eschatological existence. He also explored the possibility of an eschatology of polarity. Rex reshaped the theological agenda for his pupils, introducing entire courses on hermeneutics and literature, since he believed theology only to be relevant against a background of other studies.1524

In his drive to impress the importance of fresh expression for the Christian tradition Rex mediated for his students the theology of Bultmann. They were exposed to the concepts of demythologising and Vorverstandnis, and they were encouraged to critically engage with biblical and theological sources.1525 While Rex had sympathy with Bultmann's methodology, the former's integrity as a scholar was enhanced by the frequent exercising of his right to discover quite different conclusions to those of his Vorbild. The emphasis on engaging with scholarship, fresh expression and independent assessment - along with the message that the Christian creeds are to be regarded as primarily of historical rather than of normative interest - resulted from Rex's concern to take seriously the Protestant dictum Semper Reformatum. Over a lifetime Rex was critical, where he discerned it, of theology which valued internal (systematic) consistency above clarity of expression.

Both the suspicion of obscurantism and the attempt to find the best contemporary expression of Christian truth are aspects of Rex's model worthy of imitation today. The criticism Rex made in his letter to Frank Nichol of systematic theologians who 'ignore' the whole work of Church history by treating doctrinal confessions as of normative rather than historical interest has been stressed again in more recent times.1526 For those wishing to do

1525 Cf. Maurice Andrew, Set in a Long Place: A life from North to South, Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1999) p.255. Andrew notes: "I tried to follow Professor Rex's advice: 'Never say anything from the pulpit which has not become your own'."
theology in the Protestant tradition of which Rex considered himself a part, his plea for a theology which interprets biblical material afresh in each generation remains a pertinent one.

Rex’s work inspired critical response in his own day and remains a lively read. His example underscores the value of continuing the attempt to reform the Christian faith. His impact on students and their subsequent teaching has helped to ensure the survival of a tradition of critical work within the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. It is important that this tradition is renewed if Christianity wishes to represent itself in its best light for adoption as a faith by members of the present generation.

2.0. Affordability

Each area of Rex’s work was deeply concerned with ‘our interests’ - the existentialist issues facing modern man. As we have said, the Sartrean anthropology that Rex believed to have been derived from the biblical material was his usual starting point. It was important to his D.Theol. thesis and pervades much of his latter work. Existentialist and psychological insight informed his literary studies and in his hermeneutics Rex described the way in which readers approach texts as being shaped by ‘our interests’. His papers in the history of ideas were structured so as to present existentialism as the way forward in the long struggle against determinist thought; and further, Rex described his eschatology as an exploration of ‘our interests’. Finally, his situational papers begin with an understanding of the human condition that is then used to depict the issue examined as a phenomenon tied up with existentialist concerns. Put succinctly, Rex saw an existentialist anthropology as a plausible and, therefore, practical starting point for any theological enterprise.

The problems with existentialist anthropology have already been acknowledged. So can a contemporary theologian draw lessons from Rex’s approach? Yes, insofar as the obvious philosophical difficulties are appreciated. The difficulties with the notion of an individual subject have not been resolved. Before any defence of this approach is attempted it must be recognised that the ‘individual decision-making subject’ is a construct. When this is accepted, it is possible to acknowledge that this in practice is how the vast majority of human beings in the western world function. In our everyday life we act as though we are autonomous individuals capable of making responsible and independent choices. We are
not in the habit of viewing ourselves and our decisions as the result of social constructs. Existentialist anthropology can, therefore, be adopted and appropriated in a heuristic way for the construction of our theologies. It works in practice even if it doesn't work in theory!

To be of value to the doing of theology today the notion of 'our interests' must be developed and expanded beyond the realm of Bultmannian existentialist concerns. The society we now inhabit is different from the New Zealand society that Rex addressed in the 1950s and 1960s. If a 'demythologised' situational theology is to speak to contemporary social concerns it must take account of this change.

Rex paraphrased Goethe when describing his wish that theologians would 'begin with that which could be known and concentrate on that which is worth knowing'. Rex chose an affordable theology because it would address modern man in language and thought forms that spoke to him directly. This provided the occasion for Rex to then address modern man with matters of 'ultimate concern'.

3.0. Ultimate concern

Rex believed modern man needed to be rescued from his ignorance about himself. Although his concern was not original, Rex's approach to this task was unique. For Rex, rescuing the individual involved educating him about the plight of modern man including his place in the world and those matters which concerned contemporary continental philosophers and psychologists. Fritz Künkel was influential in shaping Rex's perspective on the world and the place of religion in it. Künkel described the New Testament as the textbook of depth psychology, and Rex likewise believed that the Christian tradition carried the material necessary to address the individual with the truth about himself and his world. The aim of Künkel's religious psychology was to save man from egocentricity and to direct him towards his 'real' self, a self centred on God. It is important to remember this more private influence on Rex because it forms the background to much of his academic work. As Rex himself admitted - the attitude one takes towards the modern world depends to a certain extent on personality and temperament. Against the backdrop of the history of

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ideas Rex found that Künkel’s religious psychology offered insights worthy of contributing to his generation’s expression of the Christian religion.

In his 1961 letter to Frank Nichol Rex described those questions with which he believed the systematic theologians ought to concern themselves. They were questions familiar to the existentialist and of the type ‘why are we here?’ and ‘what ought we to do?’ Significantly, in both his M.A. thesis and his D.Theol. Rex explored answers to these questions that involved adherence to an ethical attitude. As we have seen, in his masters Rex attempted to offer a synthesis between the aesthetic and ethical vindications of the individual, while in his D.Theol. he explored the way in which ethical imperatives shape a life lived authentically ‘in the Spirit’. Rex’s search for a correct attitude to life was shaped by the intersection of his understanding of the ancient Christian metaphor of ‘the way’ and his existentialist beliefs.

Rex’s Christian existentialist journey was modelled in miniature in his approach to each theological paper he wrote. In the aforementioned letter to Nichol, Rex suggested that the theologian should focus his approach on ‘Christ and our interests’. Rex was convinced that when properly understood the latter (‘our interests’) shape concerns that lead towards the former (the ‘Christ’). For example, Rex viewed the study of history as a quest for Selbstverständnis, and the greater understanding of ‘our interests’ that result from this search invite their ideal conclusion in an existentialism borne of Pauline anthropology (tied to scriptural witness to the ‘Christ’). Equally, each of Rex’s forays into eschatology began with the concerns of modern man and ended with the search for an apt analogy of the resurrection (where resurrection is deemed interchangeable with God and viewed as the central event of the Christian faith).

Rex’s theology might be described as postmodernism avant la lettre in so far as it may be seen to reflect an antifoundationalist pragmatism, however, it is unlikely Rex would have described his thought in this way. While he maintained that the Christian tradition would continue to be of value in a world without God, and described his own experience of God as a silent partner in relationship, he never himself declared the death of God per se. Certainly it is possible to say that Rex was comfortable with ambiguity and did not advocate abandoning the Christian tradition.
Although, for example, Rex might be viewed as a precursor to the 'death of God' movement, part of what makes him an enigma is that he did not live long enough to assess its full historical and existential significance. It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty where Rex would have stood theologically had he lived twenty or thirty years longer because, like any good scholar, he was willing to change his mind. However, Rex gave useful expression to issues surrounding the search for truth at a critical historical juncture. In many ways he foreshadowed later developments in theology, engaging with important movements, the full moment of which would only become recognisable after his death.

Aspects of Rex's manner of approaching matters of ultimate concern are readily adaptable to contemporary theology in New Zealand. Aside from aforementioned difficulties presented by the notion of the self, history as a search for self-understanding stands up well to scrutiny today. The extent of our ability as individuals to understand and describe our world and its history has a direct bearing upon our ability to make choices in face of that history.

The best future 'true self' we are able to choose is shaped by our ability to engage with and respond to our past choices and understand the consequences of those decisions. Since we are now prepared to concede a greater influence to society in shaping the selves that make these decisions, it appears imperative that theologians (as an instrument of Christian society) offer Christians a model capable of shaping the way they understand the world and the decisions with which it presents them. Not only does the whole (the Christian tradition and its theology) need to inform the parts (its adherents) but the parts inform the whole. The level of 'authenticity' we are able to achieve in our theological studies is dependent upon the understanding and expression of individual theologians who contribute to our world-view. Those who would wish academically and existentially to analyse the movements in thought that have come to shape the world we inhabit today may benefit from adopting an understanding of history as a search for Selbstverständnis.

4.0. Bricolage

If Rex's theology was convincing in its day it is because he was conversant with history, contemporary issues, psychology and philosophy. His writing underscores the
importance of familiarity with the basic concepts of these disciplines to the construction of effective and convincing theology. Rex believed in the value of wider reading to the theological task. He believed ministers (and by extension - theologians) could, from the study of literature, develop a worthwhile appreciation of the potential for good and evil in their fellow human beings.\textsuperscript{1528}

Flexibility is a key advantage of an approach that draws on many sources. A willingness to consult new sources opens the possibility of new and surprising perspectives and draws into question the adequacy of systematic approaches which focus primarily on internal consistency. Rex's Christian existentialism offered an understanding of Christianity as 'the way' and presented a plausible model for making choices. His theological model took into account whatever was to hand and spoke most directly to the situation. It presented the possibility of adequate, if temporary, solutions to human problems which were to be pieced together from philosophy, cultural context and other non-academic sources. It was concerned less with being universally applicable and more with its potential for future adaptation as man's world changed.

But Rex's particular pastiche is no longer the best one can offer. Culture has changed and theology has branched out. The philosophers, authors, biblical scholars and theologians Rex drew upon were steeped in the western tradition, clearly dominated in Rex's time by the white, middle-class male. Today power has shifted and the imperative of conversation with a variety of cultures no longer needs the extensive justification it once did in theological prolegomena. Theology done following Rex's example today must take from Rex the courage of his convictions and leave that which belongs to the past behind. New means of expression must be found to frame the age-old questions theology wishes to address to its surrounding culture; and fresh expression must be found for the responses the Christian tradition can offer for the questions contemporary culture places to it. As Rex maintained of the philosopher, so too the theologian's role is to make us sit up and look with new eyes at what we have taken for granted.

\textsuperscript{1528}Cf. Rex, 'Charge to a young minister' in \textit{BHR}: p.233.
Rex himself insisted that each new generation must find new expression for Christian truth. His life's work serves as an example of the way in which a broad and sound education in theology and the social science forms an ideal backdrop for this task. Rex was contemptuous of intellectual laziness and/or dishonesty, and, far from viewing his time as a golden age, was scathing of the state of contemporary sermon writing and liturgy - an important face of public theology. As far as Rex was concerned the Sunday service failed to address its recipients as 'men come of age' and therefore could not be taken seriously.

Broad reading, and refined skills of critical discernment are required in order to perform the task of creating 'a myth that sustains' in today's secularist intellectual environment - a task particularly relevant to the theologian who wishes to locate 'meaning in history'. In this context the importance of a method similar to Rex's, which holds traditional theology in conversation with contemporary insight offered by other disciplines, cannot be understated.

5.0. Cognitive dissonance

In line with his Lutheran forebears Rex is likely to have claimed God's 'grace' as decisive in any 'conversion' that occurred during an interaction with his theology. It is important to recognise that while Rex did preach the value of kerygmatic theology he did not at any stage speak of 'cognitive dissonance'. Rex did, however, claim that theology should be done with 'Christ and our interests' in mind. That is, he intentionally constructed his situational responses with the 'Christ' (matters of ultimate concern) and our own 'interests' in view. He spoke in the first instance in terms of 'our interests', thus moving his theology from 'what can be known' towards 'what is worth knowing'. Drawing on contemporary sources and the language they provided was an intricate part of his theological approach.

The possibility of 'cognitive dissonance' occurring arises as a result of the way Rex structured his material. Rex would not have been able to engage and challenge existing assumptions without relating to the interests of the individuals who made up his audience (recognising their 'situation' and its truth). By teaching these individuals to look at their own situation in a different light, Rex laid the groundwork for insight from the Christian tradition to challenge that situation newly understood. In this way, Rex's papers, lectures and
addresses did not just present facts but also allowed for the possibility of existential engagement.

For an individual, confrontation with the content of Rex’s theology could lead to a new understanding of life and its ends. In this scenario, neither the personal situation, nor the relationship of that individual to matters of ultimate concern could be understood in the same way again. Only a re-orientation of the self in light of the new understanding is able to resolve dissonance where a conflict between the original understanding and the insights gained in the discourse exists. In such a re-orientation, a change (or conversion) is effected in the individual.

A myth that sustains

Rex’s faithful dedication to the academic task exhibited itself in his modesty of judgment. His familiarity with the history of ideas enabled him to keep his own contribution in a broader perspective. He aimed to faithfully transmit a tradition, identifying its recurring themes and their importance in his day, viewing himself primarily as a teacher of theological students and ministers. Rex placed emphasis on ongoing reform and fresh expression of the faith in each generation. In his generation he identified the need for an affordable theology that spoke to the concerns of human beings living in a world catalogued and categorised by increasing secularism and the scientific method. Rex did not seek to be another Barth, Tillich, or even Bultmann. His contribution was intentionally fragmentary - appropriate to an age which required a response - yet where the nature of God and truth was increasingly in question.

Rex blazed a trail from the tradition of academic German theology, concerned with *timeless and universal* expression, towards a theology in the New Zealand situation that offered *timely and particular* consideration to matters as they presented themselves. The latter, an inherently more modest approach, made no claim to providing an overarching framework yet neither did it shy away from the theological task. An examination of Rex’s work suggests he believed the tools he had accumulated in his academic study, his broad private reading and his experience of a life lived in light of the insights of Christian existentialism, meant that he had something useful to contribute. His was a ‘theology come of age’. He believed
his approach (heavily influenced by Bultmann) sufficient to begin the construction of 'a myth that sustains'.

Since Rex's theology was a response to particular situations and since those situations have changed, his responses alone are no longer sufficient to sustain the individual confronting a myriad of different choices thrown up by everyday life in the twenty-first century. New myths must be constructed in a conversation funded by the wisdom of the tradition and the best new knowledge. An antifoundationalist pragmatism fed by the insights of the Christian tradition is a logical next step. Theology done in conversation with the present day shows that it takes seriously a 'world come of age', and avoids the worst excesses of univocity and the homogenising tendencies of normative social discourse. Language games cannot and should not be reduced to a single voice.

Any attempt to give contemporary voice to a myth that sustains must give expression to the nature of the relationship between religion and science. Recognising the object of each is a first step in this process. Traditional philosophy and its more modern guise 'science' seek to explain reality based on regular and predictable events (what occurs and what might be predicted to occur - answering the question “what happens in my life?”). By contrast, traditional theology and its more modern guise 'history' seek to explain reality based on significant events (events that are outside what might have been regularly predicted to occur - answering the question “what is significant in my life?”).

Logically, the narratives of science (philosophy) and history (theology) confront one another; for a presupposition of modern science is that it is an overarching expression of reality. While few Western citizens today would wish to do without the fruits of the modern scientific world-view such as medicines, transport and telecommunication, there are events and situations the moment of which can best be explained by reverting to ancient communal narratives. These narratives (including those of the Christian tradition which speak of surprising events in history, myths and legends) though less concerned with the rules of logic, often express a sense of wonder and awe more aptly than do scientific explanations based on the laws of cause and effect. While the co-existence of the explanations of science

1529 Evincing the intentionality of Rex's 'Christ and our interests' approach is not a straightforward task and relies upon one letter, consistency in his method, and scattered comments in his teaching texts.
and religion may cause difficulty in theory, in practice the two narratives complement one another and offer a fuller picture of the reality each individual experiences - the only reality that there is for each of us.

The role of the historical critical method in shaping a myth that sustains must also be closely examined. For Rex it was the necessary starting point for theological investigation and it seems that historical awareness is not something we can escape today. Rex argued in his ‘Hermeneutics’ that history is always viewed from a perspective of vested interest. This truth is unavoidable today. Claims to objectivity are drawn into question not only by formal movements in philosophy but also by the very existence of a plethora of competing historical narratives in print. It is increasingly problematic to claim the possibility of an experience or understanding of an historical event or text an sich. What may be legitimately questioned as we search for tools to aid expression of a myth that sustains today is the exact nature of the historical critical method's role in our exegesis. Why, for example, should we wish to search for an original meaning or text? And, can we not now safely dispense with the historical critical method since it has helped to demonstrate the relative nature of all narratives and truths? Do we need to regard one method as authoritative? In practice we regularly move between explanations of 'reality' in order to find the explanation that 'best suits' our current experiences. Can we now place the historical critical method to one side like a latter-day Wittgensteinian ladder, favouring instead more playful techniques which take for granted the multivalent nature of truth? Contemporary 'spiritual', typological, analogical and deductive methods of interpretation all provide interesting narratives. The laying of these (oftentimes competing) narratives alongside one another is more in tune with the age we live in than favouring one particular interpretation / 'explanation' offered by one particular 'scientific' method.

1530 Why should the intention of the original author be regarded as in any way authoritative? It seems that the idea of originality as a positive quality comes from the Greek dualistic world-view of which we are heirs even today. The world of the gods was mimicked in an inferior fashion by the world of shadows, which contained flesh and death and was inherently evil. Once popularly accepted, the assumption that a replica is 'inferior' is no longer defensible. While 'Coke' and 'Levis' have at times been marketed as the 'original', remixed remakes, mixed live by disc jockeys have become the preferred option in some musical circles. In actual fact, nobody really wants to wear the original pair of Levis jeans or drink the original can of Coca Cola. One would neither wish to fly in the original aeroplane nor undergo the original form of surgery, nor receive the 'original' form of vaccine, when an improved version is available.

1531 Today any number of strategies of determining meaning are recognised by exegetes: Sitz im Leben (text's
As we have said, Helmut Rex suggested that we who question life’s meaning and purpose require a ‘myth that sustains’. His view that it was to be located in the collected body of the Christian Scriptures viewed through existentialist presupposition and told via an historical critical interpretation depends on the attribution of a level of authority to the historical critical method which we must now question. We act in everyday life as though the scientific model of explaining the world were absolute and yet at times this model fails to express the fullness of lived human reality.\textsuperscript{1532} Whichever methods we choose to employ in our search, those of us who would seek a myth that sustains for today and wish in any way to defend it using ‘rational’ discourse must be prepared to concede that the myth stands and falls on the premises of the methods we have selected to uncover it.\textsuperscript{1533} This is no different for the natural sciences, philosophy, theology or any other academic discipline.

Rex’s contribution is of a different order to that of Barth, Bultmann and Tillich, the three theologians of his century whom he held in highest regard. The significance of Rex’s contribution is as a link in the Christian tradition faithfully interpreted for the New Zealand situation. This significance is largely historical. Of course, as we have seen, this is by no means to suggest that it is unimportant. Rex claimed nothing more grandiose for himself. He walked a Christian existentialist path and focussed his energies on the needs of his audiences - both student and church. It is important therefore to assess his significance in this context. Because he did not set himself the task of developing a system like that of

\textsuperscript{1532}In everyday life we act as though events are predictable. We are constantly making assumptions based on our past experiences. For example, we expect that our hairdryers will function today as yesterday. We do not imagine that a hairdryer will become a flame-throwing device overnight. We will walk to the end of the driveway to collect mail from a mailbox and presume it will still be there as it was yesterday - in the normal course of events. Yet this ‘predictability’ in our lives does not fully explain what it means for us to be human. It is frequently the events which surprise us by falling outside what we might expect that shape meaning in our lives.

\textsuperscript{1533}There will always be background issues involved in our search for suitable methods. For example, whether we find sustaining a myth which focuses on order or disorder will to some extent depend on our early childhood experiences. It may be that we have an innate craving for order and the security that provides, or conversely it may be that we have a need for the novel and new so that we might be provided with the challenge necessary for ‘life-giving’ change.
many of his academic forebears, there is little to be gained from a direct comparison with the systems of those whose thought he adopted, criticised and adapted.

The scandal of particularity

Rex’s ‘situational’ approach involved a close reading of contemporary culture. This approach, as modelled by Rex in his reading of Te Ao Hou for his ‘Race Relationships’ addresses, serves to illustrate the way in which theology can constructively engage with culture. The particular social concern (here the example is race relations) provides the platform (‘our interest’) from which the theologian steeped in his / her tradition is able to enter important contemporary conversations. In such conversation one of the theologian’s tasks is to share wisdom gleaned from a tradition which has busied itself with matters of ultimate concern through many ages. In this task the theologian must avoid the use of outdated theological language. Rex’s eschatology, by way of illustration, retained traditional language and because of this it fails to come across today in quite the same way as his other work.

Theology must find new forms of expression for its heritage since the all too familiar language of its traditional discourse not only alienates other partners in conversation but also does nothing to confront the (frequently mistaken) assumption that the intended hearer understands the meaning of the phrases used. It must find new ways of telling the stories and truths specific to its discourse. Theology that seeks to be relevant in this way is able to challenge the assumptions of others and is also open to having its own assumptions challenged. When theology does not engage in conversation with other disciplines, it cannot itself be challenged. This is a grave risk. It must engage in secular conversations, impressing its value on a new generation of citizens, or risk being lost to the world. Without challenge there is no room for God to act, and revelation cannot take place.

Although the wish to generate a clear and consistent view of one’s faith is something Rex had great sympathy with, he was aware of the difficulties presented by the variety of biblical witness, diversity within the churches, and the intended function of the product (kerygma or dogma). His own situational approach took seriously the modern scientific

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1534Cf. Letter from Helmut Rex to Frank Nichol, 9 July 1961; and, chapter six for a discussion of the diverse
world-view and human need for a myth that sustains. It worked from the former ('our interests') towards the latter ('the Christ').

Rex saw in the Christian pattern of life ("hee hodos" – 'the way') a map for journeying (Christian existentialism) that did justice to the intellect (rigorous pursuit of truth) and the soul (passions, interests, responsibilities, ethics, life after death and eschatology). In our twenty-first century in a period of western history frequently referred to as postmodernity, neither the need to take seriously our modern cultural context nor the need for a myth that sustains has diminished. As theologians we can do a lot worse than to mirror the integrity and diligence with which Rex set about creating a living faith through the marrying of the Christian tradition with secular language and insight. In practice, if not in theory, Rex's model - 'our interests and Christ' - has much to recommend itself to us today.

witness in the churches and in the biblical material.
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presented by Helmut H. Rex from Potsdam

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INTRODUCTION: THE STATE OF THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The present work aims towards a fundamentally new interpretation of 1.Cor.7. It is widely recognised that this chapter presents many difficult problems to Pauline exegesis. The problems stem from the fact that we are dealing with the answers given by the apostle to the Corinthians, without knowing the questions of the Corinthians to which the answers are directed. Knowledge of the questions is required, however, for a complete understanding of the answers. Consequently, we are forced to deduce the nature of the questions from the answers provided. This process is, of course, not free from the dangers of circular argumentation. On the other hand, this method promises real solutions. The position of the exegete of 1.Cor.7 is to a certain extent the same as a man overhearing a telephone conversation. As he hears the words of the first party, he constructs the words of the other party inaccessible to his ears. One hypothesis after the other is designed and discarded until he stumbles across a solution that best fits the words to which he has access. One difference remains though. The exegete is not able, in the same manner that the friend in the same room is able, to check his construction of the overheard conversation. In light of the conversation in 1.Cor.7, he could therefore be in a position to claim no more than this or that degree of probability for his exegesis. The best that we could say for his exegesis is that, at least at certain points, a degree of probability was achieved which amounted to virtual certainty.

If this work adds to the already available exegetical interpretations, it does so because it places a difficult exegetical problem in a new light. Whether this new attempted solution is more convincing than those which have preceded it, should be left to the judgement of the reader.

The following exegesis proceeds on the premise that the ethical problem in Paul refers to eschatological existence. It is likewise assumed that Pneuma must be viewed as the fundamental eschatological principle of Pauline ethics. The author distinguishes between an indicative and an imperative application within the Spirit-concept. With that, the theme attended to time and again since Bultmann and Windisch, of the relationship between
indicative and imperative, is taken up. The author believes that this problem is of fundamental significance for the comprehension of 1.Cor.7. The exegesis of 1.Cor.7 demands a clear distinction between the indicative and imperative ways of spiritual functioning, particularly as they present themselves in the relationship between charisma and agape.

It is a thesis of this work that the problem of the relationship between indicative and imperative is a given of human existence, and that within eschatological existence it is specifically given once again in the relationship between charisma and agape. God produces the new self through the Spirit firstly in baptism, which is given to all Christians in the same way, and secondly in the charismata or gifts of the Spirit, which are given to some Christians in a special way. Both the baptism and the charisma are concerned with an indicative production of the new self. By comparison, the 'fruit' of the Spirit (Gal.5.22), which is summarised in the love-commandment, is an imperative. In Paul charisma and agape are both traced back to the Spirit, but they flow from the spring in different ways. The one way is that of charisma, the other is that of agape. Just as charisma shows the gifts of the Spirit, so agape shows the transformation of the Spirit. In one case the Spirit is working indicatively, in the other, imperatively. This distinction is fundamental for Paul and is a presupposition of his exposition in 1.Cor.7.

The work therefore approaches the actual exegetical problem of 1.Cor.7 in three increasingly confined concentric circles insofar as it first portrays Pneuma as the fundamental ethical principle of Pauline ethics, and thereupon attends to that given problem of human existence concerning the relationship between the indicative and the imperative, as it arises in eschatological existence. This is done, finally, in order to determine its specific form as a relationship between charisma and agape. This three stage thought-process is then to be bound with 1.Cor.7.7 as the key to the whole chapter, so that from this Paul's answers to the Corinthians can be understood as arising from a focus which governs the entire chapter.

The results of exegesis undertaken in this fashion will show that Paul had a much more sympathetic attitude towards marriage than is usually assumed. By no means did Paul
regard marriage as “a manifoldly necessary evil owing to the weakness of the flesh.” 1535 The claim that he viewed marriage “with insurmountable loathing” is completely false. 1536 This means registering in the apostle’s ethics, ascetic-dualistic viewpoints which are completely foreign to him. 1537 Even within eschatological existence Paul viewed marriage as the norm (1.Cor.7.1-7) and saw the possibility of remaining in the unmarried state as a charisma which is not given to all. Accordingly, he warns against the transformation of a charismatic state, such as the unmarried state, into an ethical goal (1.Cor.7.7). For Paul, charismata are ‘gifts’ in the strictest sense of the word and not ethical tasks. This insight is of fundamental importance for the understanding of 1.Cor.7; only when one shuts oneself off from this insight does the apostle appear hostile towards marriage. That Paul understood the unmarried state as a gift is widely acknowledged in the literature. 1538 W. Michaelis and von Allmen misunderstand Paul when they describe marriage itself as a charisma. 1539 These thoughts will be individually explained later on.

At the end of the previous century H. Gunkel emphasised the grounding of ethics in the Pneuma as a specific contribution of the apostle Paul. 1540 And although F. Büchsel disapproved of Gunkel’s thesis of the ‘Versittlichung’ of the Spirit through Paul, in his book Der Geist Gottes im NT (1926) he concurs with Gunkel that Paul “made the Spirit the governing factor in Christian piety”. 1541 Following Büchsel, Albert Schweitzer in particular (Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus, 1930) portrayed the meaning of the Spirit for Pauline ethics in an impressive manner. He sums it up: “Not the fruit of repentance, but rather the fruit of

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1535Ltzm, Hdb. 3. Aufl.,29. Preisiker wiederholt das Wort vom ‘notwendigen Uebel’ (Das Ethos des Urchristentums, 177). J. Weiss spricht von der Ehe bei Pls als einem “Damm gegen die Barbarei” u. als dem geringeren Uebel” (1.Kor.,171). Hering versucht den Apostel (ganz unnötigerweise) damit zu entlasten, dass er hervorhebt, dass Pls sich wenigstens nicht auch noch die Rabbi- Populationstheorie hat zu Schulden kommen lassen (CNT, VII, 51).

1536E. V. Arnold, Roman Stoicism, 426. Er zitiert als Beweisstelle 1.Kor.7.1,2.


1539W. Michaelis, Z.syst.Theol.5 (1927/8), 426ss; von Allmen, Marias et femmes d’après Saint Paul, 28: “Le mariage... est la consécration d’un homme et d’une femme qui en ont le ‘charisme’ à leur destination authentique.”

1540Die Wirkung des Hl. Geistes, 82

1541a.a.O. 446
the Spirit (Gal.5.22) is the ethic of Paul". Additionally important to him is the recognition "that Paul understands the Spirit not only as a spiritual and ethical principle, as the exponents of the prophetic-messianic expectation did, or as a revelation-appearance, like Joel, but rather also as the power that lends the way of being to the resurrection". This point of view recurs in Bultmann in the formula "power for moral transformation". He says, according to Paul the Spirit is "above all the power for moral transformation."

Another point of view, by contrast, sees above all in the Spirit, a creative principle of the ethical tradition in the Church. This thought was developed particularly by W.D. Davies in his book *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948). This thought-process culminated in the thesis that Paul sees a new 'Torah' in the words handed down from Jesus. O.Cullmann sees matters in a similar way. He declares himself in agreement with Davies, when he says the latter "demonstrates very well the idea of Christ as 'the new law'." Of course this thesis is of particular interest for the exegesis of 1.Cor.7, in that it readily refers to 1.Cor.7.10 and 25. O.Cullmann is for example, on the basis of 1.Cor.7 of the opinion, that the way "Paul employs Jesus' words in 1.Cor.7 certainly permits the assumption that the Paradosis must already have been very extensive and well defined", and when in 7.25 Paul says that in this case he has no command from the Lord, Cullmann understands that the Paradosis "contains" commands from the Lord "for the most concrete questions of the moral life". Much of the understanding of 1.Cor.7 is dependent upon whether Davies and Cullmann have viewed matters correctly. In light of contemporary research the question of Pneuma as the fundamental principle of eschatology presents itself as follows: Should Pneuma be viewed first and foremost as a principle of tradition or as a principle of power? And further: Given that both standpoints do justice to Pauline ethics: How do the principles relate to one another?

1542 a.a.O. 286
1543 a.a.O. 165
1544 Theol.NTs, 155
1545 a.a.O. 217
1546 a.a.O. 144: Davies betont die zentrale Bedeutung des Geistesbegriffes für die pln. Ethik, u. verbindet diesen Gedanken mit der Ansicht, dass Pls in Jesus eine Art neuen Moses sah u. die überlieferten Worte Jesu als eine Art christlicher Halakah ansah.
1547 Tradition, 21
1548 Op. cit. 15
1549 Op. cit. 15
Pneuma as the fundamental principle of ethics in Paul, refers as much to the soteriological indicative as it does to the ethical imperative (Gal. 5.25). The associated problem was thoroughly dealt with by Bultmann and Windisch in *ZNW* 23 (1924) without them coming to a convincing conclusion. At that stage, Bultmann shunted the problem onto the track of paradoxicalness. With the announcement that paradox is "fully understandable" for the believer, he had in fact capitulated in the face of the exegetical problem of Gal. 5.25. Even in his *Theol. NT* (1948) he is absolutely unable to get past this solution. The new standpoint that is presented in a chapter about "the problem of the Christian life-style" can really only be viewed as an aberration. Windisch's own interpretation of Gal. 5.25 equally fails to come close to a satisfying solution: "The imperative should make the Christian aware that possession of the Spirit includes only one 'possibility', and places a responsibility that he may not shirk". No better is the announcement that the Christian stands under the imperative because he must 'play his part'. The same aporia recurs commonly in the literature, wherever an effort is made to determine the relationship between indicative and imperative. Thus Schweitzer speaks of 'being serious about' those matters which are given with the indicative. Even the idea of 'probation' introduced by Schweitzer and Wendland misses the target. Schweitzer's formulation that is supposed to indicate to the faithful who are in moral transformation, what stage the dead-and resurrected-being 'has reached', is particularly unfortunate. Preisker's declaration, that the sacraments are annulled where God's will via the 'unethical' is held in contempt, is
equally dissatisfactory. G.Bornkamm's attempt to explain the imperative through the concealed nature of the new life is also not convincing. The new life, gifted in baptism, was hardly imagined by Paul such, that the baptised would be nothing other than a 'believer and hoper'. J.Weiss expresses himself more cautiously when he says that it is expected of all Christians that they "should 'activate' and 'effect' in their complete transformation the holiness produced through their baptism" or should "now actually realise their holiness". Preisker's formulation is acceptable when it is removed from its context: "to seize the indicative in the imperative". Common to all these explanations is the attempt to understand the problem of the relationship between the indicative and the imperative from the eschatological situation, while in truth it is a given of human existence as such, which appears only in a characteristic formulation in eschatological existence.

In this formulation the problem itself is put as a question about the relationship between charisma and agape. We believe that Paul distinguished clearly between the indicative and imperative ways the Spirit functions. When Gunkel says that Paul did not sense the difference between Christian life and charisma he does the apostle an injustice; his remark is fitting for a great number of Paul's interpreters. Schweitzer's announcement that agape is 'the highest' of the charisma is characteristic of the dominant uncertainty. A welcome exception is developed by J.Weiss and G.Bornkamm. In view of 1.Cor.12.31 and 13.1 Weiss says: "that Paul here recommends love as the greatest charisma is not only nowhere to be found, it is quite frankly, dismissed". Weiss, though, obstructs further clarity when with reference to Gal.5.22, he represents the opinion that from an overview of Paul agape must be understood as 'work of the Spirit' "which names the whole new life of the Christian as a fruit of the Spirit". In contrast to that it must be emphasised that for Paul, the 'fruit of the Spirit' has a meaning just as specific as the charisma. In Paul, the 'Fruit' does not stand for the entire attitude of the whole Christian life, but rather for the transformation of the

1559Geist u. Leben, 55
1560Das Ende des Gesetzes, 45s
15611.Kor.,155
1562D. Ethos des Urchristentums, 170
1563Die Wirkung des Hl. Geistes,91, vgl. Bltm, Theol.NTs,161
15651. Korintherbrief, 310
1566loc.cit.
Spirit, as does the *charisma* for the gifts of the Spirit.

G. Bornkamm likewise drew attention to the difference between *charisma* and *agape*.

"It is wrong to call love a *charisma*. No *charisma* is excluded from being active in love, but also none is worth anything without love".\(^{1567}\) Unfortunately Bornkamm brings the analogy of the body and the members to bear on the relationship between *agape* and *charismata*.\(^{1568}\) Paul, however, did not view the relationship between *agape* and *charismata* in that way; as though *agape* were the whole or the 'body' of the *charismata*, from which they receive their life and meaning. Rather, for Paul, *agape* stands outside the *charismata*, as such it may accompany the *charismata*, or indeed, it may not. That, of course, is quite different to the idea of the members.

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\(^{1567}\) *Der Kostlichere Weg* in ‘Das Ende des Gesetzes’, 100, n. 18  
\(^{1568}\) Op. cit., 110
Appendix Two - Rex and Pauline Ethics

A new interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7

Rex’s D.Theol. thesis examines the classical Pauline division between the imperative and the indicative aspects of the Christian moral life as they present themselves in chapter seven of the first letter to the Corinthians. The doctorate’s author makes a case for eschatological existence being a particular manifestation of human existence - the dualities inherent in the latter having corresponding dualities in the former instance. Although the person living within the bounds of eschatological existence operates under the influence of God, Rex asserts that the Sartrean analysis of the human condition applied equally in this instance. The person seeks to overcome the intrinsic divide within themselves in order to constitute a coherent, complete and congruent ‘true self’.

\[\text{Rex, H.H., ‘Das ethische Problem in der eschatologischen Existenz bei Paulus’ (unpublished D.Theol. thesis, Tübingen: Eberhard-Karls-Universität, 1954). (Hereafter referred to as ‘D.Theol.’). In this chapter all citations from Rex’s doctorate appear in my own translation since no English translation has been published. The page numbers which correspond to these translated passages refer to the original German script.}
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\[\text{\textsuperscript{1569}Rex, D.Theol.: p.49: “Sartres Analyse der menschlichen Existenz steht in offensichtlicher Abhängigkeit von der paulinischen Anthropologie”}.\]
Paul does not deviate an inch from the realisation that the individual standing under the imperative in eschatological existence, does not choose spiritual 'ideals', but rather that self which God in his grace has 'posited'.\textsuperscript{1571}

Crucial to this process is the clear determination of which aspects of the moral life belong to the imperative of \textit{agape}, and which belong to the indicative of \textit{charisma}. In the passage with which Rex deals, issues of marriage, virginity, divorce, widowhood and celibacy are discussed. Rex wishes to impress upon his reader the priority of \textit{agape} \textit{over charisma} in dealing with these, or any, issues in the Christian moral life.\textsuperscript{1572}

\textbf{The priority of \textit{agape} over \textit{charisma} in the Christian moral life}

Rex argues that Paul is quite clear about the priority of the imperative qualities (associated with \textit{agape}) in the Christian life. The \textit{charismata} are nevertheless to be celebrated as indicative of the particular life and gifts given by God to individuals.

Rex is aiming at a “fundamentally new interpretation of 1. Cor 7”.\textsuperscript{1573} This fact coupled with the selection of a chapter “widely recognised” as “presenting many difficult problems to Pauline exegesis”\textsuperscript{1574} draws attention to the ambitious nature of his project.\textsuperscript{1575} Rex’s doctorate is particularly significant in the context of the present thesis because it makes explicit links between the Gospel, Pauline and Sartrean anthropology, and the ethical dimension of contemporary Christian living.\textsuperscript{1576}

In his \textit{D.Theol.} thesis, Rex draws together insights from a variety of fields to construct a plausible understanding of Paul’s depiction of ‘life in the Spirit’. That Rex read broadly in psychology, philosophy and hermeneutics whilst researching in the spheres of biblical studies and history may be an interesting fact, but is not of itself significant. It is


\textsuperscript{1572}See: RA096, Rex, ‘An attempt to understand 1. Cor. 7’: p.12. These claims will be discussed later in the present chapter.

\textsuperscript{1573}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.1.

\textsuperscript{1574}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.1.

\textsuperscript{1575}Rex was also aware of the need to limit the scope of a doctoral thesis. Prior to his selection of Otto Michel as a supervisor, Rex corresponded with Helmut Thielicke with the intention of pursuing doctoral studies under his supervision. When he recognised that a significant contribution to Thielicke’s work in Systematic Theology would require more time than he had available, Rex opted instead for a doctorate in New Testament under Michel. Source: RA003, Rex, Untitled Response to Breward.

\textsuperscript{1576}Links between these subject areas are assumed in Rex’s important later work.
only when the intersections of this wide range of interests are recognised and examined that one begins to see its fruit.

Rex's argument for an understanding of Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 7 illuminated by the work of John-Paul Sartre, was in places sharply criticised by up and coming New Testament scholar Wolfgang Schrage. For biblical scholars, Rex's aims and Schrage's critique will be interesting on a different level to that which is investigated in the present study. In this case, it is sufficient to offer an overview of Rex's position and a pithy assessment of Schrage's viewpoint, in order to concentrate on the important place of Rex's doctorate in the context of his thought more broadly examined.

The thesis is clearly structured. A reader of Rex's introduction is able to gain a clear overview of his project and may skip, with the aid of its detailed contents page, to the outworking of any particular point in the main body of the thesis. Rex gives clear indication of the material to be discussed within the thesis and offers an indication of his own feeling for the work of previous theorists and commentators.

In his opening analogy, Rex discusses the reconstruction of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. He likens the letter-writer's framework to an overheard telephone conversation; such that the person who overhears one half of the conversation must construct the other from the clues provided by the section with which he is familiar. It is worth noting from the outset that Rex assumes that Paul was responding to a concrete set of questions provided by the community in Corinth. This assumption does not allow for the possibility that the apostle has imagined for himself a set of questions around which he might construct a diatribe, as was common practice at the time. Nor does Rex's approach

1577 Wolfgang Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzellehre in der paulinischen Korinther* (Göttingen: Göttinger Verlagshaus Gerd Mohr, 1961) was published just 3 years before Schrage was appointed Professor of New Testament studies at Bonn University. Citations from this work appearing in the present chapter of this thesis are my own translation. The footnoted page references refer to the original German work.
1578 The introduction to Rex's thesis is concise. Rex did not waste words as he stated his thesis and outlined its basic assumptions. The first page offers an analogy to draw the reader's attention, the second outlines terms, assumptions and conditions, the third describes Rex's method and seeks to impress upon the reader some of the implications of this research. The balance, pages four to nine, discuss previous attempts at dealing with matters relating to the subject introduced. The subdivisions within the introductory chapter, as indicated in the contents page, correspond with the chapter headings for the first three chapters. Rex also published a succinct abstract of his thesis. See: Helmut H. Rex, 'Das ethische Problem in der eschatologische Existenz bei Paulus', in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 80, number 4, April 1955: p.241f.
record the possibility of the questions stemming from the apostle's own community, only to be transposed into another situation for rhetorical purposes associated with Paul's teaching ministry.\footnote{Rex's approach is thus in keeping with contemporary scholarly opinion. Corinthians is considered to be a contextual dialogue rather than a constructed diatribe both because of the number of practical and pastoral issues which are addressed and because of the evidence of ongoing correspondence it contains. See the introduction to Gordon Fee's commentary for a useful discussion of critical questions associated with the Corinthians' correspondence: Gordon D. Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).}

The succinct introductory section is sufficiently illuminating of Rex's aims and method to be cited in full:

The following exegesis proceeds on the premise that the ethical problem in Paul refers to eschatological existence. It is likewise assumed that \textit{Pneuma} must be viewed as the fundamental eschatological principle of Pauline ethics. The author distinguishes between an indicative and an imperative application within the Spirit-concept. With that, the theme attended to time and again since Bultmann and Windisch, of the relationship between indicative and imperative, is taken up. The author believes that this problem is of fundamental significance for the comprehension of 1.Cor.7. The exegesis of 1.Cor.7 demands a clear distinction between the indicative and imperative ways of spiritual functioning, particularly as they present themselves in the relationship between \textit{charisma} and \textit{agape}.

It is a thesis of this work that the problem of the relationship between indicative and imperative is a given of human existence, and that within eschatological existence it is specifically given once again in the relationship between \textit{charisma} and \textit{agape}. God produces the new self through the Spirit firstly in baptism, which is given to all Christians in the same way, and secondly in the \textit{charismata} or gifts of the Spirit, which are given to some Christians in a special way. Both the baptism and the \textit{charisma} are concerned with an indicative production of the new self. By comparison, the 'fruit' of the Spirit (Gal.5.22), which is summarised in the love-commandment, is an imperative. In Paul \textit{charisma} and \textit{agape} are both traced back to the Spirit, but they flow from the spring in different ways. The one way is that of \textit{charisma}, the other is that of \textit{agape}. Just as \textit{charisma} shows the gifts of the Spirit, so \textit{agape} shows the transformation of the Spirit. In one case the Spirit is working indicatively, in the other, imperatively. This distinction is fundamental for Paul and is a presupposition of his exposition in 1.Cor.7.\footnote{Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.2: "Es ist eine These dieser Arbeit, dass das Problem des Verhältnisses von Indikativ und Imperativ mit der menschlichen Existenz selbst gegeben ist. Gott setzt durch den Geist das neue Selbst einmal in der Taufe, allen Christen in gleicher Weise gegeben, und dann noch in den Charismen oder Geistsgaben, einigen Christen in besonderer Weise gegeben. Sowohl in der Taufe wie in den Charismen handelt es sich um ein indikativisches Setzen des neuen Selbst. Daneben aber steht die 'Frucht des Geistes' (Gal. 5.22) als Imperativ, der in dem Liebesgebot seine Zusammenfassung findet. Charisma und Agape werden also bei Paulus beide auf den Geist zurückgeführt, aber sie fließen aus dieser Quelle in verschiedener Weise. Die eine Weise ist die des Charismas, die andere die der Agape. Wie das Charisma die Geistsgabe darstellt, so stellt die Agape den Geisteswandel dar. In der einen Weise wirkt der Geist indikativisch, in der anderen imperativisch.}
The relationship between agape and charisma - Rex and Schrage

In order to assess the moment of his thesis, it is important to grapple with Rex's understanding of the relationship between agape and charisma. For Rex it is possible to have agape as a goal. By contrast: "The self equipped with charismata is in the strict sense of the word 'posited': 'given'". Rex stresses that the gifts of the Spirit are indeed gifts and may not be appropriated through human endeavour. The individual cannot realise his or her potential to be Self even with respect to the spiritual gifts. "What is decisive is that this self cannot be called into existence through its own desire".

Wolfgang Schrage is critical of Rex's strict allocation of the fruit of the Spirit to the imperative and the corresponding allotment of the gifts to the indicative. His 1961 work Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese is critical of biblical theologians who place the love-commandment in such an elevated position that it negates the very possibility of constructing a biblical ethic.

While Schrage focuses on Paul's ethical teaching, his broader thesis questions the popular subordination of the New Testament's ethical demands to its love-commandment. It draws the attention of his readers to the examples of both Jesus and Paul, neither of whom hesitated to include specific ethical demands in their teaching. As Schrage states:

Just a single glance at a Pauline epistle makes it impossible to ignore the manifold individual demands. Neither Jesus nor Paul have abstained from impressing quite concrete individual commandments and exhortations alongside the love-
commandment. Therefore, time and again, some embarrassment is presented to
formal-ethical interpretation by their incontestable existence.\textsuperscript{1585}

To this extent, Rex and Schrage are in full agreement. Indeed in places Schrage cites
Rex in support as he takes on more established names in biblical criticism.\textsuperscript{1586} Where Rex
and Schrage differ is over Rex's strict division between imperative and indicative, and his
allotment of \textit{agape} and \textit{charisma}, to each of these categories respectively. Schrage
distinguishes himself from those writers - including Rex - who do not wish to see \textit{agape} as a
\textit{charisma}.\textsuperscript{1587} On the one hand, Rex places the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ under the imperative and it
is his judgement that these are “summarised in the love commandment”.\textsuperscript{1588} On the other,
Rex sees baptism and the \textit{charisma} as concerned with the indicative production of the new
self. It is precisely this strict allocation of \textit{charismata} to the indicative and \textit{agape} to the
imperative that Schrage takes exception to:

Rex has assigned \textit{charisma} to the indicative, in contrast to his assignment of the fruit
of the spirit to the imperative; this is however untenable, since not only the fruits of
the spirit are to be industriously striven for, but rather precisely the \textit{charismata} too.
They are therefore not only gifts, but also tasks. [...] \textit{Charisma}, like the fruit of the
Spirit is \textit{obligational gift}, possibility for Christian behaviour given by the Spirit.\textsuperscript{1589}

Schrage here appears to describe an important logical inconsistency in Rex’s
argument. In making this response, however, it is clear that Schrage has misunderstood the
intention of Rex’s argument. Rex would agree that \textit{charismata} are tasks (imperative), but
would add that they are \textit{only} to be striven for in so far as the individual is striving to realise a
self, consistent with that given by God. The individual should not burden themselves
through the act of striving for those \textit{charismata} with which the Spirit has not blessed them.

In Schrage’s discussion of the nature of charismatic tasks he stresses that they are
difficult to quantify since all Christians are differently gifted by the Spirit. This, he explains,

\textsuperscript{1585}Schrage: p.12: “Nun mußte ja schon ein einziger Blick in einen paulinischen Brief eine einfache Ignorierung
der mannigfachen Einzelforderungen unmöglich machen. Weder Jesus noch Paulus haben ja darauf verzichtet,
nobem dem Liebesgebot auch ganz konkrete einzelne Gebote und Mahnungen einzuschärfen. Deren
unbestreitbares Vorhandensein mußte darum der formaltheologischen Interpretation immer wieder einige
Verlegenheit bereiten”.

\textsuperscript{1586}See for example Schrage’s footnotes #145 (p.106); #91, #92 (p.139); #23 (p.147); #268 (p.247). In this
collection of footnotes Rex is cited over against Davies, Dibelius, Schweitzer, Weiß and von Campenhausen.

\textsuperscript{1587}See Schrage, footnote #278: p.249.

\textsuperscript{1588}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.2 “the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit (Gal.5.22), which is summarised in the love-commandment, is an
imperative”.

\textsuperscript{1589}Schrage: p.142.
is why the observation that Paul would demand ‘Love!’ where he would not make the demand to ‘Prophesy!’ is a more nuanced matter than one might be led to believe from Rex’s thesis. Schrage’s observations highlight that spiritually gifted Christians (all Christians might be expected to be charismatically gifted in one way or another)\textsuperscript{1590} carry obligations associated with their own gifts - and thus stand under an imperative. Although he is not contradicting Rex, Schrage would be correct in stressing that a direct and un-nuanced attribution of \textit{charismata} to the indicative is misleading. In a similar fashion, one cannot simply attribute the fruit of the Spirit (\textit{agape} included) to the imperative. Where the fruit of the Spirit can be seen, they are to be regarded as ‘indicative’ of the transformation of the Spirit.

\textbf{The Spirit as governing concept in Pauline ethics}

The entire first chapter of Rex’s thesis is devoted to the governing role of the Spirit in Paul’s eschatological writings. Rex states that Paul’s ethics may be viewed as eschatological in many different ways, identifying numerous eschatological motifs in Paul’s ethical writing.\textsuperscript{1591} Despite the many faceted nature of the eschatological motif, Rex asserts that the Pauline ethics have one common denominator - the governing concept of the Spirit. According to Rex, this concept of the Spirit is absolutely essential to the logic of Pauline ethics.\textsuperscript{1592}

Rex argues that spiritual transformation is protected from enthusiasm through its close association with the ‘Christ-concept’. This fact is demonstrated to Rex in Colossians 2:6 with Paul’s use of ‘Christ’ language in a context otherwise associated with the indwelling of the Spirit. Rex makes explicit Christian spirituality’s link between Christ and the Spirit determining that in Paul: “The relationship with Christ secures the Christian character of the spiritual transformation; in return the Spirit supplies the Christian with the power for

\textsuperscript{1590}Schrage: p.143.
\textsuperscript{1591}Cf. Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.9f.

Christian transformation".\textsuperscript{1593} It is important to Rex’s thesis that the distinctive nature of Christian spirituality is pursued at some length.

Rex’s broad-ranging discussion on the nature of the Spirit and its influence includes an investigation of the language surrounding Christian transformation. Rex discovers an association with ‘compassion’ and ‘transformation to new life’ and transformation through the ‘power of resurrection’.\textsuperscript{1594} Rex suggests that Paul understands - in the passage recorded in Phl.3.10 - ‘the power of resurrection’ as equivalent to the ‘power to share in the suffering of Christ’:

In other words as power ‘for moral transformation’. That, however, means nothing other than that transformation borne of the Spirit - because the ‘power of resurrection’ is the Spirit.\textsuperscript{1595}

In Rex’s opinion, those who correctly understand the nature of the Spirit may advocate an attitude of obedience. Käsemann is praised for recognising that Paul speaks of the Spirit as though it were a material thing because, says Rex, Paul and Judaism did not know of a ‘pure’ spirituality.\textsuperscript{1596} Yet caution is urged when it is proposed to transfer this insight to the realm of ethics.\textsuperscript{1597} Käsemann’s view that Paul’s ethic speaks of a ‘must’ rather than a ‘could’ or a ‘should’ is found wanting. Spirit is said to have an affinity with the will,\textsuperscript{1598} and is linked with obedience.\textsuperscript{1599} Bonnard’s description of the Spirit as a kind of obedience thus receives praise from Rex, despite its literal incongruence with apostolic sources:

Paul never directly says that one must be obedient to the Spirit. But essentially Bonnard’s formulation hits the mark, because in Paul Christian transformation as ‘fruit of the Spirit’ is most certainly placed under the imperative.\textsuperscript{1600}

\textsuperscript{1593}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.13: “Die Beziehung auf Christus sichert dem Geisteswandel seinen Christlichen Charakter; der Geist hingegen gibt dem Christen die Kraft zum Christlichen Wandel”.
\textsuperscript{1594}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.12.
\textsuperscript{1595}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.12f: “In anderen Worten als Kraft ‘zum sittlichen Wandel’. Das heisst aber nichts anderes als den vom Geist getragenen Wandel. Denn die ‘Kraft der Auferstehung’ ist der Geist”.
\textsuperscript{1597}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.15.
\textsuperscript{1599}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.16.
Rex describes how the connection of the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ with the verb ‘diookein’ suggests an imperative. “In Paul ‘diookein’ refers to ethical tasks - those one strives after”. But, as in his earlier work, Rex is quick to remind his readers that the Spirit is not at man’s disposal - that as fruit ‘of the Spirit’, such ‘fruit’ is a derivative of the power of the Spirit. The Spirit as a sphere of influence

According to Rex’s exegesis of Paul’s writing, the Spirit might be likened to a sphere of influence in which the individual must move in order to have access to the power for moral transformation. Applied examples of this theory are discussed in Rex’s thesis, beginning with 1 Corinthians 7:14. The heathen partner is described as ‘hagios’ in so far as, by virtue of his relationship with the Christian partner, he moves within the Spirit’s sphere of influence. First Corinthians 6:12-20 is also discussed in detail, as are sexual offences in general and food offered to idols. Rex discerns that for Paul the prostitute was deemed to belong to another powerful sphere of influence and as such must be avoided, whereas the danger involved in eating food offered to idols is a somewhat more ambiguous matter.

Involvement with worldly authority, like interactions with worldly idols does not, according to Rex, necessarily exclude the Christian from the Spirit’s sphere of influence. It is clear for Rex that the Spirit is not linked to certain locations but rather has to do with spheres of influence. In a similar manner, he is able to say that in Paul’s thought the Spirit was not linked to any specifiable time. Again, Christian moral transformation is at the mercy of the Spirit. In this way of thinking, the Spirit is not a possession or tool to be implemented at will by a human being.

1602 Rex, D. Theol: p.17.
1603 Rex, D. Theol: p.17.
1605 Rex, D. Theol: p.18f.
1606 Rex, D. Theol: p.24 “Der Christlichen Wandel hat es also bei Paulus nicht mit einem zeitlosen Ideal zu tun, das prinzipiell ‘jederzeit’ erreichbar ist. Der christliche Wandel ist vielmehr selbst von ‘seiner’ Zeit, d.h. des Gesates Zeit abhängig”
The relationship between Spirit and Law

Having outlined the specific character of the Spirit's influence, Rex proposes a discussion of the way in which the Spirit moves to influence Christian ethical conduct. In effect, Rex then raises the issue of verification by asking whether the norms of moral transformation are to be dictated by the believer's relationship to Christ, spontaneous response to the particular situation, or, the received tradition. That is, he is asking how Christians are to recognise a legitimate and spiritually guided ethic. Corresponding to this is the question of how the Christian community should discern which moral actions are not of the Spirit.

_Agape_ provides the starting point for Rex in his attempt to deal with questions of ethics. He notes the parallels between Christian transformation's 'new law' and the Jewish _Halakah_, and speculates that Paul intended the similarities. Consequently Rex disputes Schweitzer's opinion that eschatology and law are incompatible - finding his claims to be groundless. Nevertheless, Rex believes that it is legitimate and important to ask how Paul views the Spirit and whether it is possible that he had in some sense regarded it as a new type of law.

This however is certain: for Paul, law and eschatology are not logical opposites. The possibility therefore logically exists that Paul viewed _agape_ as a new, pneumatic law. The problem is thus centred on the exegetical question: Did Paul view the 'fruit of the Spirit' in such a way or not?

Rex compares the contributions of various exegetes on the significance of the linking of 'nomos' and 'pneuma' in Romans 8:2. The discussion of the Mosaic Law in the verses following suggest a link with the 'Law of the Spirit', but whether this connection was

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1607 Rex, _D. TheoL_: p.25.
1608 Rex, _D. TheoL_: p.25: "Zentrale Begriff der paulinischen Geistesethik ist die Agape. Das braucht keines Beweises".
1609 Rex, _D. TheoL_: p.28: "Gerae was das Gesetz für Paulus zur Heilsgeschichte gehört, kann er sich darüber wundern, dass die Heiden, obwohl sie nicht innerhalb der Heilsgeschichte stehen, das Gesetz erfüllen (Rm.2.14)".
1610 Rex, _D. TheoL_: p.29: "Das aber steht fest: Für Paulus sind Gesetz und Eschatologie keine logischen Gegensätze. Es besteht also rein logisch die Möglichkeit, dass Paulus die Agape in der Weise eines neuen, pneumatischen Gesetzes gesehen hat. Das Problem konzentriert sich darum auf die exegetische Frage: Hat Paulus die 'Frucht des Geistes' so gesehen oder nicht?"
intended as parallel or contrast remains, for him, in question. Rex is of the opinion that this passage provides no definitive answer.\textsuperscript{1611}

Trying another tack, Rex asks how the ‘Law of the Spirit’ comes to the believer: “does it happen in a ‘direct’ way [...] or, as it were, from ‘outside’ in the same manner as the written law [...]?”\textsuperscript{1612} Various authors who comment on the relationship between the Spirit and the Mosaic Law are examined as Rex attempts to answer this question. Lietzmann and Bonnard fuel Rex’s discussion about whether the law of Christ (the love-commandment) is a new law, or an interpretation of the old. Could such a law really be understood as ‘law’ anyway? In any case, Rex comments, Paul seldom used the term \textit{nomos} in a Christian context.\textsuperscript{1613} Finding it impossible to decide definitively whether the Spirit is to be understood as directly efficacious or rather as efficacious through the medium of teaching, Rex proceeds to investigate in greater depth the echoes of Rabbinic tradition in Paul’s writings.

The relationship between Spirit and Tradition

The application of the \textit{paradosis}-concept in the Christian context is cited by Rex as an example one might examine in order to discern how consciously Paul imitated Rabbinic form in his teaching. The exact nature of Paul’s authorial intention in the use of such forms is, however, difficult to discern. While the relationship of Paul’s tradition-concept to the mainstream Jewish tradition-concept remains unclear, its relationship to his own Spirit-concept raises further questions for Rex. He asks how the Pauline tradition-concept stands in relation to the Spirit-concept\textsuperscript{1614} and draws upon the work of W.D. Davies in his search for an answer. According to Rex, Davies believes Paul is best understood as a pharisee who believed the Messiah had come\textsuperscript{1615} - thus Paul sees Jesus as a new Moses whose words represented a new law which was to be the basis of a type of Christian \textit{halakah}.\textsuperscript{1616} Rex asserts that Davies’ view, that the Pauline Christian life is dictated by a moral law, has
noteworthy consequences. It contradicts the commonly held view which sees spontaneous creative love guiding the individual Christian in their moral transformation as the essence of the Pauline ethic.

In Rex's view, the material in Paul which is reminiscent of the Jewish tradition is found in the letters which most strongly emphasise the eschatological thought of the apostle and where he explicitly expresses hope in the Parousia occurring within his lifetime. Rex questions how this traditional material is to be read within the context of the basic eschatological principle of Pauline ethics - asking how this traditional thought relates to the concept of Spirit.

To answer the question of the relationship between Spirit and tradition, Rex enters into a discussion of the material on divorce presented in 1 Corinthians 7, noting first that Paul's paraphrasing of the Command of the Lord might suggest room for interpretation and application on the behalf of the apostle. To this, Rex adds as background the fact that the ethical question at hand belongs under the jurisdiction of church order as it is a matter of ecclesial social relationships, and that in Paul's writing it should be assumed that the earthly Jesus and the risen Lord are one and the same person. For Rex this has important implications:

Accordingly one can interpret: The Word itself has come to Paul through the tradition of the early Christian community, and it is authoritative word for him because it goes back to Jesus who is the exalted Lord.

Rex also considers the possibility advocated by Cullmann, on the basis of 2.K.3.17 that the risen Lord be considered as identical with the Spirit. If the 'new Law' in Christ (the risen Lord) were identical with the Spirit then there would exist no theoretical conflict. Rex, however, declares this reasoning unsatisfactory if only (as other commentators have highlighted) because it is important to preserve the distinction between Christ and the Spirit.

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\[1617\] Rex, *D.Theol.* p.39: “Der irdisch Jesus ist natürlich für Paulus mit dem erhöhten Herrn identisch”.

The interim nature of the Spirit points to a distinction Rex believed must be upheld. In contrast to the view of Cullmann he presents, Rex is of the opinion that Paul discerned carefully the traditional words of Jesus for his use. Paul did not, according to Rex, rely on contemporary revelation for his 'words from the Lord'. Thus his discussion returns to the exact nature of Paul's use of the commands of the Lord. Alternative understandings are entertained by Rex. Firstly, evaluation dictates that Lietzmann's proposition amounts to a compromise - whereby it is accepted that the 'words' Paul possesses were passed on by the original Christian community but have been understood by Paul in the light of his Damascus experience. Kümmel stresses that in Paul the 'Kyrios' must be viewed not as the originator of the chain of tradition, but as its author - again stressing the ongoing nature of revelation.

It is worth summarising Rex's discussion of his understanding of the Spirit as it is presented in the first chapter of his thesis. In his wide-ranging discussion of the nature and influence of the Spirit, it is clear to his readers that Rex does not wish to identify too closely with any of the viewpoints he examines. He whole-heartedly affirms that the Spirit might be associated with the transformative power of the resurrection, but is more tentative when it comes to siding with contemporary interpretations of what this might mean.

Rex's image of the Spirit incorporates ideas of the Spirit as a sphere of influence, linked with obedience and having an affinity with the will. The Spirit is seen to influence Christian ethical conduct, but the precise nature of this influence is deemed too difficult to conclusively discern. One cannot be sure whether Paul viewed the Spirit as a new type of pneumatic Law. Although clarifying the nature of the relationship between the Jewish tradition-concept and the Spirit-concept was proving to be challenging, it is precisely this

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1619 Rex, D.Thed.: p.40: "In vieler Hinsicht kann man überhaupt keinen wesentlichen Unterschied zwischen den beiden Formeln sehen, und doch muss man sich hüten, sie einfach zu identifizieren. Dass die beiden Formeln nicht austauschbar sind, ist allein mit dem Interimscharakter des Geistes gegeben".
1620 Rex, D.Thed.: p.41: "Damit fällt Cullmanns Konstruktion von dem erhöhten Herrn als dem gegenwärtig wirkenden Urheber der Gemeindetradition dahin. Auch rein logisch wie Psychologisch ist da der Gedanke vom erhöhten Herrn der jetzt durch das Mittel der Tradition der Gemeinde verkündigt, was er während seines irdischen Daseins die Jünger geklebt habe, schwer annehmbar".
1621 Rex, D.Thed.: p.42.
question which occupies the more constructive final quarter of Rex’s first chapter. In order to come to grips with this issue, Rex focuses on the practical example at the heart of his study: 1 Cor 7.

**The authority of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7**

Whether Paul intended sections of 1 Corinthians 7 to be read as his own opinion, ‘as a Christian in possession of the Spirit’, or whether he intended them to be read as the work of one who spoke with a special apostolic authority, is a question that backgrounds the relationship between material from the tradition and the concept of the Spirit. Rex claims that Paul was conscientious in placing himself within the chain of tradition and as such ought to be regarded as someone who took seriously his role as an interpreter in the chain of apostolic succession. Because he separated his words from the words of the Lord does not mean, according to Rex, that Paul attributed to them any less authority.

Central to the debate on the authority Paul expected to be attached to his advice are verses 10 and 11 of Chapter 7 in 1 Corinthians. While acknowledging that it is not exactly clear whether the words in brackets belong to the original saying attributed to Jesus, or not; Rex asserts the best interpretation allows them to be regarded as the words of Paul:

The brackets show a quite surprising liberty on the apostle’s behalf, in the application of the Word of the Lord to the concrete situation. This liberty is doubtless to be traced back to the possession of the Spirit by the apostle.

Rex believes that the apostle acted with special authority. 1 Cor 7.40 contains the basis of Rex’s argument for this viewpoint. The implication Rex discerns in the apostle’s closing comment is that Paul believed his commandments were derived from the Spirit “just like others”. Rex argues that the ‘others’ of which Paul spoke referred to the commands traceable back to the Lord. Rex considers it plausible to then assume that the Corinthians anticipated an answer to their letter (1 Cor 7.1) which carried the authority of the Lord.

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1622 Rex, *D.Theol.*: p.42ff
1623 Rex, *D.Theol.*: p.44: “Nicht nur der Herr befiehlt, sondern auch der Apostel”.
1625 Rex, *D.Theol.*: p.44.
According to Rex the whole chapter gives the impression that Paul sought to discharge his duties with the authority of the Lord. Failing in all but one instance (1 Cor 7:10), the apostle therefore retreated into speaking upon the basis of his own authority. The fact that Paul was clear about where he spoke on his own authority, rather than from traditional material, is regarded by Rex not as a type of diffidence but rather as a sign of the seriousness with which the apostle discharged his duties. That the apostle would attribute his own commandments to the Spirit, the same source he presumably regarded as behind the congregational tradition, is a point Rex garners in support of this thesis about Paul's seriousness.

The *paradosis*-concept as framework

Rex believes an answer to the question of the relationship between the love-given transformation and the obedience to tradition presupposes an analysis of the content of the tradition. This is made difficult by the introduction of the 'paradosis-concept' in 1 Cor 11:2 without any explanation. "From other passages it can be determined that 'paradoseis' might just as well be religious teaching (1.K.11.23; 15.3; Rm.6.17) as practical life-rules (2.Th.2.15;3.6)." Rex constructs a case from the relationship of the verb 'kratein' and the 'paradosis-concept' in the aforementioned passages which allows him to offer an understanding of the *paradosis* as a framework:

From the connection it follows that the *paradosis* is the 'given' (the framework as it were) which gives the 'structure' to the Christian transformation. This structure, into which the individual Christian life is put, is 'taught' and must accordingly be 'learnt'.

According to this theory, the believer becomes familiar with the structure (the *paradosis*/ tradition) through the *parēmēsis* (ethical teaching) both before and after baptism. This structure, shaped by the Spirit, provides a flexible ethos which is handed down in the

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1627 Rex, *D. TheoL*: p.46: "Aus anderen Stellen ergibt sich aber, dass 'paradoseis' religiöse Lehren (1.K.11.23; 15.3; Rm.6.17) wie praktische Lebensregeln (2.Th.2.15;3.6) sein können."
tradition. This structure forms the context within which the Love-commandment is delivered.\textsuperscript{1629}

One could express it this way: The ethos passed on by the tradition is 'given'; the 'fruit' of the Spirit is the 'hidden', provided one remains conscious that [...] the ethos too - in as far as it is 'ordered', 'commanded' and 'bid' - has an imperative aspect.\textsuperscript{1630}

Thus it can be seen that Rex does not believe the fruit of the Spirit is produced in a shapeless void. Rather, he envisages the fruit growing out of a tradition that has been carefully 'ordered' ('arranged') and transmitted from one generation to the next. The transmission is achieved through commandments and recommendations which belong to Christian communities that aim to nurture such development.

Paul - an 'anonymous Sartrean'?

An understanding of the relationship between the imperative and the indicative - in Paul's writing - is strongly tied in Rex's mind to an understanding of the key issues involved in continental existentialism. In the key central chapter to his thesis, Rex endeavours to make these links clear to his readers.

At the heart of Rex's thesis are issues of free will and grace. His approach aims to make plausible both his strong reformed convictions about the nature of justification through faith by God's grace and his faith in the existentialist canon of free will. As has been shown, Rex's 1949 inaugural lecture makes clear that the Western heritage of determinism is to be legitimately challenged by the existentialist creed. In fact, Rex appears to view the existentialist work of Sartre as providing the basis for a new reformation, albeit - if one allows the inversion of a common metaphor - a sheep in wolf's clothing:

Sartre's thought [...] (as with much of atheist existentialism) contains Christian inheritance in secular form. Sartre's analysis of human existence stands in obvious dependence on Pauline anthropology. As so often, the biblical realisation in its

\textsuperscript{1629}Rex, \textit{D. TheoL}: p.47: "Das Verhältnis der vom Geist getragenen Tradition zu der 'Frucht' des Geistes stellt sich so dar, dass das Liebesgebot in ein vom Geist gegebenes Ethos hineingestellt ist".

\textsuperscript{1630}Rex, \textit{D. TheoL}: p.47: "Man könnte das so sagen: das durch die Tradition weitergegebene Ethos ist das 'Gegebene'; die 'Frucht' des Geistes das 'Gebotene', vorausgesetzt, dass man sich dessen bewusst bleibt, dass (wie noch weiter unten gezeigt werden soll) das Ethos auch - sofern es 'angeordnet', 'befohlen' [sic], 'geboten' wird - eine imperativische Seite hat".
actuality is revealed with new clarity once it is illuminated by its own secularised form.\textsuperscript{1631}

Such is Rex’s conviction about the link between Existentialism and good current theology that he believes it no accident that Bultmann has provided for his contemporaries a ‘masterly’ and ‘penetrating’ analysis of Pauline anthropology.\textsuperscript{1632} It should come as no surprise to the reader that Rex applauds an approach that allows biblical insight and existentialist themes to cast light upon one another.

In building a case for eschatological existence as possessing the same dualities present in the general human condition, Rex outlines Sartre’s thesis that “the law of identity (A=A) is not applicable to the person in his human existence”.\textsuperscript{1633} As will be shown below, Rex reads back into Pauline anthropology Sartre’s recognition that each human \textit{ipso facto} lives at a distance from the picture they conjure up of their ‘self’. Rex interprets Sartre’s formulation “He is, what he is not, and is not, what he is”,\textsuperscript{1634} in the following manner:

This distance belongs to the fundamental ontological structure of human Being. Without this, the human ceases to be a human. With Sartre, it is man himself (or the judgement of his fellow man) that ‘posits’ the indicative ‘en-soi’ in autonomous freedom (the self as object); this Self=Object would be ‘chosen’ by the ‘pour-soi’, i.e. assumed or discarded. But even where the ‘pour-soi’ ‘chooses’=adopts the ‘en-soi’, it is never in that sense, identical with itself, in the way that, for example, a tree is identical with itself. In other words, man is only himself as (in Sartre: by oneself or a fellow man) one addressed, or as one who is carrying the responsibility.\textsuperscript{1635}

In linking Sartre’s thought with that of Paul, Rex is careful in his choice of expression. He does not claim that Paul’s anthropology is thoroughgoing, but only that it


\textsuperscript{1632}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.49. Rex also noted that Bultmann had not applied this analysis to the problem of the relationship between the indicative and the imperative in eschatological existence.

\textsuperscript{1633}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.48.

\textsuperscript{1634}Rex, \textit{D.Theol.}: p.48.

mirrors a clear knowledge of the essence of human existence.\textsuperscript{1636} Since Rex asserts that in Paul the Spirit is the "fundamental eschatological principle" and that this principle "refers as much to the soteriological indicative as to the ethical imperative",\textsuperscript{1637} a point he believes to be supported by the twenty-fifth verse of the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians; this recognition forms a starting point of his presentation of Pauline anthropology:

Paul encloses the ethical imperative in a natural and unforced manner with the soteriological indicative. In his depiction of eschatological existence he does not limit himself to the indicative in the manner of the mystics. This is because he has the whole of human existence in mind, and not only a human essence [Substanz]. The rites of the mystics lend a deadly essence to immortality; in Paul, it hangs on the salvation of the human in his existence. Paul places the self, 'posited' in the soteriological indicative, under the imperative, because the person cannot have this self any other way; or better, this self is nothing other than that which he 'chooses' with the freedom gifted by God. That means, in eschatological existence, the Spirit meets humanity, always simultaneously in the indicative and the imperative way. This is rooted in the nature of human existence. To express it bluntly, but poignantly: mirrored in the anthropological vocabulary of the apostle is the recognition, that the human is 'built' in such a fashion, that he lives at a distance from himself.\textsuperscript{1638}

This linking of the ethical imperative with the soteriological indicative allows Rex to make parallels with Sartre's individual, who seeks fruitlessly to be at one with the 'objective' self he has posited with his own mind. Instead, Rex's objective self is one posited by God and, as such, carries the hallmarks of the soteriological indicative - baptised, and gifted with individual charismata:

Viewed purely technically, the imperative is neither 'derived' from the soteriological indicative, nor does it 'follow' from it. The duality of indicative and imperative is given quite generally with human existence. The cooperation of indicative and imperative is certainly materially determined through eschatological existence, in that it is now that self which God in his mercy has given, that the human, as one

\textsuperscript{1636}Rex, D. Theol.: p.50.
\textsuperscript{1637}Rex, D. Theol.: p.48.
\textsuperscript{1638}Rex, D. Theol.: p.50. "Paulus [fügt] dem soteriologischen Indikativ in natürlicher und ungezwungener Weise den ethischen Imperativ bei. Er beschränkt sich in seiner Darstellung der eschatologischen Existenz nicht auf den Indikativ (2) nach Art der Mysterien (3), weil er die ganze menschliche Existenz im Auge hat und nicht nur eine menschliche Substanz. Der Ritus der Mysterien verleiht einer sterblichen Substanz Unsterblichkeit; bei Paulus geht es um das Heil des Menschen in seiner Existenz. Paulus stellt das im soteriologischen Indikativ 'gesetzte' Selbst (4) unter den Imperativ, weil der Mensch dieses Selbst nicht anders haben kann; oder besser, nicht anders ist, als dass er es in der ihm von Gott geschenkten Freiheit 'wählt'. Das heisst, in der eschatologischen Existenz trifft der Geist den Menschen immer zugleich in der Weise des Indikativs und des Imperatifs. Das ist in der Art der Menschlichen Existenz begründet. Um es einmal ganz vulgär, aber peignant auszudrücken: im anthropologischen Sprachschatz des Apostels spiegelt sich die Erkenntnis wider, dass der Mensch so 'gebaut' ist, dass er in der Distanz von sich selbst lebt."
who stands under the imperative, 'chooses'. The imperative therefore 'follows' from the indicative only in a material fashion, in so far as the human in eschatological existence as that self given by God in his mercy, is addressed.\footnote{Rex, \textit{D. Theo!.}: p.50f.: "Rein formal gesehen, ist der Imperativ aus dem soteriologischen Indikativ weder 'abgeleitet', noch 'folgt' er aus ihm (5). Die Dualität von Indikativ und Imperativ ist mit der menschlichen Existenz überhaupt gegeben. In materialer Weise ist dann allerdings das Miteinander von Indikativ und Imperativ durch die eschatologische Existenz bestimmt, indem es nun das von Gott in seiner Gnade gesetzte Selbst ist, das der Mensch, als unter dem Imperativ Stehender, 'wahlt'. Der Imperativ 'folgt' also aus dem Indikativ nur in materialer Weise, sofern der Mensch in der eschatologischen Existenz als das von Gott in seiner Gnade gesetzte Selbst angesprochen wird."}

The Christian way presented by Rex involves the individual striving - the imperative - to realise the new self gifted by God - the indicative. Rex asserts that previous attempts to solve this problem failed because they sought the answer directly in the eschatological situation itself.\footnote{Rex, \textit{D. Theo!.}: p.48.} Instead, he allows existentialism to cast new light on the problem of the relationship between the indicative and the imperative in eschatological existence.

Whether Rex's reading of scripture in light of Sartrean analysis is appropriate depends upon an assessment of it as a legitimate development of the Christian tradition. As Rex is in favour of developing the tradition he is unapologetic about this fact. His belief in the necessity for ongoing reformation of the faith and his strong desire to express this faith in contemporary language leave him with little option but to propose a new understanding of indicative and imperative aspects of the Christian life. To the extent that he claims that his interpretation is entirely faithful to Paul's original intention, he is open to the charge of casting Paul as an 'anonymous Sartrean'. That however is a matter for biblical scholars to decide. The theologian can only commend the attempt to clarify the map to be followed by the individual Christian on his or her journey towards God.

Rex is convinced that his solution to the relationship between indicative and imperative in Pauline eschatology has serious implications for the exegetical passage with which his thesis is concerned: 1 Cor 7. The final chapter of Rex's thesis focuses entirely on a new exegesis of this chapter, and the substance of this chapter Rex subsequently converted into two articles. It is to an analysis of the latter of these two articles that we now turn.
Celibacy as charisma

Two papers on First Corinthians chapter seven (1 Cor 7) are to be found in Rex’s archive files. One is entitled ‘A new Exegesis of 1. Cor. 7’, the second ‘An Attempt to Understand 1. Cor. 7’. A careful reading of the documents suggests that they were written in that order. ‘An Attempt to Understand 1. Cor. 7’ was published in the Australian Journal The Reformed Theological Review in June 1955.1641

Rex forwards the thesis that the then current reading of Paul’s advice on marriage in First Corinthians proceeds on wrong assumptions which were the result of failing to make a suitable Pauline distinction between charisma and agape. Rex instead works with “the assumption that Paul rigidly distinguishes between ‘charisma’ (spiritual gift) and ‘agape’ (Christian ethics)” and sees in this distinction the clue to the correct understanding of 1.Cor. 7.1642 Rex views charismata and agape as manifestations of the same Spirit, but believes that each is a different manifestation of the power of the coming kingdom. For Rex, these manifestations are to be understood in the following way:

In a charisma the power of the Spirit establishes a fact in the manner of an indicative, in agape it does so through the medium of an imperative in response to which the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit is released.1643

Given this distinction in Paul’s thought, and its implications for understanding his writing, Rex locates many of the remaining clues for his understanding of 1 Cor 7 within the text itself. His reading of verse seven sees “celibacy or the gift of continence [...] defined as a

1641 Helmut H. Rex, ‘An Attempt to Understand 1.Cor. 7.’ in The Reformed Theological Review, June 1955: pp.41-51. (The typescript for this publication is located in RA096). Although details are difficult to locate, it is reasonable to assume that RA097, Rex, ‘A New Exegesis of 1.Cor. 7’ was an address given by Rex at some point after he returned from Germany in February 1954 and prior to his June 1955, publication.

1642 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.41. In this paper, Rex argued his case in the following manner: “To my mind, Paul leaves no doubt that the charismata are ‘gifts’ in the strict sense. They can only be ‘earnestly desired’ (He always uses the term zeeloun in conjunction with the charismata: 1.Cor.12.31; 14.1; 14.39), but they cannot be pursued as an ethical goal. In contrast to this, agape (as the sum of Christian ethics) falls under the imperative. It is meaningful for Paul to command the pursuit of agape, but not so, to command prophesying and the speaking of tongues. Paul consequently does not extend the use of such ethical terms as dioikein (1.Cor. 14.1; Rm.12.13; 14.19; 1 Th.5.15; Phl.3.1,14) and ka,pos (Gl.5.22; Rm.6.22) to the charismata, but confines it to agape. The charisma is a ‘gift’ of the Spirit, agape is a ‘fruit’ of the Spirit. This distinction is fundamental.” (p.41).

1643 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.41.
This proposition, together with the allocation of *charismata* to the indicative and *agape* to the imperative, leads Rex to conclude that:

Paul's main concern in this chapter is to prevent both a wrong view of the nature of *a charisma* and an exaggerated view of its importance in the life of the Church. Paul wishes to press home two points: first, *a charisma* must not be mistaken for an ethical goal, and secondly, it must not interfere with the harmony of human relationships in the Church. 

Rex believes *charismata* have a community splitting tendency, as they tend to create a 'pneumatic elite' that cares more for the spiritual enjoyment of its own gifts than for the edification of the Church. He thus concludes that Paul's criticisms of the Corinthian gnostics are directly applicable to the subject matter dealt with in 1 Cor 7.

Rex's view of celibacy as a charismatic gift, together with the understanding that *charismata* should not be mistaken for ethical goals, serves as a cautionary dyke against any attempt to flood his new exegesis of 1 Cor 7 with allegations of arbitrariness in exegesis. Rex states his opposition to the contemporary consensus on the opening passage of 1 Cor 7 in the strongest of terms:

In the traditional exegesis of v.v.1-7 Paul appears as an advocate of celibacy who views marriage as a necessary evil and who will allow it as a concession only. Nothing could be further from the truth than this interpretation. It is a mistake to read v.2 as if Paul meant to define marriage as a mere prophylactic of immorality, and the context is ignored when the ‘concession’ in v.6 is identified with the permission to marry.

As a viable alternative, Rex presents his own reading of the passage before he proceeds to offer supporting exegesis. His interpretation of the passage is based on a

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1644 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.41. The bracketed note in his script indicates that criticism of this reading was anticipated: "(the context of v.v. 1-7 shows this clearly; the fact that celibacy is not listed among the *charismata* in 1. Cor.12 and Rm. 12 does not invalidate this interpretation since in both cases the selection is determined by the context and the lists are obviously not intended to be exhaustive)."

1645 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.41.

1646 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.42. Cf. RA097, Rex, ‘A New Exegesis of 1. Cor. 7.’: p.1f. "In face of [the] common consent of scholarship I shall try to defend the thesis that PAUL DOES NOT VIEW CELIBACY AS AN ETHICAL GOAL BUT AS A CHARISMA (A GIFT OF GRACE) WHICH IS A GIFT THAT MAN EITHER HAS RECEIVED OR NOT. CONSEQUENTLY PAUL ACCEPTED MARRIAGE NOT AS A NECESSARY EVIL BUT AS THE NORMAL CONDITION OF MAN AND WOMAN WHICH IS GOOD IN ITSELF. NOT MARRIAGE BUT REMARRIAGE IS A CONCESSION WITH PAUL AND THAT NOT FOR ASCETIC BUT FOR ESCHATOLOGICAL REASONS. THE END IS NEAR."
reconstruction of the questions he believes the Corinthians had posed for Paul, and to which he believes Paul was responding in the seventh chapter:

The first question of the Corinthians apparently dealt with the married state in general. It appears that some Christians in Corinth had come to question the lawfulness of the married state. It is possible that they were charismatically endowed Christians who believed that marriage was hostile to the charismatic state. These Christians Paul assures of the lawfulness of the married state, and, in addition, he warns them of ascetic experiments within the marriage bond. Since they obviously have not the *charisma* of celibacy they must not embark on anything that may surpass their strength.1647

For Rex it is clear that Paul viewed marriage as something more than a prophylaxis of immorality. Rather, according to Rex, Paul wanted to impress on his readers “that for a Christian who has not the *charisma* of celibacy, the alternative is not that of marriage or continence but that of marriage or incontinence (*porneia)*.”1648 Further, Rex warns that a Christian who thinks they can pursue as an ethical goal what is, by its very nature, a *charisma* - a ‘gift’ in the strict sense of the word - is suffering “under a dangerous illusion”.1649

**Reconstructing historical context**

Rex views the remainder of the chapter as a series of responses to specific situations while he imagines vv. 1-7 to refer to the married state in general. For example, the people referred to in v.v.8,9:1650 Rex posits that the group most likely referred to here is a group of widowers. His exegesis on this point need not concern us here, suffice to say that he is confident enough of his conclusion to extrapolate from Paul’s discussion; “Admittedly though widowed Christians have a better chance of remaining continent in an unmarried state, Paul does not lose sight of the fact that the gift of continence is essentially a *charisma*”.1651

Rex envisages “the emergence of the ‘order’ of widows in Corinth”, in the face of which Paul’s attempts to deal with a new situation in verses 10 and 11 “lose their puzzling

1647Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.42.
1648Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.43. Rex translates *porneia* as ‘promiscuous sex with harlots’.
1649Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.43.
1650See Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.43.
1651Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.44.
quality". He considers this a more plausible explanation than those which account for these verses as a discussion on divorce. Rex sees the distinction he has outlined between charisma and agape offering an interesting insight into Paul’s views on mixed marriages as recorded in verses 12-16.

In verse 17, Rex finds a parallel with verse 24. He seeks to differentiate himself from other commentators with an understanding of verse 17 as a radical conclusion to the discussion contained in 12-16, rather than an introduction to the following section. Thus, Rex understands Paul to be dismissive of Christian scruples focussing on peripheral concerns linked to the “external condition in which the Christian happened to be at the time of his conversion”, and instead argues that emphasis should rather be placed on the principle espoused in verses 17 and 24: “Let everyone lead the life in which God has called him.”

Rex does not deal with verses 17b-24 - which he described as an “excursus concerning the external circumstances in which a Christian happens to live at the time of his call”, preferring to examine what he calls Paul’s ‘proper subject’, the questions put to him by the Corinthians. Thus he offers a discussion of the question of the partbenoi, the subject of verse 25-38.

Although Rex cannot submit to his alternative explanations, agreement with criticisms voiced by Professor Oepke of contemporary understandings clear space for Rex’s own novel interpretation:

The whole context suggests that some young women have taken a vow of chastity, obviously after their engagement, and that this action on their part has produced the problem which Paul tries to tackle in vs. 25-38. The question is, whether the young men must respect these vows or not. As the emergence of the ‘order’ of ‘widows’ was behind vs.10, 11, so we detect here the emergence of a similar ‘order’ of

1652 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.45.
1653 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.47.
1654 Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.47.
1656 Concerning Rex’s agreement with Oepke’s criticisms see: Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.48f.
'virgins'. Paul apparently assumes that the parthenoi have the charisma of virginity, for in no wise does he question their ability to keep their vows.\textsuperscript{1657}

In Rex's construction, the young men concerned are neither under a vow nor do they possess the gift of celibacy. Assuming this model is acceptable, Rex then outlines Paul's motivation for responding to the matter in the way that he did. In all of this it is important to recognise that Rex's identification of the question - "whether the young men will be able to sustain the continence which the vows of the young women imposes upon them"\textsuperscript{1658} - as Paul's critical question, is based on his highly hypothetical reconstruction. Nonetheless, in the tradition of German theology, Rex is concerned to thoroughly investigate his own plausible hypothesis, and outline in detail its logical implications. This inquiry leads to the attribution by Rex of very reasonable motivations to Paul:

Paul sees to it that the charisma of the parthenoi does not tyrannise their human relations. In contrast to the fictitious Paul of the Acts of Theda, the real Paul did not encourage a dualistic morality hostile to marriage; on the contrary he removes any scruples which might prevent a couple from marrying when in fact the moral welfare of one of the partners demands it. In short, when a charisma or the moral welfare of a brother is at issue, no real alternative exists for Paul: Agape takes precedence [over] charismata.\textsuperscript{1659}

\textit{Agape takes precedence over charismata}

Rex paints a picture of Paul as an apostle with an affordable approach who is keenly interested in presenting a theology that does justice to concerns about the human condition, relationships and sexuality. This pragmatism is put forward as an explanation of the seemingly contradictory attitudes in Rex's interpretation.\textsuperscript{1660} He discusses only briefly the

\textsuperscript{1657}Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.49.
\textsuperscript{1658}Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.49.
\textsuperscript{1659}Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.49f.
\textsuperscript{1660}Rex's interpretation of the positions that Paul might be seen to be taking in the context of Rex's reconstruction, invite the label 'pragmatic'. Rex, RTR, June 1955: p.50 records: "It may, perhaps, be objected to our interpretation that it puts Paul in a rather odd light when he expects a woman who has taken a vow of virginity to abandon it if her fiance so demands, while, on the other hand, he expects a married man to accept the position when his wife has left him for the order of widows. But there is really nothing odd about this seeming inconsistency once one considers the difference in age, in the two instances, of the male partners. The young man has in fact nothing but the proximity of the end of this dispensation on his side (v.29) when he attempts a life of continence; as to the older man, Paul obviously was more confident that he would be able to sustain a life of continence even without the charisma".
final two verses in 1 Cor 7 before closing his article in the *Reformed Theological Review* with the articulation of his desire to have opened a discussion rather than to have concluded it.¹⁶⁶¹

As this discussion on Rex's doctorate and related published article is drawn to a close, it is important to underscore the fact that it is Sartrean analysis which underpins Rex's hermeneutical approach. While the finer points of his exegesis may be disputed on its own terms by biblical scholars, the cut and thrust of his thesis depends wholly for its inspiration and force upon the credibility of its Christian existentialist foundation. This conflation of this gospel with scripturally based theology was in tune with post-war German theology and represents an earnest attempt to discover in scripture serious and relevant advice on the issues facing modern man.

Appendix Three - Glossary from Rex's 'Hermeneutics: An Introduction' ¹⁶⁶²

Glossary

The following list includes a number of terms which are very prominent in the vocabulary of contemporary German theology and which have a tendency of appearing also in works written in the English language.

1. **Anrede:** A recent work by Zimmerli is called "Das Alte Testament Als Anrede". The word 'Anrede' means literally 'address' but in the temporary theological vocabulary it has acquired a more specific meaning. It stresses the 'personal' aspect of the word of God as it existentially engages us: judging and redeeming us as we encounter it (cp. pp.30 and 32). The opposite would be an attitude of aesthetical 'enjoyment' of a text.

2. **Existenzial:** The word is a noun and plays an important part in Martin Heidegger's vocabulary and in the works of all Philosophers and theologians who have come under his influence. Heidegger distinguishes between the human condition (Dasein) and the word of objects (Das Seiende). To do justice to this difference he does not apply the categories to the human condition - unless it is viewed in terms of the world of objects (The categories apply to the drunkard who is lifted from his position like a sugar bag). What the categories are to the world of objects, the 'Existenzialien' are to the human condition. The two most important 'Existenzialien' in Heidegger's philosophy are 'authenticity' and 'Non-authenticity'. (cp. p.6)

3. Geisteswissenschaften, geisteswissenschaftlich: The two words (noun and adjective) suggest the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). He was concerned with the scientific status of the humanities. Accepting the challenges of the natural sciences and of the growing tendency to regard them alone as 'scientific', Dilthey worked at the construction of a system of Geisteswissenschaften based on a method which could claim for its knowledge of the individual a universal validity comparable to that claimed by the natural sciences in their knowledge of the general (cp. pp.1 and 5).

The [G]erman language is fortunate in having the two words, Geisteswissenschaften and Naturwissenschaften. It avoids the monopolising of the term 'science' by the natural sciences. The German word 'Geisteswissenschaft' is a comound [sic] which is made up of the German word for science (Wissenschaft) and the word 'Geist' for which there is no adequate translation into English. The word 'Geist' appears also in the German equivalent to 'Holy Spirit': 'Heiliger Geist', but it would be entirely misleading to render it in the present context as 'spirit'. For one thing, it has a more 'secular' connotation, and in addition it is charged with associations which derive from the world of German Idealism from Kant to Hegel. It will be best to accept the term as a companion to 'natural sciences' and to remember that it claims for the humanities and their methods a 'scientific' validity comparable to that of the natural sciences. And it should also be borne in mind that the term stands for an attitude of mind steeped in German Idealism.

4. Glaubensgeschichte: This is one of a number of compounds which include the German word for history (Geschichte) and of which 'Heilsgeschichte' is probably the best known (cp.this). The other word in the compound means 'Faith'. As v.Rad uses the term (cp.p.20) it refers to the history of Israel’s Faith viewed psychologically. By rejecting ‘Glaubensgeschichte’ as a scheme of interpretation, v.Rad dissociates himself from Schleiermacher and his followers.

5. Heilsgüter: This is one of a number of compounds which all include the German word for salvation (Heil), of which, again, ‘Heilsgeschichte’ is the most prevalent. The other part of the compound is the plural of the German word ‘Gut’, a noun which can mean both 'a good thing' and 'a landed estate'. The plural ‘Guter’ [sic] means as much as 'Possession' or 'property'. Heilsgüter are the benefits conferred by salvation. The phrase used in the text (p.21) is 'Die realen Heilsgüter' which expresses the tangible nature of the benefits of salvation as the Old Testament believers conceived of them (e.g. the promised land and numerous posterity).

6. Heilsgeschichte: This term has been referred to under 4. and 5. of this glossary. Literally it means 'history of salvation'. It is a term which owes its prevalent use largely to the work of the Erlangen theologian J.C.K.v.Hofmann (1810-1877) who wished to do justice to the fact that according to the Old and New Testaments the benefits of salvation are conferred through the medium of history and that this very medium derives its structure and meaning from this fact (cp. pp.20 and 25ss).
7. **Heilstatsachen:** This term carries with it a certain polemical fervour when used affirmatively by contemporary theologians. It implies that the events on which the benefits of salvation rest - in particular, the Resurrection of Jesus - have a factual nature which enables us to use the term 'historical' in conjunction with them. Karl Barth refers e.g. to the period between Resurrection and Ascension as to the 'history of the forty days'. The term is used polemically against Bultmann's conception of history (cp.c.IX). A good introduction to the controversy over the meaning of 'History' and 'Heilstatsachen' is F.Gogarten, Demythologising and History, SCM Press 1955. (cp.pp.4 and 30).

8. **Offenbarungsgeschichte:** This term is used by Cullmann (cp.p.25) in analogy to 'Heilsgeschichte'. It is offered as an alternative to 'Heilsgeschichte' in order to avoid the impression as if his interest in Heilsgeschichte committed him also to other tenets of 'Erlangen Theology' characterised by Lutheran 'orthodoxy' and conservatism [sic].

9. **Religionsgeschichtlich:** The Christian Faith is interpreted 'religionsgeschichtlich' when understood exclusively in terms of its contemporary religious environment and in terms of 'Religionsgeschichte' quite generally, i.e. within the context of the religions of mankind [sic]. One of the fruits of Schleiermacher's work was the so called 'Religionsgeschichtliche Schule' (cp.pp.4 and 5) of which Ernst Troeltsch was the systematic theologian and which included biblical scholars of such outstanding quality as Gunkel, Bousset and Heimüller. This school created its encyclopedic monument in the first edition of the RGG (Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart = Religion Past and Present). It was this school that bought the term 'religion' into discredit with Karl Barth and his followers, with the result that they denied that the Christian Faith was a religion at all. Bonhoeffer's 'non-religious interpretation of Biblical concepts' (cp.c.X) is in line with this reaction.

10. **Selbstverständnis:** This term suggests immediately the name of Bultmann and his school. I have used it therefore as a sub-heading in my chapter on Bultmann (c.IX). The compound is made up of the two words 'self' and 'understanding'. Two misinterpretations must be avoided. The word is not to be taken in a purely epistemological sense, as if it referred to the knowledge which we have of ourselves, nor must it be taken psychologically. Bultmann's 'Selbstverständnis' is not Schleiermacher's 'Selbstbewusstsein' (p.32). It is a matter of viewing one's human condition in existential involvement, implying a decision that gives our life its fundamental direction.

11. **Verfügbar, unverfügbar:** These two adjectives and their corresponding nouns occur frequently with Bultmann. They indicate two modes of being. The world of objects is 'verfügbar', i.e. at our disposal; the world of faith (and all that it implies) is 'unverfügbar', i.e. it is not at our disposal. Bultmann's use of the term 'eschatological' implies the element of 'Unverfügbarkeit' (cp. pp. 9, 22, 33). This terminology enables Bultmann to point out an important difference between the realms of nature and grace. Nature is at our disposal, grace is not so. It is entirely dependant on the mercy of God as he deigns to us in his saving Word.
12. Vorverständnis: This is still another word which plays an important part in the contemporary theological discussion on the Continent. Generally speaking, it refers to the presuppositions with which we approach a text. These can be conscious or unconscious to us (cp p6).

13. Zukunft: This is the German word for 'future'. It is one of a number of words which, in Bultmann’s use, frequently take on a specific theological meaning. In such instances the application of the ordinary use of the word would be quite misleading. ‘Zukunft’ is a good instance of this. In the ordinary use, ‘Zukunft’ is the time ahead of us, but in Bultmann’s more specific sense it is the ‘coming’ of God in his Word here and now. (cp.34).
Appendix Four - Copy of Original Letter to Bultmann

Sonntag, 26.3.61

Mein sehr verehrter Herr Professor!


Nach Wochen des Ringens mit dem Buche hatte ich seinen Segen gewonnen. Ein wenig hinkend wie Jakob nach seinem Kampf in Bethel
war ich auf dem Wege nach Phenuel, dem Sonnenschein entgegen.


die Mode sind. Aber am Ende werden die Menschen der Mode müde
und suchen nach den Plätzen, wo die alte solide Tradition bewahrt
worden ist, und dann werden sie auch zu Ihnen und Ihren vielen
schönen Büchern kommen. Ich danke meinem Herrn stets von neuem,
dass ich Sie bereits als junger Mensch gefunden habe.

Sie kennen vielleicht Henri Troyats schönes Buch über
Dostoevski. Dort sagt er, dass Dostoevski in seinen epileptischen
Anfällen in das Land jenseits der 'Mauer der Evidenz' schauen
durfte. In meiner Krankheit habe auch ich über die 'Mauer der
Evidenz' das Land der Ewigkeit geschaut. Da waren auch Ihre
Bücher. Das hat mich sehr glücklich gemacht. Denn es sind
Bücher, für die man eine Ewigkeit braucht, um sie auszuschöpfen.

Nun wissen Sie, warum ich an Sie schreiben musste, sofort,
denn ich danke Ihnen meinen Glauben, der mir in den letzten zwei
Wochen neues Leben geschenkt hat.

Möge der Herr Sie behütet und begleiten
mit seiner Gnade auf allen Ihren Wegen.

Ihr dankbarer

Helmut Rex,
Professor der Kirchengeschichte.
Appendix Five - Copy of Shelf List Sheet for Rex Archival Material held in the P.C.A.N.Z. Archive

Shelf list sheet for the collection of provenance: Rex, Helmut Herbert Hermann (Rev.) as recorded in the NZ Presbyterian Collection, series code: 3/132 (PCANZ Archives held at Knox College, Dunedin).
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<td>Psalms (I), (ex.book, &amp; loose papers, MS);</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>&quot; (I), (&quot; . &quot; , MS);</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Revelations, (&quot; . &quot; , );</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Romans, Exegetical Notes (I), (ex.book, &amp; loose papers, MS);</td>
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<td>&quot; , &quot; &quot; (II), (&quot; . &quot; , MS);</td>
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<td>&quot; , Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, (ex.book, MS);</td>
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<td>Selected Books of the N.T., (ex.book, &amp; loose papers, MS);</td>
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<td>I &amp; II Thessalonians, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>&quot; &amp; &quot; ; (Vol.I), (ex.book, MS);</td>
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<td>&quot; &amp; &quot; ; (Vol.II) (&quot; . &quot; , );</td>
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<td>46.</td>
<td>Butler, Ronald J.: correspondence with, &amp; notes by H.R. &amp; R.J.B. re David Hume, (MS/TS);</td>
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<td>47.</td>
<td>Carey, Joyce: 'Mister Johnson', radio talk &amp; notes re, (also photocopied newspaper items &amp; notes re Africa &amp; Moorison), (MS/annot.TS);</td>
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<td>de Chardin, Teilhard: notes, commentary &amp; publisher's leaflet re, (MS/TS);</td>
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<td>49.</td>
<td>&quot;Christianity and History,&quot; lecture, at a church retreat, (related letter), (annot.TS/MS);</td>
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<td>50.</td>
<td>&quot;Christianity, Past and Future,&quot; article, (in: 'The Student', 7th issue);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; (I), <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; <em>(Conspectus 1-14)(TS)</em>;</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; <em>(19-35), (annot.TS)</em>;</td>
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<td>The Church at the Beginning of the Modern Age, <em>(MS/annot.TS)</em>;</td>
<td>1945-48</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; &quot; of the Modern Age-Annotated Notes to <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>Church History IV(A), <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
<td>1954</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; *(II)&quot; &quot;, &quot;);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; Assorted topics, <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
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<td>63.</td>
<td>A Companion to the Church History lectures(I), <em>(ex.book, &amp; loose papers, MS)</em></td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; Church History lectures(II), <em>(ex.book, &amp; loose page, MS)</em>;</td>
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<td>The Dark Ages, <em>(MS/TS)</em>;</td>
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<td>67.</td>
<td>The Doctrine of Scripture, or the Christian View of the Nature and Authority of the Bible, Treated Historically, <em>(bound, annot. TS)</em>;</td>
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<td>68.</td>
<td>The Early Church (1-3), <em>(annot. TS)</em>;</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; *(4-17)( &quot;, &quot;);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; *(12- )&quot; ( &quot;, &quot;);</td>
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<td>Faith and Reason in the 17th Century(I), <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; *(II), <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
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<td>The Middle Ages (I), <em>(ex.book, MS)</em>;</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; &quot; *(II)&quot; (&quot;, &quot;);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; (1050-1500), (annot. TS, w. additional MS pages);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; (,28-), (, annot. TS);</td>
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<td>87.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; (1600-1970), by H.R. &amp; I.Breward, bound TS);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; Period, (TS);</td>
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<td>Origins &amp; Development Under the Roman Empire, (annot. TS, w. additional MS pages)</td>
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<td>90.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; Under the Roman Empire, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>The Reformation, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>92.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; -5 lectures, History II, Otago Uni. (annot.TS);</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<td>93.</td>
<td>Reformation and Counter-Reformation, (annot. TS, incomplete, w. MS page);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; in Europe, (TS, w. annot. by F.W.R. Niehol);</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot; (w. additional MS pages &amp; magazine articles, c.1942-60), (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>I Corinthians 7: &quot;A New Exegesis of...&quot;, essay, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Dostoevsky - Lecture Notes:</td>
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<td>'The Brothers Karamazov.' (I), (ex.book,MS, &amp; loose papers &amp; 'New Zealand Libraries', Dec. 1951);</td>
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<td>The Life of Dostoevsky (I), (ex.book, MS, &amp; loose MS/TS papers);</td>
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<td>108.</td>
<td>'The Possessed.', (MS/annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Eschatology: Addresses, essay, notes &amp; 'Outlook' article re, (MS/annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Evangelische Akademien: notes &amp; letter re, (MS/annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Existentialism: notes, addresses, articles, corresp. &amp; cuttings re, (MS/annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Extracts from works concerning the subject of History (Vol. 1), (ex.book, MS);</td>
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<td>&quot;Faith and Reason in the 17th Century.&quot;, lecture, (Red Lecture Theatre series, Otago Medical School), (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Fultor (from selected literature), lecture notes, (ex.book, MS);</td>
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<td>Funeral, sermon preached at funeral of H.R. by Dr. A.C. Moore, (booklet);</td>
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<td>&quot;God and Man in Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre.&quot;, 3 talks to Chch. Presbytery retreat, (annot. TS &amp; copies);</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>&quot;The Guilt of Christians in the Present World Crisis.&quot;, article, (in: 'The Student', 5th issue);</td>
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<td>Helmut Rex, 1913 - 1967, &quot;by I. Breward, biographical monograph, (bound TS);</td>
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<td>&quot;Heresies Ancient and Modern.&quot;, lecture to SCM, Otago, (also incld. &quot;Modern Heresies.&quot;, articles in: 'For Ministers Only', 1957), (annot. TS/MS);</td>
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<td>(an introduction), lecture notes, (bound TS, w. annot. by Anon.);</td>
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<td>III, Applied, lecture notes, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>III (Selected Passages I), lecture notes, (ex.book, MS);</td>
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<td>III, The Ten Commandments, lecture notes, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>&quot;Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?&quot;, article (also published in: 'The Reformed Theological Review', Vol. XVII, No. 5);</td>
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<td>140.</td>
<td>&quot;In Defence of the Individual.&quot;, Inaugural Lecture, (photocopy of 'Landfall' reprint);</td>
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<td>141.</td>
<td>&quot;The Individual in Sören Kierkegaard's Aesthetical Writings.&quot;, paper (bound TS, w. loose MS notes);</td>
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<td>&quot;The Intellectual Revolution.&quot;, lecture, at SCM Summer Conference, w. correspondence &amp; papers re conference, (MS notes &amp; draft/TS/annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Kafka: &quot;Franz Kafka.&quot;, address to Goethe Society, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>&quot; : notes re, (4 ex. books, MS);</td>
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<td>&quot; : &quot;The Psychological Interpretation of The Trial' by Franz Kafka.&quot;, &amp; &quot;Beyond the Psychological Interpretation of 'The Trial'.&quot;, papers, (annot. TS);</td>
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<td>Kafka: Stuttgart theatre programme re, (booklet);</td>
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<td>'The Kirk Through the Centuries.' by G.D. Henderson, w. annot. by H.R., (published booklet);</td>
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<td>Knox College Library Committee: minutes, reports, correspondence etc. re, &amp; book lists, (MS/TS /annot. TS);</td>
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<td>149.</td>
<td>Letter, to F.W.R. Nichol, note re, telegram, Bell invitation &amp; MS copy of Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem (possibly by Renate Rex), (MS/TS);</td>
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<td>150.</td>
<td>&quot;Luther and Lutheranism.&quot;, radio talk, (transcript, annot. TS);</td>
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<td>151.</td>
<td>Memorial Minute, Presbytery of Dunedin, (TS, w. accompanying letter to Renate Rex);</td>
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<td>152.</td>
<td>Mormonism: booklets, newspaper article &amp; letters to the editor re; (TS &amp; photocopies);</td>
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This sheet records material held in the Collection prior to 1/1/91. For material of like provenance acquired after that date, refer to the ongoing Accessions File.

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<td>'Novum Testamentum Graece.' (published Greek New Testament, w. annot. by H.R.);</td>
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<td>a) &quot;Our Calamity (or: The Right of Historical Criticism).&quot;; b) &quot;The Bible is the Word of God.&quot;; c) &quot;How Does God Speak Through the Bible Now?&quot;; d) &quot;The Relation Between OT and NT.&quot;; 4 addresses, (TS);</td>
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<td>Photographs (2), of Helmut &amp; Renate Rex, &amp; others, at Waipori Falls;</td>
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<td>&quot;Problems of Religious Knowledge.&quot;, by Peter Munz: review of (for 'Landfall'), correspondence, notes, rough draft, (MS/TS/annot. TS);</td>
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<td>158.</td>
<td>&quot;Race Relations.&quot;, 2 addresses to the Maori Synod, (annot.: TS);</td>
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<td>'Report on the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution.', Scottish Home Dept., w. annot. by H.R., (published report);</td>
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<td>161.</td>
<td>&quot;The riddle of Christ's birthday may never be solved.&quot;, UDT article &amp; notes re by H.R., (photocopy newspaper/TS);</td>
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<td>163.</td>
<td>Thielicke, Helmut: letter, notes, draft &amp; 'Outlook' article re, (MS/annot. TS/photocopy);</td>
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<td>165.</td>
<td>'What Small We Do?--five studies on the fundamentals of Christian Ethics.', by P.R. McKenzie, w. annot. by H.R., (published booklet);</td>
<td>1954</td>
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<td>166.</td>
<td>'A Woman of the Pharisaees.', by François Maurier, notes for commentary re, (MS);</td>
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