

Rabbi Dr. Werner van der Zyl - Background

Rabbi Dr. Werner van der Zyl was born in Schwerte, a small town in Westphalia on 11th September 1902. He grew up attending the Liberal synagogue of nearby Dortmund and graduated from the Hochschule fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Berlin) in 1929. He acquired his Doctorate at Giessen University in 1931 and held positions as Rabbi at the Friedenstempel, Berlin (1932 - 1935) and the Neue Synagogue, Oranienburgersrasse, Berlin (1935 - 1938/9).

He came to Great Britain in 1939 with his family. He and his wife Anneliese were interned at Kitchener Camp, Deal, Kent and then on the Isle of Man. In 1943 Rabbi Van der Zyl became the minister of North Western Reform Synagogue, a post he held until 1958. Between 1958 and 1968 he was minister of the West London Synagogue. He later held the post of honorary rabbi of the Comunidad Israelita de Palma de Mallorca. He was a founder and President of Leo Baeck College, London; President of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain; and Life Vice President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

The Hartley Library (University of Southampton) holds family papers including the following:

Correspondence of Erich Van der Zyl, a list of possessions of Magnus and Emma Van der Zyl and copies of documents for Rosa Anneliese Van der Zyl, 1933-66; correspondence, with poetry, from Georg Less, Werner Van der Zyl's uncle, sent to him and Rosa Anneliese Van der Zyl, 1948-53.

Papers of Rabbi Werner Van der Zyl, including a pass for the Mooragh Internment Camp, Isle of Man; photographs of Werner Van der Zyl; notes for sermons and addresses, 1928-90; papers relating to the establishment of Leo Baeck College, 1943-84; papers for the Comunidad Israelita de Palma de Mallorca.

[Hartley Library: Van der Zyl family papers, 1928-94](#)