Formerly most of the publications in English which pertain to
"Reformational philosophy" have issued from North America and there
seems to be no let up from that quarter. Yet, in terms of the formative
influence upon thinking Christians in this part of the world, and
especially for those who by psychic disposition are more British than
American, there is beginning to be significant developments.

Linette Martin's Hans Rookmaaker may well herald the broadening and
deepening of the decade-long influence which Francis Schaeffer's cultural
apologetics have had upon evangelical students at the secularist
universities in New Zealand and Australia.

In the relaxed armchair posture, stimulated by her novel format, Linette
Martin leads the reader into a leisurely, gripping and serious examination
of the life and work of Hendrik Roelof Rookmaaker. Those interested
in critically understanding the roots of 20th century Christian thought,
which has issued from the Netherlands, will also find many things to ponder
from this book.

Rookmaaker, the Christian art historian, clearly identified himself as a
Calvinist, yet in his upbringing he was isolated from the neo-Calvinistic
movement and it was only upon reading the Bible in a Nazi-prison that he
was converted to Christianity. The book however, is not of the genre
"Intellectual Biography". Though the publishers are to be commended for
commissioning such a work, they only gave their talented writer a mere
twelve months to do the necessary research. Linette Martin shows that
HRR is a very important figure within the renewal of Christianity in the
English-speaking world in this century.

This book gives a framework of HRR's life-work. The story of his life
is constructed as a series of biographical fragments: in Indonesia as
the son of a Dutch official in the twilight of the Dutch East-India
empire; his early teens and his Jewish girl-friend who was lost in the
Nazi "Final Solution"; his conversion in the converted "Orange Hotel" Nazi
prison; his deportation to P.O.W camps and his introduction there
to neo-Calvinistic philosophy under the teaching of Captain Mekkes;
and his life in the post-war reconstruction as Professor, husband, father,
L'Abri worker, Anglaphile and travelling art critic.

Whilst many of his country-men and women were being carried off as booty,
doing things in the "American Way", Rookmaaker immersed himself in the
rich traditions of pre-Enlightenment Dutch art (van Goyen) and the
deeply-moving tempora in American negro "soul" music. He saw himself
to be called to be a Christian art historian and from these two sources
found much needed inspiration to give his newly-found Christian faith
a critical distance from prevailing counter-trends of Christian accommodation
or Protestant iconoclasm.
A biography which discusses HRR's scholarly approach, and his view of the relation of christianity to his research is yet to be written. This book throws up some crucial problems that require further rigorous investigation.

Rookmaaker's view of Calvinism is only given in bare outline. Though a faithful churchgoer and elder, he had a distinctive style in his church going which enabled him to keep his church's way of doing things at a distance. The English reader will not know much about his denomination - the Article 31 church - and even less about the "vrijegemaakt". We read very briefly of his association with Rev. F. Schaeffer and of his love for England and of his sacrificial serving of a stimulating circle of British christians.

These are some of the critically important issues touched upon by Linette Martin. She does us a service in refraining from any slick journalistic flourish which would superficially resolve them. Perhaps it is her own style as an accomplished ballet dancer that enabled her to touch lightly, and artistically, upon the whole landscape of Rookmaaker's life. The question that I find intriguing is this: did he, as a christian art historian consider himself to be in Kuyper's line? Calvinist? Yes! But Kuyperian? Here is a crucial point for further investigation.

This book is the writer's delighting and insightful response to the christian challenge of Hans Rookmaaker. Many young christians in our quarter of the globe have experienced deep psychic alienation from the christianity of their parents. Sometimes the chasm appears even deeper for those who have had some contact with "reformational philosophy". They will be able to identify with Rookmaaker's struggle to assert a fresh christian perspective in the second-half of the twentieth century. But not only those. The book shows that Rookmaaker's appeal has extended to a wide variety of persons who have had to come to terms with the profound spiritual turmoil of post-war reconstruction and the empty solutions of liberal secular humanism.

Bruce C. Wearne