

unfold, the emphasis seems to be upon Mark's portrayal of Jesus's teaching, but a concern to recover the message of the historical Jesus also runs through the work.

The five chapters discuss key 'kingship' (*basileia*) texts, but are also concerned to reveal the pervasive presence in Mark of a concept that cannot be restricted to occurrences of the term. Light is shed on Mark's Gospel by frequent references to background or parallel texts in Matthew, Luke and the OT, as well as other writings France stresses the paradoxical nature of God's kingship – it is hidden, humble, misunderstood and rejected. God is 'taking over', but ordinary nationalistic ideas of God's deliverance miss the point. God's saving action (i.e., his kingship) is too revolutionary for Jesus' contemporaries to grasp; it is focused not on overcoming Roman rule (Jesus is not a zealot) but on the more fundamental task of toppling demonic forces. Spiritual conflicts punctuate the Markan narrative, and many individuals whose lives had been dominated by demonic power are liberated in the revolution Jesus leads.

As well as refuting claims that Mark 9:1 is an instance of failed prophecy, France maintains that 8:38, 13:26 and 14:62 correlate with 9:1 and have their basis in the enthronement vision of Daniel 7. This implies that the 'coming' of the Son of Man and the 'coming' of the kingship of God in power anticipate Jesus' enthronement in heaven and not the Parousia. France concedes that this is a controversial thesis, but it has the advantage not only of removing the problematic edge of 9:1, but also of doing justice to Markan language and imagery.

Although this work is targeted mostly at a popular readership, France interacts with and contributes to the scholarly discussion of Mark's Gospel. On the issue of the obtuse Markan disciples, France maintains (against Weeden) that Mark has no vendetta against the disciples or a group which they represent. Rather, the disciples exemplify ordinary people who need to allow the paradoxical kingship of Jesus to reverse their conventional system of values. As for the messianic secret, France suggests that it reflects an attempt of the Markan Jesus to avoid handing ammunition to his opponents (any notion of royal or messianic identity was likely to be heard in political terms). The 'Son of man' in Mark is heavily dependent on the man-like figure in the vision of Daniel 7 (there is no discussion of a possible collective Son of man in Dan. 7). Finally, Markan christology has been greatly underestimated: it may be less developed than that in other NT writings, but there are still strong implications of Jesus' divinity.

My only significant objection to this work is that there is a certain lack of clarity in the introduction and throughout the work as to the focus of analysis: France seeks to understand both what the historical Jesus had in mind and the Markan portrayal of him. While it is quite appropriate to approach NT texts on both of these levels, this book has neither differentiated consistently between them (frequently the work slides from the *Jesus Sitz im Leben* to the Markan, or vice versa), nor provided a method by which one can confidently work back from Mark's final text to recover the mind of Jesus. Of course, France is not suggesting that the fact that Mark's is the earliest of the Gospels (pp. 2-5) means that it is free of redactional features and constitutes a perfectly clear lens to the period of Jesus, but the reader may nonetheless get the impression that there is an easy transfer of content from the message of Jesus in history to the message of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.

That concern aside, this is a very useful, interesting and thought-provoking book. Students, ministers and any who wish to understand the NT better will benefit by reading it. Further, there is no lack of relevance for 'real life' today. This is especially true in regard to the sharp critique the work offers of conventional ideas about authority, power and prestige: Jesus brings God's kingship to serve the lowly, the child, the outcast; ordinary values of greatness are thus turned upside down.

Peter K. Nelson

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***Gereformeerden op zoek naar God.  
Godsverduistering in het licht van de  
Gereformeerde Spiritualiteit***

**C. Graafland**

Kok, Kampen, 223pp., hfl. 29,50.

**SUMMARY**

This book is concerned with the decline in Church attendance in the Netherlands. The author discusses secularization, especially in the writings of Dr Hendrikus Berkhof, which leads him to a fresh discussion of Reformation theology and spirituality. He insists that the real point at issue between Calvinists and Arminians at Dort was justification, not double predestination, though the latter doctrine assumed greater importance in the final documents. The book is an interesting corrective to much traditional thought, though it contains the danger that regeneration will be given too central a place, leading once more to a dangerous internalization of spirituality.



## RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre traite du déclin de la fréquentation des églises néerlandaises. L'auteur étudie la sécularisation, en particulier selon les écrits de Hendrikus Berkhof, ce qui le conduit à considérer de façon nouvelle la théologie et la spiritualité de la Réforme. Pour lui, il y insiste, le vrai problème entre les calvinistes et les arminiens à Dordrecht portait sur la justification, et non sur la double prédestination, bien que cette dernière doctrine ait pris plus de place dans le document final. L'ouvrage corrige de façon intéressante plusieurs des vues traditionnelles, mais la régénération risque de prendre une place trop centrale, qui favorise une fois de plus une dangereuse intériorisation de la spiritualité.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Buch behandelt den Niedergang der Kirchenbesucherzahl in den Niederlanden. Der Autor diskutiert das Problem der Säkularisation, besonders in den Schriften von Hendrikus Berkhof, was zu einer neuen Diskussion von Reformationstheologie und Spiritualität führt. Es wird betont, daß der eigentliche Streitpunkt zwischen Calvinisten und Arminianern in Dordrecht die Rechtfertigung und nicht die doppelte Prädestination gewesen sei, obwohl diese in den Schlußdokumenten größeres Gewicht hat. Das Buch ist ein interessantes Korrektiv zur herkömmlichen Sicht, dennoch birgt es die Gefahr, daß der Wiedergeburt ein zu zentraler Platz eingeräumt wird, was einmal mehr zu einer gefährlichen Verinnerlichung der Spiritualität führen könnte.

Just like all the churches in Western Europe the churches in Holland are being hit hard by the onslaught of secularism. Though it may be true that in terms of percentage many people still are attending church in the Netherlands, in actual fact their number has been dropping drastically in the last twenty years. Hardest hit is the Roman Catholic Church which may have lost more than 60 percent of its churchgoers. But the larger Reformed denominations (such as the Netherlands Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) are suffering badly too. The smaller Reformed denominations are faring better, but once in a while one hears complaints that the process is starting there too. Last year Dr C. Graafland, Professor of Theology in the University of Utrecht, wrote an important book dealing with the issue at hand on behalf of the Reformed Alliance within the Netherlands Reformed Church. It is called *Gereformeerden op zoek naar God* (*Reformed people in search of God*). The subtitle reads: 'The twilight of God in the light of Reformed Spirituality'.

In the first part of the book he deals with the question of the 'twilight of God', a term first applied to the situation of secularization by Dr Hendrikus Berkhof. What really is seculariza-

tion and which are its causes? Here he enters into discussion with several other theologians, such as Berkhof himself, Newbigin, myself (my book *Waar blijft de kerk?* (*What is left of the church?*) (Kok, Kampen, 1988), etc. But his main discussion partner throughout his whole book is Berkhof. He agrees with him that to believe means to choose. Yet he has the impression that in his earlier writings on the subject at hand Berkhof puts too much emphasis on the choice of man, even though he admits that man chooses in close cooperation with God (78). In his later writings Berkhof puts more emphasis on the role of human sin in the process of secularization (79). What is the answer of Reformed theology to all this? Here Graafland embarks on a discussion of Reformed spirituality. He traces it back to the Reformation with its three *sola's* and to the subsequent Reformed Pietism (the so-called *Nadere Reformatie*) in the Netherlands. In other words, he takes his starting point in the Reformed tradition. At the same time he warns against the danger of embellishing this tradition, as some are inclined to do (100ff.). Undoubtedly there are certain shortcomings in this tradition and we should be willing to reassess it frankly in the light of Scripture itself. The heart of the Reformation is the doctrine of justification, which is also the heart of the Bible itself. But the Bible 'conjugates' this salvation in numerous different situations, salvation-historically, culturally-socially, psychologically and personally (115). This naturally also implies that we cannot act as if we experience justification of faith in exactly the same way as the people of the Reformation did. Undoubtedly, God's grace and salvation are always the same, yet they must be 're-actualized' (a term he borrows from me) all the time (115). We should not forget that much has happened since the Reformation. In the period of Pietism salvation was interiorized, spiritualized and individualized. As a matter of fact some of these tendencies are already found in Calvin (123ff.). The Pietists took these elements and concentrated one-sidedly on them, the result being that the Pietists themselves gradually changed into a kind of subculture and landed in a kind of spiritual ghetto situation, even within their own church (130). Their entire attention was focussed on what is happening in the soul of man and they usually had no real interest in the broader questions of life, such as the structures of society or the ecological problems. Although he is a very confessional man, Graafland honestly admits that some of these weaknesses are already present in the *Canons of Dort* (1618–1619). Unfortunately the fathers



of Dort allowed themselves to be pushed into a corner by the Remonstrants, who constantly attacked them on the issue of reprobation and so focussed the whole controversy on the issue of double predestination. The fathers of Dort followed them on this path and did take their starting point in the doctrine of double predestination, thereby landing themselves in insoluble problems. Graafland agrees with Kohlbrugge, who had always maintained that the real issue between the Remonstrants and the Counter-Remonstrants was the doctrine of justification itself (211). Nevertheless, Graafland himself, in the closing part of his book, returns to the *Canons* and emphasizes the need of regeneration again (156ff., 183ff.). However much I agree with him and with the *Canons* that regeneration is a necessity, we have to be careful in not making it the centre of our theology and spirituality, for before we know it we may fall again into the trap of the internalization and subjectivization of God's grace and salvation. Graafland certainly has not given the last and final answer, but we are grateful for the honest way in which he has raised the issues and his book makes us think again. Perhaps the latter is the highest praise one can accord to an author!

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***The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature***

**Sidney Greidanus**

IVP, Leicester, 1988; 374pp., £9.95;  
ISBN 0 8028 0360 1

***Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church***

**Richard J. Neuhaus (ed.)**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989; 190pp.,  
ISBN 0 8028 0209 5

**SUMMARY**

Dr Greidanus gives us a most valuable book, covering an exceptionally wide field without superficiality. The preacher who works his way seriously through this book will find his own understanding of the Bible greatly enriched and could find his preaching revolutionized.

The second volume arose from a conference in New York in January 1988. The Bible must be understood as a church document, even in its historical context, and the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* is not a formula for church-rejecting individualism.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Greidanus nous offre un livre de grande valeur, qui couvre un champ exceptionnellement vaste, sans être superficiel. Le prédicateur qui travaillera sérieusement ce livre en trouvera sa compréhension de la Bible enrichie, voire sa prédication transformée.

Le second volume est issu d'une conférence tenue à New-York en 1988. La Bible doit être comprise comme un document *ecclésial*, même dans son contexte historique, et le principe protestant *Sola Scriptura* n'autorise pas l'individualisme oublieux de l'Eglise.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Greidanus präsentiert ein überaus wertvolles Buch, das ein außerordentlich weites Feld abdeckt, ohne dabei in Oberflächlichkeit zu verfallen. Der Prediger, der das Buch aufmerksam durcharbeitet, wird sich in seinem Verständnis der Bibel bereichert finden und könnte seine Predigt geradezu revolutionieren.

Der zweite Band entstand aufgrund einer Konferenz im Januar 1988 in New York. Die Bibel soll, selbst in ihrem historischen Kontext, als Dokument der Kirche verstanden werden, und das protestantische Prinzip des *Sola Scriptura* stellt nicht eine Formel für einen kirchenverachtenden Individualismus dar.

A friend of mine, the principal of a college for preachers in Brazil, once told me he would always award a diploma to a student whose work was weak, provided he passed in both hermeneutics and homiletics, two essential disciplines for every preacher. Both these volumes address hermeneutics, while the first of them relates the two disciplines to each other.

Dr Greidanus has given us a most valuable book, covering an exceptionally wide field without superficiality. He says, 'In the present volume cross-fertilization takes place not only between hermeneutics and homiletics but also between historical and literary studies.'

The first half deals with the major steps of thorough sermon preparation from a conservative evangelical perspective. The author argues that expository preaching is essential and then considers the relevance of various types of biblical criticism to the preacher's task. He emphasises the need to go beyond atomistic approaches to a more holistic perspective and welcomes recent trends in this direction. He also lays stress on the need to recognise the richness of literary forms in the Scriptures and particularly to let these forms affect the structure of the sermon itself. Along the way, text selection, theme formulation and relevant communication are also addressed.

The second half applies the principles estab-