

[MJTM 16 (2014–2015)]

#### BOOK REVIEW

Daniel Strange. *Their Rock Is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 383 pp. Pbk. ISBN 0310520770. \$24.99.

Daniel Strange, in *Their Rock Is Not Like Our Rock*, offers a sketch of a theology of religions that is primarily grounded in the Reformed tradition. His main thesis is as follows: “From the presupposition of an epistemologically authoritative biblical revelation, non-Christian religions are sovereignly directed, variegated and dynamic, collective human idolatrous responses to divine revelation behind which stand deceiving demonic forces” (156). He adds, “Being antithetically against yet parasitically dependent upon the truth of the Christian worldview, non-Christian religions are ‘subversively fulfilled’ in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (156). He states that idolatry should serve as “the hermeneutical master key with which to unlock the nature of non-Christian religion and religions” (156). Its main purpose is to equip Christians with a theological foundation that can respond to the messages of other religions that are in direct competition with the truth claims of Christianity.

The book is divided into nine chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a general overview of the book’s main arguments and its proposed methodology; the second gives the Reformed theological foundations for interpreting the religious Other as *homo adorans*; the third touches on the issue of remnantal revelation and on how it can be supported by *prisca theologia* and comparative mythology; the fourth addresses the origin of religious diversity as depicted in the story of Babel; the fifth examines the idolatry of the religious Other in the Old Testament; the sixth accomplishes this same feat in the New Testament; the seventh delves into the issue of the gospel as the

subversive fulfillment of the religious Other; the eighth addresses the missiological implications of subversive fulfillment among the Gentiles; the ninth chapter gives a pastoral perspective on the purpose of the religious Other; and finally, the conclusion provides a reflection on previous scholarship on this topic along with further suggestions as a way forward in studying and formulating a more comprehensive theology of religions.

One of the strengths of this book is the author's straightforward approach to the topic at hand. He clearly lays out his own personal background, experiences, presuppositions, and biases early in the book. This accomplishes two things for the author: first, the academic aspect of the book is illuminated by the personal details of the author's life. And second, one is able to properly engage with the arguments he puts forth in a clear manner, since the author goes to great lengths to establish the parameters of his arguments. From the start, it is clear that Strange is engaging the question concerning the theology of religions from a Reformed perspective. He is also at pains to reintroduce some great Reformed thinkers who unfortunately have been largely forgotten by today's students. Figures such as J. H. Bavinck and Cornelius Van Til are prominently featured in this book. Even if one disagrees with his arguments and conclusion, he is unflinchingly consistent at laying out his presuppositions.

Sometimes, however, a work's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. The decidedly Reformed perspective from which Strange forms and creates his arguments may unintentionally, but inevitably, limit the audience this book may reach. Christians who do not agree with Reformed theology or are not interested in interacting with a theology of religion from a Reformed perspective may not find this book worth reading.

Throughout the book, the author frequently uses a conservative reading of the Genesis account as the springboard for his analysis and critique of other religions. Yet, for those who subscribe to a more progressive reading of the Genesis account, the points he makes will seem rather overreaching. This highlights one of the challenges I encountered throughout the book: unless one fully subscribes to Reformed theology, it is difficult to agree with or consider the key points the author makes.

Additionally, the tone, though academic, also seems incredibly condescending when dealing with other religions. I will concede, however, that the content of his arguments has a lot to do with the perceived condescending attitude. The author also provides overly detailed explanations for some of the more ancillary arguments that he makes in the book. While it would be appropriate to provide a brief explanation for certain points, he gives these tangents a disproportionate amount of space.

This book is a tour-de-force and a must-read for anyone who has Reformed leanings or has an interest in learning how Reformed theology interacts with other religions. Strange's personal background and journey make this book an incredibly fascinating read. Rooting his theology of religions in a Reformed setting is a wise decision. By doing so, he is able to equip numerous Reformed adherents. Even though his main concern is providing a theological foundation for his theology of religions, he still manages to deal with the missiological implications of his theology of religions. This book performs the important work of drawing up a blue print for how to understand other religions from a Reformed perspective.

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