BOOKS I HAVE READ: FOR THEIR ROCK IS NOT AS OUR ROCK

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This is an excellent introduction to the theology of religions. However, there are lots of long words and quite a few Latin phrases; it isn't an easy read - but it is worth it.
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In my experience, Evangelical Christians respond to other religions in one of three ways; the first is simply to ignore them and hope they will go away, the second is to dismiss them as false and then assume that there is no need for further discussion, while the third approach is to attempt to understand themÂ with a view to evangelism and dialogue.

Dan Strange inÂ 'For Their Rock is not as Our Rock'Â does something different; he sets out to develop a evangelical theology of religions. His concern is not so much for the various ways in which religious life is expressed around the world, but to understand how non-Christian religions can exist alongside God's revelation of himself in Christ and in Scripture.

Strange sums up his quest like this:

> *From the perspective of a "fides quaerens intellectum" (faith seeking understanding), what are non-Christian religions? Why are there non-Christian religions? These seemingly crude and almost childlike inquisitions of nature and purpose are in reality deeply profound questions, for without pretension they encapsulate much of the essence of the discipline known as the theology of religions. How one decides to answer these questions sets a theological trajectory with far-reaching implications for contemporary Christian missiological engagement with other religions.*

His definition of religion is rich and gives plenty of scope for investigation:

> *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. 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.*

These two quotes illustrate something key about this book; it isn't an easy read. It is liberally sprinkled with Latin phrases and very long words. I wouldn't recommend it as relaxing reading - you have to concentrate.

For me the worth of the book is in the last few chapters where he gets to grips with some of the pastoral and missiological implications of the presence of other religions in the world. This is good stuff and richer than the normal 'this is how you should approach Hindus/Muslims/Buddhists' books that proliferate on the market. However, this section doesn't make much sense without the sustained biblical and systematic argument that leads to it. Don't try to skip to the end.

I have to admit that I was stretched by this book; it isn't really my field. Nevertheless, I would recommend it to anyone who is involved in sharing the Gospel across religious boundaries. Strange,

himself gives a compulsive argument for getting to grips with this sort of thinking:

> *For the sake of the gospel we need to be engaging and immersing ourselves in the lives of the religious Other. On the other hand, a number of missiological practitioners I have met over the years have spent their lives engaging with a particular religious tradition and have both this knowledge and love. However, and again I hope I am not being unfair, sometimes the theology of religions that guides their praxis can be unreflective, shallow and sometimes questionable in terms of exegesis and systematic reflection. If my own contribution is weighted to the theological side, then what I have wanted to achieve in this study is to provide a solid but subtle theological basis for missiological engagement.*

From my point of view, he has succeeded admirably and I look forward to others building on this foundation.