As a result of globalization and mass migration, western Christians live in an increasingly pluralistic environment. Heightened awareness of religious diversity raises some important questions: How should we view non-Christian religions? Does our commitment to Christ as the way, the truth and the life require that we dismiss the teachings and practices of other religions? How do we account for exemplary behavior among Buddhists, Hindus or Muslims? Although these questions are relevant to all Christians, they are particularly important for those serving cross-culturally. Indeed, any viable theology of mission must include a theology of religions.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the discipline of the theology of religions. First, we will answer the question: What is a theology of religions? Second, we will discuss three positions that have shaped contemporary discussion. Finally, we will explore several key topics that need to be addressed in the process of developing a Christian theology of religions.

What is the Theology of Religions?

If you scan the table of contents of systematic theology texts written by prominent evangelicals (e.g., Grudem, Erickson, etc.), you won’t find a chapter titled the “theology of religions.” There are several reasons for this. First, while these theologians may address some topics germane to a theology of religions, theological interpretation
of religious diversity has been of greater interest to missiologists than theologians (Tennent 2010:192). Second, although theological reflection on the relationship between Christianity and other religions can be found throughout the history of the church, the contemporary theology of religions emerged only in the latter half of the twentieth century (and even more recently among evangelicals). Third, the theology of religions cannot be easily located under any single theological category. It touches many of the traditional loci: God, creation, providence, anthropology, fall, person and work Christ, pneumatology, salvation, ecclesiology and eschatology. Finally, the theology of religions not only involves the interpretation of biblical texts but also descriptive analysis of religious traditions using tools that differ from those employed in biblical and theological studies.

The Christian theology of religions attempts to answer the following question: *How, from a biblical and theological perspective, should we think about the presence, practices and beliefs of non-Christian religions?* In the process of answering the latter question, several sub-questions must be explored:

1. How should we think theologically about the phenomenon of human religiosity?
2. Can we affirm the presence of truth and goodness in non-Christian religions and, if so, on what basis?
3. Is it possible for adherents of non-Christian religions to experience salvation apart from hearing the gospel and responding in faith?
4. What role, if any, do non-Christian religions play in mediating the saving work of Christ?
5. To what end, and on what basis, should we engage in inter-religious dialogue?
6. Is it appropriate to adopt sayings, proverbs, categories, institutions or practices found among non-Christian religions as we contextualize the gospel?
Broadly speaking, we can group these questions into four categories: (1) theological interpretation of human religiosity (q. 1), (2) truth and goodness in non-Christian religions (q. 2), (3) salvation in non-Christian religions (qq. 3-4), and (4) contextualization in Christian mission (qq. 5-6).

These questions can also be explored in relation to specific religious traditions. For example, focusing on Muslim belief and practice (in its many forms), one might develop a Christian theology of Islam. A theology of Islam would address questions such as the following: When Christians and Muslims speak of “God” are they referring to the same being? Is it appropriate for native Arabic-speaking Christians to address the triune God as “Allah” in worship? Is it appropriate for Muslim converts to continue worshipping in Mosques? Since every missionary operates with implicit interpretations of the beliefs and practices of the religious group(s) to which they minister, explicit theological reflection on non-Christian religions is vital.

The Christian theology of religions differs from other disciplines by virtue of its explicit dependence on the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. Whereas the history of religion, philosophy of religion and comparative religion attempt to offer tradition-independent analysis of religions, the Christian theology of religions arises from, and is constrained by, the self-revelation of the triune God in Holy Scripture. (Of course, like these other disciplines, it also engages in descriptive analysis of religious traditions and may use similar tools in the process.)
Forthcoming chapter in *Introducing Missiology*

**Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism**

The debate over a Christian theology of religions has been framed by the exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist typology. Exclusivism is associated with the view that Christian salvation (constituted by a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and culminating in the new creation) is possible only on the basis of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and enthronement of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit (regeneration, indwelling, sanctification and glorification). Non-Christian religions play no role in accomplishing or applying this salvation. Prior to the twentieth century, exclusivism represented the dominant position in the church. It still represents a widespread view among conservative evangelicals.

Todd Miles makes a strong case for exclusivism in his book *A God of Many Understandings: The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Miles 2010). While exclusivists generally emphasize the necessity of explicit faith in Christ for appropriating the saving benefits of Christ’s work, some exclusivists adopt an agnostic stance on the faith of the unevangelized.

“**Inclusivism**” generally refers to the view that saving work of the triune God extends beyond the witness of the church (such that adherents of other religions can experience salvation apart from conscious faith in Christ) and that non-Christian religions may play some positive role in salvation-history. Vatican II (1962-65) marked a decisive shift in Catholic attitudes toward non-Christian religions (Ruokanen 1992). In
the years since Vatican II, inclusivism (in a variety of forms) has become the dominant position in the Catholic Church. Catholic theologian Karl Rahner (whose theology was influential in the theology of Vatican II) coined the phrase “anonymous Christians” to describe adherents of non-Christian religions who experience God’s grace and salvation (mediated through their religious traditions) without knowing it.

Influenced by Catholic (and mainline Protestant) reflection, evangelical inclusivism in North America emerged several decades later. In his book *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*, Clark Pinnock articulated his “hermeneutic of hopefulness,” suggesting that numerous adherents of non-Christian religions may experience Christian salvation through their response to general revelation, apart from conscious faith in Christ (Pinnock 1992). The same year, John Sanders made case for universally accessible salvation in a lengthy book titled *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Fate of the Evangelized* (Sanders 1992).

Although they agree that salvation extends beyond the witness of the church through the universal work of the Holy Spirit, inclusivists are divided on the question of whether non-Christian religions represent means through which saving grace is mediated. This represents an area of significant disagreement among contemporary Catholic theologians (compare D’Costa 2000 with Dupuis 1997 and 2002). Evangelical inclusivists have generally been more hesitant to view non-Christian religions as means through which Christian salvation is mediated.
As an interpretation of religion, pluralism denotes the viewpoint that all religions are more or less equally valid paths to “salvation” (which is construed in a variety of ways). One of the most articulate pluralists in the English-speaking world was the British philosopher, John Hick. Hick claimed that all religions are culturally-conditioned, yet authentic responses, to the same divine ultimate reality, which he called "the Real" (Hick 1989). Hick began his theological career as an exclusivist but later moved to pluralism (Hick 1980:1-9). Harold Netland, a former student of Hick, offers a compelling critique of Hick's “pluralistic hypothesis” (Netland 1991:196-233; 2001:158-246).

Although the exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist typology has framed discussion in the theology of religions for several decades, four limitations beset it. First, a number of proposals cannot be easily located under any of the three categories. For example, Karl Barth is sometimes identified as an exclusivist; however, to the extent Barth may legitimately be recognized as a universalist, his position defies easy categorization. Second, even among theologians who explicitly identify themselves with one of the three positions above, considerable diversity exists in the substance of their proposals. Third, the threefold typology is structured around soteriology. There are a number of important issues the typology does not address (e.g., the presence of truth in non-Christian religions). Finally, use of the label “exclusivism” within the threefold typology is pejorative and obscures that fact that all the positions outlined above are “exclusivist”
in the sense that inclusivists and pluralists assume that their position is ontologically and epistemologically correct and defend their interpretations against rival explanations (D’Costa 2000:19-98). While some theologians continue to use the typology, many have abandoned it and attempted to develop alternative paradigms.

**Toward a Christian Theology of Religions**

There are four topics that need be addressed in developing a Christian theology of religions: theological interpretation of human religiosity, truth in non-Christian religions, salvation in non-Christian religions and issues of contextualization related to non-Christian religious practices and beliefs. Because contextualization is discussed elsewhere in this volume (see chapters XXX), we will focus on the first three topics.

**Human Religiosity**

The Bible has no concept of “religion” as the term is used today (Bavinck 2003:237). In the Old Testament, the objective dimension of religion is constituted by God’s revelation and reflected in “covenant” and “torah” while the subjective dimension is captured in “the fear of the Lord” (2003:237-38). In the NT, the objective dimension centers on God’s self-revelation in Christ while the subjective dimension is expressed in “faith” and “love” (2003:238).

Lack of a general concept of “religion” is also reflected in early Christian discourse. Prior to the seventeenth-century, Christians used three primary categories to understand those outside the church: pagans, heretics and Jews (Griffiths 2001a:165).
For nearly a millennium, Christians viewed Islam “as a Christian heresy rather than a non-Christian religion” (Griffiths 2001b:3).

The concept of “religion” as a genus of which there are various species emerged from key developments in seventeenth-century Europe including religious wars and growing awareness of non-European cultures (2001b:3-7). This approach to religion was further reinforced with the advent of the formal study of religion in nineteenth-century using psychological and sociological tools. This history does not mean that we should not use the term “religion” but it is important to understand the history of this term.

Religious traditions include a number of elements: worldviews, stories, beliefs, ethical norms, rituals, social patterns and religious experiences (Tennent 2010:193; Netland 2001:193-94, 328-29). Although religion and culture are distinct (such that the former cannot be reduced to the latter), the line between religion and culture is often difficult to discern. This presents a significant challenge in the area of contextualization. When evaluating the appropriateness of certain practices in cross-cultural contexts, missionaries often ask, “Is this practice cultural or religious?” The problem is that many practices are both cultural and religious. Christmas represents a case in point. There are both cultural and religious dimensions to the celebration of Christmas in North America. Moreover, the meaning of specific elements is shaped, at least in part, by context (e.g., “O Holy Night” playing softly in a shopping mall vs. sung by followers of Christ in a Christmas-eve worship service).
Proposal, Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland offer a helpful discussion of the complex relationship between religion and culture (McDermott and Netland 2014). To adequately address issues of contextualization, we need a theology of culture alongside a theology of religions (Tennent 2010:159-90).

The Christian doctrine of creation represents the starting point for theological reflection on human religiosity: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27, ESV). Although scholars debate the precise entailments of the imago Dei, capacity for relationship with God should be seen a central component (Carson 2001:210). This means that our religiosity is an essential element of our humanity. As Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck explains, “According to Scripture, humans were human beings from the first moment of their existence, created in God’s image, hence religious beings from that moment on. Religion was not something added later by a separate creation or a long process of evolution but is automatically implied in the fact of humanity’s having been created in the image of God” (Bavinck 2003:278). In light of this, it is not surprising that we encounter forms of religious expression in every culture.

Just as the eye is designed to see light and the ear designed hear sound, God has given human beings a “natural aptitude for perceiving the divine” (2003:278-79). Theologians have used a variety terms to characterize this aptitude. John Calvin speaks about an “awareness of divinity” (divinitatis sensum) implanted in the human mind
(Calvin 1960: 43). He also affirms that God has sown a “seed of religion” (*religionis semen*) in every human being (1960:47). Although people sometimes use religion to deceive, this deception would not work were it not for the presence of this seed: “But they would never have achieved this if men’s minds had not already been imbued with a firm conviction about God, from which the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed” (1960:45). Thus, we might think about non-Christians religions “as expressions of a genuine, although misguided, search and longing for God” by those who have been created in the image of God (Netland 2001:334).

Of course, we cannot end our analysis of human religiosity with the doctrine of creation. We must also consider the devastating effects of the fall. The rebellion of Adam and Eve not only brought guilt and condemnation but also death and corruption (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21; 8:19-25). Every aspect of human life, including the religious dimension, has been corrupted by sin. The biblical category of idolatry is particularly important for understanding the Scriptural analysis of human brokenness and rebellion resulting from the fall (Exod. 20:3-6; Lev. 19:4; Rom. 1:18-22). Humans continually turn from God to other “saviors” (a recurring indictment in the Prophets). Thus, a paradox exists. Created in the image of God, humans long for a relationship with God; however, as sinners they rebel and hide: “While religion can be a way of reaching out to God, it can also be a means of hiding from him” (Netland 2001:335). A final doctrine that must ground a proper understanding of human religious life is the demonic. While is it
certainly wrong to attribute all non-Christian religious activity to demonic influence, some reflects demonic influence (Deut. 32:16-17; 1 Cor. 10:20; Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-4; Rev. 9:20).

Truth in Non-Christian Religions

A second issue a Christian theology of religions must address concerns the presence of truth in non-Christian religions. (When we think about truth in religious traditions we tend to focus on doctrinal beliefs concerning God, the world and human beings; however, it is also important that we include moral and ethical norms under the category of truth.) We can frame the question this way: Can we affirm the presence of truth and goodness in non-Christian religions and, if so, on what basis? One might assume that exclusive commitment to Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life (and not a way, a truth and a life), requires a negative answer to this question; however, as Harold Netland explains, “There is no reason to maintain that everything taught by non-Christian religions is false or that there is nothing of value in them.” (Netland 2001:333).

On what basis can one make such an affirmation? It is not because non-Christian religions represent an alternative means to the salvation purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son and applied by the Holy Spirit. Nor do we affirm the presence of truth because non-Christian religious texts, like the Bhagavad Gita, are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Elements of truth and goodness can be affirmed on the basis of general revelation, indirect influence of special revelation and common grace. (In a sense, we
account for truth in non-Christian religions in some of the same ways we account for truth in human culture more broadly.)

If God is to be known, God must reveal himself. Throughout the history of the church, theologians have distinguished two types of divine revelation: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation denotes the act of grace whereby God reveals himself to every human being through nature and conscience (Rom. 1:18-21; 2:14-16; Ps. 19:1-6; Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:16-17) while special revelation refers to the act of grace by which God reveals himself through historical acts (e.g., parting of the Red Sea), dreams and visions (e.g., Joseph’s dreams), divine speech (Exod. 3:14), the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (1 Tim. 3:16) and the eternal Word made flesh (Heb. 1:1-2; John 1:1-18). While Christian theologians have differed in their understanding of what may be known on the basis of general revelation (e.g., medieval debates whether God could be known as a Trinity of persons through general revelation), there is a general agreement that human beings have some awareness of the existence and nature of God. The gracious self-revelation of the triune God through nature and conscience represents the first basis for affirming the possibility of truth in non-Christian religions. As Bavinck explains, “But, however severely Scripture judges the character of paganism, it is precisely the general revelation it teaches that enables and authorizes us to recognize all the elements of truth that are present also in pagan religions” (Bavinck 2003:318). While general revelation does not contain sufficient
knowledge to bring someone to saving faith, it certainly can be used by God to prepare
individuals for the gospel (*preparatio evangelica*).

Second, some religious truth may result from the indirect influence of special
revelation. Islam represents a case in point. The Qur’an contains numerous references
to people, events and beliefs recorded in Scripture including the six days of creation,
Adam as the first human being, Moses receiving the ten commandments, Noah’s ark,
Jonah being swallowed by a great fish, the ministry of John the Baptist and the sinless
birth of Jesus (Tennent 2007:59). The fact that these references are included in the
Qur’an does not mean the Qur’an is inspired but it does suggest that the Qur’an makes
some true claims. It should be noted, however, these truths are recast in a narrative and

A final basis for recognizing truth and goodness in non-Christian religions can be
found in the Reformed doctrine of common grace. Common grace refers to the non-
salvific blessings the triune God extends to the entire human race ("common" in contrast
with the "special" saving grace that is extended only toward the elect). Included under
the rubric of common grace are God’s providential care for creation (e.g., making the
sun rise on the evil and the good, Matt. 5:44-45), restraint of human sin (Gen. 20:6; 1
Sam. 25:26), human government (Rom. 13:1-6), the development of human culture, and
many other blessings (Jam. 1:17). While Reformed theologians have not generally
connected common grace to non-Christian religions, Bavinck suggests that “an
operation of God’s Spirit and of his common grace is discernible not only in science and art, morality and law, but also in the religions” (Bavinck 2003:319). Common grace (in the context of the *imago Dei*) also provides a way to account for exemplary behavior among adherents of non-Christian religions.

Our discussion of the presence of truth in non-Christian religions raises a question regarding the use of non-Christian sacred texts in cross-cultural ministry. In *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, Timothy Tennent explores the role of non-Christian religious texts in Christian mission (Tennent 2007:53-75). Tennent suggests that Paul’s preaching in Acts 17 (in which Paul cites pagan sources in the context of proclaiming the gospel) provides warrant for limited use of non-Christian sacred texts (e.g., Qur’an) in evangelism and offers helpful guidelines to this end (2007:71-73).

**Salvation in Non-Christian Religions**

A third issue that must be addressed in developing a theology of religions concerns salvation. The Christian doctrine of salvation represents a central focus of contemporary debate in the theology of religions—and rightly so. Three questions must be answered. Must we preach the gospel to adherents of non-Christian religions? Is it possible for adherents of non-Christian religions to experience salvation apart from hearing the gospel and responding in faith? What role, if any, do non-Christian religions play in mediating salvation? Obviously, one’s responses to these questions
have significant missiological implications. In our discussion of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, we already mapped a spectrum of possible answers.

Constructively, four points can be offered. First, because they have rebelled against God, all human beings—including adherents of non-Christian religions—stand in need of the redemption initiated by the Father, accomplished by the incarnate Son and applied by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1-8; Eph. 1-3). Hence, adherents of other religions must be presented with the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). Second, the preaching of the gospel represents the means, under the New Covenant, through which individuals come to saving faith in Christ (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:9-17). When people hear good news concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit opens their blind eyes to see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4, ESV). This does not mean that God cannot bring the gospel message through other means. Some former Muslims report that visions and dreams played a role in them coming to faith in Christ (Miles 2010:334-36). Nor does it mean that the Spirit of God cannot providentially use other factors, including prior religious beliefs and experiences, to play a role in conversion. Third, the fate of the unevangelized is a difficult question—both pastorally and theologically—and it represents an area in which conservative evangelicals disagree. The justice of God is one of central issues regarding the fate of the unevangelized. In this regard, we do well to remember that, according to Romans 1:18-21, every person has some knowledge of God and is without excuse; God will judge and
his judgment will be just; the church is called to bring the gospel to every person; and those who reject Christ will experience eternal separation from God. While inclusivists go beyond Scripture in confident pronouncements (on the basis of God’s “universal salvific will”) regarding large numbers of unevangelized who will be saved, Christian theologians nevertheless have, at times, cautiously acknowledged the possibility of the Holy Spirit applying the benefits of Christ’s work apart from conscious faith in Christ. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that elect infants and other individuals “who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word” may experience salvation (WCF 10.3). What is clear in Scripture (but undermined by some inclusivists) is the fact that the appropriate response to reality of the unevangelized is gospel proclamation. Finally, no Scriptural warrant exists for affirming that non-Christian religions mediate Christian salvation, as some inclusivists have suggested (Acts 4:12; John 14:6).

Contemporary theologians who affirm that adherents of non-Christian religions can experience salvation apart from hearing the gospel and that non-Christians religions mediate salvation frequently appeal to the doctrine the Trinity in substantiating these claims. Three examples will illustrate this trend. In The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends, Mark Heim, a Baptist theologian, suggests that the debate over the theology of religions proceeds on “a largely undefended assumption that there is and can only be one religious end, one actual religious fulfillment” (Heim 2001:17). This
assumption must be rejected. While Christians will experience salvation (i.e., communion with the triune God), adherents of other religions may experience other positive ends which must be distinguished from salvation (e.g., Buddhists experiencing Nirvana). These alternative “religious ends” arise from an encounter with the complex life of the Trinity: “I contend that distinctive religious ends sought and realized in other religious traditions are grounded in apprehension of and connection with specific dimensions of the divine life of the Triune God” (2001:9).

In his book, Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism, the late Jacques Dupuis, a Roman Catholic theologian, argues on trinitarian grounds that non-Christian religions mediate saving grace. According to Dupuis, the saving action of the triune God is not limited to the Christ-event. To the contrary, the “two hands” of God, the Word and the Spirit, are universally present and active in non-Christian religions (Dupuis 1997:316). A “distinct action” of the non-incarnate Logos continues following Christ’s resurrection (1997:299). The Spirit is also universally active following the incarnation. As a result of the Spirit’s inspiration, “revelation” can be encountered in sacred writings like the Qur’an. Building on the work of Karl Rahner, Dupuis claims that non-Christian religions constitute “channels of salvation” through which divine grace is mediated. For example, the worship of images may constitute a means of grace for Hindus: “[T]he worship of sacred images can be the sacramental sign in and through which the devotee responds to the offer of divine grace; it can mediate secretly the grace
offered by God in Jesus Christ and express the human response to God’s gratuitous gift

In a monograph titled *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to a Christian Theology of Religions* Amos Yong, a Pentecostal theologian, suggests that trinitarian pneumatology may provide the key to moving beyond the “christological impasse,” that is, “the almost irreconcilable axioms of God’s universal salvific will and the historical particularity of Jesus of Nazareth as Savior of all persons” (Yong 2000:94). The metaphysical basis for Yong’s proposal is the universal presence of the Holy Spirit. Yong argues that the Spirit is present and active among non-Christian religions and that Christians must learn to discern the Spirit’s presence. The “foundational pneumatology” Yong develops is predicated upon a trinitarian distinction between the “economy” of the Word and the “economy” of the Spirit. Because the Spirit acts in an economy distinct from that of the Son, one should be able to identify aspects of the Spirit’s work that are not “constrained” by the Son (2000:136). As a result, one need not require "Christological" criteria for discerning the Spirit's presence. Although there is good reason to believe the Spirit is present and active in other religions, confirmation of the Spirit’s presence can come only through concrete engagement. When the Spirit’s presence is discerned, one may recognize a non-Christian religion “as salvific in the Christian sense” (2000:312). Similar themes (in a more muted form) can be found in Yong’s subsequent writings (Yong 2003 and 2005).
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I critically engage these theologians in *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* and argue that Heim, Dupuis, Yong and others undermine classical Christian teaching about the Trinity in order to marshal support for their constructive accounts of religious diversity (Johnson 2011:67-140, 186-95).

Although most evangelicals will not be attracted to the proposals of Heim and Dupuis, many evangelical inclusivists resonate with Yong’s pneumatological vision (even if they disagree on a few of the details). Yong is not alone in appealing to a distinct economy of the Spirit as the basis for a Christian theology of religions (Johnson 2011:136-40; Miles 2010:210-76). Not only are these pneumatological proposals inattentive to the pervasive Scriptural emphasis on the Spirit’s role in glorifying the Son (John 16:7-15; Acts 1:6-9; 4:24-31; 1 Cor. 12:2-3) but they also employ sub-trinitarian accounts of divine agency that sever the work of the Spirit from the Son and Father (Johnson 2011:119-25).

Do the preceding criticisms suggest that the doctrine of the Trinity has no relevance to a Christian theology of religions? By no means! A trinitarian foundation has at least three benefits. First, it keeps the person of Jesus Christ central. Not only does orthodox trinitarianism depend on a high Christology, but the incarnate Son is also at the center of the trinitarian revelation and salvation narrated in Holy Scripture (John 5:39). It is troubling that some theologians have used “trinitarian” claims to undermine biblical teaching about the person and work of Christ. Second, building on the principle that the external works of the Trinity are undivided (*opera ad extra sunt indivisa*), a
trinitarian approach holds together the unified work of the Son and Spirit in a single economy of salvation (2011:116-35). Finally, a trinitarian approach invigorates the evangelistic mission of the church by reminding us that the missionary character of the church (which it cannot surrender without ceasing to be the church) is rooted in the very life of triune God. The sending of the church is rooted in the dual sendings of the Son and the Spirit. Just as the Father sends the Son into the world, so the Son sends his disciples into the world (John 17:18; 20:21). The Spirit, who is sent by the Father and the Son (John 14:16, 26; 15:26), bears witness to the Son by preparing the way for and empowering the witness of Christ's followers (John 15:26-27; 16:14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:2-5; Rom. 15:14-21). In these ways, the doctrine of the Trinity provides a crucial foundation for Christian reflection on religious diversity.

Conclusion

Western Christians increasingly proclaim the gospel in a pluralistic environment in which there are “many gods and many lords.” The theology of religions serves the evangelistic mission of the church by reflecting on the significance of the presence, practices and teachings of non-Christian religions from the standpoint of the self-revelation of the triune God in Holy Scripture. A Christian theology of religions is concerned not merely with the fate of the unevangelized but also addresses human religiosity, the presence of truth and goodness in non-Christian religions, salvation in
non-Christian religions and issues of contextualization. For this reason, a viable theology of mission must include a theology of religions.

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