Editorial

As in childbirth, the mood of humanity in this hour is a strange amalgam of two contradictory emotions – agony and exultation, fear and expectation. All through these latter years – not merely six years of world conflict, but thirty years of war, respite, regirding and war renewed – another single word has chorused through the vocabulary of mankind until we weary of its reiteration. It is the word ‘crisis’. It has been repeated so tiresomely because it so accurately reflects the deepest nature of our times.¹

These words written by the ecumenist Henry P. Van Dusen three-quarters of a century ago, do not seem to have lost their relevance. Socio-political phenomena and processes continue to be perceived in public and academic discourses as crises: economic crisis, political crisis, crisis of social cohesion, peace and security crisis, refugee crisis, health and pandemic crisis, ecological crisis, cultural and civilizational crisis, humanitarian crisis – just to name a few.

A quick browse through the mission studies’ literature of the last seventy-five years reveals the importance of the notion of “crisis” in the work of missiologists, theologians, and mission-studies scholars. David Bosch understood mission as an answer to “contemporary crisis”, and Lesslie Newbigin saw crisis in his reading of the times. Emmanuel Katongole writes about the “crisis of belonging” while C.S. Song links the need for narrativity with experiences of crisis and Justo L. González points to the crisis of theological education. Numerous papal encyclicals refer to and address different crises (*Redemptoris Missio*, *Evangelii Gaudium*). Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox theologians have written extensively on responses to crises.

In light of this, it does not come as a surprise that some essays in this first issue of *Mission Studies* in 2022 are once again preoccupied with crisis. Elia MAGGANG addresses the marine ecological crisis and critically explores the mission of Christian Churches in this area. Engaging with the recent *Ten Commandments of Food* (TCF) campaign, as advocated by the WCC out of concern for food security and sustainable living, the author identifies the neglect of fish, fisher, and sea in the TCF. This neglect bears negative consequences

1 Henry P. Van Dusen, *World Christianity: Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947:11.

for the marine ecosystem and those who depend on the sea for livelihood and sustenance, limiting the relevance of the TCF for ecclesial communities who could draw on it. Noting that the life-world of the sea has a crucial place in biblical literature and Christianity, particularly in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples, he suggests a more holistic mission of the church should be enabled to address the marine ecological crisis more comprehensively, utilising both land and sea as spiritual and missional resources.

Rachel IWAMONY looks at Christian mission in the context of today's Covid-19 pandemic health crisis. The author examines the theological response of some Protestant churches in Eastern Indonesia in the early period of the Covid-19 pandemic. She is particularly interested in how the religious practice and theological discourse of the Lord's Supper has been challenged and transformed by the circumstances and necessities of the pandemic in three distinct communities. The author discovered that churches made significant contextual transformations and adjustments to fulfil their mission.

This issue also brings systematic theological voices to the missional conversation on crisis. Nathan D. SHANNON, in his historical theological account, presents a discussion on the topic of theological crisis and discernment of Christian uniqueness, focusing on a 20th century Reformed theology of religions and missiological encounter. He compares the Dutch neo-Calvinist theologies of Herman Bavinck and his nephew Johan Herman Bavinck on the uniqueness of the Christian concept of God. While the missionary and missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck engages with the need for theological discernment of Christian uniqueness in the context of the religions of Java; his uncle, pastor and scholar of dogmatics, Herman Bavinck, responds to the theological crisis in the history of Western philosophy, in which absoluteness and personality appear in irresolvable dialectic. The author concludes that both argue that (only) the Christian Scriptures present the absolute personality of the Triune God as the subversive fulfilment of the contradictory theisms of philosophical speculation and non-Christian religions respectively.

While the first three essays of this issue focus on different types of crisis, the remaining two articles offer perspectives on more general missiological topics. E.J. David KRAMER again seeks to invigorate the conversation between missiology and systematic theology by sketching a theological perspective on contextualization. He draws on the New Testament pattern of 'death and resurrection', on the one hand, and employs N.T. Wright's rendition of the Apostle Paul's life-transformation as 'dying and rising with Christ' on the other. Allowing this pattern to inform his theological reflection on contextualization, he expands the incarnational model to include Christ's death and resurrection, considering

the pattern of death and resurrection in relation to conversion, and drawing out the significance of contextualization for the life of the eschaton.

Finally, James BUTLER's essay on the pedagogy of evangelism argues that while evangelicalism has sought to maintain the importance of communicating a normative understanding of faith, it has done so primarily through a didactic understanding of evangelism. According to the author, this has not only made it difficult to integrate informal and non-verbal expressions into an account of evangelism but has also contributed to evangelicalism's difficulty in understanding the relationship between evangelism and social action. By turning to lived experience, and the 'theology in four voices' framework from theological action research as developed by Helen Cameron and her team, Butler proposes a conversational model of evangelism which enables a move away from a didactic model without losing a commitment to communicating a normative understanding of Christian faith.

As an international and multi-disciplinary journal, *Mission Studies* provides a platform for the publication of relevant research in areas of Christian missions throughout times and places. As we engage in Christian living and believing in an unstable world, challenged by multiple global crises, we need meaningful inquiries into the contexts, horizons, and resources of God's salvific mission for the world – such as the contributions assembled here.

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