

The Importance and Significance of Missiological Research – Christian Stewardship in Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will begin with defining key terms, followed by explanation of the importance and significance of missiological research in order to help Christian leaders be good stewards of resources and opportunity. Due to the brevity of this paper, only five branches of missiological studies (i.e. theory, theology, history, anthropology and strategy of Christian mission) are being included. For more extended coverage on missiological research and research methodology, readers are advised to consult other papers published in English and Chinese by the author.¹

¹ Papers published in Chinese :

- 溫以諾、 「傳統式神學與處境化神學論宣教」 · 教牧期刊 16 (2004年5月) 149-157.
- 溫以諾、 「宣教文化人類學=文化人类学+神学」 · 教牧期刊 16 (2004年5月) 115-129.
- 溫以諾、 「基督徒從事「研究」——遵神旨或從人意？」 · 《教牧分享》， 2005年11月號， 第2-6 頁。

Papers published in English :

- Enoch Wan, "The Paradigm & Pressing Issues Of Inter-Disciplinary Research Methodology," Published in Global Missiology, Research Methodology, January 2005, www.globalmissiology.net
- _____, "Missiology and the Social Sciences: Contributions, Cautions, and Conclusions" In *Missiology and the Social Sciences*, Edited by Edward Rommen and Gary Cowen, <http://www.enochwan.com/english/articles/pdf/Missiology%20and%20the%20Social%20Sciences.pdf>
- _____, "Rethinking Missiological Research Methodology: Exploring a New Direction" Published in Global Missiology, Research Methodology, Oct. 2003, www.globalmissiology.net
- _____, "Core Values of Mission Organization in the Cultural Context of the 21st Century," Published in www.GlobalMissiology.org "Featured Article" January 2009
- _____ & Paul Hiebert, "Missional Narrative and Missional Hermeneutic for the 21st Century," Published in "Featured Article" of www.GlobalMissiology.org January 2009
- _____, "Ethical Issues of Conducting Cross-Cultural Field Research". *Transcending Borders. Logos* Evangelical Seminary. Academic Volume 2.

KEY TERMS IN MISSIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- “Missiological research” — “systematic and academic study (e.g. theory, theology, history, anthropology(intercultural studies), strategy of Christian mission) to continue on and carry out the *missio Dei* of the Triune God, including investigation and interdisciplinary research.²
- “Inter-disciplinary research” — “academic and systematic study conducted by using elements (e.g. theory, methodology, etc.) from one or more disciplines in the attempt to achieve a high degree of coherence or unity.”
- “Mission” — “is the endeavor of both individual Christians and organized congregations to continue on and carry out the *missio Dei* of the Triune God at both micro and macro levels, spiritually (saving souls) and socially (ushering in *shalom*)³, for redemption, reconciliation and transformation.”

THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MISSIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

For the sake of being brief, we shall explain the importance and significance of missiological research by selectively choosing only five branches of missiological study as shown in the diagram below.

² See earlier publication — “Christian engaging in research —— following the will of God or man?” *Pastoral Sharing*. 2005. November: 2-6. (in Chinese)

³ “*Shalom*” - The opposite of “*shalom*” is described in John 12:31; 1 John 3:8; 5:19 and Jesus had overcome the world and the evil one who is its ruler (1 John 2:13-14; 5:4). *Shalom* is a Hebrew word with connotations of peace, wholeness, and wellness in the context of right relationships with God, people, and nature (Jer 33:8-9; Job 5:24; Ps 30:11; Isa 11:6, 9; 53:5). (Wan

Figure 1. The Importance and Significance of Missiological Research

Importance/ significance missiological study	Significance of missiological research	Importance of missiological research
Theory	Formulation of theory and model, such as “church growth study,” 10/40 window, unreached people-group, diaspora missiology, ⁴ relational paradigm. ⁵	Academically and practically seeking to advance in: theoretical formulation, model building, etc. for qualitative and quantitative improvement, e.g. church growth study, ⁶ Engle’s Scale, contextual - ization: C1 to C7, etc.
Theology	In search of biblical and theological foundation for branches of missiological study in order to avoid abstract speculation and superficial knowledge	Being evangelical, action and strategy should be grounded in biblical principle and sound theology to avoid problems, e.g. secularization, syncretism ⁷ , etc.
History	Learning: how God worked previously in historical past, including temporal, spatial and contextual factors, and ways to follow good examples of past saints and to not repeat past mistakes.	Positively: to appreciate Gods’ work in the past and learn from godly practice of past saints. Negatively: discern past pitfalls, avoid repeat of past tragedy.
Anthropology & intercultural studies	Through studies in anthropology, intercultural studies, etc. in order to understand people we evangelize/ serve in matters of cultural background, cognitive pattern, etc. in order to continue on and carry out the <i>missio Dei</i> of the Triune God spiritually (saving souls) and socially (ushering in <i>shalom</i>), for redemption, reconciliation and transformation	Training in anthropology, linguistics, intercultural studies(e.g. cc-communication, intercultural education/leadership) will reduce culture-shock, increase learning curve, advance contextualization without accommodation, minimize cc-conflict, maximize productivity, expedite indigenization process,
Strategy	To be good stewards of resources and opportunity, collect & interpret data of demographic reality, advance planning...in order to best use resources and opportunity	To be good stewards of resources & opportunity, one has to be wise & responsible in planning & implementation in a godly way.

⁴ Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*. IDS-USA, 2012

Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe, Enoch Wan, *Scattered Africans Keep Coming: A Case Study of Diaspora Missiology on Ghanaian Diaspora and Congregations in the USA*. . IDS-USA, 2013

⁵ Wan, Enoch, “The Paradigm of ‘relational realism.’” *EMS Occasional Bulletin* 19:2 (Spring 2006):1-4.

_____. “Relational Theology and Relational Missiology.” *Occasional Bulletin* 21:1 (Winter 2007): 1-7.

_____. “A Missio-Relational Reading of Romans: A Complementary Study to Current Approaches.” *EMS Occasional Bulletin*, Vol. 23 No. 1 (Winter 2010e):1-8. Also in *Global Missiology* (April 1, 2010e). Available at www.GlobalMissiology.org/ & Narry Santos, “Missio-relational Reading of Mark,” *Evangelical Missiological Society Occasional Bulletin*, [Volume 24, #2 - Spring, 2011](#)

_____. “Relational Tree,” Published in “Relational Study” www.GlobalMissiology.org Jan. 2011

⁶ “Church growth theory” of Donald McGavran, including “HUP” - Homogeneous Unit Principle)

⁷ Religious syncretism is a taboo for evangelical practitioner due to unreserved accommodation !

INTER-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN MISSIOLOGY

Inter-disciplinary research in missiology combines and integrates biblical study, theology, anthropology, demographic, statistic, etc. in order to achieve a high degree of coherence or unity in research and for the practice of Christian mission. As evangelical, we are not to be sold out to the newest theory, pragmatic efficiency⁸. Nor should we engaged in unreserved contextualization,⁹ such as multiple forms of liberation theology (e.g. feminist theology of the west, “*minjung* theology of Korea,” C.S. Song’s “third eye theology”)

The diagrams below emerged from personal research, professional publication and two-decade-long coaching doctoral dissertation. If inter-disciplinary research in missiological studies is conducted by following the five-step according to priority, then it will be characteristically evangelical, doctrinally sound and theologically grounded.

Figure 2. Wan’s Way of Integrative Research (“STARS”)¹⁰

CRITERIA	*	EXPLANATION
1. S cripturally sound	S	Not proof-text; but the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27)
2. T heologically Supported	T	Not just pragmatism/expedience; but sound theology
3. A nalytically coherent	A	Not to be self-contradictory; but to be coherent
4. R elevantly contextual	R	Not to be out of place; but fitting for the context
5. S ensibly practically	S	Not only good in theory; but can be put into practice

Listed below are simple explanations:

1. **S**cripturally sound

As evangelical, Scripture is to be the basis and guide of Christian faith and practice. It is axiomatic for evangelical Protestant based on the conviction of “*sola scriptura*.”

⁸ 即圖二第五項，便是本末倒置。有關功能論的評估，參下列兩篇專文：

Enoch Wan, “Critique of Functional Missionary Anthropology” *His Dominion*, Canadian Theological Seminary, Canada. 1982.

⁹即圖二第四項。

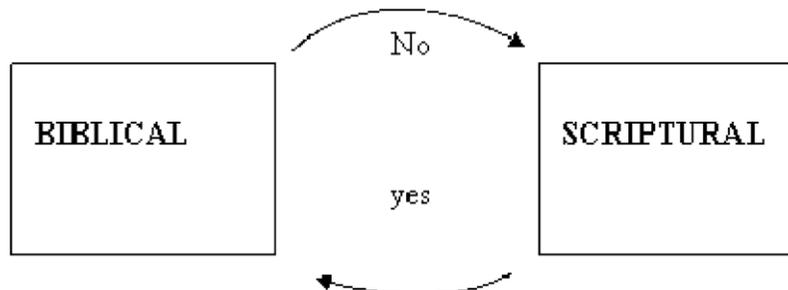
¹⁰ Enoch Wan, ““Core Values of Mission Organization in the Cultural Context of the 21st Century,” Published in www.GlobalMissiology.org “Featured Article” January 2009

2. **Theologically supported**
Just based on pragmatism/expedience is insufficient; but sound theology is essential and required.
3. **Analytically coherent**
Not to be self-contradictory; but to be both consistent and coherent
4. **Relevantly contextual**
Not to be out of place; but it is to be required to be fitting for the context.
5. **Sensibly practically**
It is good to have scriptural/theological support with coherent theory and cultural relevance; but can be put into practice in reality.

Figure 3. Comparisons Between “Biblical” & “Scriptural”^[4]

#	BIBLICAL	SCRIPTURAL
1	Descriptive: Recorded/reported in the Bible	Prescriptive: Prescribed by the Incarnate & enscriptured Word
2	Precedent in the Bible	Principle of “the whole counsel of God”
3	particular: time and place specific	Universal: transcending time & space
4	culturally & contextually specific	Neither culturally nor contextually specific

Figure 4. Directional Understanding of Being “Biblical” and “Scriptural”



Note: Not all men are husband; but within the context of “traditional Christian marriage,” all husbands are men.

INSIGHTS FOR CHINESE CHURCHES

Figure 5. Insights for Chinese Churches

NAT- URE	STEWARDSHIP OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP	
	PRINCIPLE	PARTICULAR
POSITIVE	Wise with entrustment	Know history: be truthful to founder's original vision or founding principle. Best preserve heritage & withstand tidal waves of secularization, post-modernism and can face fierce challenges of pluralism, new age movement, etc.
	Faithful stewardship	Make informed decision to best use of opportunity and exercise wise stewardship of resources, and opportunity.
NEGATIVE	Avoid mistake	Learn from history → not repeat tragedy; theological soundness → steadfast in faith and not drifting; spiritual discernment → not to be presumptuous/misled
	Reduce wastefulness	Benefit from anthropology, linguistic & communicative sciences, etc. to reduce or minimize culture-shock, risk factor, casualty of personnel, cc-conflict thus spare of blunders and wastefulness.

Chinese churches have the tendency of being obsessed with efficiency and dismissing research to be unnecessary and a waste of time/energy. At the leadership, sometimes may even make uninformed decision, i.e. without knowing the hard facts to be gathered by research. Missiological research is an essential part of healthy stewardship and godly leadership. For example, the LCWE movement (Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization) has formed committees to conduct research on holistic mission, BAM (business as mission), diaspora missiology, etc. In addition, there are other missiological research groups, e.g. the “Center of the Study of Global Christianity” at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Joshua Project¹¹ of Frontier Ventures, and Global Research of IMB¹² ([International Mission Board](http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/References.aspx)) of Southern Baptist Convention.

CONCLUSION

Due to the brevity of this paper, we began with definition of key terms, then use diagrams to explain the importance and significance of missiological research, and concluded by introducing Wan's five-step approach in inter-disciplinary research in missiology.

¹¹ See info @ http://joshuaproject.net/get_involved/with_joshua_project

¹² See info @ <http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/References.aspx>