

# Diaspora Missiology<sup>1</sup>

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Last week (September 22-23, 2010) I convened the *North American Diaspora Educators Consultation* in Charlotte, North Carolina. Dr. Enoch Wan, President of Evangelical Missiological Society, and Dr. Grant McClung, President of Missions Resource Group assisted me, a world missions resourcing ministry that provides training, consulting, and mentoring to the global Great Commission community

We invited a group of missiologists, missionaries, and professors who represented leading North American seminaries such as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Wheaton College, Western Seminary, Asbury Theological Seminary, Tyndale Seminary, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Our discussion was:

- The urgency of integrating Diaspora Missiology in the missions curriculum;
- Publication of diasporic literatures in relation to missions.
- Intentional recruitment of Evangelical scholars to study diasporas in its multi-faceted reality.

## II. WHAT IS “DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY” ANYWAYS?

"Diaspora Missiology" has emerged as a biblical and strategic field of missiology and is defined by the *Lausanne Diaspora Educators Consultation* (Read about this consultation at <http://www.lausanne.org/diaspora-2009/consultation-on-diaspora-missions.html>) as: *a missiological framework for understanding and participating in God's redemptive mission among people living outside their place of origin.*

Diaspora Missiology necessitates interdisciplinary study of academic fields related to who, what, when, where, and how populations are moving (e.g. anthropology, demography, economics, geography, history, law, political science, and sociology) and classic missiological study (e.g. theology, missiology, biblical studies, evangelism).

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<sup>1</sup> This article was originally published as a blog post for the Lausanne Conversation. It is reprinted by [www.GlobalMissiology.org](http://www.GlobalMissiology.org) with the permission of the author.

### **III. WHO IS STUDYING “DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY?”**

The study of migration and diasporas is not new. Social sciences: e.g. history, anthropology, sociology, geography, demography, economics, political science, and law are disciplines that are carefully examining migration. Each discipline has its own sets of questions, hypotheses, and variables. In *Migration Theory: Taking Across Disciplines*, Caroline B. Brettell and James H. Hollifield suggest that migration theory is interdisciplinary, with each discipline focusing on specific aspects of migration, but all working together to provide the bigger picture. Practitioners of these disciplines interact to develop migration theory:

- Anthropologists are interested in the immigrant experience and the results of social and cultural changes.
- Demographers project the future of population movements by analyzing the nature of population change. They document the pattern and direction of population shifts.
- Economists use human capital terms and labour market patterns to chart population shifts.
- Geographers study the spatial patterns of migration (e.g. employment patterns and residential patterns; the development of ethnic enclaves; segregation patterns of ethnic and racial groups).
- Historians study past immigrant experiences.
- Lawmakers and researchers of migrant law study and develop national immigration policies related to migration.
- Political scientists study the relationship between migration and a nation's policies.
- Sociologists are interested societal changes that occur with migration.

The tenets, methodologies, theories, and hypothesis of disciplines concerned with migration and people movements are presented in the table: Migration Theories across Disciplines.<sup>2</sup> Please refer to PDF attachment

Missiology is also an interdisciplinary study combining theology, biblical studies, social sciences, and evangelism. As a branch of missiology, the emerging Diaspora Missiology is a specialized study of missiology and migration theory. As previously suggested, this data is to be analyzed resulting in missiological implications for missions planning and strategy.

### **IV. RECENT GATHERINGS TO LAUNCH “DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY”**

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<sup>2</sup>Caroline Brettell& James F. Hollifield, *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2007).

To launch Diaspora Missiology on the international stage, missions educators and missiologists gathered in Seoul, South Korea, hosted by the Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology -- a seminary devoted to training diaspora leaders for ministry to diaspora peoples, for the *Lausanne Diaspora Educators Consultation*. The Seoul Consultation culminated in the assembling of the “**Seoul Declaration on Diaspora Missiology**”(read it at <http://www.lausanne.org/documents/seoul-declaration-on-diaspora-missiology.html>), summoning the Whole Church of Jesus Christ, including its missions agencies and its academies to motivate, equip, and mobilize Diaspora Kingdom Workers, and in the formation of *Regional Diaspora Educators Teams*.

The European Diaspora Educators Team, led by Thomas Harvey of Oxford Centre for Missions Studies (OCMS) convened the *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) Diaspora Educators’ Consultation* (Europe) on April 16, 2010 in Oxford, UK. OCMS is publishing an upcoming special edition on Diaspora in their journal *Transformation*.<sup>3</sup>

Several Seminaries have advanced the diaspora discourse in the academic circles by publishing diaspora related articles and papers. In Asia two seminary journals have already published the on the subject of diaspora:

- *Phronesis*, the Journal of Asian Theological Seminary (ATS), Alliance Graduate School (AGS) and International School of Leadership (ISOL), featured theological education and training of Filipino Diaspora.<sup>4</sup>
- Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology (TTGST) in Seoul, Korea has devoted two issues in 2010 to Diaspora themes.
- The E-journal [www.globalmissiology.org](http://www.globalmissiology.org) is diasporic in design; it has a section entirely devoted to Diaspora studies.

Also North American seminaries such as Ambrose College and Seminary in Canada and Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon have started offering courses on Diaspora Missiology. More seminaries are currently developing their curriculums to include Diaspora Missiology.

## V. WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT IN THE SCHOLARLY FASHION?

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<sup>3</sup>An Asian Diaspora Educators’ Consultation is being planned for the year 2011.

<sup>4</sup>Aragon, Averell, ed., *Phronesis: A Journal of Asian Theological Seminary and Alliance Graduate School*. vol. 12, no.2, (2007).

Not only because we need solid literatures in academic centers for students of the People on the Move, but researchers may be able to assist diaspora missions practitioner understand the biblical, theological and missiological moorings of Diaspora Missiology. To practice missions is one thing, but to have informed practitioners is another. All this calibrated study will help the Church understand God's mission among the People on the Move to accelerate the preaching of the Gospel to the Whole (borderless) World.

\*Photo courtesy of: Flickr: [Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the BPL](#)

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