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## Book Review

### *Diaspora Missions to International Students*

By Enoch Wan, editor

Western Seminary Press, 2019

191 pages

US\$9.99

Reviewed by I. Francis Kyle, III (M.Div., Th.M., D.Min.). He is a pastor and independent scholar near Roanoke Rapids, NC, and is a member of the Evangelical Missiological Society, Evangelical Theological Society, American Society of Church History, and Nineteenth Century Studies Association. Among other periodicals, his book reviews have appeared in *Mission Studies* and the *New England Journal of History*. He is the author of two works on the Second Great Awakening evangelist James Brainerd Taylor (1801–1829).

For over a century Protestant mission agencies, churches, and parachurch campus ministries have sought to evangelize and disciple international students. With mixed results and effectiveness, the most popular missiological frameworks and methodologies used have been borrowed from the world of secular management in business. This pragmatic, programmatic, and formulaic approach is heavy on the American “obsession with doing/performance/outcomes” (24) while being light on being (ontology) and relationships—both vertical (with the Triune God) and horizontal (other people). Veteran missiologist Enoch Wan is seeking to change this in his plea to “all Christians and all churches to rediscover and revitalize ‘relationship’ in faith and practice” (23).

Developed about ten years ago and still evolving, Wan led the formation of a supplemental and “relative new paradigm” (31) called the *Diaspora Missiology Paradigm (DMP)*, and he formulated what he has

labeled the Paradigm of Relational Realism. His latest edited volume integrates these two cutting-edge paradigms as they relate to International Student Ministry (ISM), thus making it “unique” and “not merely another book on ISM” (8, 187). The book is the third by the new Western Seminary Press in their ongoing series by the Wan-formed Center of Diaspora and Relational Research in Portland, Oregon.

The volume’s other ten contributors—six men and four women—are a mix of academics and field experts with over one hundred cumulative years of ISM experience. Seven have doctorates and several are previously published authors. Some served or are serving with the Association of Christians Ministering among Internationals, Cru, International Student Ministry, InterVarsity, or Navigators.

In the brief introductory chapter, Wan provides the background and uniqueness of the book, its purpose, a definition of thirteen key terms, and an explanation of its organization. In Chapter Two, Wan provides his reasoning behind the book and introduces a theoretical framework for a relationally based understanding of Christian mission. Aspects of Scripture, history, theology, and practice form the basis of his relational paradigm. Wan’s relational missiology is rooted in and summed up in his “STARS” approach to integrative research: scripturally sound, theologically supported, analytically coherent, relevantly contextual, and strategically practical.

Chapters Three and Ten are case studies. In each, the reader learns about the author(s) through their autobiographical details that are presented before, or are incorporated into, the case studies.

Chapter Three shares the stories of five international students who attended schools in New York. This ethnography describes a Buddhist from China, two atheists from China, and two Muslims from South Asia. The chapter describes each student’s particular context and subsequent encounter with Christianity. It also describes the impact of this outreach after their graduation. The chapter’s authors are confidently able to state that “all [five] developed a more positive and enriching attitude toward Christianity” (46).

Entitled “From Every Campus to Every Nation,” Chapter Ten presents several case studies of churches and campus ministries that have ties to the evangelical charismatic church-planting organization Every Nation Churches and Ministries. The author describes missionary efforts by Filipino, Nepalese, and Zimbabwean diaspora workers and students. The case studies give examples of Wan’s four types of diaspora missions.

This kind of missional movement is reminiscent of the early church in the book of Acts. . . While these varied stories of diaspora missions in

the Every Nation world, particularly those facilitated through international student ministry, may represent something of a departure from conventional, western missionary narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is something peculiarly biblical about God using diasporic peoples in unexpected times and places in the story of redemption. (184)

Chapter Four seeks to show that a biblical theology of ISM is rooted in the *missio Dei* (mission of God) and can be seen in the various Old and New Testament stories of scatterings and sojourning. An examination of current global migration trends, comments on the unique issues with international students, and three reflections are also provided in the chapter that ends with this statement by Alexander Best: “God is re-gathering nations, drawing their brightest hopes for the future, to a global campus near you” (69).

Chapter Five offers a five-fold personal reflection and biblical meditation on ISM by a Dallas Theological Seminary-trained campus minister and teacher who has served in Australia, Canada, Singapore, the UK, and the USA. She recommends for us to “Focus on Father’s Wind” (John 3:8), to “Find Fields for Witnessing” (Mark 16:15), to “Familiarize Foreign Ways” (1 Cor. 9:19, 22), to “Follow Fellowship Walk” (Matt. 28:19, 20), and to “Fly on His Wings” (Mal. 4:2).

The book’s longest chapter—Chapter Six—traces InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA’s long and effective history of ministry to international students. The chapter reveals how reaching international students is a part of the “DNA” of Intervarsity (117).

“The Global ISM Movement Emerging from Diaspora Missions on Campuses: From John R. Mott to ‘Lausanne’” is the title of Chapter Seven. It shows how ISM developed into a strategic diaspora mission. ISM had the American and Noble Peace Prize-winning J. R. Mott (1865–1955) as its “unrecognized visionary and founder” (123). ISM regionally expanded throughout post-WWII North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia-Pacific; and has been incorporated into the work of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization—the global movement that was inspired by Billy Graham to mobilize Christian leaders to collaborate for world evangelization.

Chapter Eight details five stages or thresholds of cross-cultural evangelism or of “conversion in community.” These stages are distrust to trust, apathy to curiosity, curiosity to openness, openness to seeking, and entering the kingdom. Before discussing the five stages, the author explains the difference between a surface-level decision and a core-level conversion. The author finds a crucial truth in the story of “Jesus the

Farmer” (Parable of the Sower, Mark 4:26–29)—namely, that spiritual birth and growth are mysterious and organic. “How long might it take for our friends to go through the stages?”, the author asks before answering, “God is sovereign over conversions” (149).

Chapter Nine relies on scripture, demographic data, and current missiological trends to exhort local congregations to become involved in ISM—especially among unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs). With estimates of 214–232 million people living outside their place of birth, and 1.4 million international students registered at U.S. institutions of higher education (158), “it is imperative that the church of Jesus Christ see the sovereign hand of God in this unprecedented movement of people across the planet” (153). Mission agencies and parachurch campus ministries can assist and partner with the Body of Christ in evangelizing UUPGs.

The work concludes with a summary and final word from the editor in Chapter Eleven. Wan opens the two-page chapter by stating that the publication “is both personally and professionally significant” (187). He reiterates his strong belief that, in contrast “to the popular and programmatic and outcome-based approach in Christian practice,” now is the time for ISM to “rediscover the relational characteristic of Christian faith and practice in the pluralistic and post-modernistic era of the 21st century” (187).

As usual with a Wan-edited work, *Diaspora Missions to International Students* has much to commend. Space allows me to only mention a few examples while focusing mostly on Wan.

The book is highly informative and insightful as it integrates theology, missiology, theory, concepts, statistics, and history with case studies, storytelling, the practical, and the personal. Its logical and skillful organization, clearly defined terms “along with the embedded assumptions” (11), lucid writing, relevancy, interaction with the latest missiological trends and key figures, and well-reasoned and fact-based arguments are all noteworthy. For instance, regarding relevancy, no work about students today can omit the subject of social media. Though not at length, the volume does comment on this popular form of human interaction. Wan states, “The popularity of social media is symptomatic of the starvation for relationship of contemporary people due to multiple factors, e.g. broken marriage, dysfunctional family, high mobility, etc.” (36).

Like an effective defense lawyer, Wan is convincing with his missiological emphasis on the relational aspect (“relational realism paradigm”). Influenced heavily by the ingrained cultural obsession with doing and results, American Christians would do well to return to this more biblical approach to reaching international students and others with

the gospel. Indeed, being (ontology) precedes doing (pragmatic).

A deep and conceptual thinker, Wan's charts and graphs help readers to better comprehend his thought process. The seasoned teacher is an impressive master wordsmith, chartsmith, and succinct abbreviator (e.g., "STARS" approach of integrative research, and his *to, through, by and beyond*, and *with* four main types of diaspora missions and ISM).

Most would agree that parachurch mission agencies and campus ministries have helped the kingdom of God to advance. But as it has been explicitly stated by many, and implied in *Diaspora Missions to International Students*, the local church is the divine "Plan A" for rescuing the perishing and strengthening the disciples. How true: "Focusing on diaspora missions is very appropriate for the average church member and should not be considered another responsibility for the pastoral staff" (168).

A wide range of readers will benefit from this work which offers "stimulating and challenging concepts and insights" (9). These include university campus ministers, evangelical students and professors with an interest in missiology, mission agency leaders, and academically inclined pastors and laypersons living near a university or who are at a multicultural church. Indeed, international students "represent a unique missions opportunity worthy of sustained theological reflection and loving engagement" (69).