

RELATIONAL THEOLOGY AND RELATIONAL MISSIOLOGY

Enoch Wan, Western Seminary (ewan@westernseminary.edu)

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is written with the purpose of introducing relational theology and relational missiology. It is a sequel to the earlier study on the “Paradigm of relational realism.”¹ The thesis of this paper is that relationship is foundational in Christian faith and practice, and a prerequisite to systematic/practical theology and missiology. The assumption is “missiology” is within the encyclopedia of theology and is a branch of practical theology like preaching and pastoral counseling. The paper covers three major elements in the sequence of “being” (ontological)², “knowing” (epistemological)³ and “doing” (missiological) within a relational framework.⁴

II. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- “relational theologizing”⁵ is systematically doing theology by way of relational approach (i.e. derived from the relational characteristic of the Trinity and “relational realism paradigm”) and its resultant theological understanding is “relational theology”
- “relational missiology” is the practical outworking of relational theology in carrying out the *missio dei* and fulfilling the Great Commission.
- “*missio dei*”⁶ is the Triune God pressing Himself out thus showing forth His nature of love, communion, commission (sending) and glory.

III. POSSIBLE FACTORS PRECLUDING THE EMERGENCE AND CHOICE OF RELATIONAL PARADIGM IN WESTERN LEARNING AND AMONG EVANGELICALS

¹ Enoch Wan, “The Paradigm of ‘Relational Realism,’” Occasional Bulletin, (Wheaton: Evangelical Missiological Society, Spring 2006b), 1-4.

The following is a summary:

- Epistemologically, “relational realism” is the systematic understanding that “reality” is primarily based on the “vertical relationship” of God and the created order and secondarily “horizontal relationship” within the created order. Reality and truth are best to be comprehended and experienced in relational networks of God & the created orders (3 systems in existence: angels, humanity and the natural order).
- Ontologically, “relational realism” is the systematic understanding that God is the absolute Truth, the most Real; only in relationship to Him that there is the existence of human reality and the possibility of human knowledge of truth (Acts 14:14-17, 17:24-31).

In this study, “paradigm” is understood to be “a coherent conceptual model for philosophical postulation and scholarly research (Kuhn 1970, Barbour 1974) or “the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises” or “interpretive framework” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:19).

² “Ontology” is the systematic study of issues related to the nature of being and the reality of existence.

³ “Epistemology” – the systematic study of issues related to the nature, essence and means of knowledge and truth.

⁴ “Relationship” the interactive connection between personal beings (or “Beings” in the Triune God) whereas “relationality” is the generic quality of being connected.

⁵ “Theologizing” is the systematic study of God (e.g. His attributes) and His Word and works, and “theology” is the resulting understanding and practice.

⁶ Bosch states, ‘The *missio dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the Church and the world, and in which the Church may be privileged to participate...’mission has its origin in the heart of God.’ (Bosch, 1991, p.391.,389).

To some readers who are not preconditioned by the traditional theological orientation of the West may find “relational paradigm” self-evident. Others, who are so entrenched theologically in Western tradition may immediately dismiss “relational paradigm” to be a corruption by existentialism, postmodernism and neo-orthodoxy. Several factors are identified below to explain “why” that is the case in the West.

3.1 Historical overview

Academic enquiry and former learning in Western civilization began in the Renaissance and the emerging of the modernist paradigm. The dominance of the “scientific paradigm” required an objective and impersonal posture. The motto, “I think therefore I am” of Descartes, provided an impetus for the rationalist orientation (“I think”) and existential element (“I am”) with its individualistic and humanistic tendency based on the capital “I” in the entire undertaking. The closest to “relational theology” was Martin Buber’s “I-Thou” existential paradigm which was drowned out by the voices of atheistic scientism, narcissistic individualism, self-indulging hedonism, functionalistic pragmatism, etc.

3.2 Theological overview

In various ways, some theologians of the Western tradition hold to a dichotomist view (e.g., either divine or human nature in Christology, either God’s sovereignty or man’s free will in soteriology, either inerrant or not inerrant in bibliology), forensic (“justification”) in emphasis at the expense of “relational reconciliation”, individualistic (i.e., over emphasis on personal decision for salvation and doubting household conversion of multiple individuals or multiple-generations), rationalistic (e.g., schematic and analytical system), to name just a few.

Thus, conservative evangelical Christians burned bridges that could lead anywhere close to a relational approach in Christian faith and practice. In Christian faith for example, we are very alarmed by the danger of Karl Barth’s relational understanding of revelation being neo-orthodox. We are “allergic to” or hypercritical of charismatic understanding of spirituality (i.e. a strong emphasis on relational reality of the Holy Spirit in Christian believer’s experience) being extremist. Relational Christian doctrines of salvation, spirituality, etc., are customarily reduced to rational schemas and scientific formulae.

Christians in the West also have a tendency to misuse relational approach in practice. For example, the careless use of “friendship evangelism” tends to cheapen relationship to become a means to an end. Christian practice such as genuine fellowship, cell groups, accountability groups, pastoral ministry and Christian counseling are often turned into programmatic, instrumental, entrepreneur approaches for the sake of operational management and quantifiable outcomes for verifiable success in conformity to worldly value system.

3.3 Theoretical overview

Christian scholars have many theoretical options such as rationalism and realism, individualism and socialism, idealism and pragmatism⁷, etc. There are various kinds of realism, e.g., classical realism, naïve realism, critical realism; but not “relational realism.” Christian theologians have many choices in theological paradigms such as dispensationalism and Calvinism.

Many evangelical scholars have sold out to “rationalism” and theological conservatism, that any inklings of a relational emphasis would be immediately deemed to be unacceptable for being ‘existentialist,’ ‘extremist’ or ‘neo-orthodox.’

For rationalist, the maxim is “I think therefore I am;” but for a Christian “relationalist” (he who embraces the proposed paradigm on relationship):

- “‘I AM’ therefore i am” ontologically⁸
- “‘I AM’ therefore ‘i know’” epistemologically
- “‘I AM’ (*missio dei*) therefore ‘i am’” missiologically⁹

IV. RELATIONAL APPROACH IN THEOLOGY

4.1 Being – “relational realism paradigm”

“Relational theology” is based on the “paradigm of relational realism,” God is the absolute One who transcends time, space and circumstance; whereas His created order remains otherwise. A maxim for “relational realism” is that the great “I AM” as self-revealed in Exodus 3:13-15 in contrast-distinction to the confession and lament of Moses “who am I?” (3:11). In that light, we can derive the maxim for “relational realism” ontologically - “‘I AM’ therefore i am.”¹⁰

Returning to the Scriptures, one can easily find “relationship” woven intricately within a complex of multi-dimensional, multi-level and multi-context system as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 1 – Relationship: multi-dimension, multi-level, multi-context (Wan 2006a:3)

Order/ System	Relationship: multi-dimension, multi-level, multi-context		Biblical Reference
Uncreated order - Triune God	Essence Existence	Absolute, transcendent, infinite ----- Tri-unity of Father, Son & H.S. with perfect harmony	John 17; Phil 2:1-11
C R O E R	Angel	Essence ----- Existence	-Not absolute, perfect, infinite; but superior to humanity & nature -Since the Fall, --disharmony ----- Created and ruled by God
		Essence	-Strife, conflict, disharmony since the Fall -Within the redeemed humanity: reconciled & mediated by

8 The “I AM” is God’s self identification and “i am” (lower key) is an intentional designation for man in contra-distinction to “I AM”

9 Our Triune God is characterized by love, communion, commission (sending) and glory. Also see Kevin Daugherty 2007, John A McIntosh 2000.

10 For discussion on the theme and text on “I am” of Exodus 3:13-15, see Cronin 2007, Foutz 2007, Freedman 1960, Laney 2007, Piper 1984.

A D T E R E R D	Human	-----	Christ with unity restored & harmony obtained	9:1-7; Ps 8, Heb 2; Eph 2:11-22
		Existence	-Willed to existence by God (“let us...”) -Created with God’s breathe & image both male & female (reaffirmed even after the fall & the flood) -Designated by God with authority to rule and subdue, provided with food -Blessed by God to be fruitful & multiply & sustained by God	
	Nature/ Animal	Essence	-Harmony before the fall -Cursed & groaning for redemption -“Shalom” ushered in by the messianic role of Christ	Acts 17:26; Eph 2:1-14; Col 1:16-18
		Existence	-Created & sustained by God -Cursed after the fall, restored in Christ: by/for/through Him	

4.1 Knowing – “relational theological paradigm”

A. The source of human being & understanding is “relationship”

If ontologically, the maxim for relational approach be “I AM’ therefore i am,” then, in this study epistemologically it is “I AM’ therefore ’i know’.” General (or natural) human knowledge stems from the fact that mankind is relationally created in the “image of God” with mental capacity, perceptual and conceptual competency. Theological knowledge of God and His work (in creation, salvation, etc.) is only possible due to one’s “relationship” with the self-revealing ‘I AM.’

Figure 2 – Human Being & Knowing within a Relational Network

LEVEL	DIMENSION	RELATIONSHIP
BEING (ontology)	beginning	- all life & breath from God - “made of one blood all nations of men” (Rom 11:25-26) - created in God’s (Gen 1:26-27)
	sustaining	“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Ro 11:36) “For in him we live, and move, and have our being” Ac 17:28. (cf. Rom 11:36; Heb 1:10)
	destiny	-“God will judge the world” (Act 17:31)
KNOWING (epistemology)	Natural knowledge	-perception: acquired through senses (relate to natural order) -conception: acquired through mental power (relate to natural, social and spiritual order)
	Revelatory knowledge	-general revelation: creation & conscience (Ps 19:1-2; Rom 1:20); [culturally interpreted]. -special revelation: theophany, miracle, inspiration, Incarnation, etc. of God’s self-revelation (Mal 3:1; Col 1:19; John 14:17;15:26;20:22); [linguistically interpreted] - Spontaneous revelations: prophecy, tongues, words of wisdom and knowledge, sign and wonders (1Cor 12; 14; [personally interpreted])

4.2 The basis of human knowledge is “relationship”

As evangelicals, we affirm the close relationship between the Triune God and humanity as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 3 – Relationship between Triune God & Humanity (Wan 2006:4)

TRIUNE GOD	...relationship...	HUMANITY	CHRISTIAN
Father	-Created, ruled & sustained by God (Ps 103:19-22 to Ps 104)	-Male or female, Jew or Gentile, slave or free...all are one in Christ” (Gal 3:28) -“all together...one body...one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 3:1-4:7)	-Known, called -foreordained
Son	-“In Him we live, move & have our being” (Acts 17:26) -“...by...for...through Him” (Col 1:15-20)		-Atoned, mediated -redeemed -reconciled
Holy Spirit	-“...first fruits of the Spirit... those God foreknew...predestined called...justified ...glorified” (Rom 8:1-30; Gal 4:1-7)		-regenerated -indwelled -endowed (gifts)

Due to the limitation of this paper, the following presentation might seem to be “simplistic;” but a “simple fact” of evangelical theology is that there is a relational basis¹¹ for Christian faith and practice as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 4 – Relational Theological Paradigm: Christian Faith and Practice

Relationship Dimension	RELATIONAL BASIS	RELATIONAL REALITY
FAITH	-God’s faithfulness & self-revealing -Christian trust/commitment to God	-doctrine from church history -systematic theology
PRACTICE	-individual level	-regeneration, sanctification
	-converging (individual + institution)	-spiritual warfare -discipleship & evangelism
	-institutional level	-worship, fellowship

As the maxim of this study, “I AM’ therefore i am” ontologically expresses relational realism paradigm, so also “I AM” therefore ‘i know’” epistemologically expresses relational theological paradigm as outlined in Figures 5, 6,7.

Figure 5 – “I AM’ therefore i am” & “I AM’ therefore ‘i know’” - General¹²

MAXIM LEVEL/PARADIGM	“I AM’	therefore i am”
Ontological – “relational realism”	Triune God -self-existing -intra-Trinitarian Relationship -the One to bless	Man - created in God’s image -dominion & stewardship -marital union: “two → one” being blessed
	RELATIONALITY	REALITY
	“I AM’	therefore ‘i know’”

¹¹ On ‘relational theology,’ see

- Book by F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003;
- Review article of the book by Shults, “Towards a Truly Relational Theology: A Conversation with F. LeRon Shults” by Maarten Wisse, University of Heidelberg, German at <http://www.arsdisputandi.org/index.html?http://www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000160/index.html> (retrieved Nov. 20, 2007)
- Electronic chat room on ‘relational theology’ visit: <http://www.opensourcetheology.net/node/1256> (retrieved Nov. 20, 2007)

¹² Commenting on Exodus 3:15, Keil & Delitzsch (1981, vol. I: 442) stated, “God would even manifest Himself in the nature expressed by the name Jehovah, and by this He would have all generations both know and revere Him...the name, expresses the objective manifestation of the divine nature;...memorial, the subjective recognition of that nature on the part of man.”

Epistemological – “relational theologizing / theology”	God’s self-revelation to man -the Giver of life & free will; but setting the boundary for man (Mt 11:25-27; Jn 1:14-17)	-positive: good provision & clear instruction/warning given & endowed with free will -negative: tempted to “know” beyond what is revealed, as God knows (Gen 3:5)
	SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY OF GOD	PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF SELF & ACTION

Exodus 3 is a key passage that provides the biblical foundation for the thesis of this study as shown in figure below.¹³

Figure 6 – “ ‘I AM’ therefore i am / i know” - Exodus 3¹⁴

LEVEL	RELATIONALITY & RELATIONSHIP	
Ontology “relational realism”	“I AM” therefore i am” (v.3)	
	God’s self-identification: - “I AM THAT I AM” (14) -God of the forefathers (15,16) -name for ever, memorial for all generations (15)	Moses: “who am I?”(11) -“This is what you are to say...:”I AM has sent me to you” (14) -“I have watched over...& I have promised...” (16,17) -“I will stretch out my hand... (20,21) -being sent with a mission (9-10)
	RELATIONALITY	REALITY
Episte- mology “relational theologizing /theology”	“I AM” therefore ‘I know’” (vv.4-5)	
	God’s self-revelation: -appeared in a flame of fire (2) -called Moses by name from the bush (4) & identified Himself in relation to three previous generations (5-6) -knew their sorrows, affliction & gave the promise, came down (7-8)	Moses: “what shall I tell them?” (11) -“God of (forefathers) sent me” (15) -sandals off, face hidden (5,6) -“...be with you...will worship...” (12) -granted the favor (21) -promised to be set free: not go empty handed and would sojourn & spoil the Egyptians (22)
	SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY ABOUT GOD	PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF SELF & ACTION

Built on the ontological foundation of “ ‘I AM’ therefore i am” is the epistemological application as outlines in the figure below.

Figure 7 - Illustration of “ ‘I A M’ therefore i am / i know” - Psalm 100

LEVEL	RELATIONALITY & RELATIONSHIP	
	“I AM” therefore i am” (v.3)	

¹³ The proper name of the God of Israel is given in Hebrew as hwhy often supplied with the vowels of the noun “my lord” yn“doa] or the noun -yhil{a/. In Ex. 3:14, the name by which the Lord refers to himself is hy<βh.a.(, which means ‘I am’. The question of course is then how do we get hwhy from hyha. Some have opted that hwhy is an ancient secondary form of the 1 common singular imperfect of the ‘to be’. The problem with this suggestion is that we have no known witness for this. What we do know is that most middle yod verbs were originally middle vav verbs. So the shift from the vav to the yod is well attested. The name and the logical translation of the name in Exodus. 3:14, as “I am” seems to refer to the existence of God. So, the message to the Egyptians is that the one who truly exists sends Moses back to his people. I would simply propose that the later name hwhy is derived from this idea of existence, and that this name is the way the people of Israel referred to God: “he who exists” over against all the idols who were merely the work of man and had no existence beyond their physical representation. In LXX John’s use of εἰμ (John 8:24, 28, 58) is a reference to the deity of the Hebrew name in Ex 3:14.

¹⁴ God’s appearance to Moses as of observed by Keil and Delitzsch (1981:442), “God therefore told him (Moses) this name...‘I am that I am’ and designated Himself by this name as the absolute God of the fathers, acting with unfettered liberty and self-dependence...”

	INSTITUTION -Jesus as head & Groom -JC: priestly function & God's chosen one (Heb 7)	-body bride of JC (Eph 5:22-33); -the temple of the HS (1Cor 3:16) -chosen people, royal priesthood... belong to God (1Pet 2:9)
Christian life & living	-prayed to the Father, exalted in the Spirit (Lk 10:21-22) -submits to the Father (Jn 8:49) -God cares for us (Mt 5)	-prayed to the Father, in Jesus' name, by the HS (Ro 8) -submit to JC & one another (Eph 4:21) -care for one another & needy (1Jn 3:16-18)

Since the emphasis of this paper is not a 'historical theology' approach that examines carefully the context and content of Christian doctrines through out church history; the following discussion follows an approach that is more a study of "systematic theology."

Figure 9 – Relational Understanding of Christian Faith Systematically

RELATION DISCIPLINE	DOCTRINE	RELATIONALITY	RELATIONAL REALITY	
THEOLOGY	SYSTEMATIC	Theology Proper	-Triune God -Trinitarian paradigm ¹⁵	-Father, Son, Holy Spirit in perfect communion and harmony
		Anthropology	-Man & woman Created in God's image -In Adam (sinners) vs. in Christ (new creation) (Rom 5-6)	-Given dominion over the created order -in marriage, family & community -fallen but reconciled by Christ -will be judged in the last regenerated/indwelted by the H.S.
		Christology	-Sent by & submitted to the Father, justifier -Mediating/reconciling	-Came due to obedience to the Father -Atoning death for man because of love -Exalted to rule supreme over all
		Pneumatology	-The Spirit of Jehovah Spirit of Christ (Is 11:2; 61:1; Rom 8:9) -Sanctifier -Comforter	-Inspired...Bible; Illuminate...truth -Regeneration & indwelling; Empowering/endowing gifts -Testifier/Teacher/Guide (Jn 15:26;14:26; Acts 16:6) -Glorifying the Father and the Son
		Bibliology	-inspiration -illumination -transforming power	-Aid in knowing God and His will for salvation, edification, sanctification, -Bread of life, light unto path, etc. (Ps 119)
		Soteriology	-foreknowledge, love -covenant, calling -atonement, justification	-baptism = union - Christ's death/resurrection -communion = blood - new covenant -one body/spirit/hope/...X7 (Eph 4:1-7)
		Ecclesiology	-In Christ all made one -reconciled: Jews, gentile -joint-heir,	-love, faith, hope = all are relational reality -church local/universal, communion of saints -body/household/temple/priesthood/etc.
		Eschatology	-Christ will come back for His own -final victory & glory	-the white throne judgment & the millennium -wedding feast of Lamb & the new Jerusalem -God's perfect will fulfilled, mankind blessed
Prac-tical	(see Figure 10 below)			

V. RELATIONAL MISSIOLOGY

The Trinitarian nature of *missio dei*¹⁶ is multi-context (divine and human) and multi-level (both at micro and macro levels). For evangelicals, Christian practice is to be

¹⁵ Wan 1996

¹⁶ For earlier works of the same emphasis, see Wan 1996a and "Understanding 'Relationality' From A Trinitarian Perspective," (Wan 2006a)

based on sound theology that is grounded in biblical truth. The context of Christian practice is within a network of relationship. The relational reality of Christian practice is outlined in the diagram below.

Figure 11 – Relational Understanding of Christian Practice

RELATION DISCIPLINE		DOCTRINE	RELATIONA- LITY	RELATIONAL REALITY
THEOLOGY	SYS.	(See Figure 9)		
	PRACTICAL	Regeneration	Divine transformational power on Christians	-Christians born again by God's grace and transforming power through their faith
		Sanctification		-Christians become more Christ-like, Spirit-led by obedience to God, resistant against Satan, worldliness and the flesh
		Spiritual Warfare		-Christians are victorious by God's power; -Non-believers in the Kingdom of darkness, enslaved by the flesh, conformed to the world
		Worship	God glorified by Christians who celebrate together	-God receiving adoration & praise from HIS children who have unity in belief and behavior.
		Fellowship	The Trinity has perfect fellowship & complete union	-Christians joint in unity of faith, new life and enjoined by divine love. -With Christ as the Head of the Church and they as members of His body, the Church is a living reality and public testimony of true love.
		Discipleship	Christian responding to Christ's calling by commitment & consecration	-Christ's follower who are committed with loyalty, disciplined by God's truth and display a Christ-like life style to glorify Him in individual walk & collective testimony
		Evangelism	Sharing the Gospel to win others to Christ	-Sharing the good news with others & all who believe in Him shall be reconciled, born again, joining the family of God, be freed from Satan & sin to become God's children

Due to the limitation of this study, missiological application of this paradigm in matters of communication, church planting, etc. are not being treated. However, the foundation for relational missiology is relational theology and the relationship between them is outlined in the diagram below:

Figure 12 – Relational Missiology of “‘I AM’ (*missio dei*) therefore ‘i am’”

ELATIONSHIP DISCIPLINE /ACTION		RELATIONALITY ‘I AM’ (<i>missio dei</i>)	REALITY ‘i am’
MISSIOLOGY	general	God presses Himself out & His nature of love, communion & glory (Jn 1:14,18, 3:16; 12:28,13:32; 17:1, 4,5, 10, 24; 21:19; Mt 9:8; 17:1-8; Lk 13:13; 1Jn 4:6-12)	Likewise Christians are to manifest this quality of God's love, communion, glory (Mt 5:13-16, 10:16; ;Jn 15:16; Act 1:8; Ro 15:6; 1Cor 6:20; 1Pet 2:12;4:16; 1Jn 3:-9-19)
	Witnessing	-“the Father witness concerning me” (Jn 8:18); -H.S. witnessing → Son (Jn 15:26) -Scripture witnessing → Son (Jn 39)	-“you are my witnesses...” (Ac 1:8) & Christians are to witness (Jn 15:27)
	commission (sending)	-“as the Father sends me, so send I you” (Jn 17:18) -“...all authority... given to me” (Mt 18:18)	- “...H.S. said, ‘Separate...I have called Them’...” (Acts 13:2); “therefore make disciple by going...” (Mt 28:19-20)
	Empowering	-Father on the Son by the Spirit in ministry, resurrection & exaltation (Ac 10:37; Ro 1:4; Phil 3:9-10)	-authority given (Lk 10:19) -examples: disciples + Paul (Act 2,4; Ro 5:16-20)

Evangelizing	-God desires many will be saved (2Pet 3:9) -God's grace is sufficient for all to be saved	-in obedience to God Christians evangelize: moved by the compassion for the lost, empowered by the H.S. with gifts
Glorifying	-the Father glorified the Son (Act 3:13; Jn 12:28) -The son glorified the Father (Jn 17:4; Php 2:11) -Father & Son – mutual glory (Jn 17:1-5) -H.S. glorifies the Son (Jn 16:13-14)	-good testimony glorifying God (Mt 5:16) -failed to give glory ...serious consequence like Herod (Act 12:20-23) -Christians are to glorify God in life, living, labor (service & ministry) (1Cor 6:20; 10:31; 2Cr 4:15; 1Tim 1:17; Ro 5:2-20)
Grace	-God's nature is gracious & He freely gives to all : - Source of grace (Jn 1:14-17; 2Cor 8:9; Act 20:24; Ro 1:5; 2Cor 9:8; 2Tom 1:2,9)	- common grace to all (James 1:17; - special grace for the chosen (Eph 1:6-7) - changed Saul to Apostle Paul (1Cor 15:9-11; Eph 3:7-13; 1Tim 1:14-16)
Gift	--gifts endowed by the Father, Christ & H.S. (Trinitarian formula X2 in 1Cor 12:4-6, 12- 27); Eph 4:7-12)	-special form of grace for service: glorify God & build up the Church -be stewards of gifts (1Pet 3:10-11)
Reconciling	-"God in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to himself..." (2Cor 18-19; Ro 11:5)	-"he has committed to us the message of reconciliation..." (2Cor 5:19-20)

CONCLUSION

I believe that the emphasis on “relationship” of this study is both biblically sound and contextually relevant for the evangelical Christian community. Christian faith and practice are presented within a relational framework; especially in cross-cultural context. Traditional Western, categorical, definitional theologies prove difficult in non-Western contexts to live out within intensely relational societies. In a post-Christian and post-modernist era of the 21st Century, a relational comprehension and implementation are essential.

Since God's special revelation came to us in mostly narrative forms describing experience in relationship with God, a relational theology may prove more reasonable and more truthful across cultures than those theologies that depend heavily upon semantic categorization of abstract propositions in the Western tradition. Traditional missiology of the West is managerial, programmatic, pragmatic and outcome-base (humanly anticipated)¹⁷; but relational missiological paradigm is returning to God (*missio dei*) and relying on the relational reality with Him for His glory.

In summary:

- “being” - “I AM’ therefore i am” ontologically (relational realism paradigm)
- “knowing” - “I AM’ therefore ‘i know’” epistemologically (relational theological paradigm).
- “doing” - “I AM’ (*missio dei*) therefore ‘i am’”(manifesting His nature of love, glory and sending - relational missiological paradigm)

¹⁷ There is both a relational emphasis (Trinitarian missiology) and critique of managerial / entrepreneur style of Christian missions in the West at the Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology, Iguassu Brazil and the The Iguassu Affirmation. See <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/downloads/ccom/documents/010424%20Richard%20Tiplady.doc> (retrieved Nov. 1, 2007)

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