Abstract

Non-Western missionary movements in the West are increasingly drawing academic attention in mission studies. This research explores a section of such missionary movements through the experience of Korean missionaries (KMs) who engage with the unique religious landscape in contemporary English society. More precisely, it explores KMs' missionary engagement with a section of English population which I call 'People on the Edge of the Church' (PEC): they display some Christian notions and practices loosely and permissively, whilst their church attendance is slight, occasional or non-existent. On the one hand, this exploration is a critical appraisal of KMs' missionary endeavours among those PEC. On the other hand, it is also an attempt to seek and draw out theological insights from this study for the development of relevant mission theology for PEC.

For this purpose, the research employs an interdisciplinary approach. First of all, it looks into KMs' missionary background and formation (chapter 2) in order to highlight what missionary mindset KMs bring with them to England. Secondly, it involves a sociological analysis of PEC's Christian connections (chapter 3) for the examination of the religious characteristics of their attachment to Christianity. Thirdly, the research involves an empirical investigation of KMs' lived experience of PEC (chapter 4 and 5) in order to understand their own perspective of the PEC they encounter and their ongoing missionary endeavours. Fourthly, the findings of the empirical investigation are critically evaluated with a particular focus on the changes that KMs undergo in their missionary thoughts and practices (chapter 6). In so doing, Zygmunt Bauman's theory of 'liquefaction' is adopted in order to effectively and succinctly illustrate the
key characteristics of the changes KMs go through. Finally, this research evaluates the theological meanings of those changes for a relevant missionary engagement with PEC (chapter 7).

This comprehensive qualitative investigation reveals that KMs are now challenging, reviewing and rethinking their inherited missionary mindset in their encounter with what is called ‘religious PEC’. I develop a theological reflection based on this reconstruction of KMs’ missionary mindset, which I call ‘a critical Christocentric-Trinitarian approach to missio Dei’. This approach to missio Dei enables us to explore God’s missionary work among those PEC and to find ways to engage with it beyond the existing discussions on the mission of God. Accordingly, this approach to missio Dei has theological implications for the development of a relevant missionary engagement with religious PEC in three ways (chapter 8). First, this approach conceives mission as a process of making ourselves available to what God is planning and doing among those PEC rather than as an attempt to realise his missionary purposes by our own efforts. Second, it suggests a missional ecclesiology that puts forward a concept of the church which is viable for religious PEC in the light of God’s ongoing work among them. Finally, it draws non-Western missionaries’ attention both to a new symbolic mapping for their missionary engagement with religious PEC’s unique faith journey and to a re-conceptualisation of their dominant concept of mission as ‘bringing the gospel back’ in the light of missio Dei.