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**Missional Ecclesiology:
Missionary Encounters between the Presbyterian Church of Korea (*Tonghap*)
and Protestant Churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia**

THESIS BOOKLET

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SUMMARY

Missional Ecclesiology:

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1. Statement of Problem

The present study seeks to explore how the Presbyterian Church of Korea's (PCK, *Tonghap* denomination) understanding of missional ecclesiology translates into the post 1989 context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), by analysing, examining and investigating the PCK's missionary endeavours in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It examines the complexity and dynamics of the PCK's missionary encounters with Protestant churches of the Czech Republic and Slovakia and its effect on all agents involved.

The PCK, pronouncing itself to be a missionary church since its founding, has made great efforts for world evangelism. The spirit of evangelism along with rapid church growth directly contributed to missionary mobilization toward world mission. Its missionary movement in CEE started after the fall of the iron Curtain, and focused on sending missionaries to countries in CEE. During its missionary movement in CEE, however, some obstacles needed to be overcome, and its mission needed to be reconsidered in terms of missional ecclesiology. The self-perception of the missionary church is closely connected with rapid church growth perspective. This understanding has been manifested in its missionary endeavour in CEE context. The PCK needs relevant missional ecclesiology gained from the theological evaluation of missionary encounters with Protestant churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

2. Methodology

The combination of desk study with empirical study offers the methodological tools to carry out the research. The desk study focuses on the PCK's understandings of a missional ecclesiology in the context of the Protestant churches in Korea. The empirical study focuses on the PCK's missionary movement in CEE by evaluating its missionary encounters with the churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. A combination of methods is used, such as interviews, participant observation, life histories and documentary analysis by examining the official and non-official documents, the minutes of the PCK's General Assembly, and diverse opinions from the theologians. The researcher's life story is also a crucial part for the resources.

For the evaluation of the PCK's missionary endeavour in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, this study followed Kritzinger's *praxis matrix* which is designed to critically examine what action groups have done in mission. The matrix contributes to exploring extensively the dynamics and complexity of the missionary encounters between the PCK and Protestant churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Furthermore, the matrix can draw lessons from these interactions, stimulate both churches to action, and eventually to bring about change and transformation.

The overall structure of the study proceeds from a more general description (missional ecclesiology in Korean context) towards a concrete church's missional ecclesiology (the PCK's understanding of missional ecclesiology), and then a more particular context in CEE (the PCK's missionary endeavour in the Czech Republic and Slovakia), and from these observations to a more general level (Missional Ecclesiology for the PCK).

3. Summary of Chapters

This study contains seven chapters. Chapter 1 is an *Introduction* to the research project including the statement of the problem, methodology, structure of the study and sources.

Chapter 2, *The Missional Ecclesiology in Korean Context*, attempts to delineate the conversation of the missional ecclesiology within the Protestant churches in Korea

(Korean church). The discussion and debate on the missional ecclesiology in Korea has been enormously expanded through the influence of the book, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (eds. Darrell L. Guder, 1998). Even the seeds of the missional ecclesiology have been traced in Korea, but the active conversation of missional ecclesiology was mainly discussed since 2000s after *Missional Church*'s publication. The Korean church tended to approach the missional ecclesiology with a functional perspective which tried to search for a proper remedy to the church's decreased growth and negative antagonism from the Korean society at large. However, the conversation helped the Korean church to rethink the church's nature as being sent to a place and time. The Korean church, as a young church, made tremendous efforts in evangelism and church growth, which eventually led it to consider the context of society less. The missional ecclesiology, therefore, significantly helped the Korean church to consider the deeper missionary identity of the church. Nevertheless, the term *seongyojeok* [missional] was obscure and unclear because of diverse understandings of 'mission' within the different denominations in the Korean church.

Chapter 3, *Understanding of Missional Ecclesiology within the PCK*, investigates the PCK's missional ecclesiology by intensively analysing and examining the church's official and non-official documents, mission statements, opinions from the theologians and the minutes of the General Assembly. The PCK has understood itself as "missionary church" since its foundation. Throughout its history, the understanding of missional ecclesiology within the PCK has greatly shifted from the church's mission to God's mission, and from evangelism to ecumenical partnership. Under this shift, the PCK laid a solid theological foundation for mission: a) *missio Dei* is the foundation for the understanding of mission. b) Ecumenical partnership is the method of mission. c) The PCK focuses on holistic mission. d) The focal point of mission has gradually shifted from church growth to the nature of the church, life, peace, justice and reconciliation through socio-political engagement. e) In relation with foreign mission, the PCK emphasizes church unity and partnership with other churches in the world. e) The PCK, however, as with the tradition of the Presbyterian churches in Korea, also has deep concerns about church growth in the name of 'church renewal' and 'missional church'.

Nevertheless, it was obvious that some of the church leaders, pastors and laypersons preferred evangelical tradition, showing negative perceptions towards the ecumenical movement. With the theological stance on *evangelical ecumenism and ecumenical evangelicalism*, the PCK applied its wide understanding of mission to the foreign mission fields.

Chapter 4, *The PCK's Mission in CEE*, describes the outline of the PCK's missionary movement in CEE. Since 1990s, the PCK's missionary endeavour in CEE began with the diaspora Korean churches in Europe and individual missionaries. Their prayer, commitment and sacrifice were crucial for the mission work. The missionary endeavour has developed in diverse ways, and the range of mission work gradually extended from ecumenical partnership, to teaching missiology, humanitarian aid, sharing Korean culture, and ministering to the diaspora Korean churches. Nevertheless, the PCK's concrete mission policy for CEE was lacking. Because the PCK's mission history in CEE was short, it concentrated first on sending missionaries to CEE when the closed Communist door suddenly opened. The missionary endeavour was characterized by suffering instead of by success with many 'trials and mistakes', and was heavily dependent on the proficiency of the individual missionary. The missionary motivation came from the beliefs that the churches in CEE were spiritually empty during the Communist period and that no faith was practiced during that time. This motivation, however, did not greatly affect the local churches. The missiological issues of mission prayer, North Korea mission and diaspora Korean church were emerged throughout the PCK's missionary movement in CEE.

Chapter 5, *A Case of the PCK's Mission in Czech Republic*, deals with the evaluation of the PCK's missionary movement in the Czech Republic, examining how the missionary endeavour has been activated and practiced by the PCK. It carefully examines "the encounter" of two groups, Czech agents and Korean agents, with different church histories, traditions and culture. Diverse missionary agents, both Czech and Korean, have involved in the PCK's missionary movement in the Czech Republic. Among the Korean agents, between the mission board and individual missionaries, efficient communication was lacking. The Korean agents did not properly understand the context and had little information on the contextual issues in the Czech Republic.

The individual missionaries had the responsibility for the missionary endeavour, struggling to survive on the mission field, to contextualize their mission strategy, and to plan the mission work. Their double burden, one for the PCK and the other for the local churches in the Czech Republic, made them fragile. It became obvious that an understanding of the history and tradition of the churches in the Czech Republic was crucial for building up a trusting relationship and mutual partnership. Prayer, commitment and suffering were highlighted as crucial missionary forces. With these encounters, the Korean and Czech agents affected each other through mutual learning and partnership. The PCK, as a “young church”, learned from the accumulated historical missionary experiences of the “older Czech churches” which had already experienced the issues of church growth, evangelism and mission throughout their church history. The Korean community of the *Kobylisy* church offered the most relevant example of the diaspora Korean church’s contextualization. The *Ammi Europe*, a short-term missionary team from the *Dongan* Presbyterian church, mostly conducted its missionary efforts through partnership with the local churches, functioning a bridge between the different cultures and church histories. The fruit of the mission was effective when the missionary agents of the PCK proclaimed the Gospel in a respectful and humble way.

Chapter 6, *A Case of the PCK’s Mission in Slovakia*, deals with the evaluation of the PCK’s missionary movement in Slovakia. The lack of communication between the mission board and the missionary also emerged in Slovakia. Although the diaspora Korean church in Vienna played a significant role during the first stages of missionary involvement in Slovakia, its desire for hasty mission results harmed a relevant mission work. This discrepancy resulted from a misunderstanding of the context. Specifically, the Reformed Christian Churches in Slovakia (RCCS), the PCK’s main partner, preserved a different historical and cultural tradition from the Slovak majority. As in the Czech case, understanding the church’s history and theological tradition were crucial for building a trusting relationship. Both the agents from Korea and Slovakia had the spirituality of suffering and prayer in common. The spirituality of Christians and churches in Slovakia was never empty, even when they suffered severely during the Communist era. Since the history of the encounter between the two agents was short,

the encounter seemed strange to both agents and they viewed each other with their own judgment and prejudice. The Slovak agents seemed to maintain their theological superiority over Asia. This warranted the active exchange of each of the agents' personnel and material through ecumenical partnership.

Chapter 7, *Revisiting the Missional Ecclesiology of the PCK in CEE*, reconsiders the missional ecclesiology of the PCK. The PCK's missionary endeavours in CEE started with fervent prayer and evangelic zeal from the diaspora Korean churches in Europe and the supporting congregations in Korea. The mission work was positively done based on ecumenical partnership. Some obstacles, however, needed to be overcome. The PCK needs to reconsider the way of approach to the missional ecclesiology, its understanding of the CEE context, the relevant contextualization of the diaspora Korean churches, the communication between the PCK's mission board and missionaries, and the missionary motivation for numerical growth and the expectation of rapid missionary result. Missionary encounters between the PCK and the churches in Czech Republic and Slovakia offered various possibilities, for both, to develop common missionary identity in a different time and place.

THESES

1. Results for the PCK

1) Missional Ecclesiology: from Functional to Theological Approach

The PCK has focused on numerical church growth, which has been the case with other Protestant churches in Korea. It has accepted and imitated any type of program for church development and growth without substantial theological or cultural reflection. This caused the PCK to develop its own functional missional ecclesiology, considering the church as a growth-driven church. In the extreme concern for the expansion of the

church, mission has been manipulated and thus the essential nature of church has been lost. Mission should not be used as a remedy for church renewal or growth since it does not confirm the validity of church growth. The growth of a megachurch does not always match what missional ecclesiology demands. Missional ecclesiology does not support any church model because it does not teach strategies to obtain a bigger megachurch. Instead, it provides an invitation to reconsider not only the nature of the Triune God, but also the foundation of the church. It is necessary that the PCK reconsiders the nature of the church, by teaching, sharing and living out the Gospel in its own locality and context, and by shifting from the “church’s doing” to the “church’s being”.

2) Diaspora Korean Church: from Ethnic-Centred to Beyond-Ethnic Mission

The role of the diaspora Korean churches in Czech Republic and Slovakia has been obviously crucial for the PCK’s missionary movement in CEE. They were motivating factors and leading centres for the missionary movement. However, they needed to be more contextualized in the local context. The lack of contextualization with their strong focus on Korean culture hindered cooperation with other churches. The new context of their “being sent” was totally different from “their sending” context of their homeland. The missional ecclesiology steadily recommends that the PCK needs to be concerned with the particular time and place, asking why God has sent them in that actual time and to that place. The diaspora Korean churches in CEE should extend the direction and content of mission from ethnic-centred to beyond-ethnic.

3) Missionary Motivation: from Self-Glory to God’s Glory

The PCK’s missionary motivation has generally been distorted with expecting the rapid results and success story from the missionary efforts. Often the leadership of the supporting congregations tended to believe that the missionary results should contribute to church growth. However, this missionary motivation did not work in CEE. The pressure coming out of a church growth perspective was detrimental for mission work. Missional ecclesiology renounces any kind of distorted, human-designed mission,

and it discards supporting the church's desires. Self-glory should be removed from the missionary motivation because mission is God's mission. The authentic missionary motivation should come only from the intention to participate in God's mission.

4) Understanding the Context: from Superficial to Thoughtful Understanding

In the PCK, *Seongyo* [mission] was directly concerned with evangelism or any program of evangelism. Eventually, *Seongyojeok Gyohoe* [missionary church] referred to the church which involved evangelistic efforts or conducted evangelical programmes. This emphasis on evangelistic zeal, by contrast, has often led to concern only for "sending" not "being sent", and "*what the church does*" not "*what the church is.*" Naturally, the extreme zeal for evangelism sometimes ignores the context. In CEE, there are diverse Christian traditions and culture in the different Churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Czech Brethren Church, the Reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, and Charismatic Church and so on. The existing image of CEE from the PCK was corrected in the course of the encounter by a proper contextual understanding. The thoughtful understanding of the context played a significant role in enhancing a trusting relationship and mutual partnership. The superficial understanding of the context might mislead both the missionary motivation and endeavours.

5) Cooperation of Missionary Agents: from Distrustful to Trusting Communication

The case of the PCK's missionary endeavour in the Czech Republic and Slovakia demonstrated the reality of distrust and misunderstanding between the mission board, mission committee, and supporting congregations. The mission policy from the mission board has sometimes been criticized by missionaries in the field because its plans have been theoretic or unrealistic. The process of recruiting, supporting and dispatching the missionaries should be transparent and unbiased. Missional ecclesiology embraces not only what the church is or what the church does, but also how the church is organized. The role of the staffs, the structures of their working system, and the process of making

a mission policy should be reflected, reformed, and redefined in the wider spectrum of missional ecclesiology. Cooperation from distrustful to trusting communication, with intimate partnership, participating together in God's mission, may help to reduce the anti-missional mind set.

2. Results for Churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

1) Partnership with Asian Churches: from Indifference to Inclusiveness

Although the missionary encounter between the PCK and Protestant churches in Czech Republic and Slovakia is still in its early stages, it has contributed to the church's openness. This is due to each church learning from the other. With the continuous and regular encounters with the PCK's missionary agents, the local churches in Slovakia experienced a "different" and "other" church from Asia. The experience, however, became gradually "common" and "same", and finally it bolstered "openness" and "inclusiveness". The encounter also probably helped to break the ethnic-focused identity. It is quite remarkable to note that throughout the PCK's encounter with CEE, some common theological issues have been discovered. The historical commonality supports mutual understanding and create a sympathetic relationship. The common missiological issues, such as suffering, healing, peace, reconciliation and identity, can be further discussed when the churches in CEE tries to further its encounters with Asian churches.

2) Christian Heritage and Mutual Learning: from Preserving to Sharing.

Mutual learning and sharing Christian heritage are another valuable results for the churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The encounter claims for sharing thorough mutual learning. The church history and Christian heritage in CEE are much longer and richer than that of Korea. The diverse churches of different theological traditions have accumulated their peculiar missionary resources throughout their church

history. These valuable things, however, are not to be confined to their own theological wealth as self-experienced. Rather it would be worthwhile when they are to be shared to other churches in the world, specifically to young Asian churches.

3) Transformative Agent in the Society: from Traditional to Missional Church

The local churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are missionary agents who eventually need to participate in God's mission to transform the society where they have been sent. With understanding of the context, they would be encouraged to have a missionary vocation and keep a missionary identity. In Slovakia, for instance, the RCCS's role for reconciliation and peace between the Hungarian and Slovak people seems to be crucial as the Korean church also has a crucial responsibility for the reconciliation between South and North Korea. With the new missionary identity, the tension of the context would be relieved, and the RCCS could shift dramatically from a "traditional Christian community" to a "missional Christian community" in Slovakia. In becoming a missional community, a theological foundation of mission is highly necessary, since the lack of a mission theology might bring about the lack of understanding of the church's nature and essence. It is also same case in the churches of the Czech Republic that mission theology contributes to a contextual understanding, helping them to equip and maintain strong missionary identity. Thus, the churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as crucial missionary agents in the society, are called by Triune God, and they have a missionary responsibility to transform the severely individualized and secularized society.