

## A Way of Mission of Hospitality and Peace

- Towards Transformative Ecumenism in Japanese Context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century -

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### I 1968 as a Paradigm Shift of Missiology

Konrad Raiser views the period of years 1945-1948 as “the final collapse of the older order in Europe” on the one hand, and “the division of the world into the spheres of influence and hegemony of the two great powers, USA and the USSR” (Raiser 35), on the other. But at the same time, Raiser regards this historic period as the time of “intense theological reflection” for “a fresh interpretation of history in the light of God’s plan of salvation for humankind” and “the interpretation of the processes of rapid social change as a challenge to the churches to participate in God’s action in history” (Raiser 35).

Looking back over the history of missiological concerns in WCC after its establishment in 1948, it is remarkable that WCC believes that it has been facing a paradigm shift of missiology since the Uppsala Assembly in 1968. This is because the paradigm of Christocentric universalism as one of the most important concerns in missiology has been critically questioned in the confrontation of the reality of diversified world in stages of political ideology, culture and religion since then. In other words, churches in the world came to face a new question on the unity of the church as goal in the reality of “the polarized argument between ecclesiastical ecumenism and secular ecumenism” (Raiser 8-9). WCC decided to establish the Programme to Combat Racism in itself. We can consider the issue of Apartheid in South Africa as its social background.

While, however, we can learn about a flow of significant history of ecumenism after WWII, it seems to be unfortunate not to be able to find consideration of the two following points: first, we have to question critically about significance of the historical development of missiology by putting more serious consideration on the postwar history. In other words, we need an intensive dialogue on the impacts of European imperialism upon the rest of the world and war memory or experience and critical consideration of the influence of the Cold War regime after WWII upon the society and churches.

“1968.” What is historical significance of 1968 in Japan along with Northeast Asian

context? The year of 1968 is the centennial from the opening of the Meiji era. Therefore, when we look over the period of the past 100 years, we cannot avoid thinking about the relationship between the church and the imperialistic state which was based on the Tennoh (emperor) state Shintoism, invasive wars against Asia and colonial rules over Korea and Taiwan. If the year of 1945, when Japan surrendered, is a historic epoch to transfer to the new era of postwar world, what does it mean to churches in Japan? I am convinced that it is the time to reflect theologically upon the meanings of the history from 1868 to 1945, particularly the 15-Year War from 1931 to 1945, and the history of colonial rules under the conquest of the “Great Empire of Japan” in relation to Asian countries. That means acknowledgment of war responsibility and the confession of repentance is the most important priority. Without skipping those processes, reconciliation between Japan and other Asian countries can be unthinkable. We cannot speak of peace in Northeast Asia without concealing the history of war, invasion, and colonial rule by Japan, in other words, uncovering the history of the perpetrator against other Asian peoples and admitting responsibility for it are absolute necessity. At the same time, we have to take consideration on political and ideological system of the Tennoh state Shintoism for rationalizing those wars as “holy war” for the Tennoh and colonial rules as way of protecting Asia from the Western powers and for Asian peoples to “honorably” become imperial subjects.

However, reflecting on the responsibility for the war had not happened until 1967 when Rev. Masahisa Suzuki, moderator of UCCJ then, issued the Confession on the Responsibility during World War II not under the name of the denomination but only of the moderator of UCCJ because it failed to pass the vote at UCCJ assembly.<sup>1</sup> The main reason of opposing the confession was because majority didn't agree to admit the guilt of the church cooperating wars waged by the Great Empire of Japan.<sup>2</sup> They insisted that the state itself should bear the responsibility, and the church could do nothing to help but keep silent for protecting the church. Regarding this point, Yasuo Furuya, Japanese theologian, noted that “Japanese churches and Christians were treated so well by the missionaries that they missed a chance to repent of what they had done during the war. This is one of the reasons why the problem of so-called ‘war responsibility’ was taken up by the Kyodan (UCCJ) as late as 1967” (Furuya 21).

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<sup>1</sup> It is known that despite that Suzuki's original draft went through two revisions, it failed to reach the decision of the Assembly by vote. Cf. Nobuo Kaino, 'How Was the Confession of War Responsibility Issued?' in: "The United Church of Christ-50 years after the Confession of War Responsibility," Shinkyo Shuppan, 2017, pp.40-78.

<sup>2</sup> It is noted that while Suzuki's Confession of War Responsibility was remarkable and so influential to direction of mission in terms of human rights, justice, reconciliation and peace, its confession didn't mention the issue of the Tennoh Hirohito's war responsibility and the problem of the state Shintoism.

Japan was placed under the GHQ occupation from August of 1945 to April of 1952, when Japan was released from the occupation based on the San Francisco Peace Treaty. GHQ did not call the Tennoh, Hirohito, to account the war responsibility after all because of the fear of rebellion of Japanese people who were still sympathetic for Hirohito even after the defeat of the reckless and cruel war, and the strategy of preventing Japan from the increase of socialism and communism in the Cold War regime. I am convinced that GHQ's policy of taking advantage of the Tennoh as symbol of national integration without asking about the war responsibility extended the influence over Japanese churches' stance on the question of war responsibility, while right wing proponents of the Meiji Constitution who justified Japan's 15-Years War and colonial rules survived and successfully restored ruling power even after the war such as many politicians in the Liberal Democratic Party. It can be said that the continuity of the Japanese empire came to be surreptitiously preserved as a principle of the legitimacy of the state even in the pacifist constitution of the postwar state of Japan.

Ichiyo Muto, political analyst, describes in retrospect of the prewar Japan that “the legitimizing principle in the prewar Japanese empire was the sovereignty of the emperor. Everything that was done by the imperial state in his majesty's name was legitimate and justified. The invasion of Ainu homelands, the annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom, the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, the annexation of Korea, the invasion of China, the Great East Asia War—all of these were justified in the name of the emperor.”<sup>3</sup>

What is another historical meaning of 1968? Japan started to be rapidly spurred toward high economic growth in 1950s and 1960s because of the influence of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Vietnam War (1964-) over industries in Japan. We know that social concerns spread among students and liberal and progressive people across the world in the period of the late 1960s still under the Cold War regime. The influence surely extended to Japan. Those people in Japan committed to discussions and grass-roots movements with ideas that current prosperity of Japan was based upon the sacrifice of Asian countries including the Korean and the Vietnam, and its trend was infiltrated into the church. However, such a trend of socio-critical movements could not grow enough to transform steady foundation of political culture of Japan including the church in Japan. We face a question: why it could not?

Japan faced the defeat of war in 1945. But even though the Constitution of Japan reformed into the system in which the sovereignty of the state was shifted from Tennoh

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<sup>3</sup> Ichiyo Muto, “Retaking Japan: The Abe Administration's Campaign to Overturn the Postwar Constitution” July 1, 2016 <http://apjjf.org/2016/13/Muto.html>

to the people of Japan, Tennoh was allowed to survive without judgement on the responsibility for war, and many right-wing proponents could take grip on power even after the war. The people of Japan didn't stand up for abolishing the Tennoh emperor system in order to change the socio-political system of Japan from Constitutional monarchy to Republic without the Tennoh emperor system. They still needed the Tennoh as the core of national identity in the form of symbol of the state and the integration of nation. What does it mean? In order to answer this question, critical focus should be directed on not only the stage of political ideas and the view of history, but also the dimension of cultural/psychological structure.

A preconditional identity of one believing in Jesus Christ is an individual standing before God. The church is the community of those individuals who were called (*eklesia*) by the Lord. The identity as individual called by and standing before the Lord extends to the individual to the public in the political realm of democracy since modern time. While the individuals are placed under rules / laws which are legislated in the public, the identity of individual never disappears in the public self-effacingly. However, even after the Empire of Japan based on the Tennoh state Shintoism was defeated, it didn't mean that Japanese traditional political culture formulated under the Meiji Constitution and the previous system of the Tokugawa over 260 years were reformed to political culture of relationship between individual and public as condition of the Constitutional democracy. Even though the sovereignty of the state was changed from Tennoh to the people of Japan at the superficial dimension of the political system, the consciousness of major Japanese people was profoundly bound to the political culture of the Tennoh emperor system and the ethics of "KOH"(公) which is different from the concept of public in relation to individual. The concept of KOH is rooted in the concept of paternal *jus sanguinis* on which the institution of Japanese household "IE"(家) was been based. The Tennoh emperor system from the Meiji era extended this traditional IE system inherited in long period of BUKE (武家) society in Japan from before Meiji era to national level as an imagined community in order to formulate the national identity with Tennoh in its core. An individual in the IE loses independency for conformity of IE. IE has a father as an authority to take responsibility for protecting the family. Therefore, an individual as a part of IE must obey the authority of father and conform him/herself to the intention of whole community based on the authority of father beyond his/her own intention or idea. In the Meiji era, Tennoh became of the father of Japan who was deified as the holy being. That ideology was crystalized into the "KYOIKU-CHOKUGO" (Imperial Rescript on Education) as follows:

“Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue.

Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education.

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters: as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.

So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers. The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places.

It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all thus attain to the same virtue.

The 30th day of the 10th month of the 23rd year of Meiji (1890) (Imperial Sign Manual. Imperial Seal)”<sup>4</sup>

This “Imperial Rescript on Education” was the sole bible of the the Tennoh state Shintoism during and before war since 1890. The Abe regime made a cabinet decision in March of 2016 to allow schools to use this rescript in the educational curriculum in spite of the historical fact that both houses of Japanese Diet decided to totally abolish this rescript in 1948. It is one of far-right politics of the Abe regime to lead Japan back to the strong identity centered on the Tennoh like in the period of the Meiji Constitution. This is a great challenge to the churches in Japan. How shall theology and mission in

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.chukai.ne.jp/~masago/kyouiku.html>

Japan respond to such a flow of politics which prominently started from 1990s. The Tennoh emperor system can be regarded as “Tower of Babel.” Although this “Tower of Babel,” the Tennoh emperor system attributing the sovereignty to Tennoh was broken along with the defeat of war in 1945, it remained in frozen state in the pacifist Constitution and has been revitalized to restore the strong identity of Japan.

## II *Eklesia* and *Oikoumene*

Critically viewing political trend of increasing far-right nationalism, historical revisionism to conceal negative facts in the past and direction of being great military power by the Abe regime and its far right proponents like the *Nippon Kaigi*, we should take profound consideration on the essence of the church on the basis of the Bible and ecumenism.

Regarding the concept of ecumenism, Raiser describes that “(O)n the one hand, ecumenism is taken to refer exclusively to interchurch, inter-confessional relationship, to efforts to achieve the ‘una sancta’ ..... On the other hand, the emphasis is placed on the worldwide, universal meaning of ecumenism, its international or intercultural dimension” (Raiser 85). The “*oikoumene*” as Greek origin of ecumenism has the same root of word as the “*oikos*,” i.e., house. Raiser remarks that when the concept of *oikoumene* is used in the New Testament, it is significantly related to “a new awareness of the inhabited earth as an inter-related whole” “founded on the totality of relationship” or “an expression of living interaction” (Raiser 86).

“It lives in the certainty that the earth is habitable, because God has established his covenant for the whole of creation” which “is guided by the hope that God himself will dwell with humankind, with God’s people. ... The *oikumene*, understood as the one household of life created and preserved by God, thus extends beyond the world of humankind, of the one human race, to creation as a whole” (Raiser 87-88). We should remark Raiser’s definition of *oikoumene* as “household of life mastered only by God, the Creator.”

In the New Testament, we find many metaphorical terms to express the church (*eklesia*). One of famous terms is the church as “body of Christ” in Paul’s letters like the First Corinthians and the Romans. Let us focus upon another metaphorical term, i.e. the church as “members of the household of God.”:

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but

fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,”  
(Ephesian 2:19 <NKJV>)

The letter to the Ephesians calls the church *oikeios tou theou* in Greek. Here the plural form of *oikos* in Greek, i.e. plural form of “house” is used for designating the household members. And it is noted that *oikoumene* is derived from the verbal form, *oikeo* which means to inhabit / live. Furthermore, as we should consider the language of the Hebrew Bible as the background of the New Testament, we have to focus on the use of *oikoumene* in the Septuaginta (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), and find Hebrew term in the appearance of *oikoumene*. We can quote the text of Psalm 23:1 (24:1 in the Hebrew Bible) in the Greek Old Testament where *oikoumene* in Greek and *thebel* in Hebrew:

“The earth *is* the LORD’ s, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1 <NKJV>)

What are the consistent ideas connecting these three words: *oikos*, *oikeioi* and *oikoumene*? Humankind and the world belong to God, the Creator. The world is regarded as the household of the Lord. Household in the light of the Bible is the community of people called in by the Lord beyond exclusive relationship of lineage or blood. How are openness and inclusiveness of the Lord’s household based upon?

First, the fatherhood of God is rooted in universalism extending to every kind of peoples. Now we can review the story of Mark 3:31-35 (cf. Mat 12:46-50; Lk8:19-21).

“Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” (Mk 3:34-35 <NKJV>)

Jesus presents the figure of God’s household for the future perspective of the church universally called out of the world beyond lineage of nation or blood relation.

What is the second point? Again, let us go back to the Letter to the Ephesians 2:19. The Bible says that “you are no longer strangers ...but... members of the household of God.” Here we have to note that when the Bible says that ones are no longer sojourners, but members of the household of God, it does not mean that the reality of ones as sojourners should be forgotten. The Bible implicitly asks readers or audience in faith not to forget the grace of having been changed from the situation of sojourner to the identity of member of God’s household. In other words, the Bible encourages us in faith to freshly remind us of the given grace whenever remembering (*anamnesis* in Greek; *zakar* in Hebrew) the grace of being reborn as member of the Lord’s household from

sojourner. The Eph2:19 reminds members of the Lord's household of graceful reality that while they are members of the Lord's household, they were once strangers who lost the homeland to go back and could not find the place to aim at. This is the grammar of faith to be inspired by the Bible.

This grammar is similar to Martin Luther's famous aphorism:

*"simul justus et peccator,"* i.e., Christians are the justified, and at the same time, sinner.

In other words, even though one is justified as a Christian believing Jesus Christ and being forgiven of his/her sin, he/she is still sinful. It does not mean that the forgiveness by Jesus Christ is imperfect, but that Christian is the sinner forgiven by Jesus Christ, and Christian lives in the joy being constantly refreshed by remembering the reality of grace as the present event that he/she was changed from the sinful to the justified by forgiveness. There happens simultaneousness between rejoice of salvation and memory of sinner. This truth resonates to the simultaneousness between the rejoice of living as member of the Lord's household as holy *oikos* based upon the fatherhood of God and the memory of living as stranger / sojourner before being guided in the church from margins of the world as *oikoumene* which was created and reigned by God.

What are grounds for the universality of church which makes the church open to strangers / sojourners borderlessly and inclusive to new others beyond the exclusive lineage of nation or the blood relation? Those are guaranteed by the universality of Jesus Christ himself, on the one hand, and by spiritual dynamism of identity composed of the membership of the Lord's household and the memory of sojourner, on the other.

How can we understand the relationship between *oikos* and *oikoumene* in the socio-theological perspective of ecumenism?

By the way, we find another concept of the world in the New Testament, i.e., *kosmos* which occurs 187 times in the New Testament, while *oikoumene* is used only 14 times. The *kosmos* was defined by ancient scholars or poets as "the natural order of things" (Herodotus), "the order of government – especially the constitution of Sparta, or "the order of the universe (Pythagoras), ornament or honor" (Homer). In the New Testament, the concept of *kosmos* appears simply as the physical creation or its human habitants<sup>5</sup>, and existence antagonistically misunderstanding Jesus Christ or his Kingdom<sup>6</sup>. The concept of *oikoumene* as the inhabited region means even the Roman Empire (Lk2:4; 4:5;

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mt 13:15,38; 26:13; Lk12:20; Jn1:9; 6:14,28; 21:25; Acts17:24; Rom1:8; 1Cor14:10; Eph1:4; Heb4:3.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mt18:7; Jn1:10; 3:19; 7:4-7; 12:31; 14:30; 15:18-19; 16:11,20,33; Rom3:19; 1Cor4:9-13; Col2:8; Heb11:7,38.



as cultural reference (Acts 17:6; 19:27), or as geographical reference (Acts 11:28; 24:5; Rom 10:18; Rev 3:10; 6:14). And it is noted that the concept of *oikoumene* is used as region to which the sovereignty and judgment of Jesus Christ extends (Heb 2:5; cf. Lk 2:1,7; Acts 17:31). Therefore, we can regard *oikoumene* as theologically much more significant concept for the faith of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.

We know that the concept of *oikos* is used as metaphor of the church (*eklesia* = the called) for the Lord's household, but not the concept of *oikoumene*. Therefore, to be sure, the concept of *oikoumene* is more comprehensive concept than *oikos*, which is included within *oikoumene*. How can we understand the relationship between *oikos* and *oikoumene* socio-theologically?

What delineates the demarcation of *oikoumene* in terms of *oikos*?

Jesus' parable of "the lost sheep" in Luke 15 and Matthew 18 provides us with meaningful suggestions regarding this question. Through the parable, Jesus describes that while one sheep was lost from the flock of 100, the shepherd will leave 99 in the field or the mountain and go search the lost one. This parable suggests us that Jesus' sovereignty of love extends to the lost one who is placed at the margin where the oppressed or the poor suffers from exploitation and/or discrimination in the *oikoumene*. We can find the common truth in the text of Luke 2:1-7. In this text, Rome as capitol of the Roman Empire can be regarded as political center of secular power, while the manger where Jesus as Savior is sleeping beside Mary and Joseph surrounding it implies the margin of the *oikoumene* in the rhetorical structure of the Scripture describing Augustus as the most powerful in the world at the beginning in Lk 2:1 and Jesus as Messiah at the end in v.7. However, God chooses the margin of the *oikoumene* as revolutionary center of mission to transmit the Gospel, i.e., news of salvation, rejoice, hope and peace all over the world, i.e., *oikoumene*. At that moment, the relationship between the center and the margin is revolutionarily reversed: the center becomes the margin and the margin becomes the center. Therefore, while the *oikos / oikeioi* means the community which sojourners were guided in by the Lord who searches the lost one in the margins of the *oikoumene*, Jesus Christ calls out the church as *oikos / oikeioi* in ahead at the margins where the lost ones suffer from injustice, poverty, and discrimination. Thus, *oikos (/ oikeioi)* is encouraged to walk out from the community of worship to the way of following as sojourners of peace-making Jesus Christ who is waiting for sojourners/disciples to come and participate in the Lord's actions as their *diakonia* at the margins of the *oikoumene*. This is a paradoxical dynamics of *missio Dei*. This is a theological basis of ecumenical dynamics to which the church has to come back in the time of crisis or transition in the history of the world.

We have to remark theological understanding of transformative ecumenism in the

church based on the Biblical grounds for challenging new issues in the socio-historical context of Japan. Japan has been prevailed with the far-right politics by the Abe regime supported by the ultra-nationalist group called “Nippon-Kaigi,” on the one hand, and socio-economic changes such as the increasing economic gap between the rich and poor, rapid aging population, and the immigration policy to increase foreign laborers as low wage labor power. In other words, while Japan has been increasingly going to the far-right direction ideologically aiming at restoring the national identity as defined in the Meiji Constitution during and before war, Japanese society has been suffering from deteriorating change in penetrating global capitalism. As results of that, poverty, social unrest and xenophobic racism have been spreading profoundly in the society. This is current situation of Japan from 1990s up to now.

We have to face ecumenical tasks of the church in this reality.

### III Three Challenges to Ecumenism in Current Japan

#### A The Lord’s Household versus “KOH” based on the Tennoh System

*“Christians should oppose all forms of tyranny and domination in Church or State and affirm democracy as closest to the gospel, a point made by Reformed theologian Karl Barth, and accepted by many Roman Catholics who argue for greater democratic participation in their Church.” (Norwood 204).*

Japan will face the abdication and accession of Tennoh Emperor in April and May of this year. Current Tennoh Akihito will step down on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and Naruhito will ascend to the throne as the next Tennoh on May 1<sup>st</sup>. At least this is the first case of the change of Tennoh while the current Tennoh is still alive. This is beyond the regulation of the old Imperial House Law (1889-1945) and the new Law (1945-). While the sovereignty of the state was attributed to the Emperor from the Meiji era to 1945, under the constitution which came into effect from May 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1947 the Tennoh was placed at the position of symbol of the state and the integration of nation, the sovereignty of the state belongs to the people of Japan, and the action of the Tennoh is limited to the range of constitutional functions which are stipulated in clauses 4 and 7 of the current constitution such as the appointment of the prime minister and the judges of the supreme court. The current constitution has a principle of the separation of the state and religion in clauses 20 and 89, while the right of religion was consequently limited by the stipulation of “As long as it does not break the order of peace” (Article 28) under the Meiji Constitution

attributing the sovereignty of the state to the Emperor. Therefore, all the laws including the laws legislated at the imperial Diet were finally issued as the imperial orders. Therefore, the decisions to start wars were made by the name of the Emperor's order. After the defeat of Japan, Tennoh Hirohito should have had to be accounted for war responsibility. However, the General D. MacArthur could successfully prevent Hirohito from being prosecuted as war criminal in the international situation of the Cold War regime occurring in the region of Northeast Asia so as to integrate the people of Japan centered on the Tennoh as the bastion of anti-communism. Therefore, even though the current pacifist Constitution of Japan guarantees the principles of the sovereignty of the state to the people of Japan and the separation of the state and religions obviously, Japan failed to shift the political structure to republic without the Emperor by abolishing the Imperial House Law itself. What is the problem? Japan will hold the DAIJOSAI (大嘗祭), the first ceremonial offering of rice by newly-enthroned Emperor, with expense of huge amounts of national budgets in November of this year after Naruhito is enthroned to new Tennoh. The DAIJOSAI is apparently the religious ceremony of the Emperor ascending from human being to the deity, i.e., deification of the human being. The fact that the government spends national budgets for that ceremony means to break the principle of the separation of the state and religion. This means Japan is going to consequently return to the situation of the period during and before WWII when the SAISEI-ICCHI (祭政一致), i.e., the unity of Tennoh Shintoism as religion and politics of the state prevailed in Japan under the Meiji Constitution. Majority of the people of Japan don't feel the contradiction regarding this, because the mind and consciousness of Japanese people are profoundly rooted in the political culture of the Tennoh Emperor system, even today. Therefore, any big civil revolution didn't happen in Japan after the defeat of wars. Generally, members of the Imperial family are regarded as noble one by the people of Japan. However, they have no human rights including freedom of the individual, religion, career decision and marriage. They are not registered in the Japanese family registration system called "KOSEKI" as other ordinary Japanese people do. In other words, there is a legal discrimination against loyal family. They are not treated as human beings guaranteed of human rights in the current Constitution. This is contradictory to the basic idea of freedom and equality of individual in the constitutional democracy and the universal ideas of human rights engraved in the international acts.

This is a huge thorn stuck in the way of mission in Christianity of Japan. Major part of Japanese Christianity has kept silent on these contradictory problems with long history of persecution since the Tokugawa era of 260 years and under the Meiji Constitution era of 55 years, i.e., for over 300 years. Japanese Christians has overlooked the problem

unconsciously or pretends not to be aware of this problem, and Japanese Christianity has been involved in the history of evangelism considering the political culture of Tennoh as taboo. Historically the Japanese government has taken advantage of the authority of Emperor politically to suppress or alleviate the complaints by the people. Let me quote an example. In 2011 the great earthquake happened in eastern part of Japan and consecutively huge devastative accident occurred in the nuclear power plants in Fukushima. So many people were dislocated from their home town for evacuation. The government and the Tokyo Electric Power Co., Inc. have been pursued of responsibility by angry people in Fukushima. Many parts of problems have not yet resolved even today. The Tennoh Akihito visited those evacuated people in Fukushima. He consoled them with compassionate words. Then there happened curious phenomenon within the psychology of the people. People's anger is mitigated, and their critical mind is shaken and become obscure. Nobody expresses anger and criticism before the compassionate Emperor. The government and people of power have taken advantage of this strange power of the Tennoh's actions politically. In other words, people of Japan are not still free from the authoritarian power of the compassionate Emperor which is based upon the political culture of the "KOH (公)."

This is a peculiar cultural system of making people finally accept socio-political contradictions suppressing anger and critical spirits and giving up to stand up against the political corruptions, that is totally different from political culture of South Korea where many revolutions happened including the March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Movement, April 19<sup>th</sup> students revolution of 1960, the democratization revolution in 1987, and the Candle Revolution in 2017. The hidden discrimination between the loyal family and Japanese people is profoundly interlinked to socio-historical discriminations against people called "Buraku" and Koreans in Japan by Japanese people in the hierarchical structure of the purity and the impurity. Why has it been extremely difficult for Japan to apologize for the peoples victimized by colonial rule and/or invasive wars by admitting guilty of those policies under the Meiji Constitution? It is because the admitting of guilts of colonial rules and invasive wars consequently reaches the admitting guilt of the Emperor on the basis of which the identity of nation and the fundamental structure of the state of Japan (called "KOKUTAI 國體) consists of. Even though many liberals and progressives admit guilty of those, overwhelming majority are not supportive to such a position and keep silent of it. The HEISEI Tennoh Akihito traveled many times to places of the past battle-field such as the Okinawa, the Guam, the Parao and Asian countries expressing the words of condolence there. But he has never apologized for colonial rules and invasive wars that were launched by his father Hirohito by admitting guilty. Why? It is impossible to admit guilt of the Tennoh who was deified in the Imperial Rescript of

Education and the state Shintoism which is succeeded verbally even in the current Imperial House Law, even though it is never explicitly expressed under the pacifist Constitution. The deity must be sinless all the time. This is the political position strongly supported by far-right and conservative people and regarded as taboo by majority of Japanese people.

Can Japanese Church avoid this challenge in transitional era from “HEISEI” to the next? Japanese Church now have to come back to the basis of ecumenism as the Lord’s household resisting any kind of deification of human being.

## B Theology of Article 9

The current Japanese Constitution has kept Article 9 which declares the eternal renouncement of war:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.” (Article 9)

This Article 9 is in crisis, because the Abe regime has desperately attempted to revise this Article 9 by adding a new clause of explicit description of the Self Defense Force to the original text of Article 9. Many Constitutional scholars warn that by so doing, the government can open a way of increasing further military power so as to commit to overseas wars together with the USA after the Abe regime made a cabinet decision of collective self-defense rights in July of 2014.

Currently symbolic and main purpose of civic movement of struggling for justice and peace in Japan is to keep Article 9 opposing the revision of Article 9 by the Abe regime. The Prime Minister Shinzo Abe regards the current Japanese Constitution holding Article 9 as Constitution forced by GHQ because of the defeat of war. He feels shameful of Article 9. We cannot take further consideration on the issue of Article 9 legally and socio-politically any more here.

Now we have to theologize Article 9 for ecumenical task of peace making for the Church. Article 9 is crucially valuable ideal of promising peace in Northeast Asia and the world, although many critics including far-right groups and conservatives blame proponents of Article 9 as romantic or illusive. However, Article 9 finally sees through

catastrophic results that increasing militaristic defense possibly causes to each other. Article 9 is profoundly based upon renouncement of hostility by hospitality of love which Jesus expressed in the Gospel, “Love your enemy.”

French philosopher, Jacques Derrida philosophically argues the “law of hospitality”. What Derrida signifies is that the present situation of human society, which the hosts, or the strong, select and sequence the others based on whether they are beneficial to the society or not, is challenged by the tension between the justice of conditional of hospitality intrinsic in our law and the justice of unconditional hospitality, and the awakening to the true, unconditional justice. Thus, by the awareness of unconditional hospitality, a way for severing the chain of internal hostility can be discovered. The awareness of unconditional hospitality is compatible to the love of enemy proclaimed by Jesus. Hospitality and hostility both of which were derived from *hospes / hosti-pet-s* in Latin that means both of “sojourner” or guest and host simultaneously are significant issues for *GER* in Hebrew, sojourner like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Genesis. When we consider the church as the community of sojourners called and invited in by the Lord and called out by the Lord to margins where the Lord already stays with the oppressed ahead of us, the church of the Lord as sojourners is commanded by the Lord to persistently take position of hospitality as a way of overcoming hostility. This is theological ground in ecumenism to definitely affirm Article 9.

I think of a historical irony regarding the idea of non-violent peace-making flowing in Article 9. This perspective of non-violent peace was proclaimed in the March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Movement in 1919 in Korea under colonial rule by the Empire of Japan based on the Tennoh state Shintoism for the first time in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though that movement was bloodily suppressed by Japan, that perspective of non-violent peace was surprisingly crystalized in Article 9 of the Japanese pacifist Constitution after August of 1945. In South Korea, ecumenical movement inheriting the essence of peace in March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence movement 100 years later is trying to launch the peace process towards reconciliatory reunification of the Korean peninsula along with the direction of establishing the zone of denuclearization in Northeast Asia. Therefore, the church of Japan should firmly take ecumenical position to struggle for keeping Article 9 in solidarity with Korean church’s ecumenical movement for peaceful reunification. In other words, the way of consistently keeping Article 9 in Japan against the Abe regime’s strategy of excessively emphasizing the menace of North Korea and China as “enemy” in order to rationalize to increase militaristic power by spreading the feeling of unrest and fear is the way of being involved in the peace process of the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia. Advocating the issues of historical responsibility for “the comfort women” and the forced laborers during colonial rule of Korea by Japan is inevitably

connected with keeping Article 9. Keeping Article 9 consistently is the sole way of building solidarity with the Korean church launching the peace process towards reconciliatory reunification of the Korean peninsula, on the one hand, and the firm way for the Japanese church to always become conscious of war responsibility and practice responsible task of mission, on the other hand.

### C Ecumenical Way of Building the Church in Japan Facing the Influx of Migrants

The system of global capitalism has drastically changed economic system and social structure in Japan particularly since the USA started to put the pressure on Japan to open the door of national economy to new liberal economy in American style in 1990s. At the same time, greedy global capitalism of roaming across the globe without border and looking for cheaper materials and labor cost to get more interest has been gradually facing the aporia or the impasse. As results of that, besides serious ecological devastation, many industrialized countries mainly in the northern hemisphere have been facing rapid decrease of population, and magnification of economic gap between the haves and have-nots. In those countries local cities have been suffering from the hollowing-out of industry and the population drain. Exactly Japan has been trapped in such an ordeal.

The population of Japan which amounted to 128 million in 2008 dropped to 126.56 million in 2018 and is anticipated to go down to 9.92 million in 2053. In December of 2017, foreign laborers amount to 1.27 million among whole employed population of 65.31 million in Japan. That means that 2% (one per 50) of employed population being foreigners. The studies anticipate that the population of foreign laborers will increase from current 1.27 million to 2 million by 2025 (Mainichi, Aug. 10, 2018).

In December of the last year (2018), Japan legislated the revision of the immigration law in order to desperately accept more foreign laborers. That newly revised law will come into effect in April of this year (2019). Critics say that this is “slavery in the present time.” Japan suffering from rapid decreasing birthrate and aging population will furthermore depend upon foreigners so as to sustain industries and local societies. However, many criticisms are directed to Japanese government of persistently being reluctant of improving policies to protect human rights of foreign laborers rejecting the immigration policy for continuing the policy to introduce cheaper labor power without admitting to permanently reside in Japan.

What does it mean? There is happening enlargement of margin where migrant people or sojourners are suffering from exploitation in lower wage, dehumanized works and power / sexual harassment. They are easily isolated and discriminated against in Japanese society. They seek supports and helps. In Japan the church should have more

concern for their sufferings and human rights issues hearkening the Scripture:

“Also you shall not oppress a stranger (*GER*), for you know the heart of a stranger (*GER*), because you were strangers (*GERIM*) in the land of Egypt.”  
(Exodus 23:9 <NKJV>)

We should come back to ecumenical understanding of the church in current situation of painfully changing *oikoumene* of Japan. Sociologically, the church is recognized as host community, i.e., the *oikos* / *oikeioi* of God to be able to support and help foreign laborers who are sojourners being at problematic margins of the *oikoumene*. However, true host is Jesus Christ alone. The Lord who already stays with suffering sojourners at margins of the *oikoumene* is calling out and encouraging the Church as the community of disciples' *diakonia* to come to the Lord to work with Him according to the *missio Dei*. Our ecumenical faith for being involved in this task for the issue of migrant people is “*simul familia Dei et hospes*,” i.e., we are now the family of God, but don't forget the memory of being sojourners before the Lord have found us, and the Lord's calling us to serve in *diakonia* following the Lord. On the basis of this faith, we can commit to this task with rejoice and humbleness.

Currently, any denominations in Japanese church have been struggling with the problem of aging and shrinking of church members along with the situation of demographic change in Japan. This can be regarded as a crisis of the church in Japan. But I am convinced that a new promise by the Lord for the future of the church in Japan is hidden in this current crisis. It depends upon whether we are awake or not. Japanese society and industry have been transforming into new shapes breaking something traditional and engendering something new. In this historic dynamics, the Lord seems to expect the Church in Japan to open the door of self-changing and go beyond closedness as “national church” towards more inclusive tents of the Lord's sojourners for living together between already included sojourners and newly included ones.

#### IV Epilogue: Towards Transformative Ecumenism in Japan and Northeast Asia

I worked on consideration on a new perspective of ecumenism in the church of Japan from three angles of social issues based upon theological view of *oikos* / *oikeioi* and *oikoumene*.

First is the Tennoh Emperor system, second is Article 9, and third is the influx of migrants. I believe that those three issues are meaningfully interrelated each other in



deeper dimension as we find that salvation history has been vitally being launched by God in the depth of secular history.

The Tennoh Emperor system seems to be going towards a serious aporia like the end of the “Tower of Babel” (Genesis 11:1-9) in spite of the fact that the Abe regime and far-right proponents desperately attempt to strengthen that system towards that in the period of the Meiji Constitution persistently keeping the lineage of sole male Emperor.

When the Abe regime attempts to continually go to the policy of increasing military power so as to wage war, it used to aspire to take advantage of authority of Tennoh for integration of the nation. Put differently, the Abe regime attempts to use two axes for integration of the nation in the policy of increasing military power. One is the authority of Tennoh as national symbol, and another is the concept of “enemy,” for which particularly North Korea has been designated, and recently even South Korea. In other words, the Abe regime craftily uses the feeling of reverence for the Tennoh as centripetal force to integrate Japanese people on the one hand, and the emotion of hostility against enemy to demarcate the periphery of the nation, on the other. However, the spirit of Article 9 sees through such a plot articulated by the Abe regime’s nationalism, and instead presents as alternative a way of renouncing hostility *per se* anticipating catastrophic result of competitive defense unlimitedly increasing power of military in the context of Northeast Asia including Japan, China and two Koreas. The spirit of Article 9 is based on ethics of hospitality of love that is grounded in the Scripture of sojourners and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The political culture of Tennoh has been deeply rooted in the consciousness and unconsciousness of Japanese people. Progressive ideology to reject the Tennoh system has always been ignored by majority of the nation even after the WWII. Ironically, in the past 30 years of the HEISEI, rather over 70 % of Japanese people feel favorite to the Tennoh Akihito. The current Tennoh Emperor system which persists of the male lineage and already abolished the prewar system of concubine and illegitimate child in the postwar era has been facing serious crisis of sustainability. Since the Meiji era, Japan has delineated as “KOKUTAI-MEICHOH” (國體明徴) the shape of national identity based on the Tennoh visibly or invisibly with agreement or silence of majority of the nation. However, the shape of society in Japan has been drastically changing as result of severe infiltration of global capitalism, on the one hand, and the influx of foreigners, on the other. Apostle Pauls says,:

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Roman 8:22 <NKJV>).

Japan now groans and pangs towards new shape of society living together with Japanese and new comers sharing life in fullness. How shall the church face this dynamic flow of history and society?

The church should not sleep being blind to an omen of paradigm shift of society and necessity of reforming traditional way of the church. The church in Japan should be awake of a way of transformative ecumenism with the repenting confession of war responsibility and the spirit and *diakonia* of hospitality as a way of transformative ecumenism for sharing life in fullness. I am convinced that when we are awake of tasks in prayers for life in fullness, human rights, justice and reconciliatory peace on the basis of ecumenical dynamics of the household (*oikeioi*) of the Lord and the *oikoumene* guided by God as salvation history, the church will be able to newly stand up and go forwards in the wilderness of mission holding and spreading the tent of living together towards a promised stage of history in hope. \* \* \*

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