

Foreword: JEA Theology Commission, “Fundamentalism”

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The compilation of the “JEA Mission and Viewpoint” was based upon and completed after the “Fourth Japan Evangelism Conference” in June 2000 when the “Okinawa Declaration” was adopted. It was especially the themes of “Church and State” and “The Unity and Cooperation of the Church” which the Theology Commission repeatedly investigated. The result was the publication of “Church and State” (February 11, 2004) and “Agreement and Unity of the Church: Evangelical and Public/Catholic Church” (March 10, 2005).

What is called the “simultaneous multiple terrorist attacks (9/11 event)” suddenly occurred in the midst of this discussion. On September 11, 2001, an Islamic radical group intentionally crashed airliners into the World Trade Center. Based upon the ensuing American extermination of terrorist organizations and the so called just cause of enforcing sanctions upon countries that support terrorism, the Iraq War, beginning with the Afghanistan War, was carried out with a multinational army but without a United Nations resolution of understanding. This was done in order to overthrow the Taliban political administration in Afghanistan which trained terrorist organizations and to overthrow Hussein’s political administration in Iraq which supposedly possessed weapons of mass destruction. In the context of this international political situation, Islamic fundamentalism which had become the foundation for the thinking of Islamic radical parties, and American Christian evangelicalism through its support of the diplomatic policies shored up by the thinkers behind the new conservatism of America’s Bush administration, initiated their confrontational stance.

On the one hand, outside Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi quickly began to support America by sending the maritime Self Defense Force to the Persian Gulf as a way of providing rear support for the American military in the Afghan war and in the case of the Iraq War by making it possible for the Self Defense Force to be deployed outside of Japan through passing the “Iraq Special Measures Law.” In Japan, with the “National Flag and National Song Law,” there is an increasing tendency toward hoisting the flag and singing in unison the “Kimigayo” (national anthem) at events like graduations. Furthermore, consultations have begun to inaugurate the “Constitution Study Group” which has the goal of reforming the Japanese constitution, especially so the wording of the first and ninth articles of the constitution would fit the present situation. Furthermore, cries are being heard for reviewing the “Basic Education Law,” and the importance of respect for traditional Japanese culture and training in patriotism is being identified. An increasing number of people are fearful that while the government gropes toward a “Japanese shape” of a “normal country” it is being diverted toward forming a “country that can go to war.”

The JEA Theological Commission, cognizant of standing in this kind of era, has come to the conclusion that it is necessary to theologically investigate the nature of “fundamentalism” which has come to the attention of the entire world. The American evangelical church’s support of the Iraq War and its pro-war tendency have created a situation in which Japan’s evangelical church has been questioned and criticized by those

who are opposed to the Iraq War. Concerning the “agreement and unity of the Church,” it should be remembered that points of agreement and disagreement between American and Japanese evangelical churches regarding thinking about and responding to the Iraq War need to be examined theologically. Furthermore, even though in the publication, “Church and State,” Biblical patriotism and treatment of the role of the church in relation to the state [was examined], further investigation of the meaning of the close relationship between [, on the one hand,] the educational emphasis on “Japan’s traditional culture and patriotism” and the Prime Minister’s emphatic insistence upon worshipping at the Yasukuni Shinto shrine, and [on the other hand,] the Iraq War and the overseas deployment of Japan’s Self Defense Forces, has resulted in the situation that the church’s response to the country’s way of doing things and its direction has also become an enormous subject and cannot but fall within the range of examination. When framed religiously and conceptually, this kind of internal and external contemporary reality can be called “fundamentalism.”

On the basis of this kind of awareness of the issue, the following subjects dealing with “fundamentalism” are theologically examined.

1) “Fundamentalism and the Bible”: An inquiry into fundamentalistic events from the perspective of the Old and New Testaments. This is a study of the Lord Jesus’ way of doing things and interacting.

2) “Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism”: An inquiry into points of agreement and disagreement between Christian fundamentalism and evangelicalism, including American historical circumstances and processes, and influence and reception in Japan. Focusing on Bibliology and Biblical interpretation, this is a critique of issues within fundamentalism such as holding tightly to Biblical inerrancy and fundamental doctrines (related to ethical themes), eschatology (related to political themes), and anti-evolution (related to societal and educational themes).

3) “Fundamentalism and Exclusivity”: An analysis of the tendency of fundamentalism to radicalize acute conversion and an inspection of that mechanism. This is investigated from the perspective of theological anthropology.

4) “Fundamentalism and Polytheism”: A rebuttal of the generally held opinion that monotheism easily gives rise to fundamentalism and a pro-war stance, and that a polytheistic worldview can sustain 21st century peace.

5) “Fundamentalism and War”: An analysis of the concrete, contemporary subject of “war” and its relation to fundamentalism, an inquiry into patriotism and nationalism, and an inspection from a Biblical and historical perspective of whether Christianity is a violent religion.

6) “Fundamentalism and America”: Primarily an analysis of the American evangelical situation at the time of 9/11. This is an enunciation of “just war” theory, civil religion, and reasons for the fragility of the anti-Iraq War group.

The above six subjects complete this pamphlet. It will be a blessing if it helps the church Biblically and theologically understand first the contemporary situation of Japan and then of the world, and if it helps the church more profoundly recognize its mission.