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Abstract

Reality and Challenges of the North-East Asian “Ecclesia Catholicus”

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The great awakening movement occurred with the Pietism of the West resulting in the organizing of the “Evangelical Alliance” (EA) in 1846 in London. The EA sent many missionaries to Asia. The first pioneer of the Asian mission was the Baptist Missionary Society organized in 1793 by W. Carey who was delegated to Calcutta in India. Following him, the London Missionary Society was formed in 1795. Its representative was a famous English dissenter R. Morrison who was delegated to India, Southeast Asia and China. One reason why the Anglo-American mission for Asian countries was successively proceeded with cooperative work without denominational differences mattering was due to an earnest desire for evangelism and loyalty to God. It is significant that Asian mission was carried by cooperative working of “free church” type protestant denominations which inherited Pietism and the great awaking movement.

When Western powers invade Asian countries, the traditional religions resist, and are easily connected to nationalism. In such circumstances, Christians, as a minority, who were trying to be indigenous were politically and religiously persecuted. A history of Kirishitan martyrdom during the Toyotomi/Tokugawa era in Japan is one good example.

Nevertheless, we have to notice the fact that Christianity in Asian countries is grounded in God’s people by the homogeneous grace which goes beyond the heterogeneous elements among nations. It is the same grace inviting us, all nations, to the eucharistic community based on Christs’ sacrificial blood and body. The body of Christ as the whole church, namely ecclesia catholicus, has the power to shoulder ecumenical subjects. But this important aspect seems not to be fully shared among Asian churches, because they are interested in historical and cultural differences and heterogeneousness, which cannot be relativized. There are surely the CCA (Christian Council of Asia) and various Christian associations/ movements, but there is a lack of ecumenical ecclesiology.