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국제학석사학위논문

Explaining Religious Commitment of Protestant Middle-aged Women

개신교 중년여성의 종교몰입에 관한 연구

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Explaining Religious Commitment of Protestant Middle-aged Women

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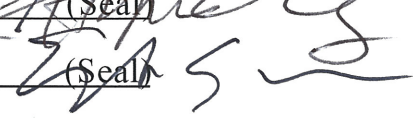
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Abstract

Explaining Religious Commitment of Protestant Middle-aged Women

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This paper examines the background of religious commitment of Korean middle-aged women. According to the statistical data, women's participation rate in religious activities exceeds that of men's. Strong religious commitment of women has long been a subject for the sociology of religion and this study also suggest Korean context of religious commitment of Korean middle-aged women. Among various religions in Korea, Protestant women were selected because numerous studies revealed the Protestant's strong commitment and devotion to religion.

By interviewing 10 people who are actively participating in religious activities and also holding strong religious beliefs, the reasons for their religious commitment can be categorized into two, which again can be divided into 5 small categories. They are: (1) Religion as a means to resolve

conflicts between family members and encourage family integration; (2) Religious community helps to overcome the feeling of isolation which is regarded as a pseudo family by substituting the old blood relationship; (3) Religion helps to overcome identity crisis by participating in various religious activities and recognized as 'an individual'; (4) Religion is a factor that they can rely on when oneself has to face with materialistic crisis in their life; (5) Religion helps them to escape from materialistic life which made them unhappy and it also enabled them to pursue post-materialistic values.

Korea has experienced unprecedented economic growth in the end of 20th century. Scholars argue that religion will lose its significance when a country becomes affluent enough not to concern about survival which is represented as secularization theory. However, Korea is moving more toward religious society rather than secularized society. Especially, the role of middle-aged women in the growth of religion is noteworthy.

An effort to reveal the background of religious commitment of Korean middle-aged women not only enables us to think about the social status and role of them, but also helps us to understand the role of religion in Korean society.

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Keywords: Religious Commitment, Religious Devotion, Korean Middle-aged Women, Protestant, Quantitative Research

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I . Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

Marx, Durkheim, Weber and many other scholars all believed that religion would gradually fade in importance and cease to be significant with the advent of industrial society and change into secularized society. Secularization theory is a theory that explains the abating of religious faith, values, and practices. This theory has been regarded as one of the most important feature of modern society, by getting support from numerous sociologist in the 20th century. Despite their strong emphasis on secularization theory, however, the impact of religion has not been weakened at all, and it is even getting stronger in some regions. The emergence of fundamentalist movement in Muslim countries and the evangelical revival in Latin America are indicators of it (Norris&Inglehart, 2011).

According to Korean Statistic (1985; 1995; 2005) data, the religious population in South Korea has increased consistently. In 1985, South Korea was one of the countries that can be defined as non-religious country because non-religious population (57.4%) was overwhelming religious population (42.6%). In 1995, within only a decade, religious population exceeded non-religious population accounting for more than half of the population in the region. This brought a big change in religious topography in South Korea.

There is one other point which claims our attention: it was women class who made this big change in society. Historically, the relationship between women and religion wasn't a favorable story, however, it seems likely that religion was more appealing to women. Religion functioned as a powerful moral force to foster sexual discrimination, and was also a strong ideology which sustains all the prejudices regarding women and segregation of social status. Numerous religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, and Islam describe women as a negative human being, where the only difference among them is just degrees of strictness. Sexual discrimination inside the religion has been eased dramatically in modern society, but still, some religious groups including traditional Islam or Christian with fundamentalism still oppose to the change in women's ceremonial and symbolic roles. Moreover, even in the religious groups where the sexual discrimination has been weakened, women becoming priests or being in a higher class in their religious hierarchy are excluded (Lee, 1997).

Nonetheless, regardless of different cultural areas, the fact that women are more religious than men and have higher participation rate in religious activities are well-known phenomenon which has already been proven by many studies (e.g., Elizabeth Weiss Ozora, 1996; Francis, 1997). In Korea as well, various research figured out that women are more religious and active in religious life (e.g., Hong, 1994; Ryu, 2009; Lee, 2012) and statistical data strongly support the fact (Korean Statistics, 2003; 2009; 2011). Moreover, the ratio of middle-aged women is higher than that of women with different ages in religious population, and middle-aged women shows higher

participation rate in religious activities than any other social group. This also back up the general hypothesis that older people are more religious compared to the group of young ages (Lee, 1997).

This research focuses on religious commitment of middle-aged women, which has already been proven by numerous studies, but in Korean context. This study will demonstrate why Korean middle-aged women show high population in religion and actively participate in religious activities. It tries to reveal what religion mean to their life, and how it affects them by approaching in societal and individual context.

1.2. Subjects and Methodology

This research limited the subject to the middle-aged, married women who are Protestant. The strong commitment to the religion, high religiosity and enthusiastic participation in religious activities are the major features of the Protestant, and those are the reason why this research has selected Protestant as a sample group (Eun, 2004; KGSS 2003-2009). Interviewees are mostly in their ages of 40s and 50s who has the position of a deacon (*jipsa*) of the church, all married. Sample group resides in Seoul, or capital area around, and snowball sampling method are adopted to acquire the interviewee which is the method of having an interviewee introduced by the interviewee who has already conducted the process. Participants of the research are total 10 persons, and the interviews were proceeded approximately one month from September 2013 to October 2013. Interviews were an one-off event, took place at the interviewee's house, church or neighboring café, and the time required was 60 minutes to 90 minutes by each person. All the processes of the interview were recorded under the consent of the participant, and their background of religious commitment was categorized by inductive analysis after the interview.

This study selected in-depth interview method to apprehend factors that triggered religious commitment of middle-aged Protestant women, how it is reinforced, and how those factors are expressed in their religious life. Among the various methods of in-depth interview, besides the structured interview

that is consisted of settled plan and format, the research utilized unstructured interview which the interviewees can easily narrate their life and opinion. Unstructured interview provides data with higher validity and possibility to discover new facts or hypothesis, compared to the structured interview (Song, 2008:224). Also, the in-depth interview is useful analysis tool since it enables the researcher to gather concrete and personal experiences as a research data, which is not possible in a statistical analysis. Therefore, it was successful to understand what makes these middle-aged women immerse in religion, why it is religion of all things, and how the religion is materialized in their real lives.

<Table 1> General Backgrounds of Interview Participants

| Case # | Age | Education Background (current) | No. of Children | Religious Life(year) | Occupation (Employment type) | Household income (annual/ Mil.KRW) |
|--------|-----|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | 53 | College | 2 | 20 | Housewife | 65 |
| 2 | 47 | College | 6 | Christian born | Housewife | 150 |
| 3 | 53 | College | 2 | 25 | Housewife | 150 |
| 4 | 53 | College | 3 | Christian born | Housewife | 150 |
| 5 | 49 | Junior college | 2 | 22 | Housewife | 60 |
| 6 | 50 | College | 2 | Christian born | Housewife | 100 |
| 7 | 59 | College | 2 | 5 | Housewife | 60 |
| 8 | 45 | Junior college | 1 | 35 | Housewife | 100 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------------------|---|-------------------|------------------------------|----|
| 9 | 41 | High school (Jr. College) | 2 | Christian born | Part-time Tutoring | 50 |
| 10 | 44 | College | 2 | 27 | Translation Telecommuting | 70 |

General backgrounds of interview participants are summarized in Table 1. People with their ages of 40s are five people (50%), those with the age 50s are also five (50%), and the average age is 49.1. College graduates are seven people, those of junior college are two, and high school graduate is one who's first and final educational background is different. Most of them are housewives, but two persons of the group are doing tutoring or translation in order to support the family financially. In both cases however, they do not work more than two hours a day, which seem unlikely to categorize them into the employed.

1.3. Literature Review

1.3.1. Functional Theory of Religion

Despite many attempts to define religion, it still remains as an area than can't be defined because the nature of each religion are different and it is difficult to have an objective perspective on every religion. Thus, in the field of religion of sociology, rather than analyzing the religion itself, it focuses on the functions of religion.

In general, religion is understood to have two major features: one is substantial feature, and the other is functional feature. Substantial feature is regarding "What is religion", while functional feature focuses on "What does religion do". In other words, defining religion based on its essence is substantive definition, on its functional role and effect is functional definition (Lee, 1997:45).

Sociologists prefer to identify religion throughout its functional role. It is almost impossible to investigate the essence of religion itself because there are a large number of religion and even same religion has developed differently in different cultural background. Moreover, the definition of the religion can be differed by scholars who is affected by a specific religious culture that him/herself is involved. And studying the essence of religion is hard to explain the change within the religion as the society changes (McGuire, 1981). Also, analyzing the role of religion rather than analyzing

its essence gives practical meaning on understanding human society. Therefore, identifying the religion by analyzing its physical, or mental benefit on human is one of the big flow in sociology.

Functional definition of religion is about revealing the societal function that religion performs. Focusing more on the influence of religion rather than its beliefs and practice is functional definition. In general, functional definition of religion is wide-ranging than substantive definition. Numerous religions that does not fall into the category of religion by the substantive definition fall into religious category according to the functional definition. Confucianism, for instance, does not worship the Absolute or God which in substantive definition puts great emphasis on a supernatural being when it comes to defining a religion. However, from the functional definition of religion, Confucianism has sufficient conditions to be defined as a religion. Beside cross-culture and societal change can all be covered by the functional definition (McGuire, 1981).

When discussing about Korean religion, functional definition has a significant meaning. *Gibok*(祈福)¹ is one of the major characteristics often used to describe the religious culture in Korea and it is closely related to functional feature of religion. Traditional religion such as Shamanism has long been utilized to satisfy people's materialistic and mental needs. Although new religions such as Catholicism and Protestantism have spread

¹ *Gibok*(祈福) literally means to pray and to wish for good luck. It refers to the behaviors and beliefs that seek blessing on one's materialistic needs.

in Korean society, traditional religion and Shamanistic practices are still strongly influencing people in Korea. People visiting fortune-teller right before important life affair, for example marriage, reflects it. In addition, newly imported religion has combined with *Gibok* feature making it different religious culture compare to Europe and America.

In the same vein, in order to identify Korean religious culture, it is important to approach in functional aspect rather than essential aspect. Moreover, this study is maintaining sociological perspective which also makes functional definition of religion significant. It focuses on revealing how the religion affects the middle-aged women in Korea, and why they commit or devote to religion than any other factors.

1.3.2. Middle-aged Women in Korea

A discussion concerning how to define the period of midlife is still ongoing. Although researchers have different opinions about it, however, 40s and 50s are generally regarded as a crucial transition period in life stage and defined middle-age (Kim, 1989).

Most of the studies regarding midlife include words such as 'crisis', 'mental health', 'self-identity', and 'quality of life' (e.g., Willits&Crider, 1988; Levin&Markides, 1988; Lee&Kwon, 2012; Cheon, 1999; Kim&Kim, 2001; Ko et al., 2000; Kim&Ko, 1996). It means that midlife is such a critical period in one's life and it is a time to prepare for the second life.

In particular, with the issue of increase in life expectancy and aging of the baby boomer generation, people's interest in the middle-aged generation is heightened. Due to prolonged life expectancy, midlife is no more the final stage of life but the start line of the second life. Moreover, baby boomer generation that enjoyed the abundant life compared to the previous generation started to consider how they are going to spend their rest of life healthy, and satisfactory. According to the data of Korean Statistics (1925-2010), the population aging from 40 to 59 was only 3.7 million in 1960, whereas it is more than 14 million in 2010. Within half a century, middle-aged population jumped three times.

Significant numbers of studies on midlife focused on 'middle-aged women'. Most of the researches on middle-aged women in Korea are about midlife crisis, stress and mental health, menopause and menopausal symptoms, depression and self-identity, social support and life satisfaction and so on (Kim&Kim, 2001). In the case of middle-aged women, biological changes such as menopause causes havoc on productivity issue of oneself. As a result, it not only brings physical changes but also psychological changes (Ko et al., 2000). And the fact that the major caretaker of children is woman cause socio-psychological changes with the independence of their children (Kim&Kim, 2001).

Then what are the factors that cause the crisis of midlife. Kim (1988) conducted a survey of men and women living in Seoul and found out the related variables on midlife crisis. The findings show that crisis level of female was higher than that of male, and the lower the women's awareness of

age, the higher the education level and the household income, the higher social status the husband had the lower the level of crisis. In addition, regardless of men and women, the more positive the marital relationship and child-parent relationship the lower the level of crisis. Regarding religious variables, it revealed that women's level of crisis was lower when their participation rate in religious activities is higher. In other words, variables that have a significant impact on women's crisis are confidence in their job, self-identity, marital relationship, health, age, relationship with children and religion. According to various research, it is obvious that religious factors affect the crisis of middle-aged women, however, most of the studies focus on the statistical data that have difficulties on finding out how they overcome the crisis, and what specific factors in religion affect middle-aged women. Therefore, this study gives a multidimensional view on the relationship of religious factors and the crisis of middle-aged women.

1.3.3. Theory of Religious Commitment

This study defines religious commitment as a status that an individual or a group having a strong religiosity or practicing it. Thus, it is required to understand about 'religiosity' to identify religious commitment.

Religiosity refers to the degree of one's religious faith and orientation. Individual's behavior, attitude, and beliefs toward religion are scales used to measure various aspects of religiosity (Han, 2005). Han (2001) organized

overall scales of religiosity that exist and used in religious studies. The scales that is related to this paper is: first, participation in religious activities and related religious behavior, second, beliefs regarding miracles, doctrines, afterlife, God and so on, third, how much is religion important in their life, fourth, self-evaluation on religious commitment or zeal.

One of the famous scale that is used for religiosity is Allport&Ross (1967)'s intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. Intrinsic orientation is an attitude to embrace a creed in one's life and to endeavor to internalize it. They fully follow a creed which means that they "live his/her religion". In other words, genuine commitment itself is intrinsic religiosity. On the other hand, people with extrinsic orientation find religion useful in a variety of ways. Religion is instrumental and utilitarian that provides security, solace, social status and self-justification. A creed is lightly held and selectively shaped to fit more primary needs.

Taken these definition together, religious commitment can be defined as actively participating in religious activities, having strong faith on religious values and whether it's extrinsic or intrinsic, living a life that is highly affected by the religion itself. Of course the degree 'actively', 'strong' and 'highly' is hard to measure in concrete figure. However, the goal of this study is not suggesting a certain figure for religious commitment. For instance, one can have weak beliefs although he/she is actively participating in religious activities. Measuring an individual's religious commitment and suggesting it by figures have many flaws itself.

In psychological aspects, religious commitment is also known as religious

devotion. Psychologists think that there are certain mental processes in religious devotion and looking at these processes will help understand the religious commitment. It is categorized into five: first, "an interest and attention in religious values", second, "selecting a life style that conforms to these values", third, "equating oneself as a being to practice a service of love", fourth, "putting priority on religious devotion when oneself have a contradiction over reality and religious life", fifth, "making one's life as the life that was pursued by God" (Johnson, 1964).

In other words, religious devotion or religious commitment can be defined as a life that put high attention on religious values, practicing religion in everyday life, giving a great deal of importance on religious activities, selecting religion when realistic affairs contradict with religious affairs and following the virtues of God.

This paper tries not to give concrete definition regarding religious commitment and devotion, but to rely on interviewees' self-evaluation of their religiosity. The interviewees' self-evaluation was based on Allport&Ross (1967) and Han (2001)'s scale of religiosity. And also people who is regarded as having a mental process that is suggested by Johnson (1964).

1.3.4. Protestant and Korean Society

The number of Protestant is showing constant increase since 1884, the

time when the religion was first introduced in Korea. The unique political and economic circumstances was a solid substructure where Protestant could widely propagate. Particularly, the industrialization process created a large number of the urban poor, caused a collapse of traditional family structure and intensified a sense of deprivation which was caused by a class bipolarization. The lower class people who were excluded from the benefit of economic development chose 'a church' where they could alleviate the sense of crisis and anxiety (Lee, 2000). These various circumstances helped Protestant in Korea to grow explosively.

Political and economic environment, however, were not the only variable to the growth of protestant. Korean Protestant integrated ecclesiastical doctrine and practice with Korean tradition which fostered Koreans to embrace the religion without having any resistance. The fact that Korean pastors took the initiative to support the integration of these two features of each culture contributed greatly to the proliferation of Protestant in Korean society. Andrew Kim (2000) defined this as "Koreanization of Christianity".

According to his research, pastors altered God similar to the Korean folk religious being by underlining the biblical clauses which delicately concurred with the materialistic disposition, and describing God as the one who answers to people's wishes. Also, Korean Protestant evaded the clash between traditional and new religion by emphasizing religious values that conform to Confucian virtues. For instance, pastors elucidated biblical clauses which is related to filial piety and patriarchal system. Kim insisted

that the alteration of religion took place without changing the indigenous religious values and faith.

As stated, Protestant pervaded in Korean society in various aspects and achieved rapid growth in 1960s to 80s (Kim, 1995). After 1980s when the democratization process took place in Korea, Protestant still burgeoned and became one of the common religions of Korean. (<Table 2>).

<Table 2> Religious Population by year²

(Unit: %)³

| Year | Non-religious | Religious | Buddhist | Protestant | Catholic |
|------|---------------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|
| 1985 | 57.4 | 42.6 | 19.9 | 16.1 | 4.6 |
| 1995 | 49.3 | 50.7 | 23.2 | 19.7 | 6.6 |
| 2005 | 46.5 | 53.1 | 43.0 | 34.5 | 20.6 |

*Source: Korean Statistics (www.nso.go.kr; www.kosis.kr), 「Population Census」 Reframed

As Protestant settled as one of the three major religions in Korea, the researches covering the religious characteristics and tendency of Protestant believers were conducted briskly. Especially, as religious conflicts became a serious issue in modern society, the exclusiveness and religiosity of each religion became one of the main topic of religion sociology. The most recent

² 'Non-religious' and 'Religious' are the number comprised of general population while 'Buddhist', 'Protestant', and 'Catholic' are comprised of religious population.

³ The units were rounded off the numbers to two decimal places.

research (Yoon&Yang, 2013) indicates that the Protestants and Catholics are more exclusive and relatively less tolerant than the Buddhists. Among them, Protestant's exclusiveness was most extreme and they had the inclination to apply their religious dogma, ceremony and practices into private and even public domain.

There are many academic papers about Korean Protestant's strong religiosity and aggressive religious practice (e.g., Eun, 2004; Han, 2002). For these reasons, Protestants were chosen as interviewees in this study. However, it cannot be concluded that their degree of religious commitment is the highest. Since this research is based on quantitative research which aims to find commonalities from individual concrete experiences, this paper assumes that the religious commitment varies by individuals. Therefore, the fact that the interviewees are Protestants does not set forth beforehand the conclusion that Protestants shows highest religious commitment. Religion was selected based on the universal standard which was discovered by existing researches. Main goal of this paper is not to identify a specific religion that shows the highest religious commitment, but to study the relationship between Korean middle-aged women and the religion.

II. Recuperation of Relational/Societal Solidarity

2.1. Religion and Family

In 20th century, the conception of 'individual' has been emerged which led influence of family and familial values to wither. The sense of individualism changed the society with velocity, and reformed family structure. Many of the people defined those phenomena as a dissolution of family or collapse of family and raised them into social issues which governments should deal with. Change in family structure weakened Confucius principles which were used to strongly bond the family. One of the characteristics of Confucius society is that a family are defined as a core unit and social prototype which consists the society. Therefore, the cohesion of families including blood relatives is emphasized, and filial piety is the most important value. Obeisance to a husband or a father is unconditional duty in this kind of family structure (Lee, 1997). Nowadays, however, the traditional meanings and normative characteristics of a family have faded away changing family into a place of anxiety, conflict, and burdens while the family in the past was a symbol of stability, sentimentality, and peace (Lee, 1999).

Despite all the changes stated above, familism still has dominant influence on Korean people looking at the fact that many Koreans point out 'family' as the most important thing to achieve happiness (Yang, 2000). In other words, the sense of estrangement between reality and desire is

continually happening, because the desire to have a decent family still exist while the familiarity and fellowship within a family are getting weak in modern society.

In 1960s to 80s, the time when the big wave of modernization hit Korea, Korean church grew rapidly and Confucius notion has been replaced by Christian value. Many people tried to handle the absence of norms and concepts which guaranteed family bondage by religion. In order to minimize the psychological distance among family members, they needed repetitive and realistic intermediation, so the repeated religious ceremonies were the optimum option for it (Shin&Kim, 2012).

Family is a group which is based on affection, and each member's quality of life is decided according to the degree of satisfaction and desire fulfillment in their family life (Byun&Kim, 2001). The fact that activity rate of Korean middle-aged women is low and spend most of their time on nurturing and household affair reflects that the family is their sole belonging group and most important value in their lives. Therefore, family unification and satisfaction level regarding relationship with family members is the core value which decides middle-aged women's quality of life and satisfaction. In the situation where family bondage is fading away and the psychological distance among family members is getting longer, religion's positive impact on family consolidation drives middle-aged women to commit in the religion.

Religion and family are very closely linked to each other. Family is the strongest medium of religious socialization and is the basic religion group; a fundamental unit of religious system. Also religion takes important part of

children nurturing, and parents with religion believe that the church life will have positive influence over their children. Therefore it is the religious duty of parents' generation to propagate religious culture to the younger generations. Family is the main passage for family to teach religious lessons to its children since the family is the most basic ground of education. Usually, children have first encounter with religious values inside their family, and their religious socialization first take place in family. Thus, women, the main nurturers have stronger will to take the initiative in religious activities than men (Lesli J.Francis, 1997), and have firm belief that their religious life will have affirmative impact on family members (Lee, 1997).

Byun&Kim (1999) classified research papers that used religious variables by each hierarchy of family in their domestic science research, in order to clarify theoretical background of family and religion, and also revitalize researches about relationship between family and religion. According to the common conclusion of their research, solidarity of family is high when it has a religion, and if the family shares same religion, it shows low conflict level, rational settlement of those conflicts, high stability and cohesion. Lee (1992) categorized every conflict and response which Korean middle-aged women experience by quantitative research methodology. The majority of the conflicts is linked to human relationship including issues with husband, husband's senior in-laws, and children. This shows that the main hardships that Korean middle-aged women recognize as a problem and want to solve is all focused on family.

Christians emphasizes their believers not to stay just inside the church but

to practice religious dogma in their daily life in family and outside. Particularly, the religious life of married women can be categorized into church-based activity and home-based activity, and many married women perceive home-based activity as a crucial factor (Byun&Kim, 2001).

This research will examine the meaning of religion as a tool of conflict resolution with family members. Conflict is sorted by counterparties including husband, husband's family, and children, and the research will analyze how religion is acting in the circumstance of conflicts with family members.

2.1.1. Conflict solution with husband and family-in-law

Statistical data from Korean Statistics (2005) show that women tend to have lower satisfaction of marital relations than men. The proportion of men respondents who answered "dissatisfied" was 38% while that of women respondents were 62%. Proportion of those who answered "satisfied" is consisted of 53% of men and 47% of women. The intimacy of husband and wife is reported to be low in the middle-aged women group (Koo, 2008). The main causes of conflict that is faced by middle-aged women are personality clash, economic power, son preference, etc. (Lee, 1992). Participants of interview state that the trigger of religious commitment were conflicts with husband or family in-law. There is other cases, on the other hand, that the religious activity improved the relationship between husband or family in-

law, which caused women to be more absorbed into religion.

Religion seemed to offer common interests to husbands and wives and be a medium of communications. In <Case 1>, the interviewee was able to spend lots of time with her husband since they started to participate in activities in foreigner's mission, *mokjang*⁴, and worships. As time spent together be longer and longer, opportunities to have conversation also became more frequent. The interviewee in <Case 2> had almost no time to talk with her husband because of the many conflicts with family in-law, and they had 6 children which brought huge nurturing burden to the interviewee. She cut herself off from conversation and the conflict became more severe, and she said her husband left deep scars in mind. But a few years ago, they had more time together after her husband quit his job and launched his own business, and they spent that time by doing religious activities together.

"We are so intimate right now after the weekend worship... I think this is the happiest time ever after our marriage, because we have... so much time together... and spiritual intercourse."(Case 1)

"We didn't have much time to talk to each other. We couldn't know each other's thoughts because there was no conversation. In any event [...] we have to solve it with conversation... but we were so busy [...] there was

⁴ *Mokjang* is Korean word for a ranch. It refers to religious community or gatherings for people who attend a same church but live near around.

nothing we could do to deal with that conflict. [...] Conflict became harsher and harsher... but the recovery happened right here (in church). At the time when I was here, my heart was so much wounded [...] I think we are changing through the worships. I might have changed and so does my husband. Pastor's speech had us change a lot"(Case 2)

Therefore, the prerequisite of solving communication problem between married couple is spending a lot of time together. However, Korean men is working so long compared to other OECD countries and it is very burdensome for husbands to spend time with their wives under a limited time with families. However, it is true that the couples have more opportunities of communications if they have religious activities together as an instrumentality at least once a week as, than those who do not participate in religious activities.

Also, religious let husbands and wives to have more generous attitude toward each other. Generally, ones with a generous attitude were wives, and husbands who perceived their spouses' change in attitude also had alteration of attitude which ultimately settled their conflicts.

"My husband told me I was picky... also my family and even said that to. The culture of my family were so different with families in-law's [...] Everything was the opposite [...] I was always very furious when I met families in-law. [...] (but) Later on, my husband said to me that I became very generous after I started to go to church. That's the reason why I do my

best to husband's family."(Case 5)

"I had been blaming my husband for 20 years, but I realized that he had his trauma since childhood, after I listened to voices of church people and their lives. My husband's mind was hurt because of his parents, and he had difficulties talking to his brothers. [...] he didn't receive enough love from his parents anyway... he was going deep down to the his pit.[...] Until now... Lots of things happened between me and my husband, we fought many times, almost had divorce. [...] (But my husband) changed a lot. Now he tells other married couple to listen to wife's opinion, and discuss. Things now became like this."(Case 8)

"Now forgiveness arises, my fault can be seen, everyone is sinner, I am a sinner... I justified myself as a good woman and righteous person... but I know that's not true."(Case 7)

Most of the churches emphasize 'family concord'. Pastors stipulate that divorce is a sin to the believers, and making family harmonious is practicing religious faith. In fact, religion is working as a certain force to suppress divorce. Doctrinally or ethically, religion defines divorce as a wrong conduct, which restrains divorce, and statistics show that the divorce rate of religious people is much lower than that of people with no religion (Lee, 1997). Therefore, the religious norm of family concord plays as a psychological pressure to block extreme choices such as divorce, and let people to have

conflict averse tendency.

"My kids told me to divorce, saying that 'how could you live like that.', but I told them 'we are family, who would take care of him except us. He is still your father and did his best to you.' [...] Now we feel sympathy to the returned dad, start to feel love him, and all recovered. Truly the Lord... Lord what I perceive is to remodel, and reconstruct. So what else can we do right now in my age? Only praying."(Case 7)

"(We had a lot of fights with families in law but) stifling because of the Lord. Lord must compensate for us. Great rewards will be waiting for us in front of the Lord (Laugh). [...] Lord said to us that he will give something in return and the crown is ready... so I just live. These days still I fight a lot and have lots of words to tell him but... so many times... harmonious ones shall have blessed [...] I will be a harmonious person because I am a child of the Lord... That's what I think to live [...] If I haven't believed in Lord, I wouldn't have married to my husband, and couldn't bear my parents in-law."(Case 9)

One thing that is worthy of notice is that they could overcome the conflict with their husbands because they shared same religion. Interviewees were also satisfied of having the same religion with their husbands, and force their children to marry a Protestant believer as a spouse, rooted from their own experience of marriage recovery. As husbands go to the same church, women could easily commit themselves to church life. <Case 10> was a sole

example of husband not having religion and even showing hatred to the Protestants, and the interviewee said she could have participated more actively in church if her husband had have the same religion with her.

"Faith needs husband's help. So the family can be peaceful. Without help from family... it is just wrong to believe in the Lord only by a woman herself."(Case 3)

"I think the root (of family's peace) is the Lord, and the faith to believe him. I really do. [...] (But I) go to church, but my husband doesn't like that. He says 'Go there without doing extra activities'. (If it weren't him) I can do better... I become hesitating to do something because my husband hates it."(Case 10)

Religion is known as a tool to enhance adaptability of marriage life, and the regular participation in religious life of a husband and wife bring about happier conjugal life. Cases of interviewees demonstrate that middle-aged women deal with the conflicts and dissatisfaction of marriage life through a religious medium. This is because religion offers a common interest to the two and allows them to have more opportunities for communication by religious activities. Also, religious activities tend to make women more generous to their spouses, which lead to the conflict settlement. However, religious faith occasionally became a certain kind of norm to give psychological pressure to be a 'Happy family', and some people showed

conflict avoiding or enduring tendencies.

Regardless of the conflict settlement processes, the research could observe middle-aged women's religious commitment getting stronger as their level of life satisfaction increase due to improvement and conflict resolution in their marriage life. At this point, the conformity of religion with husbands were crucial. If they share same religion, conflict settlement process and religious commitment process caused sequential synergy to culminate, but otherwise, it was hard for women to commit themselves to religion even though the religion could help them to deal with the conflicts with their husbands.

2.1.2. Conflict settlement with children

It is shown that middle-aged women experience conflicts with their children as they face adolescence age or become adults. 'Not listening to what parents say', 'generation and personality gap', 'children's avoiding their parents' and 'not studying hard enough' consists the main reasons of conflicts. Since women have more intimate relationship with their children than men, they tend to have harsher sense of deprivation as they encounter bondage weakening and communication problem which happen by physical, psychological independence of their children (Lee, 1992).

Religion was the factor that helps to understand children better and mitigate interference to them. In <Case 1>, she had a strong sense of inferiority because she went to local university, so they forced their children

to study hard. Obviously, conflicts with their children happened frequently, especially with the first daughter. However, they were able to look back on their wrong educational methods after actively participating in church activities and talking to *mokjang* family. She said the relationship with children improved gradually. The interviewee in <Case 5> had less expression of anger to her children after having the religion. The faith of "the Lord shall guide my children to the right way" helped her to 'pray' for her children, instead of expressing anger.

"Honestly... I interfere with my child because I am so stubborn. But I didn't know that I was interfering. Then by communicating with mokjang family [...] I realized what I didn't know in the past [...] So those parts have recovered..."(Case 1)

"I couldn't handle my temper and scolded him, waiting for him to come back home. But when I just started praying for my kid until he comes back, I could find the answer inside of that prayer. With answers, there's less time having conflict with my child."(Case 5)

Under the circumstances where the medium of communication lacks between parents and children, religion played the role of it. <Case 4> communicated with children and soothed conflicts through "worships". Because "the Lord" is absolute to children even more than parents, so no matter how they were angry to their mother and father, they always complied

with the word 'let's go to worship'. At the era when Confucius doctrine dominated Korea, parents were existence of obedience and absolute position. Later, however, as the equal and affection-based relationship between parents and children was emphasized, parents faced limit to control their family with authority and position. At the time, the transcendent and absolute monotheism of Protestant influenced Protestant family and God began to rule over the parental position. Opportunity of communication were made through the home worship toward 'the Lord', the powerful and dreadful existence, and the other family member who are not in a conflict acts as an arbiter in the process of worship. There is no big conflict with children in <Case 3>, but it is 'praying' which is the tool for communication. When they started to pray for each other, the relationship of 'parent-children' converted into religious companion relationship.

"She yell to me and disobey occasionally. Then I suggest house worship. We sit around and hold worship. [...] During that time we pray each by each even it is a 30 seconds prayer. [...] Dad talks first [...] and I say 'I was very upset because you acted like that', and then she say 'mom you did something and something'. We talk, and my husband mediate. [...] Then there's a point of peace. But if there's no opportunity like that, the chance to talk is very unlikely. [...] Children cannot resist if we say 'let's have worship' putting the Lord in our center. [...] It is inconceivable to disobey the Lord."(Case 4)

"Kids learn from my fervor activities (in church). We pray for each other..

so good cooperation. We talk about personal difficulties and share, praying for each other. Communication among us is so good."(Case 3)

However, there are some cases that parent forcing religion was the root of worsening relationship with children. In case of parents in Protestant family, the religion conformity between parents and children generation is high, but still lower than the religion conformity rate between a husband and wife. This means that there is a possibility of religious conflicts between parent and children generation (Han, 2002). Also, even if their religion are same, when someone forces religious ceremony or faith, religion becomes the reason of conflicts.

"I tend to force my kids spiritually. [...] I want them to save other souls through knowing the Lord and devote themselves into the Lord. [...] My kids tell me that please be nice to us at least as you do to church people... [...] I couldn't meet my children's demand, but I demanded too much to them."(Case 1)

As children become independent from their parents psychologically and physically, women with strong bondage to their children have sense of loss. Especially for the Korean women, who devote themselves fully to their children and give up their career, the psychological distance between them and their children will be harsh. However, they were trying to understand their children through religion, and could figure out that less interference will

help to relieve their conflicts. Also, religion became the common interest between parent and children generation who had lack of communication.

2.2. Religious Community

Durkheim (1965) argued that religion can unify individual differences in modern society that is based on division of labor and it is one of the factor that can overcome anomic phenomenon, the situation that entire society and groups are in no rule caused by weakened religious influence which maintained traditional society. He analyzed religion in fully social and collective aspects, and studied how religion can contribute to the social cohesion and unification by imbuing sense of moral duties. He pointed out attributes of religion as a concept of sanctity, ceremony, faith, and social-community tendency and he strongly focused on the community-like attribute stating that the religion is the most socialized concept which is moral community formed by all believers.

In the past Korean society, there was no ideological or social condition to form a community sharing universal values except the communities based on blood or regionalism. In western society, however, Christian value gave ideological basis to universal community and the idea that everyone is equal in front of the Lord since they are all sinner, called negative equality, became the new ideology which supports new church community. While examining Korean history, it is assumed that the start of a new community with transcendent ideology which overcame blood relationship and regionalism was church. In fact it was the church where everyone including women,

*yangban*⁵, and slave could sit together with transcendent ideological basis. They were also the members who abolished slave system (Lee, 1991).

In 1970s and 80s, the era of rapid growth in Korea, men devoted themselves to work and became heroes of Korean miraculous economic growth, but the women who were left alone in their house had to take care of every housework. The chance to participate in society and economy were deprived in a social structural manner, and they had no community where they could feel the sense of belongings and consolation. Women started to commit in religious activities to escape from the isolation, and as a substitute to the old blood relationship, religious community became the source of women's social relationship (Hong, 1994).

In most cases, middle-aged women tend to be isolated from the relationship with their friends, because they spend most of their time in nurturing. Therefore their friends' position are naturally replaced by kid's parents, local community and church communities. Among them, church community is usually described as most comfortable and family-like group, compared to the other social groups. Especially to church people, there is no need to keep face to them and feel shameful while talking their personal weakness or worries, so church is the place to get consolidation. The functions that family used to carry on were now substituted by church communities. Church is organizing groups such as 'Women Missionaries', '*Mokjang* gathering' to foster social intercourses among believers and they

⁵ The *yangban* were part of the traditional ruling class or nobles of the Joseon Dynasty.

are becoming the haven and the main source of sense of belongings for women.

"Social intercourses with other believers is not just a normal group or interest group. It is the group that helps me to apply Lord's words and look back on my sins. [...] People confess their sin a lot there, like 'I stole something from a house', 'I gambled', or 'I fought with my husband', in my case it's hard for me to communicate with my daughter."(Case 1)

"In Women Missionaries, it is constituted of people who have similar age, and peer group. Sometimes I talk to my friends on phone but since we are far... we just say hello to each other. [...] (Therefore) we talk to church people and people from our apartment and so on."(Case 2)

"(Through the Women Missionaries) I could know people from various backgrounds. I went to art school since middle school. [...] I have friends only whose career is related to music. Those artist friends are very self-centered and lack of consideration. So... themselves... I mean all of them are soloist and a prima donna. So there is no chance to have consideration to the others, it's a harsh field. But here, the church, there's no such thing. [...] It's so comforting, people with my age... You know the time we played hopscotch when we were a child, there was no competition or something. We don't judge people, we just played together. It's something like that when I meet friends from Women Missionaries [...] It's like having a heart of little girl.

[...] We meet too many times so there is no privacy, it's all exposed. We know everything about this family's situation, and that family's situation, how their kids are doing, so there is nothing to show off. Other friends, they don't know everything, we all pack ourselves with fake, but in church... They know the reality and truth eventually."(Case 4)

"So many people nowadays have mental and neural illness. But we are shameful of going to the clinic. Usually it's so embarrassing to say my daughter is in mental institution. But here, everyone is saying that without shame. [...] They speak this kind of stories so freely. If I have anxiety or I compare myself too much with the others, they tell me to go to the mental clinic to figure out the reason. So I went there. [...] Like these, we talk so freely about it, and there is no secret in front of the Lord."(Case7)

"(Outside church) it is no fun. Church people are more fun and like brothers and sisters. In my church, everyone talks frankly, like 'we fought yesterday'. We can do the real communication. Well, it is hard to start conversation when we meet an old friend, but in church, we just meet with no disguise."(Case 7)

"Church people talk their hardships... even though I haven't known them for years, they really talk such things so frankly and easily with believers. Not just me. [...] such stories from hearts... However, I cannot talk such things to my kid's parents easily. I cover some stories. [...] In church, we

don't do that, we just heal throughout each other, praying for each other's difficulties."(Case 10)

Korean middle-aged people are called as 'baby-boomer generations' and was driving force of economic growth which brought "Miracle on the Han River". But the social space for them was only for the competition and survival (Lee&Kim, 2012). Middle-aged women were deeply influenced by the sense of oppression of competition and survival and habituated to have extremely realistic mind. They were constantly conscious of other people even if they are in a very close relationship, and were haunted by the thoughts that they have to be better off than them. However, the middle-aged women who actively participate in church had so frequent intercourse with church people which formed relationship that 'keeping face' has no meaning and thinks their activities have higher level since they are in the relationship centered with religion. Also, most of the interviewees expressed non-church social group as 'Worldly gathering', and this means that the gathering in church is sacred while other groups are so vague and secular. This is the case that demonstrates well about the religion's function as a moral community which Durkheim argued. While the outside world's group is the realistic place lacking moral standards, religious organization is the space where modern people settle anomy (Hong, 1994).

In addition, the religious faith that everyone is equal in front of God helps them to get rid of the sense of inferiority and comparing to other people. Therefore, compared to general social group, they feel intensive comfort and

are able to share family-like intimacy even though they are not bonded with blood relationship.

"In my church, Women Missionaries are sorted by the ages. So we are all friends in that group. But these friends... there is no discrimination between classes. Something like standardization of academic background, or economic level. [...] At the first time, honestly it was a bit tough for me (because everyone had all different social background), but now, everything is so fun and comfortable."(Case 4)

"In church we care for other people, have an open mind and help other people unconsciously... We always had life like these, but when I meet friends outside church [...] For example, I think it's the difference between 'Study and share with people' and 'Study and keep it yourself'. [...] May be it's a bit strange to put it in this way... But I can feel the difference of the class. [...] What my outside friends talk about is like 'how can I be a better person in terms of money', 'how can I be more successful', 'how can I make my children successful in their career'. Yes, mostly those issues."(Case 5)

"When you become middle-aged women there's always a social group. When I participate in those groups, what I felt is it is such a useless life. [...] They always talk about celebrities, plastic surgeries, and talking behind someone's back... [...] I disconnected myself to those groups. [...] Here's a thing about church. People inside church are gathered with same belief and

faith, but among them there are rich people, poor people, educated people and uneducated people. They consist this church community. Without any prejudice, we equally go to worship, and share text, and it is so thankful. [...] meeting people without prejudice."(Case 8)

Besides the church organization and comparative judgment toward general social group, busy life of doing church activities and strong will to keep religious faith also lead to the anti-socialization with outside groups. Quick weekend travel with their friends, casual drinking are unacceptable for them who keeps their God's day and religious faith. It is so natural that they get distant with general social group and become closer and closer with people inside church organization.

"Half of my friends don't go to church... I have to go to church and don't go to short travel. So I became a bit distant to my friends. People call me preacher (laugh)."(Case 3)

"I have no friends outside, becoming outcast. [...] I can't go outside. If I go out, it crashes with church schedule. I prioritize church so I can't go out, and people out there have their own entertainment, like drinking beer and wine, but I can't do that... as I keep myself and become distant from that... Friends were sorted out..."(Case 4)

"I abandon most of the society's stuffs. Although my friends ask me to see,

but I am too busy doing my church activities. [...] I am always anxious of call from church or pastor. [...] I can't do the outside world's things. It's all-in."(Case 6)

Most of the interviewees stated that people who they meet and gather together often are all people from the same church. Middle-aged women who actively participated in religious communities feel that it is unnecessary to have a sense of competition or to keep face from other people, which is different from outside social groups. They were getting comfort from church community for these reasons, and they were giving help to each other by freely confessing their worries and hardships. They felt that social groups outside the church were too secularized and materialistic, whereas religious community is religious and moral which gives them a kind of satisfaction by making them feel that they are participating in productive activity. As a result, middle-aged women were recuperating their sense of belonging and solidarity in a society by committing to religious community. Moreover, the pressure for weekend worship and religious beliefs also separated them from other social groups which forces middle-aged women to restructure their human relationship centered in religious community.

III. Individual/Psychological Satisfaction and Stability

3.1. Overcoming a crisis of Self-Identity

As an answer of a question about 'Who am I', 'What can I do in the world', self-identity may be referred to the self-image containing the concept of the overall perception of one's ability, position and role (Kim&Ko, 1996). According to An Shin (2003), Freud maintained that an infant forms self-identity in the process of identifying him with his parent of the same sex and infant experience takes a key role in self-identity. However, Erikson, a post-Freudian scholar, mentioned that self-identity develops in one's whole life and identity may be shown from a vocation or a role in the society rather than a simple control system of instinct.

As for the relationship between a religion and self-identity, Freud regarded a religion as a kind of psychological illusion performing functions to remove fear from the nature and compensate for suffering and deprivation, causing one to accept his death willingly. On the other hand, Erikson asserted that a religion takes a role of helping one's adaptation to the society in the self-development process by making them overcome a crisis of identity and adapt themselves to the society through explaining them about their position in the society and universe with justification. A theory of self-identity and a religion by Erikson suggests that a religion may have an effect on women's self-identity formation.

With advancement of educational level, increase of life expectancy and improvement of labor conditions by enactment of the Act on the Equal Employment for Both Sexes, women's labor force participation rate has increased continually. However, since 1995, Korean women's labor force participation rate is about 50%, never showing an increase any more. Such a rate is an outstandingly low level compared with that of other OECD nations (<Table 3>) (Jeong, 2005).

<Table 3> Economically Active Population & Labor Force Participation Rate by Sex (1970-2012)

(Unit: a thousand person, %)

| Year | Male | | Female | |
|-------------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | EAP | LFPR | EAP | LFPR |
| 1970 | 6,516 | 75.1 | 3,683 | 38.0 |
| 1975 | 7,884 | 74.5 | 4,456 | 39.6 |
| 1980 | 9,020 | 73.6 | 5,435 | 37.6 |
| 1985 | 9,585 | 69.6 | 5,969 | 40.6 |
| 1990 | 11,030 | 74.0 | 7,509 | 47.0 |
| 1995 | 12,435 | 76.4 | 8,410 | 48.4 |
| 2000 | 13,000 | 74.2 | 9,069 | 48.6 |
| 2005 | 13,854 | 74.4 | 9,835 | 50.0 |
| 2012 | 14,835 | 73.0 | 10,568 | 49.7 |

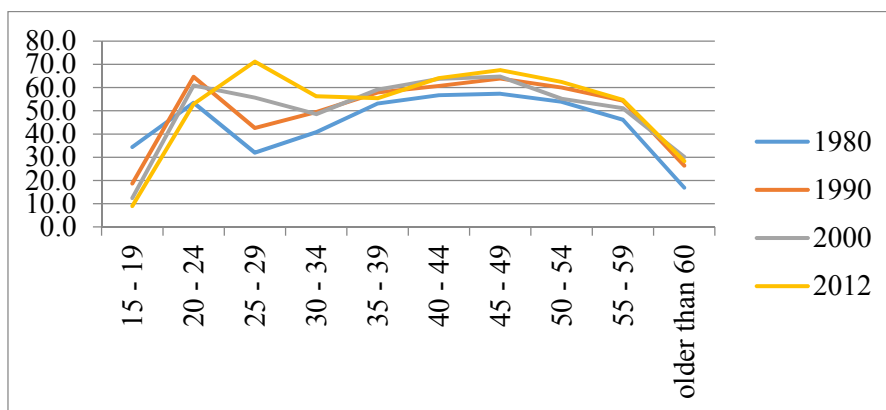
* Source: Ministry of Labor, 「Women & Employment」, 1981; 1985; 1986; 1987; 1970-1985; Korean Statistics (www.nso.go.kr; www.kosis.kr), 「EAP by Sex/Age」 (1990-2012) Reframed.

In addition, Korean women's labor force participation rate by age still stays on 'M-shaped Curve'. Despite of the change of the ideas on marriage, childcare and social participation, sustained 'M curve' means that women's employment is still under the great influence of marriage and childbirth and their sex role limited as a wife and mother in the family (<Fig. 1>).

In general, marriage is recognized as an important factor for women's self-identity because childcare is considered as one of their main role. So women recognize their value importantly, immediately after marriage and during the child rearing period. However, entering the middle age, with role loss from marriage of a child, physical change from menopause and self- conscious to the middle age, women starts to experience a crisis of identity. However, low labor force participation rate and their limited sex role prevent them from finding out an alternative for overcoming a crisis of self-identity (Kim, 2013).

<Figure 1> Women's Labor Force Participation Rate by Age

(Unit: %)



*Source: Korean Statistics (www.nso.go.kr; www.kosis.kr), 「EAP by Sex/Age」
Reframed

Statistics on 'participation in social organizations' gives evidence of Erikson's religious theory and Korean women's crisis of self-identity. The surveys on 「Social Organization Participation」 have conducted irregularly 4 times and it shows that male participation rate is higher than female in almost every organization. In the social volunteering groups, women's participation rate was slightly higher than men's in both 1999 and 2009. On the other hand, in the religious organizations, women's participation rate has been always higher than men's every year showing a relatively large gap to more than 10% between male and female. A religious organization is the second one that women participate most after social groups. Given that it's the only group women's participation rate is higher than men's in every organization, it's safe to say that group activity related to religion has special meaning to women (<Table 4>).

<Table 4> Organization Participation Rate by Sex (plural responses)

(Unit: %)

| | 1999 | | 2003 | | 2009 | | 2011 | |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Social | 70.2 | 53.0 | 85.0 | 79.8 | 79.7 | 75.8 | 75.2 | 71.0 |
| Religious | 13.2 | 33.9 | 14.4 | 26.6 | 22.1 | 36.2 | 22.9 | 34.6 |
| Sports, Leisure | 25.5 | 15.0 | 33.4 | 23.4 | 37.4 | 22.0 | 40.5 | 27.4 |
| Social Volunteering | 7.7 | 12.7 | 10.2 | 9.6 | 12.9 | 13.0 | 10.9 | 11.1 |
| Academic | 2.4 | 0.9 | 5.0 | 3.8 | 5.6 | 4.6 | 5.2 | 4.1 |
| Interest | 3.6 | 1.2 | 5.2 | 1.7 | 4.9 | 1.7 | 3.6 | 1.4 |
| Political | 1.6 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 1.3 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 0.6 |
| Others | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 1.0 |

*Source: Statistics Korea(www.nso.go.kr; www.kosis.kr), 「Social organization Participation」 (1999), 「Organization Participation」 (2003; 2009; 2011) Reframed

Considering Erikson's religious theory and women's participation rate on both labor force and social organization, it is possible to say that a religious group is an important factor influencing women's self-identity like a social group. Unfortunately, such statistics doesn't say about what effect religion has on middle-aged women's self-identity and what element has relationship with self-identity. Furthermore, it's impossible to know their inner process of overcoming a crisis and the relationship with religious commitment. However, interviews conducted in this study revealed how middle-aged women's crisis of self-identity appears and how they overcome such a crisis through a religion.

Middle-aged women felt a sense of achievement by identifying their competence through a church community and devoting themselves to a certain organization. Every interview participant had a certain duty at the church for particular church organizations like a choir or *mokjang*. <Case 1> worked at the foreign mission in the past and now leads *mokjang* meeting and worship, and <Case 2> works at a choir, women's missionary and children's educational academy. <Case 3> takes charge of the chief director of a choir composed of more than 900 persons and is participating at the women's missionary. <Case 4>, as a soloist of the choir, works at the women's missionary and also taking charge of the district head. <Case 5> also takes charge of the director at the choir and president of the women's missionary. <Case 6> takes a role of a president of the women's missionary, soloist of the choir, and a conductor of the quartet. <Case 7> and <Case 8> weren't participating in any religious groups because they lived away from

the church, only taking a role of leading *mokjang* meeting. Interview participants except <Case 1>, <Case 7>, <Case 8>, <Case 9> and <Case 10>, attended a church 7 days a week and the rest 5 attended average 3 times a week.

While performing the duty in church, these interviewees were recognized as an 'individual' beyond a role of mother or a wife and it gives women a great sense of achievement. Especially, with the change of a life cycle by retirement or marriage of a child, middle-aged women come to have much time compared with the past days so want to have a new job but have a difficulty in a new or reemployment because they have no special knowledge or skills with long distance from the social life. In this situation, church community provides them with an opportunity to have a sense of achievement and a space to show their ability.

"At first, I felt something special. I was proud of (working at the foreign mission)...Proud of hanging around with foreigners."(Case 1)

"My husband often says his friends' wives rework as a teacher, having a job.[...] I say that, I raised my child, so I'll go to church, If I had expertise, if I had something I had prepared,,,. If I had quitted my job for a short time for my child, I would try it again. . [...]I feel pride in childcare because I've devoted myself to it continually. I deserve to be treated well. [...]I say I'll do the church work only."(Case 2)

"In the summer during vacation, there's a foundation day of our church.... And then, busy during the month. Finishing it, I went there for a medical volunteering. This year, a beauty artist team went with us. [...] And I felt good there."(Case 5)

In addition, they had a busy life doing the church activities like an office worker so didn't feel a necessity to have other social life. Also, as there's a glass ceiling in the reality, it's very difficult for women to be promoted to a higher position or achieve social success. Moreover, in the reality, women have a pressure to take the responsibility of childcare and house chores which is a factor preventing women to participate in social life. Of course, there is sex discrimination at the church, too. However, it's not as severe as general organizations. Duty is assigned according to the number of years or a degree of devotion, so it may be said that they have less experience of frustration at the church community. Such factors become significant backgrounds for women's self-realization and devotion at the church community.

"A year passes so fast, without thinking of any other thing... I don't know. If I had been only as a full-time housewife, I might have thought such a thing (employment)... Strangely, I could do something upon going to church. So much thanks. So busy that I couldn't think of a job. [...]Thanks, I could be selected among these many persons. I didn't have faith. I was too much impressed when getting a duty of a deaconess, so I called to my mother-in-

law, 'I became a deaconess' while bragging (laugh). I did so when becoming a ward head, too [...] (At the church) overwhelmingly satisfactory. Very thankful."(Case 3)

"You know, a large church. So, (my husband) says 'I'll support your (music) study'. But I want to raise my child, serving God. Nothing special... But serving God is more important. Studying more and being a famous person... My husband wants it. But finding out delight and happiness from serving God, [...] So, I selected serving God. [...] 3 years have passed (since becoming a leader). Members increased much... standing with a uniform or Korean dress. And then I feel joy. Tremendous joy."(Case 6)

As children get less help from their parents, women along with their decreased burden of childcare, middle-aged women come to have much free time than before. In such a turning point, there are many cases women suffering from depression resulted from a loss of self-respect. In fact, according to the report, middle-aged women account for the highest in inpatients at the department of neuropsychiatry (Kim&Ko, 1996). Interview participants also mentioned that they feel the similar mental change but can't feel psychological sense of loss because they are conducting a church activity. Also they thought that they are fortunate because they didn't experience psychological suffering and difficulty compared with their friends about the same age by participating in religious group. <Case 7> stated that when she retired from the school where she was teaching for more than 30

years, she was not afraid or felt any loss because she thought that it is an opportunity to commit herself more to church life. She believed that the reason for her stable life after retirement is because of the religion.

"Now my friends, peers say, liveness... I called to my friend few months ago [...] Can't talk over the phone with her... cause she has a job. She says, she has 3 children, but she may have depression without a job... Feel sympathy for her saying. I didn't have a chance of depression. Very thankful."(Case 2)

"After quitting a job, for several months, I felt hollow. For a short time... about 6 months,, [...] (but after doing church activities) I can't think any other thing."(Case 3)

"If I had no faith in my life... I'd have severe depression, so suffering. [...] You know my son joined the army [...] I've never parted with my son before. [...] I had severe psychological pain. Absence of my son, and then, for the first time I thought if I had had no faith, how about unbelievers? Ah, they'd have suffered depression. I was so painful psychologically. And then, I felt something. [...] There isn't my son, there's no delight, however, after a week, God gave me teaching. If I didn't go to school, I'd feel no delight to live a life... Maybe I might have depression."(Case 6)

"You know how much I was absent-minded when quitting (teaching). I

heard people say someone goes to the school and cries in front of a school gate after retirement. But I don't regret it at all, [...] I needed some time for my religious life so I was always busy [...] So, I'm so happy."(Case 7)

Middle-aged women who devote themselves to the church community described religious activity and work life are in contradiction. It suggests a religion is alternative means to the social activities. However, they recognize religious activities to be more meaningful and positive and put a higher value on the satisfaction of religious activities than that of work life.

"If I had a work life, I'd be different. Cause, if I worked, I'd make effort for promotion. If I had worked continually, I'd have been a branch manager (laugh)."(Case 3)

"If I had not such a life, I'd do something. Studying. If I studied... I don't know, maybe I'd do other thing. I'd do something anyway. At least, maybe I could be a teacher (laugh). Or I could give a lesson. [...] But it would be a less happy thing. I'm certain."(Case 4)

<Case 4> hopes to show her ability sufficiently at the church hereafter. In addition, it's interesting for her to define her ability as only "mine". As for them, church is the space that they can exist as 'I' rather than as a wife or mother, and a place to recognize 'my' ability.

"I want to be a help for someone. Through the thing I have. These days, I know, people do something for others in the society. I'll do... things that I can do. [...] I want to do such a thing. [...] I'll live a life for myself if necessary. My little talent... God gave it to me. Rather than for my husband or my son, He gave it to me. Through the thing He gave, my thing, I want to do so."(Case 4)

Along with the increase of female educational level and labor force participation, despite many changes of the social role women expect and values they have when seeing the world, in the situation social-structural problems never change, it shows that their breakthrough is the very religious activities, and they realize their need for achievement and recover lower self-esteem through religious activities. In case of middle-aged women, they have a turning point with physical changes like menopause and social changes, together with changes of a role in the family. However, as shown from research participants, religion becomes an opportunity of experiences for confirming self-identity continually. Also, they can pursue positive self-identity by giving a meaning to their life experience and present life through religious activities.

Research shows that most of them participate in church activities actively again when their child enter an elementary or a high school after passive church activities when they are busy rearing the child. That is, though their role of a wife and mother was weakened in their family, they are discovering another kind of happiness and meanings in a new variety of relations and

roles (Cha et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the reason of their religious activities as busy as a work life is that their husband achieved economic stability. Most husbands of participants have economic power, having no difficulty in keeping up with their finances, so they weren't in the situation that women must have a job to support the family. Accordingly, it's safe to say that they have a kind of unpaid social life where they can pursue their self-identity, more "worthwhile" and "happier" than a work life which they have to make money.

3.2. Religious Experience and *Gibok*

One of Korean religious characteristics is *gibok*. Long before new religions like Christianity entered, in Korea, Koreanized Buddhism and shamanism had been settled in the society. Especially, a key of shamanism was to satisfy practical needs of believers. People wanted their material blessing or health through a shaman. Shamanism had a tremendous effect on Korean religious culture by satisfying worldly and material needs of people. And in the same vein, new religions also had to be changed with some compromise or negotiation with traditional religion. Particularly, emphasizing "God" as a being to meet material needs of people in preaching and the Bible saying, Korean pastors took an initiative of expanding a church (Kim, 2000).

Now, in more than 100 years' history since Protestant was rooted in Korea, Protestant doctrines regard *gibok* faith as a negative tradition and emphasize distance from shamanism including exorcism or divination. However, blessing-seeking characteristics are still maintained by many pastors, and believers also recognize a religion as a means of satisfying material needs. On the surface, they criticize the religious behavior that tries to take advantage of it which is similar to shamanism, but internally they see a religion in the same perspective. One thing differentiated is that they don't directly pray for their desires but pray to happen "as God's will". However, the thing they want to achieve is latent behind. And if achieved even a little

in the reality, they make it holy "God" achieved and sublimate it into the religious experience. Religious experience comes to be a mechanism making them commit to the religion, maximizing feeling through sharing it with the church community actively in the form of a confession.

Such dramatic and expressive religious activities of Korean Protestant have something to do with the effect of Korean culture. According to Lee Won-Kyu (1997), Nietzsche and Benedict divide a cultural tendency into the types of Apollo and Dionysus. Apollonian culture emphasizes reason and order, self-control and balance, while Dionysian culture is characterized as force and passion, production and ecstasy.

Such a division is also applied to the religious culture. In the Apollonian religious culture, logical understanding of a religion is emphasized with intellectual and solemn ceremonies. As for Dionysian religious culture, feeling and passion are important, emphasizing the sense more than the reason. So, irrational and ecstatic experience is understood as the essence of a religion. Generally, in the society oppressed severely, it's known that Dionysian religious culture develops, because enthusiasm for a religion causes a kind of catharsis of the oppression. In this context, Korean religious culture is Dionysian and shamanism had a key effect. Dionysian religious culture still exists now, strongly shown from Korean Protestant culture. Interview participants also mentioned dramatic religious experience as the reason for their religious commitment.

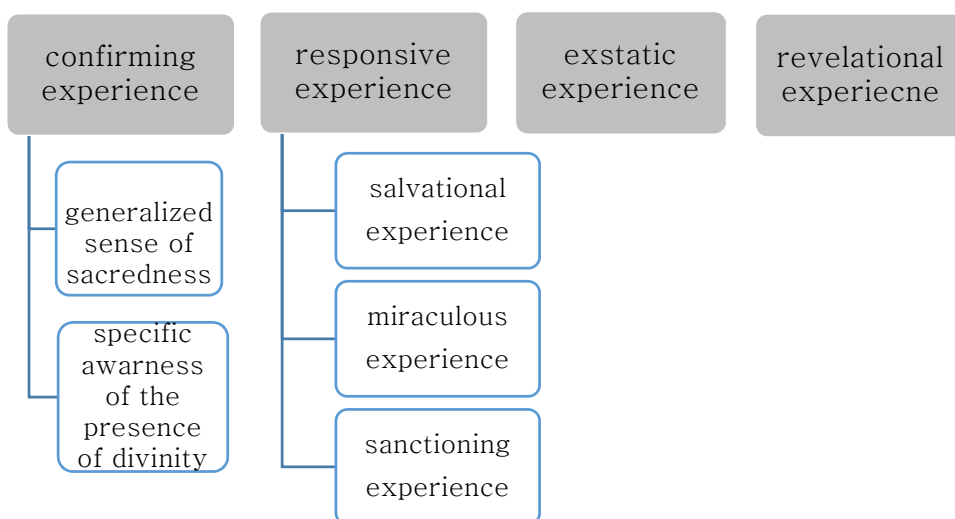
Scholars prominent in the field of religious experience are James (1985) and Glock&Stark (1965). James (1985) maintained that the existence of the

religious experience should be recognized in the age of positivism, science and reason. However, he tried to interpret it from the rational area rather than from emotional and religious area. Especially, he asserted that religious experience doesn't always happen by "God" of Christianity and substance of God shows various aspects. His viewpoint had an effect on the religious pluralism. It's not significant to discuss whether religious experience exists or happens by a personal or psychological process, being a question unsolved. However, it's important to note that many studies reveal religious experience and commitment have a positive correlation. The one with the higher religious commitment, the more religious experience one has, and vice versa.

Particularly, Glock&Stark, in 「Religion and society in Tension」 (1965), prepared an analytic frame of religious experience by dividing it into 4 phases. The first is confirming experience, as the most generalized and common religious experience. It may be divided into 2 dimensions, one is a 'general sense about divinity', as emotional experience like respect and awe, the other is 'specific awareness of the presence of divinity', as a process to recognize God exists in oneself. The second is responsive experience, as the mutual feeling that God also knows individual existence concretely. It may be divided into 3 dimensions again, one is salvational experience, as a feeling that a spirit is relieved from sins. The other is miraculous experience, as a feeling that God keeps and mediates an individual when he has a crisis and a difficulty. Final is sanctioning experience by a negative method, as a feeling that one thinks one's misery because of his fault. The third is ecstatic

experience, as uncommon, meaning physical and psychological enhancement like intoxication or a stroke. The fourth is revelational experience, as most uncommon, meaning a feeling that individual got a message about desire or intention of God. It means a feeling that God gives a message directly by a sign or a symbol. So, individual comes to experience he receives an order for a special act. Religious experience may be important in that it can be a direct cause of the religious commitment by influencing a religious and social life (<Fig. 2>) (Lee, 1997).

<Figure 2> Types of Religious Experience by Glock&Stark



*Source: 「Religion and society in Tension」 (1965), extracted & reframed from Lee Won-Kyu 「Understanding of Religious Sociology」 (1997)

Interview participants also regarded their religious experience as a turning point of faith and mentioned they came to commit to the religion through

such an experience. Responsive experience occupied most, mainly composed of miraculous experience. They connected experience of overcoming a material crisis to the religious experience. Material crisis contained their husband's economic crisis, children's schooling and employment problems, economic crisis of the whole family and health problems. They believe overcoming such a crisis or getting an unexpected luck is done according to the "God's will".

One of the most severe crises middle-aged women mention is their husband's unemployment. Many Korean women don't participate in economic activities or quit a job before and after childbirth and it means that middle-aged women depend much on their husband's economic power. Their husband's unemployment is a crisis not only for a couple but for the whole family. Accordingly, it's an important task for middle-aged couples to deal with smoothly such unemployment. And they come to depend on a religion to get rid of anxiety they have in such a process. In case of successful solving a crisis, they believe firmly that it was achieved thanks to "God" and pray for overcoming future crisis smoothly, too. When there is no direct unemployment crisis, they earnestly pray for their husband's stable position at the workplace.

"As for my husband's job, suddenly one day [...] suddenly, he said to go to the playground, something to say. [...] so, he said he had quitted a job, retired from the (company). [...] Both us, we could overcome such a difficulty through the power of faith, always praying. [...] People have difficulty in

overcoming a crisis, but God made us jump such a difficulty, jumping and jumping over and over, within a short time. [...] Not to be exhausted. [...] My husband told me, 'it's blessing of God'."(Case 2)

"So thankful, whenever promotion periods, for my husband, God makes it possible. I always said, never praying as 'My god, please make him promoted', but as 'My god, I believe in you, you'll make it possible.'."(Case 3)

In addition to their husband's economic power, there are main reasons middle-aged women commit to the religion including their children's health, studying and career. Especially, in case of <Case 5>, her son had many difficulties, with high temperature and continual diarrhea showing no recovery though going to hospital. However, she dictated her dramatic experiences about her son's immediate recovery when a pastor visited and prayed for him. She recognized a pastor as a being to solve a problem directly like a shaman. Through a series of events related to her child, she believed in the Absolute firmly and depended on Him again.

"For example, when my child was hospitalized, his diarrhea wasn't stop even if he went to hospital. By the way, if a pastor goes and prays for him, I have nothing but leaving the hospital. If he comes in the morning, my son can leave the hospital in the afternoon, if he comes in the evening, my son can leave the hospital in the next day morning. By the way, such a thing

repeats itself continually, in our life. So, I came to know the difference in things done when I pray or not through my experiences."(Case 5)

"As for my child, my child is a college student, Dept. of Physical Exercises... by the way, he changed his career suddenly. You know, you need several years' training to go to art or PE colleges [...] 2 months before the college entrance exams, he changed his career. But God made him pass the exam."(Case 6)

"My son was so much surprised at (passing the KATUSA), I had such a belief, of course, everything isn't good always though believing in God, but I got a response for my prayer ..."(Case 7)

In addition to a crisis of a life from their husband and child, economic crisis of the family is also an important factor making middle-aged women depend on the Absolute. In the middle years of their life, they spend many monetary expenses for their child's entering a college and marriage. According to the data by Statistics Korea (2012), in case of a householder's age under 30 or between 30-39, most of them have annual expenses between '15-20 million won' or between '20-30 million won. However, in the case of people ageing 40-49 and 50-59, expenses come to increase to the level between '30-50 million won'. Therefore, pursuing economic stability of the family for the future expenses, or immediately emerging expenses may be key needs of middle-aged women. Middle-aged women depended on the

religion for overcoming an economic crisis or pursuing stability, and they defined solving related problems or satisfying needs as one of the religious experiences. <Case 5>, suffering from a real estate fraud, had an experience of recovering money dramatically after going to church for prayer. With such an event, <Case 5> thought "Here is something" and began to commit to the religion.

"In the event, time was needed, in the long run... my father-in-law bought it at the price more than 10 times,,, maybe it was not easy to return, in the event, he returned it to me [...] A full amount, I got the money again. By the way, such a process, so amazing..., though it was fraud, if I were, it would not be so easy. [...] Experiencing such things, I felt 'Ah, prayer is the very thing as it is.'"(Case 5)

"There was a large house in front of (my house), away from 200-300 m. I prayed 'My God, please make me move to such a house'" looking at that house. By the way, 7 years after, I came to contract for that house. It was very expensive at the market price, but for urgent sale. And then, as for such a house for urgent sale, I had to buy it after selling this house. But I contracted for the big house before selling my house. By the way, it was then when No Tae-Woo government was handed over. [...] Without thinking at all, by the way, I contracted, but presidential election pledge was real estate knocking, (laughter), transaction was stopped completely. And then I... (still then), I was very comfortable. [...] There was no transaction all around. [...]

Really, I had nothing but depending on God. For attending the dawn warship, on such a cold day... [...] By the way, I never missed that dawn worship for 50 days on such a cold day... and then), it was the end of the month. On the end of December, someone came to buy my house, saying he liked it very much. And, he said suddenly he would contract. Without seeing other houses, [...] It was the first dealing here, Songpa-Gu, God made such a history [...] So, because of such an event, I came to go to Ilsan (for volunteering at the church), and say I would take charge of a director of the women's mission [...] I had nothing to fear, because God blessed me."(Case 6)

It's certain that religious experience is the important factor of individual's religious commitment. As for such experiences, especially, they felt great anxiety about their husband's unemployment, their child's entering a school and employment, and material factors including an economic crisis. Middle-aged women come to have such a crisis frequently, so they try to find out an object they can depend on or means they can give a meaning. If they overcome a crisis, feeling such an experience more dramatically, they recognize "God" or a "pastor" as an object to solve their crisis of the life directly. In fact, research finds out religiosity of undeveloped nations' people, facing a crisis, is stronger, and as for wealthy classes or people of the post-industrial society having rich conditions of a life, their religious values or beliefs, and performances are weaker (Norris&Inglehart, 2011). Korea already became economically developed nation with transition to the post-industrial society, but people still feel a physical, social and economic crisis,

and such resulting anxiety enhanced the religious commitment. In addition, as for middle-aged women, religious experience related to the crisis and blessing-seeking characteristic of faith became a key element of the religious commitment.

3.3. Pursuit of Post-materialistic Values

Materialism means regarding satisfaction of Maslow's primary basic needs like economic growth, stability and order with a modern society's industrialization process. On the other hand, post-materialism means pursuit of human rights, freedom, participation and pleasant environment as values for overcoming evils of materialism (Kim, 2008). According to Inglehart (1971; 2000), in the Western advanced industrial societies, silent revolution is breaking out and individual makes much of values of post-materialism rather than those of materialism. According to Maslow's needs hierarchy theory, pursuit of materialistic values is needs of 1, 2 phases, that of post-materialistic values is needs of 3, 4, 5 phases. According to his theory, only after satisfying lower phases of physiological needs, needs of higher phases may be satisfied.

Inglehart&Baker (2000) explain a value change from materialism to post-materialism as the effect of the social change from industrialization to post-industrialization on individuals. Unlike industrialized societies, in the post-industrialized societies, center of an industry is focused on service industry, and a life of an individual changes into a "game between persons". Accordingly, individual production process becomes a process of interpersonal communication rather than of handling a machine directly. Therefore, in the post-industrialized societies, values such as self-expression begin to be emphasized.

So, is it possible to apply the value-transition theory of Inglehart from materialism to post-materialism to Korea? Korea was also contained in the analytic research of Inglehart&Baker (2000) based on World Values Surveys. Based on the data showing tendencies on individual attitudes, values and beliefs from 1995 to 1998, the paper examined about correlation among modernization, cultural change and preservation of traditional values. Findings reveal that traditional values are replaced by so-called modern values with the change from agricultural to industrial society. However, in contrast with views of modernization theorists, the fact that cultural change shows a different path by traditional values or cultural areas was also identified. According to their studies, Korea stands at the intermediate phase changing from industrialized to post-industrialized society.

Kim (2008) examined about materialism and post-materialism distributions of Korean by age and the political and individual effects of such a phenomenon. This research based on 2007 surveys used 12 scales of Inglehart for value measurement so it's possible to apply on Korean value change according to the theory of Inglehart. According to this research, a mixed type⁶ sharing materialism and post-materialism accounted for 79.4%, materialism for 12.4% and post-materialism for 8.2% showing the lowest distribution. Compared with research by Eo (2004), as the result of examining the change of ratios in materialists and post-materialists as time

⁶ As there were few respondents who selected every materialism value in 12 scales, respondents who selected 5 among 6 materialistic value items and 1 post-materialistic item were named materialism. Other combinations were named a mixed type (Kim, 2008).

passed, it showed that ratio of materialists decreased increasingly from 30% in 1900 to about 12% in 2007 showing a great decrease. In addition, in a group more than 50s and 60s, ratio of post-materialists was higher than that of 20s, 30s, and 40s, meaning that a tendency of post-materialism gets stronger in the middle age. Its relationship with middle-aged women's religious commitment will be discussed in the latter part. Furthermore, it showed that post-materialists have a higher score than materialists in personal happiness.

If pursuit of post-materialistic values has an effect on individual happiness, individuals are most likely to commit to an organization, activity or an object causing a change into the post-materialistic values. This study assumes that a religion is an important factor causing a change into the post-materialistic values, and it'll have an indirect effect on individual satisfaction or mental health, giving psychological peace. Also, it intends to examine how such a process occurs, and what factor of the religion has such an effect through interview cases.

A question "What's the best advantage of a religion?" was given to all interview participants. More than majority mentioned their psychological peace, expressing as "Free", "Peaceful". Especially, most participants dictated they came to be free from comparison with others, disappointment with their child and materialistic desire by living a self-sufficient life. They described themselves of the past as unhappy beings caught by materialistic desire and regarded present themselves as happy persons who are free from various desires.

The reason why such materialistic needs are appealing to them has something to do with Korean economic development process. Their parents, through periods of colonization and Korean War, had relatively stronger obsession for survival and devoted themselves to education of their children to stop their adversities so desired for their success strongly. On the other hand, present middle agers belong to the generation located at the center of the military dictatorship and rapid economic development though they didn't live a life for survival. A noticeable distinction between the rich and the poor arose at that time. It was the period that relative deprivation became more intense and people's craving for wealthy life prevailed. As for people who compared themselves with others for life and thought they must have more things materially, it's a distinctive change and pleasure to be 'self-sufficient' escaping from social and psychological obsessions that drove them to the fierce competition.

As for interview participants' psychological peace obtained through pursuing post-materialistic values, there are internal and external factors. Internal factors are strong beliefs in God (the Absolute) and the afterlife. In fact, research findings show that belief in the Absolute has a great effect on the satisfaction of the life (Lee, 1990). Beliefs in the existence of God and His ability become a psychological support to have a resolute attitude in front of the realistic crisis. They believe that human difficulties can't be solved by human and only Absolute can solve. Such a belief became a momentum to go beyond realistic problems. Furthermore, belief in afterlife was also a factor to mitigate their materialistic needs.

"There are always difficulties in the life. Whenever experiencing those, I have no fear, and I have confidence that 'Ah, as God always protects me, I will never', and I come to return to the usual when experiencing such a thing..."(Case 4)

"Seem to be have comfort. [...] When living a life, when raising a child, we all want to raise him, so that he can succeed, By the way, seem to be well, as one of processes [...] Anyway, as I have firm belief, I go there, so having comfort. Even when my child's repeating a college entrance exams, I feel no severe anxiety, having a little comfort."(Case 5)

"The most important thing is I can't do it, persons can't do it at all, I can't change a person at all. By the way, He does. He changes a thing I can't see, changes a person I think he won't change. [...] I had so many sufferings in this world. I speculated, purchased houses here and there. And then, I thought only funding. [...] But I believe, (God) won't make me starved to death."(Case 8)

"Now, many mothers think it too much... English lessons, art lessons as a basic. And then, I came to be shaken, by the way, I leave many things to God, God leads me well without any mistake, so leads me as I am, I believe God also leads my children in such a manner [...] I believe He leads them well"(Case 9)

"I always feel, even if making money, purchasing a house... Nothing special, always feel that isn't everything. Cause, I feel they're not mine..."(Case 10)

On the other hand, external factors are caused by religious ceremonies like worship. Korean religious culture belongs to the Dionysian type, and wild religious enthusiasm occurred in such a religious cultural area offers a kind of catharsis. As shown from the Advent of the Holy Ghost movement, revival movement or religious maenadism believers cry out collectively during worship that can be seen often in the Protestant, it's clear that worship process becomes a kind of an outlet of their feelings (Lee, 1997). Particularly, pastor's preaching is the center of the Protestant worship process. Unlike Catholic's strict ceremonies, saying of the pastor is a key. Therefore, it's an important issue whether pastor can preach well or not, enough to be connected with survival of the church. Cathartic worship structure and a pastor's preaching elevating believers' feelings give aids to them when they are faced with a crisis of the life, forming a process recognizing again that materialistic values are useless.

"My mother and father, after knowing that I was (defrauded) as such,, only criticized me saying that because I didn't know the world, so I was defrauded, I couldn't take comfort. Made me more suffering. More painful when talking with them. So, there was no one I could talk with [...] I was so

angry,, so, really, whenever going to church, there I cried... Seem to shed tears, half amount of tears there, at the church. I went to church every dawn and cried. Till I could get comfort."(Case 5)

"I'm... you know, whenever I feel tough, because I'm not God but human [...] I sometimes get weak spiritually,,,, everyone has such suffering during his life. About my children's entering the college, I hope they'll get better grades, by the way, my daughter repeated college entrance exams,,,, And then, I had difficult times. When feeling painful psychologically, if I go to church, a pastor gives a saying fitting for the situation. My spirit is satisfied, feeling happy, I'm activated when listening the saying and getting blessing.. Really I'm activated when listening the saying though there was concern. (Case 6)

"A nurse always said she would leave. And then, my pastor told me to think about how many people come and go till he remains at the church [...] By the way, he told me, leave anyone who wants, and another will come, persons you need will come. When saying such s thing, it made me weeping. [...] Anyway, whenever there's difficulty, without his saying, I would not live a life."(Case 8)

Every interview participant dictated that their values of the life changed by the religion. Also, they recognized themselves with changed values as a being differentiated clearly from the past themselves. <Case 1> defined past

herself as a 'sinner' describing as a greedy and unhappy one, while expressed present herself as a new one who was relieved. One of the greatest changes by the religion was 'freedom' from comparison with others.

Present Korean middle-aged generation is the one that grew up in the endless competition and comparison with others. To live a better life than others, not to fall behind others, they had to see ahead and proceed without thinking about their happiness. Especially, as women's status was limited to the family, their position could be decided by their husband's or child's success. However, facing with the reality against their will, they had to live an unsatisfactory and uneasy life all the time. For such middle-aged women, religion became a support in the obscure reality and means for getting rid of anxiety. Also, for middle-aged women, religion acted as the function of psychotherapy to remind them of the emptiness of materialism and give them psychological comfort.

"When I didn't know this secret, I always said to succeed, succeed and succeed, and win over and over [...] I have greed in nature but it decreased a little by faith. [...] If I don't believe in God, I would live an unhappy life. Cause, as shown from past myself. Compare and to be compared continually, feeling relative poverty. Now, living in this ground. I know believing in God's saying and applying it to the life is the best blessing... So I'm free a little."(Case 1)

"Middle-aged men should have a religion, really [...] I feel comparative

consciousness most by neighbors of my apartment, coworkers and brothers and sisters.... Feel most comparative consciousness by brothers and sisters. By my own brothers and sisters, next, cousins, let me see, when a sister buys a larger house, when a brother drives a nice car, they feel painful. Especially, a sister-in-law, she really feels painful. In addition, I do, too. But so children do... When they go to a good college or enter a good company. But these days, when they can't enter any company or marry, [...] Now seeing high school students, there are so many ones who stay at home. Cause they can't be adapted to school... So, mothers get mad really. When I get hurt, my husband and child get hurt, and then if my child does, cause he's my other self, it gets worse.[...] There are so many cases, complaints about my husband, about my child,,, depression... "(Case 7)

Furthermore, religion made middle-aged women have a positive perspective to the world. Whether it's a crisis or an opportunity in life, it causes individuals to change in order to see every event of the life positively. Possession of the positive values mitigated materialistic needs, eventually allowing them to live a self-sufficient life.

"You know, through a religious life, one's thinking changes positively. While getting blessing from saying... Always say thank you... expressing my gratitude. Also, when I was unmarried, I was a little pessimistic. However, I came to think positively all the time [...] When comparing and being greedy, suddenly I come to stop it, through the saying, I think that 'Ah, I must

not"(Case 3)

"More and more, I come to express my gratitude [...] For example, my friends are all excellent... they're professors... everyone.... Compared with them, I had to study abroad then. Cause of situation of my family, and my husband didn't want it. By the way, I'm happier now. So much thanks [...] In old days, saying that she had such a great success. I complained a little. I was jealous of her, about unreasonable success. (However), I come to realize soon I'm fortunate. God gives me a thing fitting for myself [...] I don't think I should have a better house and buy a more expensive car,, [...] Thanks for my life, and I feel satisfied. I have to endeavor much and move to Gangnam. I have to purchase a Benz. Never did I dream such a thing. I don't think such a thing. Now, I feel good, expressing my gratitude. I'm happy now."(Case 4)

"(When having a religion, the best thing is feeling of gratitude, if it makes me more painful, I won't have it. So much thanks. I come to have such mind, thinking I can do it because I have a good health."(Case 4)

Interview participants came to recognize that materialism has no significance any more while overcoming sufferings from continual pursuit of materialistic and realistic desire or getting comfort by a religion. In such a process, their life changes into the one pursuing increasingly post-materialistic values. Post-materialistic life was divided into a 'free life (from comparison with others)' and a 'self-sufficient life'. Especially, pursuit of a

free life, as Inglehart&Baker (2000) suggest, may correspond to the change of the social values emphasizing freedom as a greater value in the post-industrial societies.

"I feel free. (Oppression from more wealthy life) seems to give me no stress. Now, I seem to live a good life, seem to have many things sufficiently..."(Case 10)

"I feel comfortable, happy, glad, thanks a lot [...] I feel I'm free really. There's a law, or a rule, but you know, one is free within such a rule. [...] In this present situation, I'm free so much. I'm free in God's saying, in the church, not restricted to the world. [...] And, I'm so much happy, so much thanks a lot. I've tasted it, so now I'm free and happy."(Case 9)

"Cause I believe in Jesus, I'm comfortable... whatever thing my children do, I'm free so much. [...] Before my son's wedding, I wanted him to live with me. [...] If I live near him, it's good because he can have a less busy life in the morning. However, I think now [...] Oh my, a young person has to live a life with full freedom. [...] And, I never feel sorry for it. So, saying 'Come when you have the time, come when you aren't busy, we're okay all the time' [...] Now I unburden myself, in the past I thought much of him. But I unburden myself... My son was also liberated by us."(Case7)

Middle-aged women were satisfied with their life because they felt free from comparing with other people, and they were having self-sufficient life. In the past, even if they were materially abundant, they were always nervous about the unexpected crisis in their life. However, religion is the factor that makes them realize the true happiness of their life.

IV. Conclusion

4.1. Summary

Many scholars predicted that transition to the industrial age and modernization would weaken influence of a religion and make a secularized society. However, unlike their prediction, religion is one of the factors that is still influencing human society. In addition, a flow that can be called the revival of the religion began to be captured in several regions including Korea.

1960s and 70s were periods characterized by modernization and industrialization in Korea. However, even in this period transferring to the industrial society, religious population increased rapidly and finally changing into the society more than half population is religious people since the latter 1990s. Especially, ratio of Protestant believers showed explosive growth. In the behind of such growth of church population, there have been women. Accordingly, this study was done for 10 Protestant middle-aged women regarded as having the highest religious commitment. Also, it examined the backgrounds of the high commitment from the Korean context and derived findings as follows through analyzing specific backgrounds of religious commitment and experiences of the life.

The backgrounds of middle-aged women's religious commitment may be

categorized into social and personal aspects. In the social and relational aspects, key function of a religion is the recuperation of the feeling of solidarity. The recovery of the feeling of solidarity is done, firstly by removal of conflicts with family members, secondly by association with religious organization's members.

Conflict relations middle-aged women have in the family were composed of conflicts with husband, family-in-law and children. Middle-aged women share common concerns with their husband and prepare an opportunity for communication through the religion. Regular ceremonies of worship and activities within a religious community become a place of communication for Korean middle-aged couples who have less chance of conversation and time of sharing. In addition, religious teachings mitigated conflicts by showing tolerant attitude to their spouse. However, it showed that accepting tolerant attitudes is done mainly by women. In addition, it revealed that religious norms about family's harmony act as psychological pressure to prevent an extreme selection like divorce and make them have a tendency to avoid a conflict situation. Such factors caused removal or mitigation of conflicts with their husband or the family of the husband so middle-aged women come to commit to religious activities to raise satisfaction of conjugal relations more earnestly.

Research revealed that religion acts positively on conflicts with their child arriving at puberty or adulthood. They increased understandings of their child through the religion with less interference. In the situation lacking in medium of communication with the child, religion becomes a medium of

conversation between both generations, forming a factor to increase opportunities of communication between parents and children. Middle-aged women firmly believed that religion is a center of family integration. So, it's one of key factors of their religious commitment.

Association with religious community members is also important background of their religious commitment. In the situation women's opportunities of socio-economic participation were absent in the terms of the social structure and ties of the family worsened, there was no community they could feel a sense of belonging. However, religious community becomes their new psychological refuge where they can get rid of their feeling of isolation.

Church community is a space they don't have to feel competition and show their dignity. While telling frankly about their troubles that they can't at the general social meeting where it requires them to show the dignity. Furthermore, interview participants recognized private meetings outside the church are excessively worldly and materialistic while church organization is a satisfactory, productive and moral space. Accordingly, middle-aged women participate in the church community more actively than men and other generations. As middle-aged women become more committed to the religion, the more they become alienated with meetings outside the church community that restructures their human relationship into church-centered relationship.

As for personal and psychological aspects, firstly, religion was a factor for overcoming a crisis of self-identity. Secondly, middle-aged women enjoyed the religion as *gibok* faith and transformed a materialistic crisis into the

religious experience. Thirdly, they were pursuing psychological satisfaction through post-materialistic values.

Middle-aged women identified their ability through the church community and felt a sense of achievement through devoting themselves to certain organizations. Their duty given by the church provides them with an opportunity to be recognized as an 'individual' and a place to show their competence, who stayed at the role of a mother or a wife. Also, loss of the role as a mother, physical change from menopause and perception about middle-years women have in their middle age, become causes of their psychological frustration. However, middle-aged women who commit to the religion can't even feel psychological sense of loss because of busy church activities. Church activity already has as the same meaning as work life and they also recognize that religious activity and work life contradict each other. However, it showed that their religious commitment is possible when it is supported by their husband's stable economic ability. If family's economic condition is unstable, women has to concentrate on work life than religious activities.

Religious experience making middle-aged women overcome a material crisis is one of the important backgrounds of their religious commitment. Material crises may be divided into their husband's unemployment, children's school work and employment and an economic crisis of the whole family. Such crises are the problems that middle-aged women encounter simultaneously in their period of life. In the crisis of the life, middle-aged women showing extreme anxiety select "God" or a "pastor" as an object they

can depend on, regarding as an object to solve their crisis of the life directly.

Characteristics of Korean *gibok* religion remain strongly and this *gibok* element that Protestant regards negatively functions continually on the base of the religion. Korea already became economically developed nation with transition to the post-industrial society, however, they still felt anxiety about physical, social and economic crises they can't predict. Korea shows an example contradicting with the theory of Inglehart that religious dependence lowers with transition to the post-industrial society and richness of the life conditions. Therefore, it showed that level of Korean psychological satisfaction and stability is very lower compared with speed of Korean economic growth.

Ironically, however, they also showed post-materialistic oriented aspects suggested by Inglehart. As the core generation of Korean economic development, they had to live a life always compared with that of others in the severe place of the competition. It was the age of the wide gap between the rich and the poor expanded that gave relative deprivation to the people who were lag behind. In the religious boundary, however, there is no need feel any competition or deprivation because everyone is the same in front of God.

On the contrary to the phenomenon above, believing and committing to the religion as blessing-seeking faith with satisfaction of materialistic needs, it's the religion for them to have post-materialistic values. The reason why they can enjoy post-materialistic values through the religion is that they have strong belief in the existence of the Absolute and His ability, conviction in

the kingdom, and consciousness through preaching of a pastor.

For women deprived of an opportunity for showing their ability in the endless competition and comparison, an object giving them satisfaction was only success of their husband and child. However, belief in the Absolute gives them conviction that they'll succeed someday so mitigates sticking to the reality. In addition, it becomes a factor for them to realize such needs are empty. Furthermore, belief in the kingdom gives an opportunity for changing values into the self-sufficient life to those who are pressured by success in the reality. For middle-aged women thinking that everyone was an object of completion and comparison, religion becomes a motive power to make them enjoy a self-sufficient life freed from comparison with others through giving a positive perspective. Such psychological satisfaction made them commit to the religion much more. In addition, when they feel psychological dissatisfaction by material needs, preaching of a pastor functions as a mechanism for them to discontinue pursuit of needs and feel satisfaction with the reality.

In other words, there exists a paradoxical structure that middle-aged women depend on the religion because of anxiety about a material crisis but feel happy because of post-materialistic values religion gives. Korea achieved material growth but psychological sense of anxiety and crisis still continues. It suggests that such a conflicting situation becomes a cause of middle-aged women's religious commitment.

4.2. Limitations and Implications

This study conducted an in-depth interview for middle-aged Protestant women who were actively participating in religious activities. It intended to understand their backgrounds of the religious commitment through their reframed experience in the interview. 10 women were interviewed, but with the limitation of in-depth interview, they may not represent every middle-aged female religious people. Furthermore, as interview participants were selected by snowball sampling, there was a sampling bias in items like income level, educational level, regions and employment status. Accordingly, it's regarded to derive various results if characteristics of the sample are diversified including women living at the region outside metropolitan area, having a lower income level and a job. Also, this study was done for particular religious people of Protestant, as specificity of such believers is reflected to some extent, it has a blind point in expanding to the whole middle-aged female religious people.

However, this study has significance in that it identified middle-aged women's specific experience of the life and reasons making them commit to the religion directly through their voice. There were few studies that analyzed backgrounds of middle-aged women's religious commitment from Korean context and they depended most on the statistical analysis, so there has been a limit to understanding specific causes and backgrounds. However, it's expected that this study will be a basis for future studies on Korean

women and religion in that it examined meaning of the religion middle-aged women have in their life viewing them from the perspective of their life history.

As the future task, it's required to analyze experience of middle-aged women having another religion which will give another meaning to the religious topography in Korea. So, understanding such differences and similarities will not only be a clue to examining characteristics of Korean religions but also an opportunity for inspecting significance and relationship between the religion and women. In addition, it will be also a meaningful study to compare with other cultural areas having religious culture topography similar to that of Korea. Such studies are expected to be a foundation for examining specificity of Korean women, Korean religion and Korean culture.

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요약(국문초록)

개신교 중년여성의 종교몰입에 관한 연구

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본고에서는 한국의 중년 여성이 종교에 몰입하는 배경에 대해 살펴보고자 했다. 통계자료에 따르면 여성은 남성에 비해 높은 종교활동 참여율을 보이며, 강한 종교성을 드러내는 것으로 나타났다. 여성이 왜 남성보다 더 종교적인가에 관한 물음은 종교사회학계의 오랜 관심사였다. 이 논문 역시도 그러한 흐름의 연장선상에서 한국 중년여성의 종교몰입을 한국적인 맥락에서 연구하고자 하였다. 한국 내에 존재하는 다양한 종교 중 개신교를 선택하였으며, 이는 다양한 연구에서 개신교 신자들이 높은 종교성과 강한 종교적 헌신을 보인다는 사실에서 기인한 것이다.

종교활동에 적극적으로 참여하고 있으며, 강한 종교적 신념을 보이는 10명의 중년여성 신자를 대상으로 심층면접을 진행한 결과 종교몰입의 배경은 크게 사회적, 관계적 연대감의 회복 그리고 개인적, 심리적 만족과 안정이라는 두 가지 측면으로 나뉘었다.

사회적, 관계적 연대감 회복의 측면에서 종교는 가족 구성원과의 갈등

해소의 도구였으며, 가족 통합의 촉매제였다. 또한 종교조직과 종교를 통한 인간관계는 한국 중년여성이 느끼는 고독감을 해소시켜주는 도구이자 전통가족을 대체하는 존재였다. 한편 개인적, 심리적 만족과 안정이라는 측면에서 종교는 중년여성이 자아정체성의 위기를 극복할 수 있는 기제로 작용하고 있었다. 종교조직 내에서 주어지는 다양한 직위와 책임들이 이들이 아내나 엄마가 아닌 '개인'으로 받아들여질 수 있는 기회를 제공해주었다. 또한 한국종교의 전통적 요소인 기복신앙으로서의 역할도 지속되어 이들이 물질적 위기에 맞닥뜨릴 때 위안을 삼고, 의지하는 존재가 곧 종교였다. 하지만 한편으로 종교는 이들이 물질적 욕구와 세속적인 삶에서 벗어나 탈물질주의적 삶을 좇고, 자유롭고 행복한 삶을 누릴 수 있는 정신적인 기반으로도 작용하고 있었다.

한국은 20세기 후반부터 세계에서 전례가 드문 급속한 경제 성장을 이룩했다. 많은 학자들은 국가가 발전함에 따라 종교적 영향력이 줄어들 것이라고 예측했다. 하지만 이와 같은 세속화 이론은 한국에 적용되지 않았다. 한국은 경제가 발전함에 따라 세속화 사회가 아닌 종교적 사회에 더 가까워졌다. 특히 종교의 성장에서 중년 여성의 역할은 중요한 시사점을 갖는다. 한국중년여성의 종교몰입 배경을 연구하고자 한 본 연구는 현재 한국 여성의 사회적 지위와 그들의 역할에 대해 고찰해볼 수 있는 기회뿐만 아니라 한국 사회에서 종교가 그들에게 의미하는 바를 이해할 수 있는 기회 역시 제공하고자 했다.

또한 연구과정에서 한국이 선진국의 반열에 올라설 만큼 경제적인 성장을 이룩했음에도 불구하고 종교에 대한 사람들의 관심이 높아져 가는 이유를 설명할 수 있는 실마리 역시 찾을 수 있었다. 한국은 물질적으로

는 부유해졌지만 아직도 산업화 시대의 상대적 박탈감에서 완벽하게 해소되지 못했으며, 동시에 경제적으로 부유해졌음에도 불구하고 행복한 삶을 영위하지 못하는 심적 빈곤을 겪고 있다는 사실을 알 수 있었다. 즉, 개인의 심리적 만족도는 경제성장의 속도를 따라잡지 못했고, 이는 곧 서구사회와는 다른 방향으로 한국의 종교지형을 변화시키게 된 것이다. 그리고 이와 같은 맥락에서 중년 여성의 강한 종교 몰입 역시도 남성보다, 그리고 다른 세대보다 심적 빈곤을 해소할 수 있는 사회적, 경제적 여건이 부재함을 시사한다.

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주요어: 종교몰입, 종교헌신, 한국중년여성, 개신교, 질적연구방법론
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