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Internet Usage and Religious Authority: A Case Study of the Catholic Church of South Korea

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INTERNET USAGE AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY:
A CASE STUDY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF SOUTH KOREA

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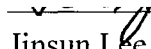
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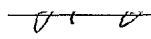
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ABSTRACT

INTERNET USAGE AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF SOUTH KOREA

Youngho Park
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This study examines what impact the Internet usage by church members has on religious authority, focusing on a case study of the Korean Catholic Church. The goals of this study are to investigate the ways in which church members use the Internet for communication in the Church, to examine whether and how the Internet usage by church members affects religious authority, and to identify what kind of religious authority is affected. This study encompasses two main parts: historical background of the Church's Internet usage and analysis of the online forums about "The Four Major Rivers Project". The latter is divided into three main areas: the construction of public opinion, forms of religious authority, and rearrangement of authority.

The findings of this study suggest that ordinary church members have utilized the Internet as a new way of getting, sharing, and even producing religious information and knowledge, as well as a space for discussion and debate on a variety of issues that is not limited to purely spiritual area. The expansion of cyber space for church member has made it possible for them to raise opinions critical of the Church organizations and leaders, which in the end brought about radical form of challenges to the existing religious authorities.

This study also found that while church members, at the initial stage of discussion, tended to rely on the Church organizations and leadership group in forming their opinions

about an issue, they tended to accept or deny the traditional religious authorities in the Church on the basis on their own convictions and experiences. This study suggests that the most frequently referred form of religious authority was religious hierarchy, with religious ideology and text the least referred. This study also found that traditional religious authorities of Korean Catholic Church, through the online discussion, were challenged and eroded, and some part of authorities were dispersed among church members or new form of authorities was created by them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
RESEARCH BACKGROUND.....	1
RESEARCH PURPOSE.....	4
KOREAN CASE STUDY.....	6
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
STUDIES ON THE INTERNET AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY.....	12
POST INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY.....	16
LEGITIMACY OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND CLERICALISM.....	20
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	24
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODS.....	26
CHAPTER 5 CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE INTERNET IN KOREA.....	28
STUDIES OF THE INTERNET AND RELIGIONS IN KOREA.....	28
INTERNET USAGE BY CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS.....	32
INTERNET USAGE BY CHURCH MEMBERS.....	34
FEATURES OF LAYPEOPLE’S INTERNET USAGE.....	39
OUTBREAK OF TENSION AND CONFLICT.....	41
CHAPTER 6 CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC OPINION.....	48
FEATURES IN THE PROCEDURE OF DISCUSSION.....	48
VARIOUS OPINIONS ABOUT TWO MAIN ISSUES.....	54
CHAPTER 7 FORMS OF AUTHORITY.....	60
RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY.....	60
RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE.....	63
RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY.....	65
RELIGIOUS TEXT.....	67
CHAPTER 8 REARRANGEMENT OF AUTHORITY.....	71
EROSION OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES BY CHALLENGING.....	71
LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY AND ANTI-CLERICALISM.....	73
NEW AGENT OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: CREATIVE CLASS.....	75
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION.....	77
SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.....	77
LIMITATIONS.....	80
FUTURE RESEARCH.....	81

REFERENCES.....	83
VITA.....	94

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

One of the emerging issues in the studies of the Internet and religion is whether and how the Internet or online communication affects the structure and practices of the traditional authorities of religions. The research of the Internet's impact on religious authority becomes increasingly important in today's digital age in which religious organizations and leaders no more effectively control over religious materials and activities than ever before (Hadden & Cowan, 2000), and ordinary members¹ of a religious community have got strong means of communication such as the Internet that enables them not just to easily obtain, share, assess, and create religious information and knowledge, but also to express their own opinions freely.

Online communication tends to make "a democratizing effect on all religions and work against those religions that resist this consequence"(Dawson & Hennebry, 1999, p. 34). The Internet's ability of empowering users to transcend barriers in time and space and traditional communication channel may give birth to public discourses that might subvert the religious authority of established religious structures and leaders (Dawson, 2000), and even create new roles and agents of authority, such as "techies" or "church webmasters" of an online group who are regarded as a legitimate authority by members of the group (Thumma, 2000).

¹ In order to refer to people who are not in the clergy, this study uses the terms such as ordinary church members, church members, the laity, and laypeople, according to the context in which each term is used.

Offline religious organizations and leaders, especially of the Roman Catholic Church, faced with the heavy plausibility of the Internet's wide impact on religion, have expressed concerns about bringing religious discourse or theological discussions previously reserved to religious leaders into public forums (Piff & Warburg, 2005). Bishop Ronald P. Herzog of Alexandria, LA., a member of the Bishops' Committee on Communications said, "one of the greatest challenges of this culture to the Catholic Church is its egalitarianism", under which "Anyone can create a blog; everyone's opinion is valid" (Herzog, 2010). He saw the emergence of online communication, especially social media, as a fundamental shift in communication patterns and behavior as the printing press 500 years ago, and warned that if the Catholic Church is slow to adapt to new technology, it has to face another "Protestant Reformation".

There are lots of examples of how easier access to information and knowledge that had normally been closed to ordinary church members and wide information sharing led to challenges to the religious authorities. Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979), delineating the implications of the printing press in the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution as well as the Protestant Reformation, asserted that the printing press completely changed the ways in which information was collected, stored, retrieved, criticized, discovered, and promoted. Kingdon (1980) also, agreeing with Einstein, makes sure that "without access to the printed editions of biblical texts and church fathers, and the worrisome variants on crucial dogmatic issues they contain, Luther might never have been stimulated to develop his revolutionary new theology", and "without accessibility to print, Luther might never have spread his ideas (p. 140)."

With the invention of printing technology in fifteenth century, the Church's monopoly of information and knowledge, thus its religious authority, began to be threatened. Today, in the digital age, church organizations and leaders are concerned about some potential similarities of the impact of the printing technology on religion (Dewar, 2000). They think that, through the development of the Internet, laypeople in the Church has been empowered more than the extent that the printing press had reinforced ordinary people's information accessibility and sharing, which contributed to give rise to the Protestant Reformation.

These concerns, however, does not mean that the Internet and online communication essentially and necessarily challenge and subvert existing religious authority. Although the Internet's potential to flatten hierarchies has been regarded as a main claim in studies of the Internet (Gurak, 1997, p.16; Turkle, 1995), many researches critically argued that the Internet is both a threat to religious authority and a useful tool for controlling members and maintaining structure (Barker, 2005), or even that online communication may reinforce traditional religious authorities (Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005; Larsen, 2001).

Moreover, most studies of the Internet and religious authority have been done mainly around "fringe" (Campbell, 2006, p. 18) religious groups including New Religious Movements (NRMs), overlooking the "mainstream" religions such as the Catholic, Protestant, and Islam. This limitation of previous studies begs the question: Can the claims of these studies be applied generally to the change of religious authority in relation to the Internet in the context of mainstream religions? It is also important to

consider the institutional and cultural differences among religious traditions in investigating the relation between the Internet and religious authority (Turner, 2007).

It is usually recognized that the Christianity, or at least the Roman Catholic Church, has a centralized system of authority, namely the Papacy and the system of sacerdotal priesthood². In contrast, in both Judaism and Islam the authority of religious leaders is based on "a local, discursive, and popular form of authority", which is given "by a superior as a result", unlike professional or bureaucratic status in Christianity (Turner, 2007, p. 119). Thus, the Internet's impact on religious authority may vary among traditional religions as well as between "fringe groups" and "mainstream" religions. Thus, the Internet's impact on the religious authority needs to be identified with more plentiful empirical and detailed investigations.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

For better understanding of the Internet and religious authority, comparative studies across religions on dominant conceptions of authority are essential. As "definitions of what constitutes religious authority may be community- and context-specific" (Campbell, 2007), religious authority may be discussed and contextualized differently in each religious tradition. Moreover, the fact that previous studies have the limitation of being ignorant of traditional monotheistic world religions makes detailed and specific case studies in the context of each religious tradition much more important.

² According to Roman Catholics, sacerdotalism means that priests, through their ministry, perform the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful perfectly in union with the sacrifice of Christ, in an unbloody and sacramental manner. Thus Priests "exercise within the Church a function of the apostles. They are empowered to perform the ministry of the Word, by which men are formed into the People of God."

In that sense, the present research focuses on the case study of the Catholic Church in South Korea. Especially, focusing on the discussions and debates by laypeople in online forums, this study examines how the Internet and online discussions affect the authorities of religious institutions and leaders.

With the widespread of the Internet in Korea, the Korean Catholic Church, focusing on the Internet's instrumental value³, expected that the new technology could be utilized as a new pastoral tool for missionary work, religious education, and computerized administration. After initial phase of introduction and usage of the Internet within the church, however, there was some phenomena similar to what Turner (2007) called “the unintended effect of corroding traditional forms of authority that are either based on oral transmission or on print based forms of textual learning that is linear, hierarchical, imitative and repetitive (p. 118)”. The unintended effect came from church members' online communication practices that had begun already since the initial stage of networked communication during PC Tongsin⁴ (Personal Computer Communication) era before the World Wide Web. They created a new form of religious space online, which have developed from just a means of getting religious information and sharing spiritual experiences into the space for discussion and debate about critical social and religious issues.

³ Almost all Religions in Korea have tried to utilize the Internet as a strong tool satisfying practical purposes, which is proved by the fact that most theological discussion about information society was concentrated on the potential and ways of practical use of digital communication technologies.

⁴ PC Tongsin refers to PC communication network prior to the worldwide web. In 1990s, individual computer users in Korea used nationwide networks, sort of Korea-wide intranets. Connection to those early networks was through dial-up modems plugged into the phone outlet.

Online discussion and debate regarding "The Four Major Rivers Project" is a representative example that exposed differences of opinion in recognizing dogmatic and social teachings of the Church and in applying them to the context of the Korean society. Especially, through the discussion, the official authorities of the Korean Catholic Church are reinterpreted and reassessed by the ordinary church members. Thus, this study examines how the Internet and online communication affect the religious authorities of the Korean Catholic Church, through investigating the procedure of the discussion and debate. The goals of this study are: (1) to investigate the ways in which church members use the Internet for communication in the church. (2) to examine how the Internet usage by church members affects religious authority. (3) to identify what kind of religious authority is affected.

KOREAN CASE STUDY

The Roman Catholic Church in South Korea was born in 1784 when Yi Sung-hun was baptized while in China. The Church in Korea survived without any formal missionary priests until clergy from France (the Paris Foreign Missions Society) arrived in 1836. Despite the century-long persecution that produced thousands of martyrs, the Church in Korea continued to expand. The Apostolic Vicariate of Korea was formed in 1831, and after the expansion of the Church structure over the next century, the current structure of the three Metropolitan Provinces, each with an Archdiocese and several suffragan dioceses, was established in 1962. There are now over 5.1 million Catholics in South Korea (over 10% the population), with 15 dioceses including three archdioceses of Seoul, Daegu and Gwangju, and the military ordinate.

The Church in Korea has seen prodigious growth in recent years. The rapid growth can be attributed to the Church's positive perception by the general public for its dedication to the democratization of South Korea, its active participation in social welfare, and its relatively respectful attitude to interfaith relationship and traditional spirituality. Especially in 1980s, the Catholic Church in Korea was believed to be the last bastion of democracy and a symbol of the conscience of Korean society for its role and enthusiasm to realize social justice and to improve human rights of the oppressed. Although even during that period some clergy and the faithful were still critical to the Church's social involvement, the Church leaders wanted to justify the social participation of Catholics from a view point of social teaching of the Church, which enhanced support of Korean people for her social stance.

Since the 1990's, however, the Church in Korea has gradually become a Church of the middle class. The intellectual level of Catholics in general was much higher than that of the average Korean people. The majority of them lived in large cities and adjoining areas and many Catholics could be found in administrative or professional occupations. The average monthly income of Catholics was higher than that of the average Korean family. On the one hand this meant that the Church in Korea has become rich in human and material resources. But on the other hand, the Church, being transformed into a church of the middle class people, has created such atmosphere that those of the poorer strata would distance themselves from it.

As of 2010, Internet usage rate of the population aged 3 and over in South Korea is 78% (ISIS, 2010). Considering that the Internet usage rate had been only 44.7% in 2000, the past decade of rapid broadband infrastructure expansion saw an almost twofold

increase in number of Internet users. Based on the highly developed information infrastructure, religions in Korea have been active in utilizing the Internet for religious purpose (Ko Yuyoung, 2009, p. 14). While some ordinary members in religions began to utilize the initial form of networked communication in the late 1980s when PC Tongsin services began, it was not until in 1994 when World Wide Web was developed that religious use in the level of official religious organizations began. The Korean Catholic Church expressed its first official interests in the Internet's potential for religious purpose in 1995, when the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea examined for the first time online network system that would connect all of the dioceses and parishes around the whole country.

This study examines the Internet's usage in the Korean Catholic Church by users: church organizations and ordinary church members. While church organizations recognized the Internet as a strong tool for missionary work, religious education, and computerized administration, ordinary church members constructed it as a new form of religious space for online communities and forums, in which they would be able to get, share, and discuss religious information experiences. This new virtual space provided opportunities to express grassroots opinions on religious issues, which never had been impossible offline in the past. As time goes by, their space for discussion expanded into the bulletin boards and forums in the Catholic official portal websites created by church institutions such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea and the Seoul Archdiocese. With the emerging of Web 2.0 era and social media including blogs, the cyberspace for discussion and self-expression of church members was expanded more rapidly and widely.

Beyond just obtaining, exchanging, and accepting given information, the ordinary church members' active participation in producing new information and knowledge caused tension and conflict in the hierarchical structure of the Church. The conflicts showed up first in the form of disclosure, accusation, and criticism of corruptions by priests. Information about scandals by clergy that had been normally hidden as trivial and local matters in offline church was exposed and shared online, to be a target of critical assessment and discussion. After all, in 2006, a series of radical statements that asserted the necessity of dissolution of the institutional church with full-blown criticism about current situation in the church rocked the Korean Catholic Church. After then, specialized sites that were critical of the institutional church began to spring up in the church including alternative religious news sites run by a group of ordinary church members.

One of the most controversial online issues in the Korean Catholic Church was the "The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project", which was first announced as a "Green New Deal" policy by the administration of the President Lee Myung-bak in January 2009. The government asserted that the restoration project of four major rivers would provide water security, flood control, and ecosystem vitality. The project, however, encountered fierce opposition from environmental movement organizations, some civil groups, and religious groups including the Korean Catholic Church. While all four lawsuits filed by environmentalists and civic groups to halt the ongoing restoration scheme on Korea's four major rivers were rejected, that is still a lingering controversy.

The initial stance of the Korean Catholic Church was regarded by most people as being quite critical of the Project on the basis of a statement, in which the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK) expressed "worries" about the predicted damage

to natural environment. However, the apparently oppositional stance of the Church became questionable by Cardinal Nicholas Cheong's ambivalent attitude toward the Project, which caused confusion and controversy in the Church. The first official response of the Korean Catholic Church to the project was found in the statement issued on March 12, 2010 by the CBCK. This statement, based on the Christian ethics regarding life and environment, declared, "We, all the bishops gathered at the 2010 Spring General Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, are concerned that the 'Four Major Rivers Project' which is nowadays being carried out in many places across the country simultaneously will cause serious damage to our natural environment." In the Catholic Church, a statement issued collectively by the name of bishops' conference is regarded as the official and united position. Supported by the bishops' critical position on the project, diverse oppositional movements were organized in the Church.

However, Cardinal Nicholas Cheong said in a press conference on December 8, 2010, that the nation needs to wait and see whether the refurbishment project is "development for destruction" or "development for development". Moreover, he said that the statement issued by bishops should be interpreted not as the decisive opposition to the project but just as encouragement to develop the rivers "in a way to reduce damage". Two days later, some senior priests asked Cardinal Nicholas Cheong to resign as Archbishop of Seoul, saying that he had broken the Episcopal collegiality and had created confusion in society and division in the Church.

For almost a year, fierce discussion and debate went on in the cyberspace within the Korean Catholic Church, regarding not only the project itself, but also a series of tensions and conflicts exposed among subjects of diverse level of authority. Discussions

have involved wide range of issues from interpretation of the Catholic Church's teaching about life and environment through ways for its social practice to criticism and assessment of official authorities in the Church. Thus, focusing on the issues and procedure of the online discussions and debates with regard to the Four Major Rivers Project within the Church, this study examines how the religious authorities of the Korean Catholic Church are accepted, assessed, and recreated. For this target, this study raises four questions: (1) How has the Internet been adopted and utilized in the Korean Catholic Church? (2) In what ways do ordinary church members construct public opinion through creating and participating in online discussion? (3) What forms of religious authority are affected by the Internet usage? (4) What is the impact of the Internet usage on the relationship between church members and church organizations and leaders?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

STUDIES ON THE INTERNET AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

For over two decades, the Internet has been used as a new space where religious rituals are conducted, traditional religious beliefs are discussed, and new kinds of spiritual movements are come to be shaped. Already since 1980s, the Internet has been used as a strong religious tool. Especially, many expressions of religion online⁵ have emerged, and the Internet has been the medium of religion online. After the first phase of research of the social implications of the Internet around the questions such as “what is the Internet, and who is using it, and how and why?”, the next key questions were raised with regard to more detailed concerns about identity, ethics, community, conflict, and simulated reality (Campbell, 2006; Haden & Cowan, 2000).

Academic concerns on the relations between religion and the Internet were evident in late 90s, when many researchers paid attention to religion online (Zaleski, 1997; Dawson & Hennebry, 1999; Campbell, 2003). Since then, studies on the Internet as a new spiritual space have taken many kinds of directions: studies on cyber-religion, religious ethics and virtual reality, or identification of new religious expressions. Among many themes, studies on religious authority and the Internet have focused on not just the

⁵ Many researchers investigating the relationship between religion and the Internet has employed a conceptual distinction between religion-online and online-religion, presented by Helland (2000). The former refers to importing traditional forms of religion online and the latter refers to adapting religion to create new forms of networked spiritual interactions.

religion online phenomenon itself, but the question of how online practices and interactions within particular community context affect offline community.

Despite the diversity of the attitudes to the Internet, one of the main claims made regarding the Internet is its potential of threatening traditional authorities by flattening hierarchies and giving voice to marginalized people (Pullen, 2000). In fact, many studies in social sciences confirmed its potential of challenging political, social, and even religious authorities (Couldry & Curran, 2003; Torres & Pina, 2005). Many studies about the relation between online and offline religion referred to some issues of power, authority and control, and claimed that online activities inevitably challenge traditional and offline religious authorities.

Thurman (2000) looked at how the Internet creates new power structures and roles in the Church online in the USA. According to his study, webmasters or online moderators within the Church, who were marginalized “techies”, are increasingly empowered with given new leadership roles. Therefore, they have begun to function as new agents of religious authority. Dawson (2000) categorized challenges that online religious activities make against traditional religions into three areas: proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, loss of control over religious materials, and new opportunities of grassroots forms of witnessing.

Piff and Warburg (2005) argued that a group in online forum can not only take discussions that are usually reserved for official administrators into a public forum, but also offer their own interpretations of religious beliefs. Their study implies that increased reliance on the Internet raises tensions between religious institutions and community members, and online conversations can create a space and process whereby official

teachings may be challenged. Herring (2005) investigated an online Christian group's efforts to construct a group theology and found that the moderator within the group holds the main authority to interpret and deliver some religious messages. The religious authority found in the identity of the moderator is a kind of new authority given to him through online religious activities and discussions, which can be a challenge to the traditional religion.

However, there have been other researchers who have been suspicious about these presumptions, and argued that the Internet may affirm and enforce traditional religious authorities. Barker (2005), in her study of New Religious Movements (NRMs)⁶ online, suggested that NRM may be affected in its religious structure by the arrival of cyberspace. She investigated how the online communication by the members of the movements can introduce challenges or rearranging the established structure of religious authority within the movement. What she has found is that the access to the Internet and online communication can not only help to "undermine plausibility structure", but also can be used as a strong tool for recruiting new members or empowering fixed beliefs or discourses among existing members. Therefore, the Internet, she argued, may be both a challenge to authority and a useful tool to affirm and maintain established structures.

In an empirical study of Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy and the Internet, Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai (2005) consider how religious fundamentalist may "culture" the Internet as a new technology in ways that its use can preserve their unique cultures, rather than threaten. Focusing on the impact of the Internet on the four dimensions of religious

⁶ A new religious movement (NRM) refers to a religious community of modern origin, which is characterized by its distinction from pre-existing religious denominations and loose affiliations. By its characteristics, it tends to utilize intensively modern technologies such as the Internet.

fundamentalism: hierarchy, patriarchy, discipline and seclusion, the study found that “the Internet can be culturally constructed in ways that adapt to the needs of a religious fundamentalist hierarchy” (p. 28). Thus, the Internet as a cultured technology, they believe, may serve to enhance rather than threaten religious authority. They also found that, through the procedure of culturing, leaders or elites try to utilize the Internet as a strong tool to control information flow and opinions constructed in a group, through public pressure on members seeming hostile to authority, condemning the Internet usage by members, or imposing censorship on the Internet through blocking, filtering, or control of the network infrastructure.

Through these briefly examined studies of the impact of the Internet on religious authorities, it can be said that the Internet may be utilized both to both affirm and challenge traditional religious authorities. Therefore, to answer the questions about the Internet’s impact on religious authority is a complicated work, which requires more detailed and empirical studies according to religious denominations, the social context, or locality. Above all, previous studies are mostly related with new religious online movements or ethnographic investigations of rituals and practices in Pagan and cultic groups online. So, it needs more deep exploration if the results of these studies can be applied to the traditional religions such as the Christianity. Campbell (2006), after delineating the recent studies exploring the relationship between religion and the Internet, pointed out that the “mainstream” religions such as Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Islamic have been under-represented, and instead so called “fringe” groups have appeared to be over-represented in the studies on the impact of the Internet on authorities. Such over-representation, she suggests, seems to reflect the tendency that those fringe groups

adopt and use the Internet more intensively than mainstream religions. Armfield, Dixon, and Dougherty (2006), in addition to Campbell's suggestion, said that the under-representation of mainstream groups can be explained better by the fact that little is known about how and why members of the mainline groups may or may not choose the Internet. According to them, members of mainline denominations are different in using the Internet from those of fringe religious groups, under the completely different organizational structures. Thus, the previous researches on religious authority and the Internet also need to be proved and complemented by more detailed and wide studies on the authority/power of the mainstream religions, which have unique, strong, and firmly fixed authority structures.

POST INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

Mergence of production and consumption

When Marx and Engels said about "constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production (1965, p. 12)" for sustainable development of the capitalism, the essential part of them was the necessity of revolution of communication technologies. The innovation of communication technologies and new modes of communication as a consequence of rapid development of technologies have drastically affected the historical processes of the capitalism. As a result, such developments have made changes to social and cultural area as well as politics and economics. In their books, John Hartley (2005) and David Hesmondhalgh (2007) explain current phases of economical development as "creative industries" and "cultural industries" each, and argue that new forms of industries are emerging on the basis of completely different political, economical, social, and cultural

environment, that has been built by new labor force, and industrial practices and organization based on the creativity.

The most evident feature of new communicational practices by this new labor force is that the border between production and consumption comes to be faded out. Hartley says that, in most advanced economies, there has been "a major turn from manufacturing industry to consumer-led enterprises", and "the creative industries are 'services' where the consumer is causal"(2005, p. 23). Therefore, consumption should be understood as "action", not "behavior", and after all consumption is the essential part of the creative industries cycle, not just a destination (2005, p.24). Actually, such idea about the relationship between production and consumption is not recently invented concept, going back to Marshall McLuhan in 1970s and Alvin Toffler in 1980s. In each case, the main theme is that "technological advances would, in the future, enable the produce and the consumer to merge"(Tapscott, 2009, p. 208). Tapscott, calling those who function both as producer and consumer as 'prosumers', said that prosumerism happens "when producers and consumers both actively participate in the creation of goods and services in an ongoing way". The feature of the prosumerism is "the blurring of the line between producers and consumers at the micro level of the economy"(Tapscott, 2009, p. 208).

We already could find the seed of such mergence of production and consumption in various kinds of media programs and entertainment items such as video games, mobile phones, and films. Jenkins (2006) deals with three concepts regarding convergence culture, such as media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence, which are all based on the strong way of distributive communication available by widespread distributive media. Jenkins, investigating the shift of relationship between

grassroots people and corporate media in power relations, the dynamics between the strong media producer and the media consumers who were once scattered in time and space are changing in unpredictable ways (Jenkins, p. 2). Regarding the possibility of participatory and collectively collaboratory communication, Clay Shirky, in his book "Here Comes Everybody" (2008), explains a world situation where anybody can have freedom and abilities of express and participation through modern communication technologies. He says that the modern communication tools makes it possible for us to "have many-to-many tools that support and accelerate cooperation and action" rather than "limiting our communications to one-to-one and one-to-many tools, which have always been a bad fit to social life"(p. 158).

The technological condition of the mergence of producers and consumers comes from the widespread availability of distributive media or way of communication, which is in turn based on the World Wide Web or the development of the Internet. The online communication and the rapidly developed digital computing together allow people to stay in network and interact continuously. Hartley (2005) explains the moves regarding social and industrial changes, suggesting that the stage of IT infrastructure has been changed through connectivity and content to creativity (pp. 20-21). During the time when content and creativity were drivers for economic activities, more advanced type of communication technologies and media are developed, which focus on the distributive power, creativity, and decentralized communication. The World Wide Web has evolved to Web 2.0, which refers to the ability of interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web (Wikipedia). Its most evident features are openness and redactive creativity (Hartley, 2005, p. 167). In the

world of Web 2.0, there is no need to be an expert and to know specialized knowledge in order to interact with those on-line and make digitalized contents such as video clip, or mashed music. The mergence of production and consumption has been accelerated by the facilitated interaction and openness.

New agent of religious authority: creative class

Today's world and industries need creativity and revolutionary innovation for both economic and cultural enterprise (Hartley, 2005, p. 1), and the newly required creativity is supposed to be suggested by a new labor force that is organized in a completely new and interesting manner. David Hesmondhalgh (2007) called the particular type of creativity regarding symbols as 'symbolic creativity' and used the phrase 'symbol creators' to refer to those who make up and work on symbols (p. 5). Hartley (2005), introducing Richard Florida's identification of a new economic class, 'the Creative Class', explains that, just as the working class and the service class in the twentieth century, this new 'no-collar' work class will be the center of economic and cultural life in the near future.(p. 2)

The new class, called "creative class" by those who, by it, want to depict new mode of social, economical, and communicational practices in completely different environment, has some evident characters. Above all, they are not firmly bound to anything that exercised demanding effect on everyday life. Richard Florida (2002), calling such situation as something related with "weak ties", says, "In virtually every aspect of life, weak ties have replaced the stronger bonds that once gave structure to society" (p. 7). According to him, contemporary creative people "don't just cluster where

the jobs are", and seek places "where we can make friends and acquaintances easily and live quasi-anonymous lives". They have very weak ties with people and institutions, thereby ultimately mobile.

This feature can be applied to religious life, still one of the most important factors that construct meaning of people's lives. Since the middle of the twentieth century, so called "believing without belonging", which referred to a phenomenon, in which, instead of revitalization of spirituality, the religious population in the established, institutional religion was continuously decreasing, is emerging. Sociologist of religion Grace Davie (1990) pointed out contemporary religious "believing without belonging", and argued that today religions are experiencing the shift from "an ethic of obligation" to "an ethic of consumption". The new class tends not to "believe", but to "consume". They are not bound to their religion any more the same extent as people do in the past. Moreover, they favor openness and diversity. Florida, in his *The Rise of the Creative Class*, says, "What they are seeking is an environment open to differences" (2002, p. 79). "Talented people defy classification based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference or appearance", and even religion. Additionally, based on their "strong preference for individuality and self-statement", they do not want to "conform to organizational or institutional directives and resist traditional group oriented norms" (p. 77).

LEGITIMACY OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND CLERICALISM

Max Weber suggested a theory of authority that can be divided into three types. He defined domination (authority) as the chance of commands being obeyed by a specific group. Legitimate authority is one that is recognized as legitimate and justified by both

the ruler and the ruled. Charismatic authority is that authority which is derived from "the gift of grace" or when the leader claims that his authority is derived from a "higher power". Traditional authority derives from long-established customs, habits and social structures. Rational-legal authority is the form of authority that depends for its legitimacy on formal rules and established laws of the state.

The structure of authorities of the Catholic Church is highly hierarchical, and the essential inequality is demonstrated in the separation between those in hierarchy (the clergy) and those outside hierarchies (the laity). The Pope X clarified that, by saying;

The Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors. (Pius X, *Vehementer Nos*, 1906, 8)

Moberg's (1962) Episcopal-Presbyterian-Congregational typology based on clergy placement structure has been utilized as a tool to classify types of religious authority structure of different denominations of Christianity. While the Congregational type is the most democratic in organizational structure and management and the religious authorities are distributed, The Episcopal type that is represented by the Catholic Church with Methodist Church and the Anglican Church has the most centralized authority structure. Lee Wonkyu (1997) summarized the Episcopal like following:

This type has the centralized authority form that supposes that religious leadership flows, through the channel that is given divine authority, from the center of the organization. The ultimate authority belongs to the bishop on the top of the hierarchy. While ministers are responsible of their individual churches, the bishop have the right to appoint them for local churches. Thus, the ministers are decided and sent to the local churches, by the bishop's selection, approval, and appointment. This type

emphasizes the role of priesthood and apostolic transmission. The autonomy of individual churches is limited and the laity never has the right to choose their own leader. The minister of an individual church is just a religious official. Like this, the religious leadership in this type is exhaustively concentrated on a religious leader on the top of the rank. (Lee Wonkyu, 1997, pp. 397-398)

In modern society, where democracy has been accepted to be one of the universal values, clergies' reliance on the laity has been increasingly, and laypeople's status in the church has been elevated, the highly centralized hierarchy of the Catholic Church always involved a lot of risk of potential collision in and out of the Church, which gave birth to widespread anti-clericalism (Franforter, 1977; McLeod, 2003, p. 13). In this context, the historical shift the Second Vatican Council had attempted, especially the partial distribution of centralized authority and the expansion of laypeople's participation in the Church leadership were inevitable option for the Church.

The Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s made a significant attempt to change the power structure and operational system of the Catholic Church. Oh Kyunghwan (1995, p. 488) summarizing main interests of bishops who participated in the Council, pointed out excessive centralization, lack of participation by lower rank of the clergy, and passiveness of the laity. These interests of bishops were also expressed by the modification of traditional Ecclesiology, the theological study of the Christian church. The Second Vatican Council understood the Church as "the People of God", which means that the Church is composed of people who are dignified by the God regardless of status. This thought that both the clergy and the laity are equally form the people of God put an end to the traditional perception of the Church that there are two kinds of people in the Church; the clergy and the laity.

The Second Vatican Council opened the opportunities for the neglected groups to participate in the Church's operational process. In other words, the Council put emphasis on the need of bishops' participation in the Pope's decision-making process, the need of priests' participation in the bishop's decision-making process, and the laity's participation in the priest's decision-making process. These were for reducing the excessive centralization of the authority, complying with the wishes of modern people in democratic society, and promoting human rights in the Church. So to speak, these were efforts to bring democratic elements in the Church (Oh Kyunghwan, 1989, p. 155). The institutional strategy for bishops' wider participation in the operational process in the Church was the Synod of Bishops, which was introduced by the decree *Christus Dominus* that was approved by the a vote in the Council and promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. The Council also suggested a presbyteral council (Code of Canon Law 495), and a pastoral council in the level of diocese (Code of Canon Law 511) and parish (Code of Canon La 536) so that the laity and members of institutes of consecrated life could participate in the operational process of the church administration and the decision making procedure of a bishop or a priest more widely.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The goals of this study are to investigate the ways in which church members use the Internet for communication in the church, to identify what kind of religious authority is affected by the Internet usage, and to examine how the Internet usage by church members affects religious authority.

Related with the first goals, this study raises two research questions. The first one is "how has the Internet been adopted and utilized in the Korean Catholic Church?", which is asked to depict historical background regarding the procedure and purposes of religious usage of the Internet in the church. This study explores the brief history of the Internet usage in the church, particularly according to two categories of users: church organizations and ordinary church members. By so doing, the study examines some differences in using the online communication by users of each category. Then this study goes to a discussion about some tension and conflicts between institutions and ordinary members as consequences of the Internet use.

The rest of questions are raised on the basis of the findings of analysis of posts in online forums regarding "The Four Major Rivers Project". The second research question, which is also related with the first research goal, is "In what ways does the Internet usage by ordinary church members affect religious authorities in the Korean Catholic Church?" This question is asked to depict the ways in which laypeople who are connected by online network create and participate in discussion and debate in religious online forums. With regard to the second research goal, this study raises the third question "What forms of

religious authority are affected by the Internet usage?" Considering some limitation of previous studies regarding conceptual specification of authority, this question is asked to identify what forms of authority are mainly affected by the online communication. The fourth and final research question is "What is the impact of the Internet usage in church on the relationship between church members and church organizations and leaders?" By asking this question, this study wants to know if there is some change in power relations between church organizations or leaders and ordinary church members.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs critical discourse analysis as a main research method to analyze online posts on the message board of a representative internet site in the Catholic Church. The data for discourse analysis come from "The Catholic Good News", the Catholic portal site of Seoul Archdiocese, which is the biggest diocese in Korea. Following a statement issued by 1,500 priests and 5 bishops participating in the movement for stopping the controversial project, the online forum specialized for discussion about "The Four Major Rivers Project" was created in "The Catholic Good News" site on March 9 2010, which continued to work for almost 1 year until it was closed on January 18 2011. Among the 8,480 posts, the top 100 posts that were most viewed by others were selected and analyzed as the data for the research.

One of the premises of discourse analysis is the assumption that words are never neutral (Fiske, 1994). Discourse analysis requires researcher to see language as having meaning in a specific historical, social, and political context, not just as abstract. That is to say, written and spoken words basically are politicized, because they carry the power that reflects what the speaker want to say. Those who are in power play an important role in raising up agenda, shaping issues, and setting the boundaries of legitimate discourse (Henry & Tator, 2002). While words of those who have power are regarded as "self-evident truths", words of those who don't have power are ignored as irrelevant or inappropriate (Van Dijk, 2000). Therefore, the critical discourse analysis can help make clear the connections between language and power (Thompson, 2002).

Discourse refers to not just abstract one, but expressing by using words. It is the way of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the real world. Moreover, it is usually being used in everyday lives in order for building power and knowledge, and even for hegemony. As the discourse, written and spoken words, carries its inherent power, the critical discourse analysis wants to describe, interpret, analyze, and critique social life that is reflected in the words (Luke, 1997). So, critical discourse analysis is interested in studying and analyzing the words to discover the discursive sources of power, dominance, bias, and inequality and to find how these sources are initiated, reproduced, and transformed in a specific context (Van Dijk, 1988).

Therefore, the goal of discourse analysis is to uncover the hidden ideological assumptions in the words (Fairclough, 1989), by exploring systematically opaque relationships among discursive practices, texts, and events and even wider social or cultural structures (Fairclough, 1993). According to Fairclough (2000), discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity, and gender) and by culture, and the words helps shape and constrain identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs.

CHAPTER 5

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE INTERNET IN KOREA

This chapter, focusing on the usage of the Internet and its impact on the religious authority, examines the history, present conditions, and features of the Internet usage in the Korean Catholic Church. It begins by examining previous studies on the Internet and religions in Korea, followed by investigation of the usage of the Internet by the Korean Catholic Church. The history of the Internet usage by the church is examined two points of view: the official church institution's instrumental interests in using the Internet and ordinary church members' new space for religious self-expression. While the former is related with the concept of the Internet as a useful tool for missionary work and pastoral activities, the latter is about the question of in what ways the church members have enhanced their participation in communication in the church. This chapter goes further by suggesting two examples that demonstrate some tension and conflict in the church caused by ordinary folks' expanded participation in communication within the church, which functioned as motives for challenges to the religious authority.

STUDIES OF THE INTERNET AND RELIGIONS IN KOREA

Studies of the Internet and religions in Korea have been done mainly in two areas of academic concern: approaches in theological studies and sociology of religion. The theological studies have been done by scholars within each religion, and, focusing on how to utilize effectively online communication and multimedia environments for missionary work and computerization of administrative processes, discussed macroscopic

vision of the future information society and ways of dealing with expected social changes. Approaches in sociology of religion have focused mainly on analysis and reflection about changes in religions caused by the development of information technologies, characteristics and patterns of online religious activities.

Theological Studies

Almost all religions in Korea have strived to figure out the impact of information technologies on religions and to find out effective ways to adapt to and deal with new religious environment. Focusing on the potential of new information technologies, theological studies examined how social changes caused by new technology affect religious system, institutional feature, and religious practice, in order to find out a better way of pastoral activities (Lee Sunghee, 1997; Chae Sooil, 1998).

Some studies, however, paid attention to a negative influence of the advance of information society on religions rather than positive expectations, and argued that online communications have seriously challenging factors that might threaten traditional religions. In late 90s, when the Internet was not widely developed yet, Kim Gusung (1996) pointed out the potential crisis of the religious authority of a minister and the absence of church members in the physical church space. As a more radical instance, Bae Kukwon (2001), who regarded cyber space as "a world filled with sins", argued that all religions might fall in danger of becoming a cyber religion in the cyber space.

Interests in practical use of digital communication technologies accounted for almost all of theological discussions about information society. Based on affirmative point of view to new communication technologies and the recognition of the necessity of

the advance of information age, religions in Korea displayed practical concerns about using digital technologies for religious purposes, especially for mission work, education, and pastoral activities.

Missionary work as an expansion of religion is the most fundamental purpose of a religion, and so the Internet as a new communication technology is seen as the strongest tool that can satisfy this religious need. Yun Seokyong (2001) also, emphasizing the powerful function of online communication in missionary work, pointed out the need to develop online worship program, to establish online church, and to develop online preaching system. He goes further by suggesting an international organization for missionary work through the Internet. The emphasis on missionary work in using the Internet is common at other religions such as Won Buddhism (Kim Unjong, 2003) and Buddhism (Kim Yangun, 2002).

Theological approach to the Internet usage by religions has been concentrated exclusively on the instrumental interests in practical purpose, which made it impossible for religions to pay attention to other studies on various issues related with the impact of new communication technology on religion: new trends in theology and spirituality as a consequence of the advance of the information age, new ethics in information society, online community, religious identity online, or religious authority and power relation.

Approach in Sociology of Religion

Approach in religious study or sociology of religion examines phenomena of changes within religions caused by new information technologies, beyond instrumental view of a certain religion. The first pattern is an exploration of changes in religion in the

context of the macroscopic vision of information society, the second is the examination of religiosity of cyber space, and the third is the studies on the pattern and feature of online religious activities.

The studies of the Internet and religion are often referred in the context of the encounter between social changes coming from the advance of information society and religion (Jung Jinghong, 1997: Lee Wonkyu, 1999: Park Munsu, 1998). Lee Wonkyu depicted the expected future of religions in the context of social changes during the late 20th centuries, but he didn't provide the detailed shape of information society and new communication technology. Cheon Jinghong also predicted social changes brought by new technology and suggested the way for religions to deal with new communication environments. Park Munsu's study has a strong point in that it suggested the patterns of changes within religions: coexistence of desacralization and resacralization, the rapid growth of religious denomination that is sensitive to change, religious use of new media, increase of deformational movement in traditional religions, and the expansion of deinstitutionalized religiosity.

Secondly, some studies examine the possibility of online space as a religious and spiritual space. Yu Gipum (2004) argued that online space constructed by the Internet is penetrated with religious desire, and so in the future cyber space is expected to decisively affect religious culture. Kim Ungcheol (2000), in his study on religious online groups, found that religious desire is one of the most strong interests expressed by the Internet users, and the Internet increasingly tends to be utilized as a way to satisfy their religious desire, to exchange religious information, and to discuss religious issues.

The third pattern of studies is to examine usage and result of the Internet by religious institutions, which accounts for almost all studies on the Internet and religion (Kim Ungcheol, 2000: Park Munsu, 2000: Park Sooho, 1998, 2000). According to Sung Sijung's study (1999), the evident features of the religious online communities are horizontality in relationship, decentralized communication, and two-way communication. Park Sooho (1998) pointed out that key features of online religious activities are that online communication is regarded as the extension of offline religious experiences and that the subjects are increasingly diversified. Through these studies, the most commonly referred feature of online communication is its power of two-way communication, which Ko Yuyoung (2009) pointed out as one of four main characteristics of online religious activities. Chun Myungsoo (2003, p. 100) argued that the feature of interactivity enables the "public sphere", in which ordinary members in a religion can construct public opinion, and may cause a change of role between religious leaders and ordinary members (Yun Seokyong, 2001, p. 43).

INTERNET USAGE BY CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

While the first concerns for the online communication came from laypeople who made online Catholic group based on PC Tongsin before the Internet, it was not until 1994, when the commercial service of the Internet began, for the church organization to be interested in the usage of the Internet. According to "2008 The Internet Usage in The Korean Catholic Church" published by Committee for Social Communication of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK), the history of the Internet usage in Korean Catholic Church is divided into three phases: base-building, growth, and further

development. The base-building phase is the period in which the fundamental base for widespread use of the Internet in the church is constructed, during the period from PC Tongsin age to development of Yang-up system, a kind of Intranet, and the Catholic Internet Good-news, a Catholic portal site by Seoul Archdiocese in 1998. The growth phase is the period when there has been continuous tries to utilize the Internet and the users of the Internet was rapidly expanded, and the phase of further development refers to the period starting in 2007, when the concept of web 2.0 and the importance of mobile communication emerged.

In 1994, when the commercial service of the Internet based on World Wide Web began, CBCK began to discuss about informationization of church, and in the next year, after some period of research, two commissions were established in CBCK, followed by the foundation of "Korean Catholic Computerization Agency" and establishment of "Moses Project" that was the blue print of church informationization. The project, however, was canceled for some internal problems in the CBCK, and the task of informationization got to belong to each diocese.

After the national informatization project was canceled, Seoul archdiocese developed "Yangup System", a kind of Intranet, and finally in 1998 all 198 parishes and main institutions are connected by on online network, and the Catholic Internet Good - News, the biggest catholic portal site, opened. Before that, the Society of St. Paul, which is specialized at pastoral activities related with media, opened MNSP (the Missionary Net of St. Paul), the first online network service in the church, based on PC Tongsin network in 1996. Therefore, the basis for the use of the Internet for mission work and pastoral activities was established in the Korean Catholic Church.

In 1999 when the number of the Internet users had surpassed ten million, catholic users of the Internet also increased rapidly and the use of the Internet by church organizations was expanded too. From 2002, beyond the simple creating of web sites, there have been many kinds of new forms of projects related with the Internet. The combined wire-wireless service was first made at this period and Internet broadcasting began in some dioceses. In 2007, the Yang-up system was upgraded and finally connected all the Catholic Church online across the nation.

The Korean Catholic Church has highly developed information infrastructure, on which the Internet has been utilized as a strong tool for missionary work, educational program, and pastoral activities. The Internet usage by church organizations has been concentrated on the instrumental adaptation. This point of view lacks the notion that the Internet is not just a tool and can make fundamental and overall social and cultural changes. One of the most fundamental changes caused by the Internet was the shift of communication mode toward two-way interactivity. The basic communication mode in the Catholic Church has been a centralized and one-way communication mode, which is not different from church organization's online communications. Park Sooho (2004) pointed out that materials in web sites created by mainstream religious organizations are mostly contents regarding public relations that deliver doctrine and events to unspecified multitude.

INTERNET USAGE BY CHURCH MEMBERS

The ordinary church members in the Korean Catholic Church have displayed their religious identity and desire in the new religious space of cyber space constructed by

using the Internet. Throughout the history of the Internet usage in the church, church members have displayed some differences in utilizing the Internet from official church institutions. One of the most important differences is that the border between production and consumption of religious information and knowledge has been blurring, which is getting more evident with the advance of the age of Web 2.0, in which social media such as Blog, Facebook, and Twitter are getting widespread. Quantitative change in producing and consuming religious materials by church members has accompanied qualitative change. Equipped both high level of education and distributive power given by the Internet, the ordinary church members do not anymore stay in just accepting religious teaching and information from church organizations and leaders, and go further by reassessing, reinterpreting, and giving their own opinions based on their own beliefs, experiences, and interactions with each other and with church organizations. These changes of power relations in production and consumption of religious information and knowledge, and increasing interactivity among church members and organizations caused some tension and conflict rarely found in offline church, which would be proved to be challenges to the religious authority of the Catholic Church.

While there have been enough statistical data and materials regarding official application of the Internet to church administration by church organizations, few, even for the most basic data about who and how much they use the Internet, has been known or researched about the Internet usage by church members. Particularly, there has never been official statistics regarding the utilization of the Internet by religious people in Korea. Religion is not being considered as a separate item in the regular survey that has been performed by Ministry of Information & Communication and Korea Internet &

Security Agency (KISA), and moreover the Catholic Church itself have never investigated current situation of the usage of the Internet by church members. Thus, the question of how many and why ordinary church members are using the Internet has to be assumed from data researched by public institutions on the basis of demographic features.

"2008 The Internet Usage in The Korean Catholic Church"(CBCK Committee for Social Communications, 2009) published by the Committee for Social Communication of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK) assumes that, considering demographic and social features of the Catholic people in Korea, the Internet users rate of Catholics should be higher by 3 to 5% than that of the general population in Korea. According to a research, "Korean Catholics' Religious Consciousness and Life"(2007) published by the Korean Catholic Times, Korean Catholics' average age is slightly higher than that of general population, with both indexes of the level of education and annual income much higher, which may be an eminent factor that lead to an assumption that Catholics' Internet user rate is higher than average level of general population. Thus, it is regarded that, as of June 2011, the Korean Catholics' Internet users rate is somewhere between 81% and 86%, which is 3 to 5% higher than general population's users rate, 78% (ISIS, 2010).

In the Korean Catholic Church, the interests in using the Internet for religious purpose were first expressed by ordinary church members. Catholic online groups based on the PC Tongsin before the commercial Internet service was provided in early 90s, showed the potential of the Internet as new space for religious or spiritual desire. The first example of religious online community is "Hanulnara"(Heaven) established in 1991 on Hitel (now Paran), a PC Tongsin network provided by Korea Telecom., followed by Catholic Telecommunication Group in 1992 on Chollian owned by Dacom,

"Hanultu"(Sky Ground) in 1994 on Naunuri owned by NauCom., "Catholic Group" in 1997 on Unitel owned by Samsung SDS. These online religious groups, despite of low level of perception about networked or online communication by people, collected several thousand members in a short period of time and boasted vigorous activities. As of June 1966, Hanulnara was the biggest with 4,545 members, who were mainly college students around Seoul area, followed by Catholic Telecommunication Group with 2,423, among whom there were many people in their 30s, and 200 priests including even a bishop.

Since the first commercial broadband network service was provided by Korea Telecom in 1994, the Korean Catholic Church officially expressed its expectation to the Internet's potential as a new communication tool for church administration and pastoral activities, and set up Catholic Informationalization projects in a variety of ways. For several years after that, almost all organizations and institutions in the Church as well as lots of parishes built their own websites, and laypeople's individual websites also increased explosively. Before web 2.0 and social media emerged as a new trend in the Internet environment, the online space for the usage of the Internet by church members can be divided into three categories. The first space is individual websites that expanded and grown in volume and the second is bulletin boards provided in official church organizations' websites. The third is many small online groups, established on catholic portal sites and supersized internet portals outside the church.

While for several years individual websites had continued to grow rapidly in volume, the rate of increase had slowed as time went on. As building a website required having a high level of expertise regarding HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language), a

system of codes for producing documents for the Internet, it was not an easy task for individual Catholics to build their own websites. Thus immediately after main portal sites provided "mini homepage" space, which is was constructed automatically in the portal site just with registration as a member, individuals who didn't want to have a variety of functions on their websites moved from websites created by HTML to mini homepage services that didn't require any additional building process.

Laypeople's online activities on the bulletin boards of official church websites were one of the most important ways to communicate within church, although with some limitations. Official websites of CBCK, dioceses, and parishes, unlike websites for individual, small groups, or agencies committed to limited purpose, had the potential of being an online space for active and wide communication in church, with a large number of potential members and the representativeness as official organizations. Particularly, the Catholic Internet Good-News that had more than 300,000 members in 2010, offered various bulletin boards for laypeople's participation, with 6 categories and 35 subcategories including themes from religious experiences and cultural activities to political discussion and debate. Among them, "Toronsil"(discussion room) is one of the most actively visited spaces, in which various kinds of fierce discussions about religiously and socially controversial issues are found.

Lastly, relatively small online communities and groups in portal sites in and outside church cannot be ignored as the important online space for laypeople to use the Internet. These communities have been organized according to areas of concern and age groups, including catholic online groups from the age of PC Tongsin in early 90s. Within church, there are 2,500 clubs, small online communities on the Catholic Internet Good

News, and 363 clubs are established on "Maria Sarang Net" that has 150,000 members and 112 volunteers. There are more Catholic Cafe⁷, small communities on portal sites outside church with 4,443 Cafe on Naver and 3,488 Cafe on Daum, as of January 2011.

FEATURES OF LAYPEOPLE'S INTERNET USAGE

While church organizations' Internet usage has been focused on instrumental usage of the Internet for mission work and pastoral activities based on highly developed infrastructure, laypeople have found opportunities for new perception and reinterpretation of the faith and the church through horizontal and two-way communication in a new form of religious space.

Creating New Religious Space

The Catholic online groups in the age of PC Tongsin had special meaning as the first religious virtual communities, which led to the online religious activities by laypeople in the Catholic Church in the age of WWW. This religious virtual community constructed by online is conceptually different from traditional community of physical space. Rheingold (1993), predicting the computer mediated communication would be completely common with the development of new information technologies, called the virtual community "a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks (Rheingold, 1993)." This virtual community, unlike traditional community of physical space, is based on the desire and expectation of creating new forms of

⁷ Café refers to online community in Korea, which is established in portal sites.

community that goes beyond time and space (McLaughlin et al., 1995). The interaction of members in virtual communities has different structures and features from those of offline communities. Sung Sijung (1999), analyzing religious online groups on PC Tongsin network, argued that members of online religious groups were relatively free from bureaucratic power or hierarchy. That is to say, equal right in participatory activity was given to every member because there was no center of authority and decision making and the community itself was built by completely voluntary participation. Sung, therefore, argued that this religious virtual community was characterized by horizontal and decentralized organizational structure, not hierarchy on the top of which there are clergies and theologians.

Diversity of agencies in producing information and knowledge

Another feature of religious virtual community is that producing of religious materials is not limited to religious elites and every members of the community can produce and share information and knowledge created and collected on bulletin board. Anyone can easily provide and collect religious materials, by posting and searching the bulletin boards. Through this procedure of producing, consuming, and sharing, new experts are emerging as people who have special information and knowledge about a certain issue or area, and they are verified and recognized publicly as someone who deserves to be given a kind of authority. Unlike the authority in offline communities where the established authority to teach and discuss religious materials is given to church leaders, clergies, and theologians by their existing positions (Lee Wonkyu, 1997, p 412),

the online authority is examined, assessed, and recognized as one that has leadership, not by their status in church, but by their expertise and involvement.

Quantitative expansion and qualitative change

Considering that users who participate in online communication on bulletin boards in church websites are mainly laypeople and their websites overwhelm official church websites in volume, it seems that laypeople has become more powerful in providing new information and knowledge by online than church organizations. Emergence of church members as new producers of religious materials has affected roles of religious leaders and laypeople, and so brought about changes of hierarchical structure in church (Ko Yuyoung, 2009, p. 50). Moreover, laypeople are no more uncritically inceptive of teachings and information from church leaders or official organizations. They are not hesitant to accept them selectively through reinterpretation and reassessment in discussion and debate, even to challenge and defy them. In this regard the religious authority that is traditionally reserved to church organizations and leaders may be challenged by the Internet usage and online communication by church members.

OUTBREAK OF TENSION AND CONFLICT

Expansion and change of laypeople's online communication in the Church began to cause "the unintended effect of corroding traditional forms of authority" (Turner, 2007, p. 118) that church leaders have never expected. Internal problems that were easy for church leaders to deal with and control by regarding them as limited to a certain locality and trivial, began to be wide spread and amplified by online all over the church, which

gave birth to tension and conflict. Here, this study examines two examples that show how the online communication of laypeople has raised challenges to traditional religious authority.

Declaration of Dissolution of Korean Catholic Church

In April 2002, there was a sensational affair that aroused a lot of controversy and heated debate. An unidentified catholic who's online ID was KumkuJohn (Korean name of Joannes Chrisostomus, a Catholic saint), criticizing severely irrationalities and corruption of the Korean Catholic Church, posted a kind of statement that argued the Korean Catholic Church as an institution had to be dissolved. The declaration that appeared in a series of 10 times was posted to the online bulletin board of website of CBCK (Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea) during the period of April and May.

The only alternative is supposed to be the dissolution of Church. It is evident that there is no real Catholic Church in Korea. The only thing that exists is the church's extremely self-righteous authoritarianism that disguised as divinity wrapped by the name of the Catholic, accumulation of wealth justified by the name of social welfare, exploitation of spirituality based on a well-ordered theory of punishment and reward, legitimization of anti-intelligent dogma decorated with a fake science, absolutization of mission work that justify any heinous behavior, service to the power and the wealth disguised as justice, and curse and contempt uttered in the name of love. (KumkuJohn, 2002)

While there already had been intermittent criticism of church on several online bulletin boards, the declaration aroused a series of fierce debate in the Church, which continued for a year until spring in 2003. Further, the controversy was not limited within the CBCK website, expanded to many other websites of dioceses and parishes. The statements urged "active noncooperation movement" and "independently absent from the church" movement based on laypeople's resolution for reformation of church.

My statement is a declaration that laypeople are the principal agents of the church, which had been proved by Jesus who, being with the poor in the middle of the secular world, lived, fought, and died as a lay person, and so opened the door of his kingdom. Furthermore, this is a kind of spiritual resistance movement from the bottom, with the hope that pastors and priest would be live as what they should be. (KumkuJohn, 2002)

Although the response from other laypeople was partial agreement rather than full support because of the extremeness of the argument, it led many church members to critical reflection on the current undesirable situation in Korean Catholic Church and brought into question the authoritative structure in the church, which was unconditionally sanctified.

This happening had several implications with regard to the effect of the online communication on the Church. First implication is that the repercussion of the statement was expanded uncontrollably because it had appeared and following debates continued online for months. Whoever had the accessibility to the Internet could read and share the statement by copy-and-paste activity and emailing to other laypeople. Secondly, most part of the criticism in the statement included very detailed and accurate facts about the present situation in the church, among which there were some hidden information about corruptions by some priests such as misappropriation of church fund, which, in offline church communities, had been unknown to the public except those who were directly engaged in the incident. The exposure of information about priest's wrongdoing and sharing the information with laypeople might be a motivation of erosion of the moral and religious authority of the top of the church. The church organizations and leaders were supposed to try to control the spreading of the effect caused by disclosure of hidden information, which has proved to be powerful in the history of the offline church. The spread of information about scandal, however, is almost impossible to control over once

it appears and begins to share online. Third, the declaration was not unexpected and one-time happening that popped up all of a sudden. There are already increasing number of cases of criticisms in church after church members relied on the online communication in church. Church's official response to this incident was similar with the traditional crisis management strategy. The only way for church organizations to deal with it is to delete all the challenging posts as well as the declaration itself on the bulletin boards of all official church websites.

Taken as a whole, people's responses to critical posts in the church were divided into two categories. First was the perception regarding it as a side effect of new information technologies, which means that few antichurch people were slandering the church anonymously. It seemed that for church leaders such criticisms were regarded as malicious or weakly founded opinions, and the only effective way of dealing with such situation was indifference and no-response strategy. Second, some people in church, considering the serious implication of such situation, suggested that the emergence of critical public opinion in cyber space was "a desirable course of transition from premodern communication structure to open mode of communication" and "the Catholic Church may encounter more difficult situation in the immediate future if the church does not recognize and accept erupting public opinion from the bottom, whether it is positive or negative (The Korean Catholic Times, 2002, August 18).

Revelation of the Virgin Mary in Naju

Another example that showed the possibility of the challenging factor to the authority of online communication was the claim that the Virgin Mary had revealed to a

lady in Naju city, Korea. Julia Kim and her followers claimed that a statue of the Virgin Mary owned by Julia shed tears and blood, which was claimed as a revelation of the Virgin Mary. The Archdiocese of Kwangju, however, declared it as a "private revelation", which refers to a private experience that is not verified through strict examining process and declared officially as public revelation with the authority of the church (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults 67), and so it could not be regarded as a canonical conduct to claim that it was a miracle. The Archdiocese of Kwangju finally issued a decree on January 21, 2008 that declared that Julia and her followers defied the unity and communion with the Catholic Church and anyone who joins them should be punished by automatically being excommunicated (Code of Canon Law, 1336, 1364).

While the authenticity of the claimed revelation belongs to theological and religious area, the notable part with regard to the online communication in church is the processes during which Julia and her followers propagated their claim into the faithful of the Catholic Church despite the official declaration by the church authority that prohibited it.

The first characteristic of this example is that they have utilized the Internet and online communication effectively in order to diffuse their claim among the faithful. Their official website titled "Mary's Ark of Salvation"(<http://www.najumary.or.kr>) is made up very systematically to deliver theories and information in favor of their claims, organize offline prayer services and regional groups. While they were already declared as heresy by the official authority in the offline church community, they have been able to expand their supporters as the only foundation of their existence through online communication. Of course the most powerful propagation of their claim was offline meeting and visit to

Naju, but such offline activities were possible through online communication that enabled the potential supporters to have spiritual experiences. In fact, many church members who are participating in them obtained information regarding the claimed revelation of the Virgin Mary through their website. Although just contents in the website cannot let the faithful to believe in the miracle, some people who got the motivation by their website, believed in the miracle by visiting Naju city and meeting those concerned with the claimed miracle, and in turn they made the claim of the miracle expand online by witnessing their experience as a truthful one in online forums, individual Blog, or internet Cafe, a kind of small online group.

In this context, this example may be differentiated from another private revelation of Sangju Hwang Theresa. In 1950s, Sister Hwang Theresa claimed that she had seen a revelation of the Virgin Mary and mystical visions of heaven, purgatory, and hell, and published a book related with these alleged visions. At that time, Archdiocese of Daegu examined her claims and declared that those visions didn't come from the God. Two examples are different in how their claims were diffused among the faithful. In the case of Hwang Theresa, there was no way to deliver her claims of alleged miracles to the faithful, after the official authority declared that they were not in line with the Church tradition and did not reveal God's message. Unlike sister Hwang who had no way of communication but printed media and face-to-face communication, Julia and her followers, through powerful way of online communication, could challenge the official church authorities and collect many supporters from the church with direct contact with the faithful. Although the church authority's decrees of prohibition and excommunication that is the severest punishment for the faithful were the most powerful means to control

church members, online environment of communication made their controlling power weakened.

The second feature of this example is that the Internet usage was directly affecting the official authority of the Korean Catholic Church to the extent that it had impact even on purely religious area of revelation and miracle, which has been exclusively reserved to clergies and church organizations. According to the Catholic doctrine, a miracle is a supernatural phenomenon and its judgment has been strictly reserved to the official authorities: first to the superiors of dioceses and ultimately to the Pope (Code of Canon Law, 391). Julia and her followers, however, have turned down the official authority of the archbishop, and claimed that the archbishop oppressed them against the will of the Vatican and the Pope.

CHAPTER 6

CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

This chapter examines how and in what ways laypeople create public opinion through online discussion and debate, and what impact these online forums have on religious authorities in the Church. This study was done through the analysis of discussion and debate that appeared in posts on the "Toronsil" bulletin board of Catholic Internet Good News, a portal site of Archdiocese of Seoul. This chapter first depicts features that were found in the procedure of online discussion and debate about The Four Major Rivers Project, followed by examination of a variety of opinions suggested by church members, focusing on the relevance to the standpoint of the church leadership.

This study found that laypeople's discussion and debate were being made on the basis of question of how social realization and practicing of religious teaching should be done, rather than scientific debates regarding the Project. While, throughout all the procedure of the discussion, the most frequently referred resources by laypeople were official standpoints and teachings from the church leadership, the degree of recognition and acceptance of the authorities were varied depending on their own individual beliefs and experiences. Moreover, when there were some conflicts between the viewpoints of the church leadership and laypeople, official authorities used to be declined evidently.

FEATURES IN THE PROCEDURE OF DISCUSSION

The discussion and debate started from setting up the agenda by the publication of the statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, which expressed officially

its stance of opposition to the Four Major Rivers Project. As the discussion progressed, there emerged acute conflicts and different views. Especially, as diverse viewpoints about the statement and validity of the involvement of the church in politically sensitive issue appeared even in church leadership, laypeople's discussions are sharply split into pros and cons. The difference in opinion about the Project among the CBCK, Cardinal, and Catholic Priests Association for Justice was in turn reflected in diverse groups of laypeople, and there appeared a wide spectrum of opinions according to each one's stance and conviction.

The first feature of the online discussion was that the setting up or shifting agenda for discussion relied on an official organizations' indication of stance or key religious leader's reference. For about two weeks since the first opening of the bulletin board for discussion of The Four Major Rivers Project on March 9, 2010, most posts agreed on what the statement of the CBCK said with related to the Project with worries and warnings about expectedly catastrophic destruction of environment. Especially, these posts expressed their full support to the symbolic meanings and the pastoral authority that the episcopate held. When Fr. Kim Kyecheon, a senior priest contributed to an online journal titled "New Daily" a column saying that it was wrong for the Catholic Church to give a pro or con opinion about the controversial project collectively, posts that complained about the church's involvement in that matter began to increase rapidly. Meantime, Cardinal Cheong, the Archbishop of Archdiocese of Seoul, unlike other bishops who were actively engaging in the oppositional movement, was lukewarm about participating in the movement. At that time, there was a scandalous affair in Myung Dong Cathedral Church of Archdiocese of Seoul, in which several priests and laypeople

participating in a rally against the Project were forcibly dispersed out of the church by employees of the Cathedral, which caused fierce disputes on the bulletin board. Moreover, Cardinal Cheong's remark that the bishops' statement could not be regarded that the Korean Catholic Church's official stance about the Project was opposition to the Project brought about unprecedented demand of his resignation by some senior priests. Once again, a fierce debate was raging on the bulletin board over the validity of Cardinal's comments and demand of resignation by priests.

During the discussion for almost a year, the focus of debate continued to shift from scientific examination of the Project and the validity of church's involvement in social problem, through diverse interpretation of the bishops' statement and conflicts among the bishops' conference and cardinal, to insubordination of some priests. One can find that on every turning point of the discussion, laypeople relied primarily on the viewpoints of subjects who were regarded as holding any kind of religious authorities. This demonstrates the fact that laypeople of Korean Catholic Church still are decisively affected by the official authorities both in their religious life and in their recognition and judgment of social issues.

The second characteristic found in the procedure of the debate was that, when some difference of viewpoints within leadership group caused conflicts in the church, higher credibility was given to those on the higher status of hierarchy. That is to say, laypeople tended to evaluate the credibility and validity of a viewpoint by the rank and power of certain authority. Thus, in the case of tension and conflicts among authorities, laypeople participating in the discussion paid attention to following questions; who said? Who is the highest in rank? Whose authority is more credible than others? For instance,

the credibility of the bishops' statement had rarely been challenged by the column of Fr. Kim Kyecheon, a senior priest that was doubtful of the church's involvement in social issue. Of course, the column encouraged those who were opposing to the bishops' statement, but that necessarily didn't lead to the denial of the authority or overall reinterpretation of the statement by laypeople. Decisions and stance of bishops' conference as a collective body of bishops were still much higher than any other individual or group in terms of credibility.

However, when the cracks between bishops' conference and cardinal Cheong began to show, the reinterpretation of the statement began to appear rapidly and widely with the cardinal's controversial remarks that had given different meaning to the statement. For many laypeople, the authority of cardinal seemed to hold a higher rank than other bishops and even bishops' conference in hierarchical structure of Catholic Church. So, in some meaning, the authority of bishops' conference was challenged by the cardinal, which in turn caused challenges to the religious authority from laypeople.

In this confusing situation in which bishops' conference and the cardinal showed differences of perception regarding the Project, some people tried to find evaluation criteria in judging different opinions from the Pope, the highest hierarchical authority. Kang Hanbaek, in his post (December 23, 2010) implied that the development of the nature is human right given by the God and so development in favor of human beings can be justified and even worth recommending, by introducing quotation from Encyclical letter "CARITAS IN VERITATE" of the Pope Benedict XVI.

Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in him and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which

demeans the person, disrupts the environment and damages society.
(Benedict XVI, CARITAS IN VERITATE 51)

Other part of the same papal document, however, was cited as opposite evidence. Jung Jusik, in his post (December 23, 2010), saying that biased quotation made the Pope seemed to be a blind developmentist, introduced other part from the same document.

It is also necessary to reject the opposite position, which aims at total technical dominion over nature, because the natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a “grammar” which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation. (Benedict XVI, CARITAS IN VERITATE 48)

Finally, Hong Seki, in his post (December 23, 2010), by introducing the whole paragraphs involved, pointed out that neither “to view nature as something more important than the human person” nor “total technical dominion over nature” was not been referred to as proper attitude to environment by the Pope. Like this, laypeople tended to recognize the structure of religious authority in church as a linear and top-down structure of Pope-Cardinal-Bishop-Priest-the religious-laypeople.

The third feature was that, when conflicts and tensions continued, laypeople wanted to shift their referencing resources from church leaders to religious ideologies, or religious texts, and tried to reinterpret and reassess different opinions based on the ideologies and texts. First of all, articles of the Code of Canon law were introduced in order to emphasize the importance of the bishops’ statement. The article 447 of the Canon law was most frequently cited as an explanation of the function and rights of bishops’ conference. Especially, it was pointed out that laypeople have obligation to conform to the Magisterium performed collectively by bishops, who exercise their common pastoral functions (Articles of Association of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of

Korea 7). The Bible, along with the Canon Law, was frequently quoted. While Lee Wonkil, in his post (December 14, 2010) was critical to the opposition movement against the Project, by quoting the analogy of lazy servant in the Gospel of Matthew (25, 14-30), Lee Byungyul (October 15) quoted the Gospel of Luke (12,1-3) in order to criticize that the process of planning, promoting, and practicing was done surreptitiously.

The final feature was that reinterpretation and reassessment were ultimately performed on the basis of their own conviction, belief, and experiences. While diverse opinions had continued to be raised together with repeated acceptance and denial of authorities of religious leaders, church organizations, and religious texts throughout the online discussion, there was never any big change in each church member's stance. Each one was consistent in his/her opinions regarding The Four Major Rivers Project and Catholic Church's involvement in social issues, on the basis of political orientation, perception of the faith, and individual or collective experiences. For example, while conservative people were usually critical to church's social participation in politically controversial issue, hostile to a priest's political remark, and strict in keeping hierarchical rules, they were receptive to existing socio-political landscape and quite cooperative with government's policies. Progressive people, on the other hand, were actively supporting church's involvement in social issues, critical to government's policies, and defiant about authoritarian way of thoughts and attitude. It was interesting that most laypeople, regardless of their propensity, were selective in accepting or denying religious authorities according to their own beliefs and experiences. Moreover, when they encountered a difference between what certain religious authority taught and what they believed, they used to try to find information, with which they challenged these authorities, and to

legitimize their own opinions and viewpoints. While they, for this legitimization, wanted to utilize other subjects of religious authorities or religious ideologies and texts, their stance ultimately relied on their own established propensity and belief.

VARIOUS OPINIONS ABOUT TWO MAIN ISSUES

Acceptance and Denial of Magisterium

In the Catholic Church the word ‘Magisterium’ refers to the teaching authority of the Church. The authority is regarded to be embodied in the episcopacy, the aggregation of the bishops of the Church in union with the Pope. According to Catholic doctrine, the Magisterium can teach or interpret the truths of the Faith and ethics infallibly. “The Catechism of the Catholic Church” declares, “The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him (1997, 2)”. The primary referencing resource in judging the legitimacy of The Four Major Rivers Project was the official stance expressed by public statement of CBCK, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea. The written material published by the bishops’ conference with the consent of all current member bishops is regarded as an official position, which is to be respected and accepted by church members. Although it is not a law that has legal validity like decree, all members of the church have the obligation to respect and accept it faithfully. Thus, the statement issued on March, 2010 by the CBCK was to be accepted by church members in Korean Catholic Church, without exception.

There were two kinds of responses to the statement during the discussion. The first one was attitudes faithful to the teachings of the church, saying that personal conviction and thoughts have to be put aside in order to be loyal to the Catholic Faith.

If you were catholic, you have to obey religious commandments, not part of them, but the whole. Even when the teachings are difficult to understand with human reason, you have to put aside personal beliefs in order to be faithful to the words of the Jesus. The statement was declared collectively by the name of bishops. It is nonsense to say that the religious teachings are wrong because bishops are not scientists. (Park Yuhyang, August 27, 2010)

Another said that anybody should not be permitted to interpret the doctrine and Bible, emphasizing that the right and authority of teaching doctrine belongs to the church organizations.

We just can find the answer to the question whether The Four Major Rivers Project is in line with the God's providence or not in the statement issued by bishops. If we are not conformed to the teaching the statement gave, such act is not different with arbitrary interpretation of the God's will. While anybody can read the Bible, the social practice of teachings in the Bible has to be always according to the guidance of the church. (Lee Byungyul, September 15, 2010)

There appeared not a few opinions that take a completely opposite stance to the Magisterium, which traditionally has been one of the most basic and essential teachings in the Catholic Church. Posts of this position gave a variety of reasons why they could not accept what the statement declared: The church should be in favor of neither one regarding so controversial matter like this, what bishops referred to was a political issue that was not within the jurisdiction of the church, and the decision made by bishops who never be experts about scientific issues was irrational. Moreover, some said that whatever the statement of the bishops were, it is enough for them to behave according to

their own conscience, without any obligation to be conformed to the guidance by the bishops. Park Jaehong said;

What do the faithful have to do? We can have many options: 1. to oppose desperately and launch an anti-campaign against candidates who are supporting to The Four Major Rivers Project 2. to feel sympathy with the stance of bishops, but not to participate in oppositional movement 3. Just to read the statement 4. to complain to bishops 5. to do just what I want. I think these all are right answer. Even if there are many worries about the expected results of The Four Major Rivers Project, it is enough for us to behave according to our own intellect and conscience. (April 26, 2010)

He said in another post;

The Catholic Church is a human society, in which every member is not always reasonable in making a decision. Sometimes, church also used to make an absurd mistake. We can see so many mistakes through the history of the church. It is not surprising and not strange. If a person do not follow what the statement said, is he/she sinner? Never. It is evident that I have no duty to follow what the church said. (March 19, 2010)

No matter how the statement was recognized, the acceptance of the magisterium was not regarded as a basic and essential duty for the faithful. In fact, this kind of attitude to what the church has taught as truth of the faith is not unique on online communication. There already have been expressed harsh criticisms about this selective behavior of believing in the Catholic Church. Pope Benedictine XVI warned, in the context of relativism and secularism, so-called cafeteria approach to faith, in which people were selective in accepting doctrine and ethics (August 15; Archbishop Levada, 1994). The Catholic Church, however, as a hierarchical religion, which expects that the whole faithful are loyal to a certain set of doctrines or creed established by theologians and fathers for a long time, finds some challenging factors raised by the church members in online communication environment by the Internet (Campbell, 2006).

In the Catholic Church as an institution in the cultural environments that is characterized by increasing secularization, pluralism, and relativism, the degree of the Faithful's loyalty is reducing and the binding force to the religious communities is weakening (Willmer, 1992). In the online communication environment, for the level of participating in a religious group activity is supposed to be decided by the spontaneity of group members, and enforcing power of the religious authority as an institution is relatively weak, the loyalty to the religious leadership and teachings is becoming remarkably lower than in offline environment (Sung Sijung, 1999, p. 163). There were some evidences in posts that showed that individual opinions that were impossible to express publicly were possible to suggest online. Participation in the discussion on bulletin board on the Catholic Internet Goodnews, which has been managed in the Internet real-name system, requires publication of real name of users, and so user's real name appears along with online name in posts. Jun Deukwhan(jundeuk), expressing his oppositional opinion against the bishops' statement, proposed that he could post his opinion anonymously because he was worried that he would be in a difficult situation at the parish, if his real name and opinion became known to everybody.

Diverse Interpretation of the Areas of the Faith and Social Participation

The biggest issue in discussion about the bishops' statement was regarding the question of whether church's involvement in The Four Major Rivers Project could be a matter of the faith and ethics, a unique area of the church. The basic intent that bishops wanted to deliver by the statement was an oppositional warning that the Project, considered on the basis of the Catholic Church's teaching about ecological system and

so-called creative order of the God, had serious probability of destroying nature and environment, and so was threatening the dignity of life including humans. For bishops, it was not just a matter of politics or secular world, but essentially a matter of the faith with its alleged danger on humans and nature as creatures of the God.

Those who were opposite to the statement of bishops, however, argued that the Project was the highly politicized issue and something that had to be judged in the point of scientific view. According to them, if the church were engaged in the matter, the church was not within her rights to do such a thing. Lee Junghee said;

While the church can be infallible in teaching the faith and ethics, I cannot understand the reason why bishops are coercing people regarding secular problem. Opinions about the question whether the Project will have negative impact on natural environment or not, are different even among scientists and experts. The church's enforcing obedience even in the area of secular world is the act of repeating the previous mistake, in which religion tried to judge science. (June 15, 2010)

They went further by interpreting the statement itself as not expressing evident “opposition” to the Project. In other words, they argued that the statement was not necessarily oppositional to the Project, because there was not the word “opposition” in the statement and it just expressed “worries” about potential dangers. Moon Kyungjun (April 1, 2010) stressed in his post that while a previous declaration by “Catholic Association to Stopping The Four Major Rivers Project” suggested a detailed action plans of “Stopping the Project” and “Supporting candidates who are opposing the Project”, the bishops’ statement expressed just “worries” about “the probability of destruction of the environment” and “hasty pushing ahead with the project without a consensus of the people”. The diversity in interpretation of the statement was displayed among the church leadership, especially between some priests and Cardinal Cheong, which worsened the

confusing among the faithful. Particularly, Cardinal Cheong said in an interview with a daily newspaper that the meaning of the statement was just a “worries”, not “opposition”, bringing about the unprecedented demand to resign from the superior of the Archdiocese of Seoul from some progressive priests. After that, opinions regarding the Project were equally divided pros and cons, and some people asked strongly more evident stance about the Project to the bishops’ conference.

CHAPTER 7

FORMS OF AUTHORITY

This chapter examines what authorities are mainly affected by online communication of church members, by answering the questions of what authorities were referred most frequently and how church members assessed them. For this analysis, this study employed Campbell's (2007) concept of "multiple layers of authority" as a basic analytic frame. She pointed out that there have not been investigated about the "authority" in detail in previous studies on the relation between religious authority and the Internet, suggesting four layers of the authority through which the changing of the authority can be investigated, including religious hierarchy, religious structure, religious ideology, and religious text.

RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY

Most frequently referred form of religious authority was religious leaders on the top of the hierarchy. As pointed out in chapter 6, the primary referent resource in discussion was the question of what was the basic position about "The Four Major Rivers Project" of roles and leadership in church who are regarded to have religious authorities. Almost all people seemed to recognize and accept willingly the prerogative power and authority that leadership group on the top of the hierarchy held.

First of all, nobody raised objection to the Pope's absolute religious authority, treble powers of administration, legislation, and judicature. The pope is "the first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, is the head of the college of bishops, the

Vicar of Christ, and the pastor of the universal Church on earth", and so "he possesses supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely (Code of Canon law, 331). The Pope "not only possesses power over the universal Church but also obtains the primacy of ordinary power over all particular churches and groups of them" and moreover "No appeal or recourse is permitted against a sentence or decree of the Roman Pontiff (333)". The faithful were not doubtful about the authority of the Pope who has "full and supreme power in the Church (332)". Additionally, they had no doubt about papal infallibility, a Catholic doctrine that the Pope cannot be wrong when he teaches about the faith and ethics (Pastor Aeternus, 4; Lumen Gentium, 25).

Church members showed a very favorable attitude to the status and authority of Cardinal, a religious role that is usually regarded the second class in the hierarchy. In many posts, the position of cardinal was said to be given by the Pope, and so God's will and providence, and so the status and role of cardinal has to be preserved under any circumstances. Thus, when some priests asked the cardinal to resign from the position of the superior of Archdiocese of Seoul, most of the posts criticized them severely, regarding it as mutiny that led the church to disorder.

A notable thing is the Faithful's confusing or inconsistent perception of hierarchy in the church. They showed both blind obedience to and complete ignorance of the traditionally established hierarchy and official status in church, at the same time. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church has been firmly established power structure. Highly centralized Catholic hierarchy has been too much respected in Korean Catholic Church,

which has drawn criticism of clergy-centrism and high-handed authoritarianism (Su Kongsuk, 1998, p.160; Min Kyungsuk, 1999, p. 64; Lee Sungwoo, 1972).

It is interesting that almost all posts recognized and accepted the linear and top-to-bottom order of hierarchy (the Pope-Cardinal-Bishop-Priest-monk and nun-laypeople). This seems to have the root in unique cultural background of the Korean Catholic Culture, in which Christianity in Korea, Catholic Church in particular, has been affected by Confucian cultural tradition that emphasizes patriarchal and vertical social structure (Min Kyungsuk, 2000; Kang Incheol, 2003). The core of Confucianism is that all social institutions including family are constructed and maintained by this authoritative structure based on vertical relationship. The centralized hierarchy in the Catholic Church has become much more robust by the influence of this Confucian tradition, and the solid hierarchy has been enhanced by the concept of "obedience" to superior, which has functioned as an ideological means to control the church (Kang Inchul, 2003, pp. 54, 57). The dominant perception of the hierarchy in church, which was found in many posts, demonstrated this unique Korean concept of hierarchy.

Almost all laypeople are leading a religious life, being patient to do as they are told from a priest, not making any comment."(Kang Misuk, April 8, 2010)

How can I dare to assess and judge a priest?"(Choi Jinho, July 9, 2010)
The Catholic Church is based on the faithful who believe in the Father, and priests whom the faithful call father delivering Father's teaching (Bae Jihee, August 1, 2010)."

The Korean Catholic Church is highly hierarchical organization. Laypeople's reliance on a priest has never been changed. The centralization in managing the church and the passiveness of laypeople are not just recent occurrences (Kim Minju, December 16, 2010)

Particularly, when there was a conflict between some priests and the cardinal, most of the posts regarded priests' asking of resign as wrongdoing that was against the duty of obedience and disturb the law and order in the church.

If priests ask the cardinal to resign, the faithful will ask priests to refrain from parish job."(Lee Changkwan, December 15, 2010)

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE

The "Declaration of Dissolution of Korean Catholic Church" by KumkuJohnin 2002 caused controversies in church by arguing that the Korean Catholic Church as an institution had to be dissolved. The basic purpose was to point out the drastic repentance and reformation in order to solve a lot of urgent problems in the church, and the object of the reformation was a local church, the church in Korea. However, this kind of phenomenon is, at least partly, related with the tendency of people's increasingly lacking loyalty to the institutional church. In fact, today's society is characterized by its secularization, cultural or religious pluralism, and the coexistence of de-sacralization and re-sacralization, and today's people are seeking "spirituality without belonging to" a religion as a form of institution (Park Munsu, 1998). It is closely related with the trend of "believing without belonging", a religious phenomenon that was found in the study on the situation of the Christian churches in Britain and Sweden (Lind, 2003; Davie, 1995). This mentality was evidently shown in many posts. You Chulhee said;

We need to lead a free religious life that is not bound by religious tradition, holy sacraments or forced commandments. A spiritual life relied not on priests, but on Jesus. If the Jesus returns, he would denounce priests and bishops for their reigning over the faithful, the authoritative interpretation of the teaching from the Jesus, and arrogant conviction that they really have the key to paradise. If I cannot have priests, I will simply do without.

(December, 16, 2010)

In fact, laypeople who showed this kind of denial of the church institution were only a tiny minority. Instead, most of the posts were respectful of the authority of the church institutions such as Bishops' Conference, a variety of committees, and their decisions. However, church members were conditional in accepting the authorities of the institutions. The first condition found here was the rationality, by which the faithful could understand and accept some decision and order from the church authority, judging based on their own conviction, knowledge, and experiences. Lee Kijong said;

There are many Catholics who are saying that any Catholics have to follow the direction that the Bishops' Conference's statement suggested. Of course, I think that the faithful have to conform to the teaching of bishops, but actually there are so many people who do not want to follow the direction. Bishops have to check it up about why they do not want to follow. One of the reasons of such incredibility is the fact that bishops' decision does not demonstrate principle, fairness, and consistency. The only thing left is just authority. (August 13, 2010)

The second condition was that the judgment and decision of the religious authorities had to be within the area of doctrine or ethics. That is to say, any religious judgment about "The Four Major Rivers Project" by official institutions in the church had to be essentially related with the doctrine or morality. Here, one can see the perception that the religious and secular world has to be considered separately. Lee Sunghan said, "The church guides just spiritual dimension of the human being" (March 28, 2010), and Park Jaeyoung pointed out, "Bishops' Conference' decision and statement has no religious authority because it referred to what belongs to secular world (March 18, 2010).

The third condition was that a broad variety of ideas had to be taken into consideration in order to determine the best policy, especially when it was not related with directly religious issue. Kim Sungkwan said, "Never force us to follow some

directions without enough discussion among clergies and laypeople, just because it is the decision of the church” (March 7, 2010).

RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY

Religious ideology and religious text were the least referred form of religious authority, and any kind of doubtful references were not appeared. Religious ideas appeared in the discussion included communion, unity, the dignity of the life, the importance of protection of natural environment, a moral life, or the realization of a just society. Religious ideas and theological concepts tended to be accepted just as what they have traditionally been taught by the church institutions. Almost all posts regarded the communion and unity as the most important thing, and thought that the split and conflict within the community were very sad things. Especially, the shock and frustration that the faithful felt when "The Four Major Rivers Project" caused some very serious conflicts among clergies as well as church members was so big that some people had got strong religious skepticism.

However, two theological concepts or traditional teachings were disputable in discussion and debate. The one is “obedience” and the other is “social participation”. Obedience has been one of the most important virtues in the Catholic tradition. In The Code of Canon Law, obedience is one of the three evangelical counsels along with chastity and poverty (Code of Canon Law 573). Priests have the obligation to profess obedience to superior bishop, and bishops are bound by a special obligation to be obedient to the Supreme Pontiff and their own ordinary (Code of Canon Law 273). The faithful are bound to follow “with Christian obedience” those things which the sacred

pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church (Code of Canon Law 212). Thus, obedience in the Catholic Church means a general and spontaneous submission to their superiors in centralized hierarchal structure.

In discussions, the concept of obedience appeared in two kinds of contexts. First is a concept of a virtue, which has to be observed even by laypeople as well as clergies, and second was in a context of criticism about enforced obedience. When some priests asked Cardinal Cheong's resignation, many people denounced those priests in that that action was against the virtue of obedience. Lee Sangyun said, "Priests who professed obedience are against their superiors, then the faithful will be against priests" (December 16, 2010). Park Jongil said, "If a priest does not obey to his superior by reason of difference of thoughts, then it is not real obedience" (December 18, 2010).

The second theological idea that raised controversy was the problem of social participation. When it comes to the voice of the church about social issues, the responses were divided into two points of view. While some agreed with the possibility of church's active participation and involvement in social problems on the basis of the Catholic Church's social teachings, others argued that the Church and the secular world have to be separately considered, and so the church has to concentrate on purely religious and spiritual issues. Park Yuhyang agreed with the former, saying;

A faith is belief in religious teachings about all phenomena and essence regarding humans, nature, and history, and each religion interprets and judges all of these according to its own belief system. In the Catholic Church, the right and authority to declare and teach this belief belong to the Pope, bishops, and priests. These people have received the right to teach about all issue about humans, nature, and history from Jesus. Thus, there is no area and issue that pastors cannot teach and refer to. (September 7, 2010)

This point of view reflects the official position of the Catholic Church, which has been called “Catholic Social Teaching”. Catholic social teaching is a body of doctrine developed by the Catholic Church on matters of poverty and wealth, economics, social organization and the role of the state (Catholic Social Teachings, 1996). The purpose of Catholic social teaching is to protect the dignity and rights of human beings and reasons why the Catholic Church put emphasis on it are the ethical dimensions included within social problems, Catholic Church’s mission for human salvation, and inhuman living conditions that block liberation of humans (Catholic Social Teachings, 1996). The legitimacy of Catholic Church’s social involvement is based on social teachings of the church, and the CBCK’s statement also was made by this position regarding social issues.

Even those who regarded the CBCK’s statement as political action and denounced it as deviation from church’s unique area, were recognizing and highly evaluating the political meanings and roles of the Catholic Church and its members, especially clergies, in the procedure of democratization of the Korean society. They, however, do not expect any more political roles the Catholic Church has to play in the society where political democratization was already regarded to be done. Park Jaehong said in his post,

When the market, the election, and the court did not function well, there were so many things for the Church to do. But, nowadays, there is not many that the church meddles in for justice. If the church wants to contribute to justice and peace, the only way is to raise experts and specialists. The best thing priests can do today is just to celebrate mass and sacraments. (April 16, 2010)

RELIGIOUS TEXT

Articles in The Code of Canon Law and the Biblical quotations were the most frequently referred religious texts in posts. These quotations, however, functioned as

evidences or referencing resources, not as those that were to be challenged. Regarding the Bible, Lee Wonkil (December 14, 2010), by the citation of the Gospel of Matthew (25, 14-30) that said about an analogy of lazy servant, argued that those who asserted that the four main rivers, which had been already polluted seriously, should not be developed were to be blamed as “lazy servants” whom the Jesus had denounced by their idleness in the Bible. Lee Byungyul (October 15, 2010) cited the paragraph from the Gospel of Luke (12, 1-3), in which the Jesus reproved Pharisees’ hypocrisy, in order to pointed out that the whole process of development of "The Four Major Rivers Project" was being made clandestinely, saying that “there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed” and, “What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight”.

Referencing The Code of The Canon Law was concentrated on several hot issues: the status and responsibility of the bishops’ conference, cardinal’s position and rights in the hierarchy, and laypeople’s obligations of conforming to the Magisterium. This concentration on some issues seemed to come from the necessity to confirm more fundamental legal basis for judging different opinions between bishops’ conference and cardinal. The posts by Park Yuhyang (August 27, 2010) and Jang Kilsan (December 19, 2010) emphasized the legality and pastoral significance of bishops’ conference, quoting article 447 of the Code of Canon Law;

A conference of bishops, a permanent institution, is a group of bishops of some nation or certain territory who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions for the Christian faithful of their territory in order to promote the greater good which the Church offers to humanity, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place, according to the norm of law. (Code of Canon Law 447)

Jang Kilsan's post went on to introduce a part of "Articles of Association of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea" that was adapted to the situation of the Korean Catholic Church according to the universal Canon Law, saying that bishops were "performing their office collectively in the body of the conference" and the collective performing of their duty included "job of teaching". He, therefore, pointed out that church members have obligation to stick to the guidance by the Magisterium of bishops.

Meanwhile, there was a fierce debate about the question of whether a cardinal had the supreme religious authority in Korean Catholic Church or not. Moon Kyungjun (August 20, 2010) in his post, refuting Park Jaeyong's argument of cardinal's supremacy in Korean Catholic Church, said, on the basis of article 349 of the Canon, that a bishop to whom the care of some diocese is entrusted by the Pope has the highest authority in the dioceses entrusted to him with independent qualification, rights, and obligation. According to article 349 of the Canon that regulates cardinal's status and duty, the cardinals constitute "a special college which provides for the election of the Roman Pontiff" and have special office of "assisting the Roman Pontiff" either "collegially" or "individually". However, there is no legal rule in the Canon Law regarding cardinal's special status of a head of other dioceses or bishops' conference.

With regard to laypeople's religious obligation, Hong Seki (May 19, 2010), introducing article 752, 753, and 747 of the Canon Law, said in his post that the Catholic Church has the right and duty "to announce moral principles, even about the social order, and to render judgment concerning any human affairs (Code of Canon Law 747)". He went on saying that bishops "are authentic teachers and instructors of the faith for the Christian faithful entrusted to their care", and so "the Christian faithful are bound to

adhere with religious submission of mind to the authentic magisterium of their bishops
(Code of Canon Law 753)".

CHAPTER 8

REARRANGEMENT OF AUTHORITY

As previous chapters have mentioned, today, "One of the greatest challenges of this culture to the Catholic Church is its egalitarianism. Anyone can create a blog; everyone's opinion is valid (Herzog, 2010)". Today's social and religious environment is characterized by the structural change that enhances the laity's status (Kang Incheol, 2003, p. 7), such as the formation of religious market and religious consumer status caused by religious pluralism. In this milieu, laypeople baptized with digital technologies would no longer be just a consumer of religious information and knowledge given by those on the top of hierarchy, obtain the status of producer who participates in the process of creating religious materials. They have become critical to rigid and centralized church administration and traditional communication mode in the Church and have regarded expressing their own identity and beliefs as a birthright. It is natural that egalitarian behaviors and attitudes require decentralization of religious authorities, by doing so threaten the highly centralized hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

EROSION OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES BY CHALLENGING

It is notable that there have been some phenomena in which traditional religious authorities were shattered and eroded by repeated challenges in online discussion. Dawson (2000) depicted the challenges by online religious activities to the religious authorities in three ways: proliferation of malinformation or misinformation (p. 43), the loss of control over religious materials by religious organizations, and new opportunities

for grassroots forms of witnessing (p.44). These enable the challenging unofficial or alternative voices emerged, which makes traditional religious eroded and weakened. Although everything was not exactly matched with this theory, what Dawson described regarding to the online communication' impact on the religious authority was repeated in the online discussion about The Four Major Rivers Project.

First of all, all information and opinions were not always correct scientifically or dogmatically. For instances, although there have been plentiful examples in the discussion that were cited as a scientific evidence of pros and cons with regard to the aftermath of the project, few had been officially verified and agreed to be true. In other words, the scientific evidences of the argument that the project would finally destroy the environment and ecosystem of Korea were in direct opposition to the scientific evidences of the claim that the project would improve the quality of the polluted water. Looking the dogmatic side of the discussion, there were so many examples in which some laypeople's lack of understanding the doctrine and theology. Especially, there was wide gap among laypeople in understanding the area and validity of the Church's social participation. Park Yuhyang (August 20, 2010), by quoting the Code of Canon Law and comments by the Pope, criticized the claim raised by "those who were lack in understanding even most fundamental knowledge", that the teaching from the statement issued by bishops' conference was mistake. Kim Sungwoo (December 22, 2010) and Park Jongil (December 18, 2010), however, in their posts brought forth some paragraphs from the Bible as the evidences for their claim that the Church's social participation was evidently beyond the religious area. Finally, although correct understanding of doctrine and social teaching of the Catholic Church was a premise for a discussion, the level of understanding was not

the same for everybody, which got to be the reason why a variety of opinions and viewpoints based on wrong foundations and incorrect understanding were proliferated. Moreover, there was a case that might be misinformation and disinformation at the same time. Park Yunsook, in her post, (raised a suspicion of clandestine deal with the government.

I've accidentally heard that the government suggested that they can give the Catholic Church the long waited permission for the remodeling of the Myung-dong Cathedral with the Church's soft opposition to the project. I was so shameful of that. It was so shocking to hear that the godfather of the Korean Catholic Church, cardinal Cheong, was secretly dealing with the government officials in order to exchange the destructive project and the remodeling of Myung-dong Cathedral.I'd like to warn that the cardinal should resign in order not to tarnish the reputation of the Korean Catholic Church. (December 16, 2010)

Regardless of its authenticity, this kind of information was powerful in its influence on other laypeople, bringing about doubts among people that the purpose of cardinal Cheong's comments might be secular, which functioned as a strong challenge to the cardinal's authority.

LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY AND ANTI-CLERICALISM

If the traditional religious authorities of the Catholic Church were to be accepted by laypeople, some new conditions should be added to the authorities. While in past days, the religious authorities that came from the status of people could be accepted unconditionally, laypeople, today, accepts those religious authorities in the condition of rationality and democratic procedure. As Weber (1958) saw, while in pre modern society traditional or charismatic authority was dominant, in modern society Rational-legal authority has been dominated. Weber's the three-part typology for authority is full of

suggestions regarding laypeople's attitude to religious authority. Laypeople's attitudes to the religious authority mean that they should be the religious authority that could demonstrate its rationality.

This asking of rationality is directly connected with the demanding of democratic process. That is to say, the exercising of authority which is lack of the democratic process of collecting opinions is regarded to be lack of the rationality. Some laypeople participating in the discussion referred to the necessity of this democratic procedure. Kim Sungkwan (September 7, 2010) said, "authoritative way of thinking, without enough communication among priests and the laity, that the decision of bishops' conference is the Church's commandment has to be corrected." Seo Kwangho (December 14, 2010) asked, "Did the Church even ask what the people think about the project?", and Sim Jaewook (December 15, 2010) claimed, "If you need to declare an opinion about the project, you should have to collect various kinds of opinions in the Church".

Although The Korean Catholic Church was active in introducing revolutionary thoughts of the Second Vatican Council and established all institutional devices for decentralizing authorities in almost all dioceses and parishes. However, it was a completely different matter whether these unprecedented institutional measures could have guaranteed democratization of the existing centralized authority structure. The contrary is rather to be supposed. Newly introduced systems tended not to contribute to distribute the highly concentrated authorities in the Church, which was bound to attract repeated criticism from in and out of the Church. According to a survey of 1,000 adults conducted by "The Research Association for Korean Modern and Contemporary Catholic Church" in 2002, "authoritative" behavior and attitude was pointed out as the most

negative aspect of the Korean Catholic Church and the clerical and authoritative management of the Church was said to be the biggest problem of the Catholic Church. There has been a lot of criticism to clericalism and authoritarianism that came from excessively centralized authority structure in Korean Catholic Church.

First, most laypeople identify the Church with the clergy and think a religion as a kind of metaphysical concept far away from real society. Secondly, they regard the obedience as the foremost virtue in religious life, to accept the faith just passively. So, they have been satisfied with the status of a beneficiary who receives just what a priest gives. (Lee Seungwoo, 1972, pp. 106-107)

The laity in the Korean Catholic Church used to accept the clergy's authority unconditionally. Thus, they always tried to be patient with and embrace who a priest was like, regardless of whether he was not good at sermon, he had a poor leadership, or he used the church fund privately. It was just because he was a priest. (Min Kyungsuk, 1994, p.4)

The status of the laity tends to be recognized for the convenience of the clergy. When laypeople are against the will of bishops or their activities have some risks of conflicts with the power of the state, their rights and status are denied. The laity are just assistants rather than cooperators of the clergy. (Park Munsu, 2000, p. 682)

Throughout the online discussion, laypeople strongly opposed the clericalism and authoritarianism. Oh Changho said in his post;

Conflicts caused around the problem of the project have showed the clericalism that is unique in Korean Catholic Church. While the clergy are shouting justice and life to the society, they reign parishes as little dictators. He threatens the laity by saying that if the laity does not follow him, they are sinners. If the Korean Catholic Church want to oppose to the project and thinks it as a prophetic vocation, the clergy have to look into the parishes they are in charge of. (December17, 2010)

NEW AGENT OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: CREATIVE CLASS

In the post industrial age, when creativity is the strongest driver for operation of economy and cultural successes, the emergence of a new modes of communication looks

natural. Just as new communication technologies such as telegraphy and modern navigation functioned as a catalyst of development of capitalist system during industrial age, the new modes of communication which are based on features such as interaction, participation, and easiness of copying, sharing, and reproduction, is one of the key elements of the creative industries. Indeed, participating, interacting, and recreating in using media might still obviously be limited by lack of access to technology or the Internet, time and space, or skills for using these. Or, there might be some people who do not agree with, or cannot recognize the dominant role of new modes of communication in current society and world. However, "creativity will be the driver of social and economic change during the next century"(Hartley, 2005, p. 1), and the creativity will not be the same one which was in industrial societies (Hartley, 2005, p.18).

Laypeople are a part of modern people who are characterized by high level of education and strong distributive power, who performs as both producer and consumer, and who do not think anymore tradition and authority as their important guidance in the life. They give more credibility to the messages itself than the status of those who send the messages. Thus, in the online discussion about the project, while the traditional authorities are not completely ignored, the religious leaders or church organization's authority was not always be accepted unconditionally and a different forms of religious authorities grew up among laypeople in online space.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study has examined what impact the Internet usage by church members has on religious authority, focusing on a detailed case study of the Korean Catholic Church. Korea is characterized by its highly developed Internet-based communications and the dramatic social changes, particularly since 2000 when the Internet was widely utilized, which suggests its relevance to the locality for this study. Additionally, the reason for choosing the Catholic Church as the object of this research is that the Catholic Church who has highly centralized hierarchical structure of authorities is expected to experience wide range of changes as it encounters new communication technology that encourages decentralization of communication.

This study can be divided into two parts: historical background of the Church's Internet usage and analysis of the online forum about "The Four Major Rivers Project". The first one is chapter 5, which explored the history of ways and features of the Internet usage by the Korean Catholic Church. This chapter is both the examination of historical background and analysis of what influence the religious authorities of the Catholic Church has been experienced by the Internet. This historical consideration was exercised in two categories; the Church Organizations' instrumentalism in using the Internet and ordinary church members' expanded online space for religious self expression. The findings of this study suggest that while the religious organizations and leaders of the Church were primarily interested in utilizing the Internet as a strong tool that had been

expected to improve the efficiency in missionary and pastoral work of the Church, they seemed to have failed to recognize that the development of the Internet meant more than technological tool, something regarding more wide and fundamental social changes including changes of religious environment and the religious people themselves.

The Internet usage by the ordinary church members, instead of focusing on technical instrumentalism, tended to utilize the Internet as a new online space for production and sharing of religious materials, discussion and debate on a variety of issues as well as purely spiritual growth. The expansion of cyber space for religious information and discussion by church member has made it possible for the laity to raise critical opinions to the Church organizations and leaders, which in the end brought about radical form of challenges to the existing religious authorities. After all, the Internet usage by church members had a risk of tension and conflict in the Church and the Church organizations' simply instrumental view of the Internet already had potential risk of failing to understand the change of the laity's perception of religious authority.

In the second part, this study first found that church members, at the initial stage of discussion, tended to rely on viewpoint declared by the Church organizations and leadership group in forming their own opinions about "The Four Major Rivers Project". The higher status a religious leader had, the more confidence they put in him. However, the findings of this study demonstrated that church members went beyond just accepting religious authorities, to try to reassess and reinterpret religious texts and ideologies, and suggest them as evidences for their own arguments. It was one of the most interesting things that throughout the discussion there were few who had changed their stances on the Project, which implied that the church members tended not to accept the religious

authorities unconditionally. Instead, they wanted to accept or deny the religious authorities on the basis on their own convictions and experiences.

This study also found that church members, in their online discussion, referred to, relied on, and even denied most frequently the religious hierarchy among four types of religious authorities: religious hierarchy, structure, ideology and text. The least referred forms of religious authorities were religious ideology and text, and, even during being referred, they have never been challenged by church members. Lastly, this study found that the traditional religious authorities of Korean Catholic Church, through the online discussion, were challenged and eroded, and some part of authorities had been dispersed among church members or new form of authorities was created by them. Especially, the findings of this study suggest that these erosion and distribution of religious authorities came from not just as the result of online discussion, but also a variety of factors. That is to say, dramatic changes of religious environments in modern society, emerging new class of people to which the laity belongs as a part of it, and resistance to the clericalism and authoritarianism inherent in the Korean Catholic Church contributed to the distribution and rearrangement of religious authorities among the laity.

Taken as a whole, this study suggests some implications regarding the relationship between religious authorities and the Internet. Above all, it demonstrated ordinary church members' seemingly ironic perception of religious authorities, particularly hierarchy. They stick to the established structure of hierarchy and were decisively affected by the official authorities in their recognition and behavior. They, however, resisted to and challenged the authorities by reassessing, reinterpreting, and selectively accepting what they are taught from the authorities. Secondly, these confusing

situations do not come exclusively from the fact that the discussions were performed in cyber space. Instead church members' resistance and challenge to religious authorities can be attributed to various kinds of offline factors such as political propensity, rapidly changing social environments, the features of the laity as a new generation, or oppositional attitude to the clericalism and authoritarianism. Third, while this study did not verify that the Internet or online communications by church members necessarily resulted in threat to the religious authorities, it tended to provide much more opportunities to challenge existing authorities by creating new space, in which church members could express and share their opinions freely.

LIMITATIONS

The fact that this study focused on the Korean case study enables the relationship between the Internet and religious authority, which previous studies had explored generally and mainly within the area of infringe religions, to be understood in more detail through examples in specific religious and social environments. This study's significance, however, is defect or limitation at the same time.

First, for this study dealt with the case of the Korean Catholic Church, a local church in Asia, which has no deep root of the Christianity, it had to consider many religious and social factors, which could not be applied to the studies that explored the Internet and religious authority in the Western society where the Christianity has been the only predominant religion. These factors include influences of other traditional religions and thoughts, rapid social changes caused by intense political, social, and economical development in a very short term, features as a highly multi-religious society,

and politics that has just got out of political authoritarianism. This study, thus, has a limited validity.

Second, this study focused on the discussion about the politically controversial “The Four Major Rivers Project”, and so cannot explain the whole picture of the Internet and religious authority in the Korean Catholic Church. Church members were mainly divided pros and cons regarding the Project in the online discussion, and this study was concentrated on the analysis of discourses that were made mainly related with political issues. This study, thus, is not enough in explaining the impact of the Internet on the religious authority, in purely religious life and in a daily life.

Third, this study cannot explain enough the impact of online challenge to authorities on offline church. For the analysis was done with the focus on the church members’ online rhetoric, the question of how the offline church organizations and offline leadership group dealt with church members’ online activities was not examined enough. This study, therefore, cannot answer the question of whether church members’ online activities actual effect on the church policies and the process of decision making. While, in the long term, church members’ production of religious materials and criticism to the Church will be expected to affect the Church’s decision-making, such guess has to be proved through more detailed and wide empirical studies.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the implications of limitations, this study suggests future research agenda. First, comprehensive study that will go beyond the context of a specific political and social situation will be needed. This study was the analysis of the discussion of a

limited environment and issue. Therefore, for future research, a study that will explore more comprehensive impact of the Internet on the religious authorities in daily lives will be needed.

Second, this study was an analysis of church members' online discussion that focused on the change of their perception of and response to existing religious authorities. Thus, further study should explore relationship between church members' online activities and offline church's real changes. This study will include empirical research on offline religious organizations and leadership's reaction to church members' online activities, and vice versa.

Third, comparative study among other religious traditions or local churches in other country or other cultural area will be needed. As mentioned above, this study was a study of the situation in the context of Asian culture. Thus, future researches will be the comparative studies that enable better understanding the differences of the impact of the Internet on religious authorities in different religious tradition or social contexts. Especially, these follow-up studies will include comparative study among the contexts of other Asian countries, and comparative study with the Western society that have deep Christian root but lost its religious vitality because of secularization.

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