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Changing Female Religious Leadership in Christianity

A Case Study of American Methodism

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Summary

Christianity in America has had a gender paradox for a long time. Female church adherents have been predominant in the churches, but males have dominated church leadership. As women female clergy rapidly increased their numbers during the 1970s, however,but the history of female leadership in Christianity is not monolithic. By focusing upon on a the historically nationwide American Methodism as a case study, this thesis discusses how female religious leadership has historically changed and developed throughout the history of American religious society.

The previous studies after the 1970s have argued that women's religious individual experience has changed and developed female religious leadership. Through examining the American Methodist history, this thesis clarifies that three factors — individual experience, the institutionalized Methodist system, and interactions between Methodist women and feminism in secular society — have diversified and developed American Methodist women's religious leadership.

Keywords: American Methodism, history, female leadership, individual experience, church institutionalization, church/secular interaction

1. Introduction: Background of Female Leadership in American Christianity

The issues of female religious leadership have been often argued in the monotheistic world. Female religious leadership is controversial within not only Christianity, but also the contemporary Jewish or Islamic society. Still, a few Christian denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, various Eastern Orthodox Churches, and some conservative Protestant denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention, have never officially accepted the ordination of women. Even though many Catholic nuns can take leadership roles in the order, the Pope never allow them to preach as an official clergy. This paper tries to argue female religious leadership by focusing upon American Methodist as a case study, and it thinks that the experience of American Methodism can reflect for other religious communities in some

cases.

Christianity in America has had a gender paradox for a long time. Female church adherents have been predominant in the churches, but males have dominated church leadership. Although female leadership in the churches has been visible from the seventeenth-century colonial period to the present, it was not until the 1970s that women clergy as official leadership position in mainline Protestant churches[1)] — began to increase. By the early 1990s, women comprised an average of 10% of women clergy in the denominations that officially admit women's ordination.[2)]

However, even though women clergy in the churches have rapidly increased after the 1970s, it is still very difficult for women to overcome the social problems which limit female leaders, such as the "glass-ceiling" and gender stereotypes within the churches. Many Christian women clergy, for example, are vulnerable to gender bias that woman are not capable of her ministerial duties because she needs to take care of children. Women clergy who have children (especially under eighteen years old) are sometimes thought of as irresponsible mothers.[3)] Unlike male clergy, women clergy are often required to be a single because some male clergy and churchgoers do not believe that women can manage both ministry and the duties of wife, housework.

Why are many people and religious institutions against female religious leadership? Socially and culturally constructed gender stereotypes and traditional conventions keep women back. This not only happens in the churches but also to many other "masculine" professional jobs. There has been a widespread thinking in which woman is biologically incompatible with leadership positions. In the nineteenth-century American society, through the symbolic idea "the Cult of True Womanhood"[4)], women have been regarded as not suitable for professional leadership positions, especially in the economic, political, and religious sphere. Another important factor to oppose female religious leadership is canonized religious texts. In the case of Christianity, biblical interpretation controversially influences on religious leadership. For example, those who are against female religious leadership insist that Jesus did not choose women for Apostles. They also say that women are not suitable as preachers because Revelations 2:20 says, "I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel who calleth herself a prophetess to teach", 1 Timothy 2:11-12 says "let the woman learn in silence", or 1 Corinthians 14:34 says "Let your women keep silence in the churches".[5)] The Genesis story which says that Eve was formed out of the Adam's rib by God is other reason to reject female religious leadership.[6)] Significantly, only men have not always opposed female religious leadership. In following example, one female layperson criticizes female preaching by depending on the Bible:

> *It's a deliberate yielding and deferring to your husband, in obedience to God's plan for your life… Think of today's unhappy women who struggle to usurp men's authority. Their*

efforts can only be fruitless and result in self-defeat and misery because I can't see where they're supported by God's Word... The devil can disrupt many a would-be Christian household via the woman's tongue... Submission, in the Biblical meaning of the word, becomes the only answer to that sort of problem. "Looking up to" the men as head of the house constantly asserts and reaffirms him. As I can support him with faith and trust, he can protect and complete me.[7)]

On the contrary, in several ways, women and male sympathizers have challenged these oppositions against female religious leadership in Christianity. First they reinterpret the Scripture, especially some biblical statements about female preaching and leadership. Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that feminist theology tries to reinterpret the Scripture and Christian traditions by embracing women's experience.[8)] Second they engage in grass-root activism within ecclesiastical institutions. Women have often organized women's societies for themselves within their denomination to control their religious leadership. Missionary society during the post-bellum period is a good example. Protestant women began to organize women's missionary societies to obtain independent authority within their churches. Thirdly, they push the boundaries of gender around female leadership by affirming individual experience. Susan Hill Lindley argues that women have challenged sexism that denies women by justifying God's call to preach through referring to their own individual experience.[9)] For example, Ann Hutchinson who was a charismatic female Quaker preacher, emphasized her own personal understanding of Puritan religious doctrine and individual religious experience by affirming her call to preach from God.[10)] And finally, secular social activism changes female leadership within the churches. For example, the great impact of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* published in 1963 was the dawn of the so-called second wave of feminism and it also triggered the emergence of feminist theology.

Different from other countries, American religious experience and history are deeply rooted in a religious pluralism. Julia Michell Corbett clearly points out that the First Amendment to the Constitution, the Separation of Church and State, has given religious freedom American citizens from the early republic.[11)] This basic American understanding about religious pluralism accepts not only denominational differences, but also gender differences. The federal and state governments cannot force any religious community to affirm female religious leadership.

Female religious leadership in American Christianity has been a complex. The definition of "female religious leadership" itself is always vague and complicated. It encompasses various forms of female leaders who are religious educators, theologians, or ordained clergy. There is a kind of distinction between an unordained female religious leadership and an ordained woman clergy, but the distinction has been often blurred and ambivalent through the history of American Christianity. Analyzing historical process of female religious leadership is one

of significant ways to understand the complicated gender issues in religious community. Female religious leadership is diversified and we cannot generalize it because of various social categories such as race, class, sexuality, or ethnicity. But as a case study, this article focuses upon the historical traditions of American Methodist female leadership, and it attempts to reflect its traditions on gender problems in monotheistic religions and other religious communities.

2. Popularity and Diversity of American Methodism

2. 1. Methodism As A Popular Religious Movement

The argument needs to move on more narrowed case study from a wider context, American Christianity to American Methodism. Methodism has its beginnings in the life and ministry of John Wesley (1703-1791), who was a priest of the Church of England. The word "Methodist" comes from Wesley's participation in a so-called "Holy Club" that sought to live with the "method" indicated in the Bible. Although Wesley and his brother, Charles, unsuccessfully tried to bring Methodism to the American colonies in the mid-eighteenth century, organized Methodism in America began as a lay movement led by Barbara Heck and Captain Thomas Webb. Later, Francis Asbury, who was dispatched by Wesley in 1784 to create the growing American Methodist societies, became the most important figure in early American Methodism. His energetic devotion to the principles of Wesleyan theology, ministry and organization shaped American Methodism.

American Methodism can be a good case study of female religious leadership because it is a good representative of mainline American Protestantism in many cases with following reasons. First, it is very large denomination. American Methodism rapidly acquired converts during the post-revolutionary and the antebellum era. Methodist adherents counted approximately one thousand by 1770, but its membership exponentially expanded to 2.5 million by 1820 and to 5 million by 1830. Though Methodist percentage was only 2% of American Christian population in 1775, it reached 34% by 1850.[12)] The growing rate of Methodist membership declined after the post-bellum period, although Methodist denominations continued to grow at a stable rate until well into the twentieth century. The United Methodist Church is the dominant Methodist denomination after the merger between the Methodist churches in 1968. The church is the second largest Protestant denomination in America. The biggest Christian denomination in the United States is the Roman Catholic Church, and the largest Protestant denomination is the Southern Baptist Convention. The third largest Christian denomination in the United States is the United Methodist Church. It has approximately 8,250,000 members in 2002.[13)]

Secondly, Methodism is found all over the country — the Methodist denominations are a major presence in every region, especially east of the Mississippi River and on the West Coast.

In contrast, the Southern Baptists are located predominantly in the South, or the Lutherans in the North Central States.[14)]

Thirdly, American Methodism was a historically national movement from the early republic. Along with a rapidly changing circumstances of the post-revolutionary society, Methodism as a popular religious movement transformed its shape. In his *Taking Heaven by Storm*, a religious historian John H. Wigger points out that early American Methodism accommodated to religious "free market" of the post-revolutionary America. While the old Protestant denominations in New England such as Presbyterians, Congregationalists, or Episcopalians stuck to ecclesiastical clericalism and elite education, Methodists underscored popular beliefs and deconstruction of the church-state system so that ordinary people could control religious authority in their church.[15)]

Since Methodism adapted to the changing cultural values from this early period, a number of women could find new various opportunities to engage in shaping Methodist movement. Like other mainline Protestant churches, for example, the home and foreign missionary experience and societies during the late-nineteenth century were crucial for changing female leadership in American Methodism. Before the Civil War, Methodist women already began to develop women's missionary societies at the local level, but it was not until the end of the Civil War that they organized missionary societies at the national level. By the beginning of the twentieth century, almost all Protestant denominations had missionary societies constituted by only women.[16)]

Because of the expanding "West", Methodists spread home and foreign missionary societies. Women found new opportunities to serve the church in this field. Especially single women were recognized, and they began to perform many church duties such as preaching. At first the female preacher as an ordained status was only permitted in the small Methodist Protestant Church, it was not acceptable in the Methodist Episcopal Church. During the church mergers that finally created the United Methodist Church in 1968, the women's ordination issue was constantly disputed. A religious historian Janette Hassey points out, in the large denominations like the Methodist Episcopal Church, most of the Methodist women who gained ordained status or partially official leadership positions had gained experience as missionary preachers.[17)]

Within the missionary societies, women began to manage societies for themselves such as fund-raising, and they eventually expanded their religious roles in mission, education, or social services. As an example of women's missionary societies, the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1869.[18)] Although the Methodist Church formally admitted women to full status in ministry in 1956, many of the churches actually gave a form of ordained status to female foreign missionaries from the late-nineteenth century.[19)] Also, the interdenominational mission movement made people more open to women's leadership and united women to work together. In 1861, the Woman's

Union Missionary Society was organized.[20)]

The uncultivated frontier is another significant factor in the "feminization"[21)] of Methodist church leadership. Because of the religiously "uncivilized" frontier, Methodist home missionaries traveled to preach as itinerant preachers or circuit riders. Because of its itinerant system[22)], Methodism became geographically widespread and popular. And also women could find places in the church as the wife of a preacher, a hostess for itinerants, or a single female preacher.[23)]

2. 2. Diversity in American Methodism

American Methodism is not monolithic from the early republic, even though it has been statistically, geographically, and historically widespread and attracted a number of women and different ethnic groups, especially black Americans. At present, the most part of American Methodism is occupied by the United Methodist Church, however, American Methodism has a complicated history. Because of regional, racial, theological and gendered reasons, the Methodist denominations have experienced some splits and mergers. The first conference of Methodist preachers in the American colonies was held in Philadelphia in 1773. After the famous Christmas Conference of preachers was held in Baltimore in 1784, the movement became organized as the Methodist Episcopal Church. As the Methodist Episcopal Church was developing, two other churches with Methodist sympathies were being formed, that is, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in 1800 and the Evangelical Association in 1803. Furthermore, when the Methodist Episcopal Church would not grant representation to laity, nearly 5,000 preachers and laypeople left that church and founded the Methodist Protestant Church for themselves in 1830.[24)] Slavery issue, for example, was intense in Methodism. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Methodist Episcopal Church was geographically divided into two, the northern anti-slavery Methodist Episcopal Church and the pro-slavery Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Women's role has been differently constructed in each different Methodist denomination. During the post-bellum period, along with emergence of missionary societies, the role of laity and women in the churches began to be discussed in Methodist churches. For example, the United Brethren General Conference of 1889 approved ordination for women, whereas both the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South kept rejecting women's clergy until they were reunited in 1939. The Methodist Protestant Church admitted women as delegates to the General Conference in 1892, the United Brethren in 1893, the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1904, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1922. The Evangelical Association never ordained women and laity rights for women were resisted. Finally in 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church merged to create "the Methodist Church." After World War II, Methodists continued to be concerned about church union. In 1946, the Evangelical

Association and the United Brethren Church merged to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

In both of these church mergers of Methodist churches, clergy rights for women were argued heatedly with surprising results. For example, the Evangelical United Brethren Church decided to keep the Evangelical practice which rejected woman's rights for ordination when they were united in 1946. But when the United Methodist Church was created in 1968 by the merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the full clergy rights for women were basically endorsed.

The presence of black American Methodists from the post-revolutionary era should not be ignored. Because American Methodism emphasized ordinary laity and free religious market space for various people, black Americans could relatively control their religious activities in the church. At the early period, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church were newly founded by free blacks in the Northern cities. After the end of slavery, these independent black Methodist churches were rapidly growing by attracting many former slaves. Like other Protestant denominations, religious characteristics of black Methodism are not same as that of white Methodist counterpart or mainstream Methodism. In regard to gender, gender identity has been differently constructed in the black Methodist churches through the historical process. Black female experiences have been very different from white female counterparts because of black women have been burdened with problem of race, class, and gender[25]. Like white churches, many black men and women in the historical black churches have viewed an uprising of black female religious leadership as an erosion of black men's authority. Delores C. Carpenter or Judith Weisenfeld argues that black men have been able to perform their leadership only within the church because secular society has been dominated by whites, therefore black female churchgoers have been obliged to be a scapegoat for racial uplifting.[26]

Moreover, the holiness movement emerged from American Methodism at the mid-nineteenth century. With counteracting the accommodation of the Methodist Episcopal Church to an American middle-class culture, the Wesleyan Methodist Church was founded in the 1840s and the Free Methodist Church in 1860. These holiness-branch Methodists were against the increasingly bourgeois character of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and they consistently pursued supernatural spirituality, temperate morality, and the doctrine of sanctification that all had been frequently practiced in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century old Methodism.[27]

This argument cannot reflect on every part of American Methodism because its character is very diversified. However, it is very significant how female religious leadership has been affirmed through the lens of mainstream American Methodist theology and its historical traditions.

3. Female Leadership in the Historical Traditions of American Methodism

3. 1. Authority of Individual Experience in Methodist Theology

In the American Methodist tradition, theology is uniquely based upon what is called "the Methodist Quadrilateral" or "the Wesleyan Quadrilateral," that is originated from the writings of John Wesley. It refers to four different ways to support thinking about truth: the Scripture, Tradition, Experience and Reason. Like other Christians, American Methodists share the way in which the Scripture is the primary source to think about God. The Bible is sacred canon for Christians. Also, Methodists have sought to interpret the truth of the Christian gospel for centuries. American Methodists carefully consider that historical process and form are very important as one kind of tradition. But in many cases, historical traditions have oppressed marginalized people. Therefore, American Methodists have affirmed people's individual experience and have made the traditions multi-faceted. Methodists think unless the Scripture and the traditions are not understood by individual witness, they are not effective. And finally, the Methodist Quadrilateral uses reason or rationally critical perspective when it thinks about the Scripture and the traditions. Pursuing biblical interpretations and Christian history from the critical standpoint makes Methodist theological understandings more affluent. These four elements are always interrelated to each other. John Wesley encouraged Methodists to follow the Quadrilateral since the 1700s, and therefore it has an ongoing influence, even on today's American Methodism.

Especially, what American Methodists have affirmed individual experience is an outstanding point when we think about female religious leadership. In many cases, female religious leadership has been restricted by cultural and biblical traditions. But authority of experience has transformed the gender boundaries of religious leadership through American Methodist history. For example, John Wesley actually accepted women's "extraordinary call," the idea is based on an individual call to ministry to justify that a woman can be a preacher owing to her individual experience; "They (Methodist women) grounded their being in the personal experience of God."[28] Also several religious revivals, for instance the Great Awakening (1740s in New England and the Middle Colonies, and the 1760s in the South), were filled with Methodist women actively participating in exhortation, and focusing on individual religious experience. Beside Quakers, these Methodist women became first example of women exhorters in the churches.[29] One of the most opened religious activities for women was praying. A few number of women, but significantly they were praised as "gifted" or "extraordinary" women by asserting supernatural visions or impressions through prayer in public. In the Second Great Awakening (1798-the 1830s), Methodist women as itinerant preachers played a leadership role that contributed to the conversions of their husbands and children, and loosened ecclesiastical clericalism.[30] As the wife of a Maine itinerant preacher, Fanny Newell justified female religious leadership by affirming her extraordinary call from

God as her own individual experience; "Whatever may be said against a female speaking, or praying in public, I care not; for when I feel confident that the Lord calls me to speak, I care not refuse."[31] In these religious revivals, women had more opportunities for preaching and forged religious voluntarism by women. Also the revivals supported women's independence and self-definition within a narrowly confined place, the church.

John H. Wigger asserts the importance that John Wesley underscored both the Scripture and authority of individual experience. Because ordinary Americans sought social and economic autonomy during the post-revolutionary period, Methodist movement was successful in attracting a large number of male and female converts.[32] In this period, even if most Methodist women were burdened with the ideal value "Republican Motherhood,"[33] they conversely utilized a status of moral authority as spiritual guardians from corrupted male counterparts. American Methodist theology and history give us one picture how authority of experience is influential to promote female religious leadership.

Also, some frameworks of previous religious studies tell us how important to look at authority of individual experience. Many scholars of religious history before the 1960s tended to overlook the significance of individual experience as a religious factor. They often labeled individual experience or enthusiasm in the churches as "sentimentalism" or "false religion". In general, popular devotionalism was regarded as "bad" religion in the context of religious studies because it was not an academically rational subject.[34]

Since the 1960s, however, Amanda Porterfield argues that a diversifying religious spectrum has led many Americans to create personalized forms of spirituality encouraging individual to be free to participate in religious activities without traditional conventions.[35] Some Christians and scholars criticize individual spirituality and personal religious experience because they do not contribute to maintain civic virtue or social order. According to Porterfield, however, Puritans originally emphasized personal religious experience such as the authority of subjective experience of the Holy Spirit. Internal religious experience rather than external religious authority like biblical inerrancy or traditions has often made it easier for Christians to become socially engaged.[36] Porterfield argues that from the colonial period, not only church traditions and biblical interpretations but also personal religious experience have provided an important "social glue." The personalization (individualization) of religious spirituality had been overlooked in the studies from the colonial period. Porterfield points out, "The issues raised in the Ann Hutchinson trial have continued to be raised in American religious history. Commitment to the primacy of individual experience and readiness to resist external authority for its own sake have found expression in numerous times and places, including in the enthusiasm for intellectual freedom among writers and social activists of the early twentieth century."[37]

Porterfield suggests that personal religious experience has been regarded as one of the most significant elements in American religious life for a long time. Individual experience can

shape believers' religious understandings. Furthermore, individual experience as a religious category is also tightly related to the expansion of female religious leadership.

3. 2. Methodist Institutional System

American Methodism has focused upon authority of experience, but also it has an established institutional system promoting female religious leadership. For example, the United Methodist Church, the dominant denomination among Methodist churches, is institutionally governed by the General Conference which is the highest authority of the church. In 1976, the United Methodist General Conference passed a rule affirming an educated professional ministry for the people called United Methodists. This rule did not fully ensure acceptance of women clergy in the church, nevertheless, it stated clearly the desire of the church to move in the direction of uniting its words and its deeds concerning women clergy. While the church has not made as rapid progress as might be desired in the implementation of full clergy rights for women, at least, it has gone further than many other mainline Protestant churches.[38)]

The employment of clergy in the United Methodist Church is conducted through an "appointment system" which begins when ordination is granted by the denomination. Clergy are appointed to work in local churches by the bishops in cooperation with the district superintendents, and in consultation with clergy members and congregations. This is called "itinerancy."[39)] Bishop has an initial authority to appoint clergy, both men and women, and send them to local churches. Once a clergy person is admitted in to full membership, he or she is guaranteed an appointment within that annual conference throughout his or her career. *The Book of Discipline*, the official rule book of the United Methodist Church which is revised quadrennially, does not allow a bishop to ignore women ministers any more. The Book says; "Open itinerancy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color of skin, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement."[40)]

The appointment itinerancy system is different from a "calling system" in other Protestant denominations like Baptists. An appointment system can support an egalitarian environment, or job market, for women clergy because clergy placement does not depend upon public opinion. Therefore, in the United Methodist system, gender stereotypes do not easily function in the ordination process. By contrast, in a calling system in which local church adherents decide to accept women clergy or not, gender stereotypes can influence decisions and deny women equal employment because gender stereotypes are not limited by the organizational system.

The strong central institutional character of the United Methodist Church is important for promoting female religious leadership. By contrast, although Baptist laity have a strong power, Baptist churches do not have a centralized ecclesiastical authority like United Methodists. Like United Methodists, Baptists have encouraged individual religious experience

in emotional worship style or enthusiastic religious climate, especially in revival meetings, and have challenged religious clericalism that overlooked authority of individual experience as a religious factor.[41] But Baptists have not been able to affirm the individual experience of female leadership like United Methodists in many cases. Because of its denominational variety and decentralized ecclesiasticism, many Baptists have failed to affirm women clergy. Yet, a few Baptists, like the American Baptists have positively accepted female religious leadership and women's ordination. However, Southern Baptists have not officially admitted women clergy and have only reluctantly accepted female religious leadership. Southern Baptists overlook individual experience as authorizing a woman's calling to preach by focusing on biblical literalism. In contrast, American Methodists have developed institutionalization of the church and simultaneously, have encouraged individual experience because they needed a balance between the two.[42] Ironically, in the United Methodist case, an institutional church system that seems to restrict all religious leadership through a rigid appointment system has helped to push the boundaries of female religious leadership. American Methodism has encouraged both institutional development and individual experience to promote egalitarian circumstances for female religious leadership.

3. 3. Interrelations between Religious and Secular in Methodism

I discussed about changing female leadership within the churches, but there are always interrelations between changing religious leadership and changing secular leadership. Here are the three examples. One is the late-nineteenth-century temperance movement originated from American Methodist women. The movement is an important factor to encourage women's religious leadership. A prominent leader of the temperance movement and founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Frances Willard declared that all women as well as Methodist women should take new roles within and outside the church. Willard called this "New Methodist Women".[43] In this sense, Willard broke the boundaries of "separate spheres"[44] and provided a redefinition of gender roles as female leadership for women within the church and outside of it. A favorite motto of the WCTU "boldly stated that women intended to move from the private, domestic sphere into the public world."[45] Willard strongly urged Methodist women to commit to active participation in a wide rage of secular social movements like labor problems, peace, social welfare, temperance, or suffrage movement. Jean Miller Schmidt argues that the WCTU expanded female leadership from the church to secular society.[46]

Second example is the missionary movement during the late-nineteenth century. The movement was crucial for changing female religious leadership in American Methodism and Christianity, but at the same time, it interconnected between religious and secular in leadership. Although the women's missionary movement stimulated female lay members in

the church, many lay members (including male members) had no concern for the women's suffrage movement.[47] Yet the women's missionary movement in the late nineteenth century did provide a catalyst for the promotion of female leadership outside of the church. The Methodist missionary society was always interacting with secular American society and thereby changing female leadership.

Another example is the late nineteenth-century deaconess movement. In the 1880s some Methodists established a new ministerial status of "deacon." A deacon served mainly in nursing, but this was a progress for women who had few opportunities for ministry during this period.[48] Furthermore, the deaconess movement changed female leadership in social welfare within the church and outside of it.[49] These three examples show that changing female religious leadership is influenced by changing female secular leadership, and vice versa.

4. Conclusion: Crossing the Gender Boundaries

The American Methodist traditions have affirmed female religious leadership in many cases because; (1) Methodists have followed the Quadrilateral equally affirming the Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason. Its balanced theology, especially authority of experience has been practiced through Methodist history; (2) institutionalized Methodist system has restricted gender inequality; and (3) changing female secular leadership has interacted with changing female leadership within the church. These three environments have encouraged Methodist women to cross the confined gender boundaries of religious leadership. Especially during the 1970s, they rapidly changed the boundaries of religious leadership from an ambiguous (unofficial) position to an ordained clergy. The United Methodist Church had the largest number of woman clergy in all Protestant denominations during the last decade of the twentieth century.[50] Recently, the United Methodist Church has over 17.5% woman clergy (7,803 women clergy),[51] whereas the Southern Baptist Convention has only a hundred women clergy despite of their huge membership (over 20 million).[52]

The 1970s and 1980s previous framework of female religious leadership and women's ordination issue had tended to be confined to institutional, occupational, and theological perspectives, but an analysis based upon individual experience could contribute to a reinterpretation of female leadership in American Methodism. More recent scholars like Amanda Porterfield have increasingly discovered the significance of individual experience for discussing changing female religious leadership. However, the most important argument of this paper is a balanced combination between authority of individual experience and institutionalization changing female religious leadership. Emphasizing individual experience is not necessarily enough for changing female religious leadership. Along with institutional structure and interconnection with secular feminism, affirming individual experience shows how female religious leadership has crossed the gender boundaries through a case study,

American Methodism.

I discussed about changing female leadership in American Methodism, but how can we apply this argument to monotheistic religions and other religious communities as a whole? Changing female religious leadership in American Methodism is a microcosm to illuminate changing the confined gender boundaries of leadership in every religious community as a macrocosm. From a wider perspective, this case study can show how gender roles have been changed through human history and society. Analyzing historical transforming process of female religious leadership can contribute to consider about constructed gender relations in every religious community. This paper argues how three factors (authority of experience, church institutionalization, and religious/secular interconnection) successfully changed female religious leadership in American Methodism. It does not to say that these three factors always change the gender boundaries of leadership in every religious community, but they can provide a possibility to change the gender boundaries for every religious community.

NOTES

1) The word "mainline" Protestant indicates the Protestant religious denominational clusters that include various biblical interpretations reflecting ecumenical attitudes, or that accept liberally modernized thinking about theology and secular society. For example, Peter W. Williams defines that the mainline Protestants are American Baptist, United Church of Christ, Disciples, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. See Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 355-57. Also, Ronald L. Johnstone defines the word "consensus religion" as similar to "mainline" religion. According to him, "consensus religion" is tolerant or has ecumenical relationships with other religions and with secular groups, and it accepts or encourages liberal change and diversity of religious practice and interpretation within or without denomination. See Ronald L. Johnstone, *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1997), 91, quoted in Julia Michell Corbett, *Religion in America*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000), 42.
2) Edward Lehman C. Jr., "Women's Path into Ministry: Six Major Studies," in *Pulpit & Pew Research Reports, Fall 2002* (NC: Duke University School, 2002), 4.
3) Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia Mei Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 23-38.
4) The cardinal tenets of nineteenth-century femininity — piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74; Mari Jo Buhle, "Feminist Approaches to Social History," in *Encyclopedia of American Social History,* eds. Mary Kupiec Cayton, Elliot J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams, 1:319-20 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993).
5) Barbara Brown Zikmund, "The Struggle for the Right to Preach," in *Women and Religion in America: the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, 1:219-20 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).
6) Ikoma Kosho, *Kamigami no Feminizumu: Gendai Amerika Shuukyou Jijyou* [Feminism of

Gods: the Contemporary Situation of American Religion] (Tokyo: Arachi shuppan-sha, 1994), 21.

7) Anita Bryant, "Lord, Teach Me to Submit," in *Antifeminism in America: A Collection of Readings from the Literature of the Opponents to U.S. Feminism, 1848 to the Present*, eds. Angela Howard and Sah Ranae Adams Tarrant, 3:73-80 (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997).
8) Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 12-13.
9) Susan Hill Lindley, *You Have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1966), 181.
10) Amanda Porterfield, *The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth Century Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.
11) Julia Michell Corbett, *Religion in America*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000), 20-23.
12) Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America, 1776-1850," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (1989): 27-44.
13) Eileen W. Linder, ed., *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches 2000* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 351.
14) Edwin Scott Gaustand and Philip L. Barlow, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 89, 112, 228-29, 291.
15) John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5-12.
16) Dana L. Robert, "The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home", *A Journal of Interpretation: Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 59.
17) Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry around the Turn of the Century* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1986), chapter 4.
18) Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 155.
19) Robert, "The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home", 71.
20) Virginia Lieson Brereton and Christa Ressmeyer Klein, "American Women in Ministry: A History of Protestant Beginning Points," in *Women in American Religious History*, ed. Janet Wilson James, 172 (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980).
21) The word "feminization" indicates the process which not only non-ordained female religious leaders are breaking a gender line at ordination, but also they can enjoy ministerial activities in egalitarian circumstances. See Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), introduction.
22) With the expansion of the Western frontier during the nineteenth century, riding-horse Methodist preachers were traveling to convert those who people lived in the frontier. This system was introduced to American Methodism by the first Methodist bishop, Francis Asbury.
23) Janet Wilson James, "Women in American Religious History," chapter 6, in Janet James ed., 1-25.
24) Gaustad and Barlow, *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, 223.

25) See Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (San Diego: HBJ Books, 1983); bell hooks, *Talking Black: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).
26) Delores C. Carptenter, *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 20; Judith Weisenfeld, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Margins, Center, and Bridges in African American Religious History," in *New Directions in American Religious History* eds. Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 417-44.
27) Wigger, *Taking Haven by Storm*, 194-195.
28) Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 113.
29) *Methodist Magazine* 6, no. 11 (October 1823), 381-83, quoted in Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism, 1760-1939* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 66.
30) Nancy Cott, "Introduction," in *History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott, 13: xiii (Munich: K.G. Saur Verlag GmbH & Co., 1993).
31) Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America*, 114.
32) Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 15-16.
33) Republican Motherhood — new women's roles and virtues added by the American Revolution. In this idea, wives have a duty to teach their children patriotism to service American country. See Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), chapter 8; Joyce Appleby, ed. *Encyclopedia of Women in American History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 1:175-76.
34) David D. Hall, "Review Essay: What is the Place of 'Experience' in Religious History," *A Journal of Interpretation: Religion and American Culture* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 242.
35) Porterfield, *The Transformation of American Religion*, 12.
36) Ibid., 15-17.
37) Ibid., 14.
38) Harry Hale, Jr., Morton King, and Doris Moreland Jones. *New Witness: United Methodist Clergywomen* (Nashville: Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1980), 78.
39) This meaning of "itinerancy" is different from the itinerant system which means Methodist traveling preachers are historically moving around the West during the nineteenth century. As a church system, itinerancy means the ordination process in which bishops choose clergy.
40) *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 1996* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), 430.
41) Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963), 64.
42) Ibid., 57.
43) Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism, 1760-1939* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 151.
44) The idea of "separate spheres" is originated from the early nineteenth-century industrial revolution in America. The industrial revolution made a clear distinction between home and workplace for middle-class white Americans. Its economic effects made two separate

spheres; woman as a mother and a housewife should stay home and the other hand, man as a breadwinner protects his family through workplace and politics. See Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39.

45) Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Home Protection: The WCTU's Conversion to Woman Suffrage," in *Gender, Ideology, and Action: Historical Perspectives on Women's Public Lives,* ed. Janet Sharistanian, 95-120 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), quoted in Jean Miller Schmidt, 156.
46) Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 158.
47) Robert, "The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home", 68.
48) Virginia Lieson Brereton and Christa Ressmeyer Klein, "American Women in Ministry: A History of Protestant Beginning Points," in *Women in American Religious History*, ed. Janet Wilson James, 179 (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980).
49) Robert, "The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home", 69.
50) Barbara Brown Zikmund et al, *Clergy Women*, 6.
51) United Methodist News Service, "United Methodist New Service Backgrounder on Women Clergy," http://www.umns.umc.org/backgrounders/clergywomen.html (accessed December 4, 2003).
52) Adherents. Com, "Religion Statistics, Church Statistics," http://www.adherents.com/ (accessed April 18, 2003).

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