

A Study on the Relationship between God's Image and Parental Image for the Development of Healthy Christian Identity of Children : with an Emphasis on Ana-Maria Rizzuto's Theory of God's Image

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Abstract

This study aims to reflect on how the experiences in the interrelationship between parents and children affect the formation of God's image and how it affects the formation of healthy Christian identity. We will explore the implications of this research on education for the formation of healthy Christian identity for children. Based on the theories of God's image by Erickson, Freud, and Rizzuto, we examine in-depth how the parental image that children acquire in their relationship with their parents is related to the image of God, which is the basis of their lives. Parents are like caregivers, guardians, and absolute beings that enable their children's survival and safety from their birth. The parental image that a child has through interaction with their parents has a close relationship with the image of God. Amid the existential limitations and restrictions faced by children and parents, negative experiences such as oppression, punishment, and anger that children receive from their parents leave various psychological wounds inside the child. What is important here is that the summation of negative experiences inflicted on the child should not exceed the appropriate level that the child can endure. In addition, children should be guided to feel the following in their relationship with their parents. Children need to be nurtured to feel basic trust from their parents. If these important premise is not observed, the distorted parental image will lead to distorted God's image. Unreliable or violent images of parents will pose a serious threat to the formation of constructive faith or healthy Christian identity. Based on this premise, this study claims a substantial shift from oppressive, authoritarian, and one-directional ways of education to those of mutual, liberational, postconventional education. Finally, this study closes its inquiry by providing constructive direction and alternatives for the development of healthy Christian identity for Children.

Key Words

Christian identity, God's image, God's representation, Erikson, Freud, Rizzuto, Parent Education, Postconventional, Child Education

자녀의 건강한 기독교 정체성 형성을 위한 신 표상 및 부모 이미지의 상관성에 관한 연구 : 리주토(Ana-Maria Rizzuto)의 신 표상(God's image) 이론을 중심으로

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논문 요약

본 연구에서는 부모와 자녀의 상호관계 속에서의 경험들이 하나님 표상, 즉 신 표상(God's image) 형성에 어떤 영향을 주는가, 그리고 그것은 건강한 기독교 정체성 형성에 어떤 영향을 주는가를 성찰하고자 한다. 이러한 연구가 자녀의 건강한 기독교 정체성 형성을 위한 교육에 어떠한 함의를 주는가를 함께 살펴보게 될 것이다. 에릭슨(Erikson), 프로이트(Freud), 특히 리주토(Rizzuto)의 신 표상 이론을 토대로, 자녀가 부모와의 관계성 속에서 획득하는 부모 이미지가 이후 자기 삶의 근거와 토대가 되는 하나님 이미지, 즉 신 표상과 어떤 상관성이 있는가를 심도 있게 성찰한다. 부모는 어린 시절부터 아이의 생존과 안위를 가능케 하는 양육자, 보호자, 절대자와도 같은 존재이다. 아이가 부모와의 상호작용을 통해 갖게 되는 부모 이미지(parental image)는 신 표상과 밀접한 연관을 가지게 된다. 아이와 부모가 처한 실존적 한계와 제한 속에서, 아이가 부모로부터 받게 되는 억압, 처벌, 분노 등의 부정적 경험은 아이의 내면에 다양한 심리적 상처를 남기게 된다. 여기에서 중요한 것은 아이에게 가해지는 부정적 경험의 총화는 아이가 감내할 수 있는 적정 수준을 넘어서면 안 된다는 것이다. 또한 자녀는 부모와의 관계 속에서 다음과 같은 것을 느낄 수 있도록 안내되어야 한다. 부모의 훈육 행동은 자녀인 자기를 지키고 보호하기 위한 것이라는 기본 신뢰를 부모로부터 느낄 수 있도록 교육되어야 한다는 것이다. 자녀 양육 및 교육에 있어서 이런 중요한 전제가 지켜지지 않으면, 그에 따른 왜곡된 부모 이미지가 왜곡된 신 표상을 야기하게 된다. 신뢰할 수 없거나 억압적이고 폭력적인 신 표상은 올바른 신앙이나 건강한 기독교 정체성 형성에 심각한 위협을 초래한다. 이러한 교육심리학 토대 위에서 건강한 기독교 정체성 형성을 위한 바람직한 자녀 교육은 전통적 권위적 억압적 방식을 벗어나, 상호적, 인격적, 탈인습적 교육을 향해 나아가야 함을 논의함으로써 본 연구를 마무리하였다.

〈 주제어 〉

기독교 정체성, 하나님의 표상, 신 표상, 에릭슨, 프로이트, 리주토, 부모교육, 탈인습적, 자녀 교육

I. Introduction

The establishment and growth of a person's faith requires the interaction of many factors. It requires spiritual enlightenment based on the Word of God(Romans 10:17), the inner illumination and presence of the Holy Spirit(1 Corinthians 2:10), proper catechesis for a sound faith, and fellowship and sharing in a community of faith, such as a Christian family and church. During infancy and early childhood, before the development of one's own ego, the image of parents that is formed through communication and relationship with the primary caregiver to whom the child is wholly dependent has a profound impact on later faith formation. Ana-Maria Rizzuto(2000), in line with her psychoanalytic theory of the subject-object relationship, suggests that the experiences formed in the relationship with the primary caregiver in early childhood are crucial in shaping the image of God, which in turn determines the form of faith in later life(Rizzuto, 2000, 172-173).

According to Rizzuto, numerous Christians maintain patriarchal, authoritarian, and oppressive image of God which is closely related with their parental image which was formed through their interaction with their own parents. As a result, many of them have difficulty when they call God "Father" and it is not easy for them to accept God's unconditional love for them.

Erikson's psycho-social development theory sees that it affects ego-development through developmental tasks and various experiences of success and failure given at each stage of life. Especially at the first stage, from birth to 1.5 years old, the characteristics of basic trust or mistrust are established in the process of caregiving considered to be deeply related to faith formation(W. S. Koh et al., 2006, 95). Therefore, this study aims to focus on the relationship between Erikson's psycho-social development theory and Rizzuto's psychoanalytic theory and the relationship between the object relationship and the formation of God's image, and to focus on the factors that form God's image while analyzing the connections with God's image in Freud's Oedipus complex theory. In particular, as a result of comparing and analyzing Rizzuto's and Freud's psychoanalytic theories during this study, I would like to reflect on the improvement directions and practical measures of Christian education, especially

among Christian educational tasks to ultimately form mature and healthy Christian identity based on the influence of experience with parents on God's image.

II. Erik Erikson's Psycho-social Development and God's Image

1. Erikson's Theory of Psycho-social Development

Erikson closely observed and analyzed how the inner self and psychology of the human self interact with the external environment and society to produce inner maturity(W. S. Koh et al., 2006, 94). In particular, Erikson's developmental theory is divided into eight stages from infancy through old age according to the life cycle theory. In order for humans to grow healthy, positive and growth-oriented affirmations at each stage must prevail over negative and growth-stunting negativity(K. M. Lee, 2023, 162-169). Humans have eight decisive stages: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and skepticism, initiative versus guilt, diligence versus inferiority, self-identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, productivity versus depression, ego-integrity versus despair(S. G. Lee, 2010, 155-180). Erikson argues that the human ego develops through continuous interaction with the environment throughout a lifetime rather than the causal and deterministic system of biologically based psycho-sexual development. In other words, as the ego develops, it is more affected by interaction with the surrounding environment and relational dynamics (W. S. Koh et al., 2006, 95). Among the surrounding environments, the most powerful one can be seen as the influence of parents, who are the main caregivers. In other words, it can be seen that the most powerful thing is the influence of parents, who are the main caregivers. Namely, the perception and basic trust of society that will be faced by parents are determined, and the type of interpersonal relationships is greatly influenced by the experience of relationships with parents. Furthermore, this basic sense of trust is imprinted as a positive or negative image in the confrontation with God, and accordingly, God's image is formed differently.

2. Erikson's developmental theory and God's Image

Erikson named the silent existence formed in infancy as 'basic trust', and Rizzuto connected this characteristic of basic trust with God's image(Rizzuto, 2000, 381). Rizzuto insists as follows. Infant children need the trust and belief that the primary caregiver not only protects themselves but also parents will provide what they need(W. S. Koh, et al., 2000, 96). This experience of trust and belief leads to trust in God in place of the caregiver and on the contrary, the negative influence of that experience also acts as mistrust in God.

Erikson also contends that religion has contributed to restoring the trust at regular intervals, promising to prevent it from giving concrete forms to feel evil throughout the centuries while restoring feelings of trust at regular intervals. He mentions the importance of a child's ability to handle reality, saying that the psychological observers should ask whether religion and tradition, as living psychological forces, permeate their parent's personality, creating faith and conviction that can strengthen a child's basic sense of trust in the world(Rizzuto, 2000, 382-383). After all, the experience of trust and distrust formed in children's relationships with their parents plays an important role in forming God's image.

Using Erikson's developmental principles as a model, Rizzuto presents her research and describes human life as a gradual development process through psycho-social crises based upon stages. In addition, each stage of development follows a process in which an element gradually predominates and then completely resolves at the end of that stage. The central thesis here is that the image of God as an intermediate representation needs to be reshaped more dynamically and in a more healthy form at each stage of crisis in order to become a subject of continuous faith(Rizzuto, 2000, 386).

Erikson's theory of psycho-social stages has moral implications and religious dimensions above all else. At least three of the decisive stages in the process of human psycho-social development, such as trust versus distrust, ego-identity versus role confusion, and ego-integration versus despair, and adaptable strengths or virtues, are important insights in that they have religious or moral dimensions

(S. G. Lee, 2010, 160-161).

Even for the spiritual infant who has been just “born-again”, the first task of spiritual development can be seen as having basic trust in God’s goodness or reliability. When there is a lack of hope in God’s world, we can see a spiritual withdrawal that results from a loss of hope or basic trust in God’s goodness and reliability(N. K. Park, 2008, 45).

Erikson’s theory has religious and theological significance because it shows developmental and interactive dimensions in relation to human moral determination and personal development at the level of existential depth. Of course, religion and morality, doctrine and ethics need be distinguished. But at the same time, we must also remember that they are closely interconnected at the same time(S. G. Lee, 2010, 160-161).

What is important here is the fact, what is experienced in a relationship with parents affects God’s image. A specific God’s image has a positive and negative effect on God’s image and has a decisive effect on Christian identity depending on the results of the tasks achieved in the developmental stage.

III. Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalysis and God’s Image

1. Freud’s Psychoanalysis

Freud argues that, along with overcoming the Oedipus complex, Libido’s concentration on the child’s mother should be abandoned and overcome(S. Freud, 1997, 386). Emphasizing the importance of unconsciousness, Freud saw that internal conflicts were revealed as dreams, symptoms, personality, characteristics, and personality. At the same time as the problems of internal stimulation and external environment (objects and their care), the term ‘ego’ was coined to describe the organization of a consistent mental process, and the task of representing the self was entrusted. It was also said that the amount of excitement generated in the organism was released by mental and external stimulation by dividing it into “id,” which made it realize the original or first principle of life, which was called the “pleasure principle”(Freud, 1988, 23). The “superego,” the

main body of personality, shows the person's morality in moral and judicial aspects(1988, 23-33).

In addition, Freud examines instincts while talking about psychological sublimation and points out that the most variable aspect of instincts lies in the purpose of the instinct, that is, the object or means of realizing the reduction of tension. If an object is not available, the concentration can be transferred from this object to another available object. This means that psychological energy has a property that can be transferred. Even when the energy is transferred, the source and goal of the instinct remain the same and the only thing that changes is the object of the goal (Freud, 1988, 87). Freud can refer to the previous stage in Erikson's developmental theory as a principle similar to how the transition of the object relationship as a result of the success and the failure of a given task at each stage affects psychological energy. In this way, Erikson, Freud, and Rizzuto believe that each individual has a different God's image as the experience with a main human caregiver or relationship is inferred to the relationship with God, the Absolute Object.

2. Freud's Psychoanalysis and God's Image

Freud demonstrates the conviction that the representations of people who were important in childhood exist in theorizing about God and the devil, and refers to how a person acquires the representations of God and the devil(Rizzuto, 2000, 77). Freud also thinks that, unlike other representations, the "self," which is a kind of representation, can use energy originally invested in itself or energy acquired from other objects(Jay Greenberg & Stephen Mitchell, 1999, 111). Freud laid the foundation for the theory of object relations while conceiving the embryological and mental dynamic development process of faith in God and the devil, and provided a very useful perspective to understand the role of early objects. He is based on the concepts that God and the devil are "a creation of the human spirit" and "the regeneration and recovery of parents in a child's thoughts"(Rizzuto, 2000, 38).

Freud also said that the repression of naming or representing causes the pri-

mordial father's image to split off, and that an individual's relationship with God depends on the individual's relationship with one's physical father or parents, but he believed that only the father provides the image that can be elevated to God. Rizzuto, However, said that God's image is not limited to father, but also formed through mother or primary caregiver. Rizzuto disagreed with Freud's view that God and religion were childish fantasies based on human's resentment(Rizzuto, 2000, 390-391). While Rizzuto partially utilizes Freud's insights, she overcomes Freud to develop her own theory.

Following Freud's logic closely, he argues that the image of God is the Oedipal father figure in which the sublimated libido is concentrated, and that the father figure, no matter how elevated and transformed, is the father; in other words, God is indeed the father. The only change here is in the quality of the libido, which is suppressed and transformed into something non-sexual. This inhibition allows the representation of God(the Father) to become ritualized(Rizzuto, 2000, 91). From a structural perspective, God's image oscillates between being used as a target for libido and aggressive resentments(id) and having the function of a regulating and controlling superego(2000, 92).

IV. Rizzuto's Psychoanalysis and the Formation of God's Image

1. Rizzuto's Psychoanalysis

As a psychoanalytic, Rizzuto is concerned with three facts. First, object representation, symbolization, and private, covert conscious and unconscious processes that create a sense of ego. Second, it is about whether God's image are used to aid psychological equilibrium or to impede psychological equilibrium. Third, it is about how God's image is transformed in the course of life, how the changes in life affect God's image, and how God's image affects individual interpretations of those changes(Rizzuto, 2000, 170).

In addition, Rizzuto claims that what psychoanalysis calls object representation and self-representation is a complex memory process that occurs during all developmental processes, and that like memory, these representations are formed

at some point in the past without simply showing what happened in the past. They emerge in a complex context of wishes, feelings, and fantasies, intertwined with one another and related to the representations of the ego at the time they were formed (Rizzuto, 2000, 107-108). The rich, complex, and dialectical associations that object representations have with self-representations are what leads to the constant reworking of the content of memories of objects and are of great importance to mental life (2000, 155). She said she understood who we were by recalling previously forgotten (suppressed) past memories at the conclusion of the psychoanalysis process, which is one of the profound contributions of psychoanalysis (2000, 167-166). Although Rizzuto does not approach the Christian God from a confessional stance, her theory has considerable insights. Critically appropriating Freud's psychoanalysis, and taking a further complementary view, Rizzuto sheds a meaningful light on understanding God's image, parental image and the mutual relationship between the two subjects.

2. Factors Shaping Rizzuto's Gods Image

Unlike Freud's concept of God's image, which understands God's image as a kind of fossil that solidified at a certain stage of development, Rizzuto sees God's image as "an imaginary being," a true actuality of a child. This new and original representation was understood to have various elements that give greater comfort, peace, inspiration, and courage than actual parents provide (M. S. Choi, 2001, 5). In addition, Rizzuto said that God is a type of special object representation formulated by a child within a psychological space where a "transitional object" is endowed with a powerful and realistic fantasy life. Furthermore, like all intermediate objects, God is a special "intermediate object" located outside, inside, and at the same time on the boundary between the inside and outside, coming from primary object representations and saying that other intermediate objects generally do not follow (Rizzuto, 2000, 328-329), and that throughout his life, God remains an intermediate object and is used as a meaningful channel in relationships with himself, others, and life itself. Additionally, she argues that the psychological process of discovering God does not end at a particular

time, but is a developmental process that continues throughout life from birth to death, and that the mental representations that children and adults use as intermediary objects are not limited to God. Children's and adults' sense of self is influenced by the characteristics of their private representations. It is argued that the developmental process of forming God's image is influenced by numerous cultural, social, family, and personal phenomena that are widely distributed from the most basic biological dimension of human experience to the most subtle spiritual enlightenment(2000, 328-329).

Rizzuto reviews Freud's theories about the developmental and personal sources that contribute to the formation of the God image and finds that Freud's assumptions that God has its origins in the parental figure and that the Oedipal crisis approaches resolution are basically valid, but Freud called for the abandonment of religion, saying that God and religion are childish fantasies based on human resentment. Rizzuto, however, explicitly criticizes Freud for this claim. Rizzuto criticizes these atheistic demands as cruel and dysfunctional, not to mention stunting the child's growth. God becomes potentially a "transitional object" after the Oedipal stage, which can be transformed anew during the crises of each developmental stage, if only the "transitional object" can remain a living being throughout life on the way to maturity(Rizzuto, 2000, 330-338).

3. Linking Rizzuto's Object Relations to the Image of God

Min-Seok Choi(2001, 6) points out that most of Rizzuto's research subjects are not clearly aware of the positive role that religion plays for healthy individuals by strictly applying psychoanalytic methods to people with poor personality integration. He also points out that while Rizzuto explains the psychological experience of God, there is a limit to her ability to analyze religious life and the reality of God's existence. Rizzuto's argument concerning this subject is as follows. In other words, God is found in the home and most of the divine experiences are passed on by parents. God is found in dialogue, art, architecture, and social events. God is experienced as a person who is invisible but realistically present. Therefore, in the course of life, many people have a

moment of being led to the "house of God," the church, which is thought to be the place where the presence of God is present(Rizzuto, 2000, 25).

Rizzuto developed a projective method of showing not only internalized object relationships but also relationships with God, and used a method of asking questions about parents on the one hand and supplementary questions about God on the other (Rizzuto, 2000, 26). Rizzuto argues that belief and doubt are a kind of conscious process, and in that conscious process, individuals find perceptual identity that is understood as the identity of subjective experiences in a broader sense. In other words, Trust and mistrust in God depend on the identity of the conscious experience between God's image and the parental image formed at a specific moment in human development(2000, 27).

Rizzuto finds the first step in the formation of God's image in eye contact between the child and the primary caregiver, which is first experienced through the caregiver's initial care for the child and personal interaction with the caregiver that reflects the child's inner self(Rizzuto, 2000, 350). This means that the child will organize God's concept around the caregiver's proto-type. As such, the relationship between parents and children, and between the mother and the child is very significant because caregivers, parents, and mothers are the basis for children to form God's image. Therefore, how parents communicate with their children and how parents relate with their children are of utmost importance for the development of constructive Christian identity.

Based upon all these findings and realization, now let us turn our attention to the basic direction and suggestions for an appropriate parenting for the children's education for the formation of healthy Christian identity.

V. The Postconventional Christian Education for the Formation of Healthy Christian Identity

For the postconventional Christian education, the basic directions and measures delved in this study represent a shift in the direction toward a substantial change from the hierarchical and unilateral education of the past. This direc-

tion moves toward a postconventional education that opens a new possibility for openness, equality, and mutuality between parents and child(H. S. Kim, 2004, 27-29). In the same vein, this inquiry rendered here can be employed as a useful groundwork moving toward a fully fledged model of postconventional Christian education. In this context, the role of parents is very important, so I would like to suggest a desirable direction and alternative for Christian education, aimed at both parents and children, to follow after a crisis or in a supportive capacity.

1. The Importance of Parental Image for the Formation of Christian Identity

What is 'Christian identity'? It refers to a state in which self-understanding, identity, and consistency as a Christian faith and commitment can be maintained consistently even amid constantly changing internal, physical, and emotional changes as well as changes in the external environment. Christian identity includes a symbolic structure that recognizes God's love even in difficult situations and enables faith in the realization of the kingdom of God.

In this context, Christian youth are called to achieve religious maturity through the process of constructing and interpreting social and personal identification while maintaining identification with other Christians and commitment as Christians based on the correlation between Christian identity and self-establishment(H. J. Im, 2008, 22-23). In other words, a person who has deep trust in God's love and power and is committed to the service for the building of God's kingdom can be seen as a person who has formed healthy Christian identity. In order to form this Christian identity, healthy image of God must be premised first and healthy parental image need to be supported for the healthy image of God.

2. Desirable Direction of Postconventional Parent Education

Parents' attitudes, roles, and education toward their children have a sig-

nificant impact on the formation of their children's Christian identity as well as the constructive image of God, as suggested above. Dudley extended Hodge's survey to conduct a study on how parents pass on religious values to their adolescent children. The results of this study showed significant differences in values and attitudes between adolescents and their parents. It has been clearly shown that adolescents tend to resemble their parents in their religious values. It can be seen that the value of the mother plays a greater role in the formation of the value of the youth than the value of the father. However, when parents and their own opinions on religious values were inconsistent, adolescents were more likely to agree with their fathers than mothers(Park, 2010, 47).

Postconventional conversation based on continuous interest, openness, love in equality, and mutuality with understanding are needed for a child whose parents' values, thoughts, attitudes have an absolute influence for the child. Parental education and specific behavioral guidelines for basic understanding and constructive relationship formation of children should be presented, and traditional, directive, and unilateral educational methods should not be sublated. Parents need to maintain personal, caring and mutual relationship with children. Basic direction of parent-child relationship and communication need to be maintained in a post-conventional level, avoiding hierarchical and conventional manner which has retained in many Christian families in Korea.

1) The Recovery of Internal Health of Parents

When the negative energy and psychological scars of parents are expressed without filtration, mind and heart of their children will be imbued with all the negative effects and scars. It has been said that there are no problematic children without problematic parents. This signifies that healthy parents are the foundation for healthy children and unhealthy parents are the foundation for unhealthy children. In order to raise healthy children, parents need to be healed first with their wounds through educational, mental, and spiritual resources.

One of the major factors which hurt their own children is the inability of parent's dealing with negative emotion. The bitterness and negative emotion in the parents' heart can be projected onto their children, causing serious inner

wounds through comparison, discrimination, abuse, assault, and neglect. These inner wounds can cause a distortion of the child's image of God and Christian identity. In order to prevent this distortion, parents have to examine their inner psychological wounds and their wounds need to be healed. Just as parents' physical condition must be checked in order to give birth to a healthy child, parents' mental condition must be checked and restored to a healthy state.

According to Kim, Jung's process of individuation and human realization, and Christianity's restoration of the image of God (*Imago Dei*), are similar to psychology's human self-discovery and self-realization and spiritual discipline's restoration of self through unity with God. Moreover, because of its resemblance to the recovery of the image of God, Jung's theory of individuation is incorporated into the Christian model of spiritual disciplines to explain the parallels between spirituality and psychology by incorporating the Christian model of spiritual disciplines' goals of recovery of the image of God and unity with Christ with Jung's goal of self-actualization. He argues that individuation implies the restoration of the true self, which is the theologically complete human being, or the image of God (Kim, 2012, 17-24). So parents need a process of looking back and reflecting on their psychological inner side and a curriculum that heals in God's love.

2) Open and Clear Communication between Parents and Child

Transparent communication between parents and child is crucial above all else for raising healthy children. Communication is the key to a good relationship and a key element of smooth relationship. Without clear communication, good and healthy relationships cannot be expected. However, communication is never easy in a short period of time. It requires continuous efforts, training, mutual respect, and deep consideration (Dial, 1986; J. K. Lee, 2021, 45). Respect and consideration for children's characteristics and temperament are important for the communication between parents and child. Parents need to recognize that almost all children and adolescents are still immature and have various weak spots. Thus, parents have to be aware that they need to meet the level of their children based upon their readiness (J. H. Lee, 2018, 71-72). It is never desir-

able to have an attitude to fulfill one's wishes through cramming. For a better communication with children, parents should maintain relational postconventional manner based on mutual understanding.

3) Maturing of Parental Empathy

Gordon reiterates that speaking and listening are the most important channels of communication in the parent-child relationship(Gordon, 2000, 271). In the parabola of speaking and listening together, parents and children form an emotional connection. This empathy plays a key role in the relationship and communication between parents and child. For this kind of communication Palmer stresses the necessity of physical and emotional space. He presents the characteristics of empathic space as follows. Empathic space includes openness, mutual respect, and even the opportunity for silence(Palmer, 2018, 78). Training, skills, and strategies are also needed for empathy. However, for empathy between parents and children, deep trust, openness, and mutual respect for each other need to be premised.

4) Education of Tolerance and Hospitality

As a form of God, McFague states that it is also a responsibility because humans can choose to be God's surrogate and God's partners, only humans can take care of the world(McFague, 2006, 140-141). In order to render communication reciprocal and interpersonal, parents and child need to accept each other as they are. This mutual acceptance allows each person to open up to the other. When people accept themselves as they are and feel that they are accepted, they are enabled to empathize with one another(Lee, 2018, 68). The starting point for this mutual acceptance is a 'hospitable spirituality'. Hospitable spirituality includes not only open acceptance of the other's difference but also rejoice and celebrates the other's existence and uniqueness. This spirituality of hospitality relaxes and eases each other's minds and moods so that they can value each other. This spirituality of hospitality is important for children, who are very vulnerable and sensitive. Children are often psychologically and internally vulnerable and wounded because they are neither stable nor complete.

Various self-consciousness such as comparison, shame, and inferiority that arise in the process of development press their mind, making it difficult to maintain healthy relationship and smooth communication with their parents. As God's partner, parents can restore calmness and confidence of their children by expressing their joy and celebration for the existence of their children. This kind of hospitable spirituality represents God's unconditional love and acceptance of God's children. Based upon this unconditional love and acceptance, children will be provided with a significant opportunity in which they can formulate healthy image of God and eventually healthy Christian identity.

3. Postconventional Christian Child Education for the Formation of Healthy Christian Identity

1) Establishment of Christian Identification through Self-esteem

As we have seen through Rizuto, the image experienced in the relationship with parents gives the image of God, and this positive image not only gives self-esteem but also a healthy Christian self-identity. Therefore, it is important to restore self-esteem and relationship with God through healing wounds from parents. Lee and Kim emphasized that smooth communication between parents and children, improvement of the level of positive psychological capital, and stress relief should be supported in order to increase self-esteem(Lee & Kim, 2023, 2693). Additionally, Lee & Kim, et al. (2023) found that this study aimed at understanding the effects of parent child communication and positive psychological capital on self-esteem and the mediating effect of stress and showed that showed that children with good parent-child communication exhibited a high level of self-esteem. Thus, the restoration of relationships with parents leads to self-esteem and furthermore, the establishment of a healthy Christian self-identity is established.

Jung-kwan Lee emphasized, the Christian home is a place where God has given the educational responsibility of educating children in faith. The Christian home becomes a channel through which God's grace is trans-mitted from parents, and children grow spiritually through an organic relationship

with their parents. The family should be the center of the child's religious education and should be linked with church education(J. G. Lee, 2022, 38). In order to maintain this continuously, the role of teachers at home is considered important not only for church education but also for parents to become non-authoritative religious colleagues and share weaknesses.

2) Empathy Education toward Parent

It has been revealed by several researchers, starting with Rogers(1957) that empathy is a key and decisive condition for effective interpersonal relationships. Empathy is the ability to think from the other person's point of view, enabling individuals to understand and help each other in relationships. It encompasses cognitive empathy, which involves taking a perspective, recognizing the other person's feelings or motives, and imagining, as well as emotional infections that experience the same emotions as the other person, emotional sharing, and emotional empathy. The latter does not coincide with the other person's emotions, but refers to an emotional response to the other person's situation, or becoming conscious of other people's feelings and thoughts. Furthermore, empathy includes the communication of understanding and experiencing the other person's feelings and thoughts that is, communicative empathy. Empathy involves translocating yourself to the thoughts and feelings of others. It uses oneself to reflect and share the feelings and desires of an individual. It is the ability to understand the feelings of the subject of empathy and to communicate with the other person(Kwon & Choi, 2015, 184-185).

In fact, most children receive sympathy from their parents, but from their point of view, the door of their heart is often closed due to comparisons, criticism, excessive challenges, and injuries they have received. However, from a parent's point of view, it can be seen that it is often caused by excessive love and an earnest desire for their children. Parents generally have a strong hidden love for their children, so if their children think about it, they can empathize and further reach the position of forgiveness. Therefore, Christian education and training for empathy can lead to forgiveness and the restoration of relationships through healing.

3) Postconventional Communication with Parent

As a result of a study on the effect of subjective happiness perceived by children on empathy ability, focusing on the mediating effect of parent-child communication by Lee & Bae, it was found that parent-child communication shows the effect of adolescents' subjective happiness on empathy ability. When parent-child communication is high, adolescents' subjective happiness increases the positive(+) effect on empathy ability. This shows that subjective happiness increases parent-child communication, and when parent-child communication is high, it has a positive(+) influence relationship in the influence relationship between subjective happiness and empathy ability(Lee & Bae, 2022, 2984).

However, in modern society, many children are accustomed to direct and authoritative communication with their parents, so they are often suppressed without expressing their thoughts, concerns, and wounds on academic, career, companionship, or general issues. Because restoring relationships with parents is important for smooth communication, paradoxically, children should not fear or avoid dialogue with their parents, but rather make efforts to express their feelings and pains, share thoughts, and engage in postconventional communication with parents. In other words, it is necessary to prepare and implement measures to educate parents to ensure relational, equal, and open communication between parents and children, and to strengthen the psychology of positivity.

VI. Conclusion

This study analyzes how experiences in the parent-child relationship affect the formation of God's image and how they affect the development of healthy Christian identity. Rizzuto, as well as Freud and Erikson inquired how the image of parents that children acquire through the communication and relationship with their parents from infancy onward affect the image of God, the basis and foundation of their lives. The negative experiences such as oppression, severe punishment, outrage that the child receives from their parents leave vari-

ous psychological scars in mind and heart of the child. In order to prevent these psychological wounds from causing serious problems in children's faith and Christian identity formation, parents' awareness and sincere endeavor to make a meaningful change is required. To sum it up, parents need to recognize and change their traditional ways of communicating with and disciplining of their children. To this end, this study suggested the followings for concrete implementation: the recovery of internal health of parents, open and clear communication between parents and child, maturing of parental empathy, training of tolerance and hospitality. It is also important for children to establish a healthy Christian self-identity by overcoming the wounds they have received from their parents and restoring their self-esteem. Learning how to empathize, understand and forgive by putting themselves in their parents' shoes, and establishing a good relationship with their parents by repairing the wounds through postconventional communication is essential.

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