

EXPERIMENTING TOGETHER:
ONE WAY OF DOING
CHILD THEOLOGY
by Haddon Willmer



Child Theology Movement

Jesus placed a little child among them.....

Mark 9:36

Key Topics in Child Theology

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- 1 An Introduction to Child Theology Keith White and Haddon Willmer
- 2 Experimenting Together: One Way of Doing Child Theology Haddon Willmer
- 3 Child Theology *for* the Churches in Asia: an invitation Sunny Tan

Other titles to follow

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MOVEMENT

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Preface

This booklet is the second in a series explaining the idea and the process of Child Theology as it has been developed since 2001 in the Child Theology Movement.

The first booklet introduced the idea and this one shows how Child Theology has been shared and facilitated in consultations around the world by a particular kind of experiment. A third is planned to present it in an Asian form and context.

As with all Child Theology activity, these experiments are designed to be accessible to Christians who work with children and to theologians. It is hoped that readers from across this wide range will find this booklet useful. This booklet is my own interpretation of these experiments. I want to communicate both my enthusiasm and my continuing questions about the method and its outcomes. It is good that there will be other interpretations of what has already been done and new ways of carrying on experiments in future. This booklet is not a final account, or a prescription but an invitation.

I could not have written it without the inspiration of companions in the Child Theology Movement. Close associates, like Keith White, John Collier, Marcia Bunge have been a great help, especially in the final preparation of this text. There are many others who, by their participation in consultations, helped to make the experiments such powerful learning experiences (even when in some measure they failed). I am also grateful to Nick Taylor who refined the Child Theology Quadrilateral diagram.

Haddon Willmer

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Introduction

In this booklet I try to show what Child Theology is and what its worth might be by explaining one way in which mixed groups have worked together at Child Theology. I am describing my own experience with Child Theology not as a movement from incompetence to mature mastery, not as one who has gone far on the dangerous road from being a listener to being a teacher but as one who is forever starting again at the beginning.

Though this booklet begins with some general remarks about Child Theology, they are merely the lead-in to a critical description of one *way of doing* Child Theology in groups. I hope it will become clear that this way can be followed by those who do not yet see what Child Theology is and even by those who are sceptical about whether or not there can be such an odd creature.

The content of Child Theology, what it ‘says’ may become clear along the way, though there are various kinds of clarity. Saul on the road to Damascus was illumined by a blinding light and had to spend some years in Arabia before he could say what it meant (Gal1:17).

Child in Theology

Jesus took a child and set him or her in the midst of the disciples who were mangling a theological question (Matt.18:1-5). Jesus gave them the child as a clue to the nature of the Kingdom of God and the way into it. And when Jesus is believed to be the incarnate Lord, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, the significance of what Jesus did in centring the child is heightened.

In Jesus Christ, God speaks for God-self, in his own Word: God speaks in his own voice and is not just spoken about. As can be seen in the Gospels, Jesus, the Word of God, used many human words, many components of human experience, in order to speak about, from, for and with God. In the world of creatures, available for the service of God, is the child. So Jesus took a child.