



CHILD THEOLOGY FOR THE CHURCHES IN ASIA: AN INVITATION

by Sunny Tan



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 <i>for</i> the Churches in Asia: an invitation | Sunny Tan |

Other titles to follow



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Preface

This booklet is third in the series introducing Child Theology to the Church worldwide. The first booklet, *Introduction to Child Theology* by Keith White and Haddon Willmer, provides an overview on the beginning, a working definition, the implications, and possibilities of Child Theology. The second booklet, *A Child Theology Experiment* by Haddon Willmer, explains how Child Theology is “one way of doing theology.” This third booklet is another introduction to Child Theology but from another angle. It is especially written for church pastors and leaders in Asia. They are invited to investigate the potential of Child Theology for their churches.

Child Theology is not about doing children’s ministry and it is not about making a church less adult-centered but it does call for a fresh way of viewing children. It calls for the recognition of “children-as-agent” from the perspective of Jesus. When children are embraced as such, there will be positive changes in the way how Christians think and speak about God, practice Church, and do Missions.

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Introduction

When the term “Child Theology” is mentioned, most listeners immediately think of children. Some hear the term as referring to a theology of/by children. Child Theology has to do with children but it is first of all “Theology” proper - that is, the field of study with G-O-D as the main subject. Child Theology is an aspect of Christian Theology and seeks to contribute towards Christian thinking and speaking on God and His ways. As Theology, it is also about a way of doing theology and recommends approaches to theological reflection.

Approaches in which children play a key role are inspired by Jesus’ action of placing a child in the midst of a theological discourse (Mt. 18:1-5). The child, though not acting or speaking, was a contributor to the disciples’ experience of being confronted with their wrong concept of God’s Kingdom.

Here lies the distinctiveness of Child Theology: it is in the employment of what could be labeled “the child-in-the-midst” method of theological reflection. There is no doubt that theologizing is an adult task but children too can make a contribution by being themselves and when they are purposefully placed in a theological context. Child Theology’s first task, therefore, is corrective in nature: to revisit theologies and practices which did *not* include children in their formulation process¹. The corrective process also promises to bring fresh insights for Christian Theology and Practice.

¹The topic of children is not totally absent in Christian theologizing for the last 2000 years but children did not impact the process. For a survey, see Marcia J. Bunge, ed. *The Child in Christian Thought* (Eerdmans, 2001).