

This Advent newsletter of the Child Theology Movement comes on behalf of the directors of CTM with very best wishes to all who are connected with and through this young, growing movement. We trust that you experience the joy of Christ at Christmas, and His presence and peace in 2014.

Events

There have been two major conferences in which CTM has been a convenor or co-convenor in 2013, the first in Romania in September, and the second in Addis Ababa in November.

Re-Imagining the Seminary: International Conference on Theological Education Leadership 11–14 September 2013 Bucharest, Romania

This conference was designed to offer a platform for reflection and discussion among and in between theological educators, as well as Christian leaders, on the purpose, task and method of theological seminaries, as they face new social, political, economic and ecclesial realities. The Pentecostal Theological Institute from Bucharest, Romania and Evangelical Theological Seminary from Osijek, Croatia, in partnership with the Child Theology Movement, took the initiative to bring together some 60 participants (theologians, seminary deans and presidents, and practitioner-theologians representing various theological institutions and Christian ministries from Eastern and Central Europe, and Russia) for a three-days consultation on issues relating to the future of theological seminaries and theological education in post-communist Europe.

It was an historic event. Among the issues addressed were: seminary leadership models; educational strategies; and theological methodology. They were explored in full awareness of the specifics of the contexts of ministry in which the participants serve, while also having the nature and values of the Kingdom of God as expressed by Jesus' symbolic gesture of placing a child in the midst of a theological argument on leadership in the Kingdom (Mathew 18) as its central theological motif and motivator.

The participants in the conference felt that the event was beneficial to them as it provided an opportunity to:

- reflect on, discuss, and imagine, new ways of following and embodying the values of the Kingdom of God while living in the kingdoms of this world,
- rethink the nature of Christian leadership from the perspective of the Kingdom of God as opposed to models following paradigms available in the contemporary predominant culture,
- take stock of how Christian seminaries in Eastern Europe have developed since 1990 in relation to church and mission in society,
- ask what seminaries are called to become and what they are to make of themselves,

- reimagine the seminary by reconsidering the content and methods of teaching and learning.

The report concludes with the following recommendations to the seminaries represented in the conference, to theologians and theological educators, and to Christian leaders in general:

- Create and maintain channels of dialogue between seminaries, other Christian institutions and ministries and the Church these serve.
- Create and maintain communication channels between participating institutions for the purpose of raising the awareness of achievements and dilemmas, for sharing experiences and promoting cooperation.
- Find ways to promote role models and good practice in theological education informed by motifs explored throughout the conference: kingdoms and repentance; leadership and humility; hope and faithfulness.
- Devise strategies to aid the continuation of the dialogue and reflection initiated during the conference. These should include a self-evaluation template to help assessment of seminaries and of individual practice, and a six-months-later follow-up to find out directions of reflection and changes that are direct consequences of participation in the conference.
- Disseminate the ideas discussed and the findings of the conference for the wider audience. In particular, besides this initial report, the contributions given in the conference and responses to, and reflections on, these should be collected and published in a volume that can be made available to seminaries and theological educators world-wide.

A report of the conference (Link on CTM website/Events) was prepared in time, specifically so that it could be shared with the second conference, held just two months later in Ethiopia.

Child Theology in Africa: New paradigms for African seminaries with the child placed by Jesus, 11th to 15th November 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This conference was the third convened by CTM in Africa, the first being in Cape Town (February 2004), and the second in Addis (November 2006). The co-convenor and host was the Child Development Training and Research Centre.

Fifty theologians and church leaders came together from Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone nations across Africa. The primary aim was to introduce them to some of the emerging theological questions and thinking in the field of Child Theology in the African context, with a view to developing a process of theological reflection focussed on them. So it was that those who gathered reflected on, discussed, and imagined new ways of following their Lord and Saviour, and embodying the values of the Kingdom of God, in light of Jesus' gesture in placing a child in the midst of a theological argument (Mathew 18).

By the end a steering group, chaired by Victor Nakah, was charged with finding ways of developing and supporting a community of scholars in African seminaries and

churches, that is connected to the emerging worldwide community exploring Child Theology.

John Collier, the conference coordinator, kindly agreed to write a full report of the event, and this will be added to the growing list of CTM publications, produced in hard copy, and also available in electronic form.

During the conference a number of publications were made available to the participants, including all four of the CTM booklet series so far; the reports of the two previous consultations held in Africa; *Entry Point*; *Introducing Child Theology*; *Now and Next*; and *Saved by the Lion?*

As Child Theology develops worldwide groups that seek to study it are discovering an increasing amount of relevant material becoming available.

CTM Publications

CTM Booklet No. 4: *Child Theology and the African Context* by Jan Grobbelaar

This is the most extended of the booklets produced so far, and was timely in that a copy was given to each participant in Addis. It complements the earlier booklet by Sunny Tan, *Child Theology for the Churches in Asia: an Invitation*.

The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience: Exploring the Vision of James E. Loder Jr

This collection of papers from a Conference Convened by the Child Theology Movement at Princeton Theological Seminary, 10th–14th March, 2012, is due to be published early in 2014 by Pickwick Publications, a division of Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Contributors include: Elizabeth W. Barnett; Jerome W. Berryman; Mark Koonz; Thomas J Hastings; Ajit A. Prasad; Wendy H. Sanders; Lauren Sempsrott; Keith J. White; Haddon Willmer; Dana R. Wright.

Future Conferences and Consultations

Some years ago the directors of CTM identified Africa, Asia, and Latin America as the three regions of the world on which it would focus its strategic development. Given the number of conferences and consultations it has convened in South and South-East Asia, and Africa, it is now seeking to gather together theologians in Latin America in 2014. Those engaged with the CT network are therefore invited to contact us with comments, suggestions and recommendations for the third CTM event in Latin America.

CTM Website

Now that the site has been completely redesigned and simplified, we invited feedback and suggestions on how to improve it. There are over 300 subscribers to the Facebook page, and regular Twitter feeds.

Research in Child Theology-Related Areas

The work of the three doctoral postgraduates that we are aware of at the moment, Beth Barnett, Stuart Christine and D. J. Konz, continues, and there are a number of others at an early stage. We hope to be able to connect these to appropriate supervisors committed to research in Child Theology.

Directors

There were two meetings of the directors of CTM in 2013, one by Skype on 29th April 2013 when D.J. Konz joined the board, and the second a meeting of the four directors currently living or working in the UK, held in London on 30th September 2013. The charity exists to facilitate a theological movement. It is a response and act of obedience to Jesus' revolutionary action of placing a child in the midst of a key theological discussion (Matthew 18). The intention is to reform all theological reflection and enquiry 'with a child in the midst' and to ensure that theology of this kind informs every aspect of the church's life and mission, including that which relates to children.

CTM Publication Depots

We are pleased to say that CTM continues to extend the number of depots of CTM publications around the world. These include: Malaysia, South Africa, Kampala, Canada, India, Australia, Romania and the UK. Further details are available via the CTM website. Our policy will always be to make as much material as possible available for download free. The first port of call for anyone seeking a CTM publication is to contact Caroline Harrison at millgrove@btinternet.com.

Child Theology Related Publications

Faith and Thought, April 2013 No 54, the journal of The Victoria Institute, contains three papers originally given at the 2012 London conference, *Children's Spirituality meets Christian Theology*. These are:

Keith J. White *Children's Spirituality and Christian Theology*, (pages 3-12);

John Pridmore "I was once alive apart from the law" (pages 13-19);

Haddon Willmer *Ant and Sparrow in Child Theology* (pages 20-32).

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Entry Point: Toward Child Theology with Matthew 18 by Haddon Willmer and Keith J. White was published by WTL Publications in November 2013. It is available through Amazon, and will shortly be available on Kindle.

The Bible and Christian Ethics (ed. D.E. Singh and B.C. Farr) Regnum 2013 contains the following two papers:

Keith J. White *Insights into Child Theology through the Life and Work of Pandita Ramabai* (pages 157-167);
Adrian Thatcher *Towards a Theology of Childhood* (pages 168-178)

Child, Theology and Mission. Work on this book in the Regnum series commissioned following the Edinburgh 2010 conference on World Mission continues and the volume is now anticipated in 2014. The co-editors are Bill Prevette, Rosalee Velloso Ewell, and Keith J. White.

A Call for Information and News

Please do let us know if you would like to share news, information, publications, with the community connected by CTM.

In Christ,

Keith J. White
Chair of CTM
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Database

This newsletter has been sent to you because CTM has your electronic contact details on its database. If for any reason you do not wish to receive further newsletters please let us know. And if there are others known to you whom you feel should be included in the process, do encourage them to contact CTM via the website.