

Hans Ferdinand Bürki's Public Engagement in Africa and Asia, on the Mystery of Human Sexual Maturity

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ABSTRACT

Hans Bürki made scores of visits to Africa and Asia in the 1970s and 80s, and Christian maturity was the topic he engaged in “Maturity Courses” with students and graduates in the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. A characteristic of these courses was Bürki’s circulation of his treatise, “Towards Human Sexual Maturity: A Ten Point Manifesto”, and his inimitably Socratic invitation to students to dialogue with it. This literary analysis introduces Bürki’s contextual, theological anthropology in “A Ten Point Manifesto”. Bürki’s theology of human identity is expounded for its biblical and interdisciplinary strengths, its relevance to his 1970s context, and its eschatological challenge to Christians to be a germinal of transformation. Third, Bürki’s theological anthropology is offered in a stark context where spiralling violence against women compromises the sustainability of South African society, as an enduring proof text for the Church, to liberate gender relations for prophetic witness, in the Spirit of Christ.

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Psalm 36:9

Let the Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come’ [...] Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. Revelation 22:17

Introduction

“Towards Human Sexual Maturity: A Ten Point Manifesto” is a pamphlet little known in the contemporary Evangelical world. It was written in the late 1970s by Swiss theologian, psychologist and student evangelist, Hans Bürki. Bürki’s theological anthropology in this pamphlet, mimeographed for distribution to African and Asian students during the 1970s during his travels as Associate General Secretary at Large for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), is the subject of the discussion to follow. During Bürki’s South African visits, Christian maturity was the topic he most often addressed at “Maturity Courses”

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