

## Preface: *To My English Readers*

To the English German professors are—not altogether unjustly—reputed to require dreadfully long and dreadfully theoretical introductions before they finally get to the point. This can be somewhat irritating to persons of a more practical temper. Some years ago when I was a visiting professor in the United States I illustrated for my students this rather unattractive habit of my profession, and sometimes of mine, with this little anecdote. When a German professor delivers a lecture on the kangaroo the first paragraph (and we are lucky if he ever gets to the second one) is likely to begin: “Prolegomena to some introductory considerations of the question whether and to what extent the kangaroo belongs to the category of mammals.” A more pragmatic-minded American, I said, would be more inclined to begin at once with the question: “Can the kangaroo carry passengers?”

Well, no man can entirely shed his nature; nor should he even wish to do so! And certainly in this book the German professor is by no means completely concealed. For here the sexuality of man is dealt with in the broad context of Christian anthropology, in the light of the doctrine of creation and redemption, of fellow humanity and the orders. And in order to familiarize the reader with this approach, the introductory section begins at once with a rather theoretical treatment of basic principles.

The historical aspects of the subject also recur frequently, since one cannot understand the extraordinary changes which have taken place in man's views of sexual ethics unless one sees them in the

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context of the changed view of man and his understanding of reality. Insights which have long since become familiar to us through the hermeneutical study of the biblical texts we must now learn to apply in the realm of ethics.

I therefore cannot promise the reader that I shall relieve him entirely of some very fundamental consideration of basic principles. On the other hand, I may perhaps also say that if he is willing to go through this part of the book, he will also be confronted with the whole range of very concrete problems of sex. I believe I can say that I have not wished to evade dealing with any aspect of the subject, however ticklish it may be. One need only to examine the subjects dealt with in part IV, "Borderline Situations," to assure oneself that even the most touchy problems, which are often passed over in silence in Christian ethics, are here discussed *in extenso*.

The reason why, despite the above qualifications, this discussion of the ethics of sex is on the whole treated in a very concrete way is explained by the fact that the theological foundations for it have been laid elsewhere. In other words, this book constitutes a chapter in a comprehensive system of "theological ethics," which is now complete in four volumes. The first part of the larger work, to be published in the near future in an English version by the Fortress Press of Philadelphia, is being translated and edited by Professors William H. Lazareth and Geoffrey W. Bromiley. I may suggest that theological readers of *The Ethics of Sex* consult this English edition if they wish to know the framework of thinking in which this anthropology of the sexes is incorporated.

The circumstance which prompted the removal of the ethics of sex from the whole and its separate publication was that I delivered the substance of it in a series of lectures at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago in the fall of 1963. In this connection the presentation was so framed as to constitute a complete whole and also in terms that would be intelligible to medical men, jurists, and all educated persons who are concerned with the problems of sex.

Again I wish to extend my cordial thanks to my friend and translator, John W. Doberstein, for placing his sovereign skill as a translator at the disposal of this work. If my books have hitherto met with

a lively response in the United States, I am well aware that I owe this above all to him and that English readers will find in me an author who has been elevated beyond himself by the translator.

HELMUT THIELICKE

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