

**The Christian Concept
Of
Man/Woman Relationship**

**A lecture given by the late Professor Verhovskoy and the
Correspondence between Mr. Lopuchin, a social worker, and
Professor Verhovskoy**

Preface:

Professor Verhovskoy discussed the topic which has, unfortunately, been avoided by Orthodox clergy and parents from 1950's until today.

The present environment, in which our children are being taught in the school systems, from kindergarten through university, embraces and endorses sensuality and immorality as good and normal. As parents and grandparents we have observed this change taking place and we have, too often, stood by silently and allowed our children's minds to be contaminated with the removal of moral and ethical values from our schools. St. Paul foresaw that which is happening before our very eyes: *Be not deceived; evil conversations corrupt good habits* (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Look at what is being taught as good and normal:

- Fornication is encouraged among students by passing out condoms in the schools.
- Abortion is taught as a valid solution for pregnancy, whether single or married, and morally good because the law says it is legal.
- Homosexuality and lesbianism are not considered immoral; instead children in grade school are forced to learn about "Jane, who has two mothers or two fathers": to oppose such teaching one is branded as being intolerant or homophobic.
- Universities have led the way in removing morality from their campuses by having co-ed dormitories where equality is praised because the young men and women can share the same rooms and bathrooms
- The effort by the abortionists and homosexuals is to remove words such as moral, immoral, perversion, and sin from our vocabulary because they see their beliefs and values as good for all. Therefore, to say that fornication, adultery or sodomy is immoral and bad for family and society is an offense to them and we *must* quietly acquiesce and accept their values as good and normal. In essence they want us to say that evil is good and good is evil.
- To a great extent these groups have been successful: one example of how this has been accomplished. Homosexuals and lesbians are now called 'gays' and the news media has accepted this for you will not hear described, either on the radio or television, a gathering of homosexuals or lesbians, instead it is always referred to as 'gays' who are marching or protesting. Why is that? They know the American public reacts differently when a homosexual is called a homosexual rather than being called 'gay'.

What can we do to change this culture that has taken over? This is not the purpose of this article but I offer just a couple of suggestions:

- a) Parents become involved in the grade schools and high schools and know what is being taught to your children and come forward and demand a change: it is your money that pays for the schools.
- b) Stop sending your children to the universities and colleges where they will be corrupted and destroyed. You are paying the bills so you have the power of the purse strings and can demand that moral standards be established on the campuses, if not do not send your child to that school.
- c) Orthodox clergy need to step forward and speak out against immorality and stand for purity and virginity; in essence, stand for an Orthodox way of life. For an Orthodox Christian there are two paths to follow: remain single and a virgin or find a husband or wife and marry.
- d) I say Orthodox clergy because those heterodox clergymen who support immorality have

nothing in common with the teachings of the Orthodox Church. How they can call themselves 'Christian' is beyond my understanding.

- e) Christ said, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's* (Matthew 22:21). Just because a law is passed legalizing abortion or recognizing homosexual marriage — in essence supporting a hedonistic way of life — does not mean we have to obey such laws. Professor Verhovskoy said: “But you can, young people, stand up for your beliefs and say flatly and clearly: “I don't go this way! You can organize your parties, go into the woods, or bushes, or in the cars, but I will not do this. If you want to be pigs, then be pigs, it's a free country, but I think it's piggish and I will not go this way.” God has created us free to follow His commandments as given to us through Jesus Christ, God-Man. This means to live in purity and virginity and keep the marriage bed chaste. Remember there are consequences for our actions — eternal life or eternal damnation.

Parents, may this brief paper force you to learn what is being taught to your children and encourage you to come forward and defend your children from being corrupted spiritually and physically. More importantly, parents must lead their children into living a virtuous life by their own example.

Father John Fleser
Parish Priest

Man-Woman Relations

Introduction

The lecture delivered by Professor S. Verhovskoy at a church school teachers' Conference in the summer of 1964 and the response it provoked marks quite a milestone in the development of our Church consciousness. It is a first attempt over a long period of time to face squarely the problem of man-woman relationships from an Orthodox Christian point of view in terms of here and today. Our theologians, priests and educators, have long been silent on this aspect of human relations and personal growth, and yet it permeates our society and our culture and is discussed daily by all kinds of authorities and our young people are so deeply involved in it.

As any first attempt it does not exhaust the subject and does not answer all the questions. The dialogue provoked by Prof. Verhovskoy shows clearly that there is a great need for better semantics, for a clearer understanding of just what meaning is injected into the words we use.

Let us hope that this booklet will prove to be a starting point for honest, sincere, realistic thinking, enlightened by our Orthodox Christian vision of life. This kind of thinking will help us to embody a truly Christian way of life, growth and relationships, to which we could then introduce our young people.

Sophie Koulomzin

The Christian Concept of Man-Woman Relations

Transcribed from a tape-recording of the lecture given by Professor. S. Verhovskoy at the Church School Conference at Douglass College, New Brunswick, N.J, organized by the Russian Orthodox Metropolia Religious Education Department. Prof. Verhovskoy teaches Dogmatics and Moral Theology at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

My subject for today is so vast and so much can be said about it that I will take up only a few of its aspects which I think are most important.

My first point is that according to Christian dogmatics there is a basic, essential identity between man and woman. Men and women are not two different species of human beings. This self-evident idea that all Christians, be they men or women, are first of all human beings—are first of all Christians—is a very important one. It is especially so now, when we are faced by a paradoxical contradiction inherent to our twentieth century: on the one hand there is a very clear tendency to identify the two sexes, to proclaim their equality of rights, etc. and on the other hand there is almost a kind of obsession by the theme of sexuality. I believe that rarely in the history of mankind was concern with sexuality as great, and as intense, as it is now penetrating all aspects of life. It would be well for all of us to remember that the most important thing for us is to be a human being, to be a Christian, and that everything else is secondary.

The same principle must be applied to human relations. If, when two persons meet, a man is so absorbed with the fact that he is dealing with a woman, or, if a woman is only concerned with the fact that she is dealing with a man—then the situation becomes an abnormal one. When two human beings meet, the fact that one of them is a man and the other a woman is still a secondary factor, the primary one being that it is a meeting of two human beings. Everyone knows that we do not have two religions, one for men, and one for women, we do not have different churches for men and women, and we do not even

have two different moral codes for men and women. You have all probably studied in your catechism the famous text of St. Paul, where he says that in Christ Jesus there is no male or female, but that we are all one in Him. Our first Christian concern is to be in Christ—not the development of our personality in a specifically sex-determined way, as male or female. Yet we must face the fact, that each human being is also either a male or a female. We cannot disregard this fact and we must speak about the very real problems involved in this dual nature of human personality. Even if the difference of sexes is secondary in its nature, it is still a very important difference.

We cannot describe the difference between men and women without reverting to quite well-known and obvious typology. What I have to say may sound like a generalization and probably would apply to not more than two-thirds of cases, for there are men who are somewhat womanly and there are women who are somewhat manly in their character. Yet I feel that it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of certain general characteristics that are usually ascribed to the psychological type of Man and Woman.

If we try to define the specifically manly nature of man, we have to say that to him belongs, in principle, the quality of courage. Being manly is synonymous with being courageous, and a man who is not courageous is not respected. In olden days a man who was not courageous was not considered to be a man, and though standards have changed, a man is still generally expected to be courageous; there still must be a hint of the "soldier" in man. He has to be ready to risk his life, to sacrifice himself for the sake of his duty or his ideals. He must not be afraid, not only in the physical sense, but also morally; he must not shy away from any responsibility. A man, in general, is supposed to be a born leader. This is why we believe that it is the man's role to be the head of the family, and unless the man possessed these qualities, there would be no reason to give him this position. A man should have a sense of responsibility, a capacity to show initiative. He must also be creative and energetic in his work, whatever it may be. Together with these psychological traits, which are supposed to be natural to man, there is a certain rationality which is inherent to male thinking and enables him to grasp the nature of any situation, to be a leader, and at the same time to work and to be creative.

As far as a woman is concerned, again in this realm of generalities, she is supposed to be a follower, a helper. She co-operates, she assumes the position of a "second" one. This statement will probably seem offensive to many young women, so that I'd better clarify the concept of "helping" or "being second." It is very typical for the mentality of both men and women to feel that "helping" and "being second" is somehow humiliating. Our pride suffers. But in the Gospel you read that Our Lord Jesus Christ was never ashamed to say and to proclaim that He is *second* that He is not fulfilling His will, but the will of Another—of His Father, and that He is not preaching His truth, but the truth of His Father. We may not like the idea of submissiveness and "secondness," but it is really a great one, because how can we dare to say that there is something humiliating or degrading about being second, or following, or being obedient, or fulfilling the initiative of another one, if such was the meaning of the life, and work and death of Christ himself? We must overcome the false pride which causes us to feel humiliated or degraded if we are not the "first." Our Church solemnly proclaims an absolute identity, not only in nature, but also in value, of God the Son and God the Father; being "second" does not mean to be "lower." The "secondness" of woman does not mean that she is "less" in value, in nature, or in importance. Women, in their

womanhood, in their character as women, are as important, as absolutely necessary in the totality and fullness of life as men, although, from the spectacular point of view, the privilege of leadership, of activity, of mental ability puts them into a more prominent position. Although a woman's rationality is often less well developed than a man's, she possesses a wisdom, a living wisdom, an understanding of life all her own. I think that in personal relations women understand life and other human beings better than do men. This wisdom, this intuition may also be the reason of the very important fact that, generally speaking, women are more religious than men. They understand better the living power of religion. A man either accepts religion intellectually—and then he becomes a leader, a priest, a theologian—or he is indifferent. A woman knows in her very being that religion is necessary for her life, and not only for *her* life, but for the life of the world in general. Religion has a vital power and meaning which she truly understands. Even if my explanation is inadequate, the fact remains, and gatherings such as the present one illustrate it; for ten women present, there is one man. Women are more interested in the active participation in church life than are men. It seems to me that such restrictions as we have in our church life in the United States, where women cannot be members of church councils, are simply harmful, for women would probably take much better care of the parishes and would better cooperate with the priests than our ambitious and rebellious men. Women would be better precisely because they would be wiser, they would not rationalize about their rights, but would do the work being moved by their hearts and by their faith. I hope that such prejudices will be eliminated soon and that women will be able to take a more active part in our church conventions.

It is generally recognized that women are more emotional and more uninhibited emotionally. A man is afraid of being emotional; it's too risky for him. An average woman is also more moral and more pure than a man. If you check any kind of statistics of criminality, in any country of the world, you will find this fact confirmed. There are many more men in prison than women. As far as sexual behavior is concerned again, men are more corrupt than women. Without going into the problem too deeply, it seems to me that women, by nature and God-given instinct are more fastidious, more disposed to purity and morality than men. Woman is concerned to avoid transgression of law—not from a legalistic point of view, but to avoid soiling herself, not to become involved with all the tragedies of evil which are so typical of our fallen world. To all this we must add a typical womanly trait, which I hope will remain their prerogative forever—kindness. The day when women would cease to be kind would be a tragic day in the history of the world.

The somewhat conventional contrast between men and women expresses itself in their typical attitude to truth and justice. The male point of view is: this is black, and this is white; you did something wrong, you're guilty, and when you are guilty you have to suffer the consequences of your guilt, be punished. . . . But the woman says: Whether you are guilty or not, I still love you, I still am able and willing to help you, I still am able and willing to comfort you.

This attitude is the very essence of motherhood and is one of the most important aspects of our veneration of the Theotokos. I am always amazed at the way we petition and glorify the Mother of Our Lord, so intensely and deeply every time, at every service, and in every set of prayers. Yet, I don't think that many of us, and especially not many women, think of the Mother of the Lord as the ideal of womanhood, an embodiment of what anti-woman must be. But, the basic, essential characteristics of the Mother of Our Lord are her absolute kindness and her absolute purity. It is not an accident that such a woman was chosen

by God to be the Mother of His Son and this Virgin-Mother is glorified by the whole world as the most perfect human being after Jesus Christ. What is so perfect about her? Not the fact, in itself, that she is the Mother of Jesus Christ rather, we would have to ask, why was she chosen to become His Mother? She was chosen because she possessed absolute purity and absolute kindness—let us say simply—love. This is the eternal ideal of any woman and I believe that any woman is spontaneously attracted by this ideal, even if she does not know or think about the Theotokos. Any woman, who is not corrupt, will be attracted by the ideal of being a bearer of love and purity, of motherly concern for everybody, and at the same time an image of holiness.

One of the greatest functions of woman is to be the bearer of the ideal of purity, holiness, to exemplify them. Men may be dirty, but they must have someone, somewhere in their family, of whom they can say—“... here is the end of dirtiness, here is the end of corruption, here they are as in the church...” Every family must be a church, and can be a church, if only the wife, the mother, has this purity. There is nothing more terrible, more disastrous than a woman who is depraved, corrupt. A corrupt wife and mother is infinitely more destructive in the life of a family than a corrupt husband and father.

We can now take up the problem of what types of vocation men and women take up in the modern world. This is considered a vital problem of our day and our time and in which radical changes are necessary. I am often called conservative and backward, but I must say that I can see no reason why women should not do any kind of work they are capable of doing. From a Christian point of view, I can see no reason against opening the doors of almost all professions to women, i.e. equalizing opportunities and possibilities for both sexes. Yet it is interesting to note how the women's vocational orientation is guided by their own natural, "womanly" traits. I once read an article on the subject of women's preferences in the choice of professions which pointed out that women are attracted to those positions in which they are in personal contact with people, i.e. teaching, nursing, secretarial. In the Soviet Union the majority of general practitioners are women. I think here is a really spontaneous wisdom in this preference, for in these professions women can use at best their special capacities of wisdom, patience, kindness, concern for the person, understanding the problems of others, etc. Women seem to choose these fields, even though they are not forced to do so.

We now come to the problem of moral relationship between men and women.

I believe that there can be no better image of the relationships between the sexes than the one I found in the Epistle of Saint Paul. I purposely used the word "image," because the passage I refer to is in no way a rational explanation. Writing to his beloved disciple Timothy, Saint Paul advised him that a man should treat a woman who is older than himself as a mother, a younger one as a daughter, and a woman of the same age as himself as a sister. Likewise a woman has to treat a younger man as a son, an older man as a father and a man her own age as a brother. Let us examine this "brother-sister" relationship which is particularly relevant at this point. It is just an image, of course, but a meaningful one, which opens the real depth and specific character of the Christian idea of man-woman relations. On one hand a brother and a sister are really different. In any family where there are boys and girls, their mutual relations will reflect very clearly that the attitude of a boy, a brother, to his sister is very different from the attitude of the girl, to her brother. It shows that their sex is reflected in the psychology of their relationships, yet unless you are perverted you would never think of brother-sister relationships in terms of sexual relations, or falling in love with each other.

The Christian idea of “sister-brother” relationship does not ignore the difference of sex and yet it invites us to exclude from our man-woman relations any elements of sexuality. The idea of purity, inherent to the concept of brother-sister, or mother-son, or father-daughter relationship, is set as a Christian standard of a natural man-woman relationship. No other relations than these are admissible, or desirable, or normal from the point of view of the Church, except, in the relationship of marriage. Outside of marriage all sexual relations of any kind, all specifically sexual attitudes to each other are wrong in the eyes of the Church, and if pursued will lead to sin, or to put it more bluntly to fornication.

This brings us to a problem which is of very great concern to both the parents and the youth of America. What I will have to say will probably be unacceptable to many young people, and would be denied by approximately two-thirds of the intellectual leaders here in the United States. Quite different ideas are being imposed on us, consciously and systematically by psychologists, doctors, colleges, so-called specialists, through the media of books, magazines, conferences, advertisements, movies, etc. Basically the idea they present is: "Let's give sex a real place in life, and let its expression be as important to us, as dynamic, as any other human function, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, speaking, working." Though not all boys and girls will completely accept this, the idea is prevalent enough, is extremely influential and widely practiced in colleges and high schools. Promiscuity is lawful and desirable. Go ahead and do whatever you like, because this is life, this is nature, this is normal, this is what we are driven to by the very elements of our human nature. If I am a man, and someone else is a woman, then the consequence is clear. If you don't do this, you will be inhibited, frustrated. There will be some kind of flaw in your personality, and it will have a most disastrous effect on your development. You will deprive yourself of normal life, will become repressed, will suffer break-downs, complexes, and all sorts of psychological traumas.

What is the Christian reaction to this kind of thinking and teaching? Let me remind you again that from the Christian point of view there can be no sexuality outside of marriage. This is the law, the absolute rule and standard, and Christians cannot deviate from it even if they do not understand the reasons behind it. I shall try to explain however why these restrictions are imposed upon us.

The first positive assertion to be made is that sexual life is sacred. Sex was created by God with the highest, sacred purposes and our natural intuition supports this attitude. Normal, uncorrupted men and women have a feeling deep in their hearts, even though they might fight it sometimes, that there is something really sacred in sexual relations, the profanation of which is a major and specific sin. In some way fornication, and everything connected with it, is more profane, more degrading to a human being, than stealing, or assaulting someone, because there you come in touch with something which is the very basis, the foundation of your existence. St. John Chrysostom asks: "What is sex? It is the root of existence." And speaking as far back as his own times he says how terrible it is that this sacred root of our existence is covered by garbage. St. Paul said that if you had intercourse with a prostitute, you are a part of her, because when you unite sexually, you truly form a unity. Even if we think of sexual relations from a different point of view we must recognize them as a function having a sacred, existential, essential character. You cannot play with sex, because then you destroy a function of your being which has the highest purpose of existence and you really degrade and profane yourself, your companion and your life. From this point of view it is not unreasonable to say that if a young man really cares about a girl he will not want to be

promiscuous with her. You might say that these considerations have no more validity in the American way of life and experience, nevertheless it was so at one time, even if it is not so now. And I must say that I doubt very much that if a young man has serious feelings for a girl, his first reaction to her is a desire to be promiscuous. It is in some way implied in our natural psychology that, if one really loves a person, something more than just physical relation is involved.

Let us further develop the idea of the purpose for which sex was created. The Holy Scriptures state quite clearly that the purpose of sex is marriage and marriage alone, but that marriage is something much more than sexual relations. It is one of the most abominable degradations of the idea of marriage to say that it is simply a legitimate sexual relation. Read attentively the short passage about the creation of man and woman in the second and third chapters of Genesis. God looks at Adam and says: "*It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him a helpmeet for him.*" There is not a word about sexual relations, or about male and female relations. A woman is created to be a helper of man and she will help him to overcome his loneliness. The implication is very clear: men do not need women to overcome this famous "sexual drive," but because it is terrible to be alone, and a man needs someone who will forever and totally share his life. Totally—not just a sexual mate.

There are books in which marriage is described as a way to use each other's bodies. Their entire content is a terrible, dirty perversion of what marriage really is, because they present its main purpose as the best way to enjoy yourself in bed. From this point of view, if everything is centered in sexuality, what's the need for marriage, for a wife? Marriage brings certain financial and social and legal responsibilities. Why bother, when supposedly any girl will do? If one needs a wife, it is not for this purpose. Sexual enjoyment is included in marriage, but the main idea of marriage is this totality of relationship. In marriage a man and a woman are totally united into one new being—two persons, he and she, but one being, one life. Nothing is excluded from this unity.

The Church warns us not to use sexuality for the inferior purposes of mere animal enjoyment. Youth grabs at this physical pleasure, for the sake of its enjoyment, but has God created sex for such a very little thing as physical enjoyment, no more important than eating and drinking: Is there no difference between eating and drinking and sexual relations? Is it not rather the total love of two beings that is involved? If it is, total love, then unity of flesh is what is advised by God—"and these two will be one flesh." It is right that there should be unity of flesh, unity of souls, unity of life, unity in everything which we share in life.

There is a modern trend of thought that fornication is as simple as eating or drinking, but this is tragically untrue. Fornication is psychologically destructive, it carries within it the disintegration of human personality — particularly so in the case of women. Instinctively, almost unconsciously we recognize a "woman of light morals," by some expression in her face, her mannerisms. A person's inner life is affected too, the animal traits of nature become stronger, all respect for the relationship of sex is lost. A man and a woman who are promiscuous cannot resume a serious attitude to their relation. If they would marry, it would merely mean for them having a new lover, or gaining some material or social values, such as a home, prestige, etc., but they would lack the spontaneous readiness and capacity for an act of union with one person. This does not depend on one's good will and though one can fight the consequences, and probably the best way is repentance, one would still suffer from them.

In the Soviet Union in the twenties, the government preached a program of freedom in sexual relations: Do whatever you want. In the thirties they suddenly changed their policies and

they, communists without God and without any particular code of ethics, insisted on sexual morality. They were not interested in moral salvation, but they were interested in having sound workers, reliable, active people, who are capable of achievement. Just as a drunkard will not do a good job, so a fornicator will not be reliable. Fornication means corruption, corruption means decomposition, something which is introduced into your being and which destroys your soul, your personality, makes you incapable of being a sound and good man.

I have spoken on this subject many times throughout the United States, and very often the reaction is that it's too late, because a free attitude toward sex is already there. It is preached everywhere and nothing can be done about it. One day I asked the headmistress, of a Church school whether she knew what kind of parties are organized by the children of the upper grades of this high school. She said: "Yes, professor, I know." I then asked her whether it would not be possible to do something about it. She said: "No, professor. If I do something about it, the parents will take their children out of my school." And so these parties, and you all know what kind of parties I'm talking about, are considered, even by a religious leader as something which you cannot touch because of the risk involved. A few days ago I was speaking to another educator, a woman again, and her reaction was the same: "No, I cannot do anything about it, because they will take the students away from me." These parties seem to be something sacred. What does it mean? Is it sacred to leave youth to enjoy themselves in all kinds of unwholesome ways while the parents go out? The teachers do nothing about it, and the priests are silent! What an abomination! Who among our priests speaks seriously about dating and matters connected with it? They are afraid of being accused of being backward, or fanatical, or who knows what else. I do not believe that it is too late to do something. It is not too late, but first, the ones who are responsible for our society must realize that this is not a minor matter. We have to organize a crusade, with the priests and the parents in the first rows. We must not be cowards, but responsible Christian parents. The young generation itself can react to the evil. Believe me; it is not true that all American boys and girls are corrupted. There are many who do not enjoy this type of thing, who condemn it, but who are afraid of saying anything because they will be ridiculed. But you can, young people, stand up for your beliefs and say flatly and clearly: "I don't go this way! You can organize your parties, go into the woods, or bushes, or in the cars, but I will not do this. If you want to be pigs, then be pigs, it's a free country, but I think it's piggish and I will not go this way." You will then gain your own self-respect. People may mock you and refer to you as "saintly," but they will respect you too. I think it is time to begin a reverse movement, to say "enough of this business." Dating is the most stupid and poisonous institution that could have been invented. Who invented it? I don't know, but it has become a kind of plague in the United States. A boy and a girl scarcely know each other, but they "make a date," which means they will go somewhere, for a certain length of time, and the two of them will be alone. They do not know each other but already they have established a male-female relationship, artificially created. What happens then? One line that was quite popular about ten years ago began: Let's discuss something. What shall we discuss, philosophy? Theology? No, let's talk about sex. From here on it is evident what happens between a male and a female, alone in a dark movie, or in a car, incited by a conversation on sex. In other countries, when a boy and a girl see each other first, it is always in public. They will be part of a group, they may dance, or go for walks, or talk with one another. It is only when a personal relationship has been established; when a boy and a girl know each other's way of thinking, when they feel that they are interested in each other, that they begin to date. Dating,

under such circumstances, is the outcome of a good, wholesome relation between a girl and a boy. But in this country today boys and girls are too busy listing the number of dates they have in their notebooks — the more the better. This is cold fornication, ready-made and organized by modern tradition. I agree that it is difficult to ruin such a tradition, but it is possible, with the help of the Church, of the parents, of youth organizations. We must create possibilities for the young people to meet each other not in cars, not in movies and restaurants, not in the street, or under the porch, or in the bushes, but someplace where they can meet each other decently, in a friendly way. Let them be friends first, then lovers and not the other way round.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD FOLLOWING PROF. VERHOVSKOY'S LECTURE

Q. Do you think that we should blame the teenagers at this date? Don't you think that it is the sins of their fathers and mothers that are prevailing on them? You can't blame the kids, they don't know any better.

A. I agree with you that the parents are behaving terribly in their lack of sense of responsibility for their children. I am ashamed on behalf of the parents because they are negligent and corrupted themselves in this respect. But it would show a lack of respect for our boys and girls if we said that they can do only what is suggested to them or impressed upon them by their parents. They are almost grown-up, after all. This is a common responsibility.

Q. I would like to ask you a question concerning the period when boys and girls are beginning to get ready for marriage, for the selection of their mate. In our modern civilization this process is left to the initiative of the youngsters themselves, instead of having parents plan, as it used to be done in the past, for opportunities for suitable young persons to meet each other. Whatever old fashioned or strange form this process took, it was still a process of the adult society helping the young to select the proper mate; meetings are left to chance now and for a period of several years a girl, say from 16 on, is meeting every boy that circumstances bring in touch with her, with a kind of inner questioning: is he the boy? It is a very difficult period, and yet it is normal, and I wonder whether there are any guidelines that could be helpful at this period?

A. Your question is important but not difficult to answer. The very purpose of human relationships is to learn to know each other. Yet I am disturbed when you say that when a girl meets a boy, she immediately thinks of him as a potential husband. I think it is a degrading, "old maid" psychology, and a young girl can rise above it. As far as human relations are concerned, everything in this world has to start with friendship. Remember what I said: any man or any girl is first of all a human being, so first you have to learn to know it.

Where and how can they get acquainted? There must be family affairs, when people come together to visit with one another. Our youth organizations and clubs can provide the proper atmosphere for our young people to meet, to become friendly, to know each other. Gradually, in a larger group, smaller units of persons who have a lot in common with one another come together. Eventually this can lead to dating and in this way love will not come from the "brain" where a mate is rated as to his or her attributes, but will develop out of friendship and understanding.

Q. What is the attitude of our Church towards inter-racial marriage?

A. From a dogmatic and moral point of view there is absolutely no obstacle to inter-racial marriage. There is no question of considering unlawful or immoral the marriage of a Christian man or woman to a Christian man or woman of another race. (The whole northern part of Russia is nothing but a mixture of people of yellow and white skin). Though there are no obstacles from the dogmatic or moral point of view, an inter-racial marriage has to face, if the couple lives in this country, a great many difficulties of a psychological nature. They must know in advance that it will be difficult for them to find an apartment, that they will lose many friends, that people might break their windows, or spit at them. Therefore they have to be courageous and must be sure that it is worthwhile to take upon themselves such unpleasant consequences of their action.

Q. Why does our Church forbid women to hold any clerical office, or be consecrated? Protestants, for instance, allow women to hold positions of minister or deaconess.

A. I can only answer your question by repeating what I have said already. God did not create women for leadership. Because the leadership of a clergyman is the highest form of leadership, there is all the more reason to exclude women from this function. To this one can, of course, add all the practical difficulties which would arise out of a woman being a priest.

Q. In years past people led religious and moral lives and they were able to work out simple marriage contracts without all this emphasis on premarital relations and lovemaking. Please explain.

A. We must understand that pre-marital sex relations are simply inadmissible from the point of view of the Orthodox Church. If a man and a woman have found satisfaction in a merely physical union, why marry? They already have each other; there is no need to marry. But there is no sacred character to this union. If we really believe in the sacramental, mystical, sacred, moral, religious character of the union between man and woman, it will be clear to us that this union must first be blessed by God. Marriage is considered by our Church not as just a ceremony for beauty's sake, not as a social affair, but as an action of God who unites a wife and a husband.

There are cases, when there is not much mutual attraction or understanding in a marriage and it still works. The husband and wife grow to love each other after a time. Other "loveless" marriages sometimes work out when the husband and wife have a deep and moral understanding of their duties, when the husband really wants to be a good husband and the wife really wants to be a good wife. They will be conscientious in their family life, they will become a good couple,—not spontaneously, not because they are moved by love for each other, but because they are conscious of their duty.

More on "Man-woman Relationships"

by Michael Lopuchin, M.S.W.

This article is a very sincere and thoughtful critical comment from Mr. Michael Lopuchin who approaches the problem on "Man-Woman Relationship" from an entirely different point of view. Mr. Lopuchin is a social worker by profession, a graduate of the School of Social Work, Columbia University. We are publishing below his article, as well as Professor

Verhovskoy's reply to it and we hope that our readers will find this exchange stimulating to their own thinking on the subject.

In his article "The Christian Concept of Man-Woman Relationship" Professor Verhovskoy states that psychologists, doctors, colleges and "so-called specialists" impose on us today a dangerous idea of sex. Their attitude, he says, can be summed up as follows: "Let's give sex a real place in life, and let its expression be as important to us, as dynamic, as any other human function, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, working." By the "so-called specialist," Prof. Verhovskoy means, I believe, counselors, psychiatrists and social workers. I happen to belong to this profession and I fail to see why he thinks that the idea he ascribes to is so dangerous.

Fundamentally, it seems to me, there is no disagreement between the "experts" and Prof. Verhovskoy. The problem is mostly one of semantics. When Prof. Verhovskoy talks about the Orthodox Christian point of view on the subject, he uses the word "sex" as meaning love or "roots of existence." Yet, he has a preconceived idea of what the "specialists" mean, when they use the same word. He mistakenly feels that they identify sex with promiscuity and expect promiscuity to be as "dynamic as any other human function." When social scientists speak of sex, they mean "life energy." When they speak of "promiscuity" they mean an unnatural sex act. Prof. Verhovskoy seems to feel that it is the sex act itself, or its timing, which make it promiscuous. The Social Scientists believe that it is not the act itself, or the time at which it takes place that make it promiscuous, but rather the individual's state of mind, or his motivation engaging in sex act, that determines its character.

For instance, a young man, after a drinking bout, may have intercourse with a prostitute. Another young man may feel great intimate love for the girl he plans to marry, she reciprocates—they have established a human bond and do not wish to frustrate their mutual love for another month or so when the wedding is to take place. They have intercourse with the full understanding of the possible consequences of pregnancy, take necessary precautions. In the first instance, the sex act was both unnatural as well as sinful. In the second instance, the emotions were good, natural and the act was sinful only because it violated a Church-established rule. The first young man was motivated by feelings of anger, by a desire to reaffirm his own masculinity; it is an act of revenge, perhaps, an act of defiance of anything feminine. The second young man is motivated by mutual love, mutual concern, and an overwhelming desire for intimacy. From the man's point of view it is an act of respect for everything feminine, not the opposite.

A feeling of intense guilt may be experienced in both instances. However, there is a great difference in what these two people need in order for their guilt feeling not to become destructive in daily life. The guilt feeling of the first young man, stems not only from his conflict with known, open, explicit Church standards, but from a deep-seated conflict with his natural feelings as a man; it is basically motivated by an unconscious feeling of doubt about himself. He feels himself to be half-a-man, and makes a desperate attempt to restore the other half. As a result, after the act, he sees himself to be an even lesser man than before, because all which makes a sex act really meaningful—tenderness, compassion, and love, in the Christian sense of the word were absent from his experience. The guilt feeling of the second young man, stems from his sense of conflict, between the Church rules which were a part of the couple's moral code and their natural desire for intimacy. The couple feels that they are part of the church community, and by this act they have broken away from it. That part of them which identifies itself with the church wants to

return, yet the other, their human and natural part, feels there ought to be no guilt attached to the act. The act of confession fulfills an important role here because it is an act of forgiveness and restoration of the previous ties between the individual and the group. In the case of the first young man, however, confession will do little, if anything, to his well-being. At best, it will restore only that portion of self-confidence which he lost at the time of his sexual act with the prostitute. It may relieve him of the guilt he feels in connection with the act of seeking a prostitute and having "sex" with her. But it will do nothing for his deeper feelings, of which he probably is not even consciously aware. Even if someone points out to him the real motivation for his act, he will emphatically deny it. He can be helped only through lengthy psychotherapy by the "so-called expert," a psychiatrist. Just as the psychiatrist can do nothing to relieve the guilt of the couple, so the priest, without proper training, can do little to the man with deep-seated personality problems.

Prof. Verhovskoy accuses experts of trying to make everyone believe that "sex" is as dynamic as any other human function. I believe Prof. Verhovskoy contradicts himself in his own article. He states a little later that sexual life is sacred, "that it is created by God with the highest, sacred purposes" and quotes St. John Chrysostom saying that "It is the root of existence." It is regrettable that, when Prof. Verhovskoy speaks about the "so-called experts" he ascribes to them the use of the term "sex" in its promiscuous sense, but when he quotes St. John he removes the promiscuous connotation of the word. There is no disagreement between Prof. Verhovskoy and the experts, if he, for a minute, allowed himself to admit that when the experts use the word "sex" they mean it in terms of the life-giving, life-preserving energy of man. Freud was severely criticized by many precisely because of this semantic problem. He used any of the words sex, sexual energy, libido, love, erotic, interchangeably the most all-embracing term being "libido," or "life drive" in contrast to a "destructive drive" which all men have. In essence, Freud gave it the same meaning as St. John (with whose writings Freud, certainly was not familiar). Freud too made sex—or the life drive—the essence of all existence, and in his theories he sharply defined its healthy and unhealthy expressions. Promiscuity is an example of an unhealthy expression of such energy.

Psychologists would sharply disagree with Prof. Verhovskoy when he implies that sex ceases to be promiscuous when it is blessed by the Church. This definition of promiscuity is too simple. It seems to me that even in the eyes of the Church, a husband and wife can engage in a promiscuous sexual act even after the Church has blessed their marriage. There are many case histories of patients under psychiatric treatment where the patients came for help because they could achieve sexual satisfaction only under "promiscuous" (unnatural) conditions. For instance, one patient achieved satisfactory sex intercourse only after a violent argument with his wife. Just as the first man's sex act was motivated by anger, so could this man experience intimacy with his wife only within a violent state of mind.

There is no disagreement between the experts and Prof. Verhovskoy when he says that a boy and a girl must be friends first and lovers later. There is disagreement, however, when he says that when a boy meets a girl they should talk about philosophy, or theology, etc. An adolescent boy or girl fools himself if he says that his interest in the individual of the opposite sex is the same as to his brother or sister. Everything about them, remind adolescents of their difference. Physical, bodily changes are very marked. The boy begins to think about his hair, the girls want to use cosmetics and go to the beauty parlor, etc. If under such circumstances, the boy and girl begin to discuss philosophy or theology or any other abstract topic, believe me, the

interpretation becomes sexual—philosophy becomes the problem of man-woman relationships and theology becomes an analysis of whether or not the Theotokos could be a virgin and give birth to Jesus Christ.

If it is true that as Prof. Verhovskoy points out, the topic of conversation of the teenagers is always sex, it is not because of the "terrible institution of dates" but because no adults actually talk to teenagers about sex. Whatever the parents say, the youngsters will reject it because of their rebellious stage of development. There are no courses in schools dealing directly with sex education, because this question has a direct relationship to religious beliefs. To the best of my knowledge, there is no formal approach to this question by Sunday school teachers. Prof. Verhovskoy's implication that when teenagers begin to talk about sex, it invariably leads to promiscuity, is incorrect. In a pilot study, a well educated Public Health Nurse in New Jersey was given the assignment to conduct a course which was bluntly called "Sex Education." No teenager was permitted to attend this course without a formal permission from his parents. The teacher was strictly forbidden to discuss anything which related to birth control methods. The program lasted for two years. The results were measured by comparing the ratio of illegitimacy among girls before and after the two-year program. The results showed that illegitimacy dropped 76% during the existence of this course. The fact that the teacher was not allowed to discuss birth control methods clearly suggests that the drop was not due to improved control technique. It suggests two possible reasons for this favorable result. One, that when teenagers are allowed to discuss sex with an adult who does not dismiss their agonizing questions but deals realistically with them and does not cover them with mystical significance, the teenagers are able to weigh the consequence realistically and decide against impulsive sexual involvement. Secondly, it suggests that illegitimacy may be a direct result of unsatisfied curiosity, that a boy or a girl goes through the act because this is one area of learning which is left entirely up to them. The girl's or boy's parents do not allow him to read books on the subject, the priest does not talk about it, and the school teaches every subject under the sun except the one that the teenager is most interested in. Society, in fact, implicitly tells the teenager that this is one topic which he must learn by himself, through experience. To add a little epilogue to the New Jersey study, oddly enough, after the results of this course were submitted to authorities so as to make this subject a permanent part of the curriculum, the board of education was unable to decide in favor of allocating sufficient funds for its continuation as the subject was too controversial!

To me, it seems clear that because of the non-sectarian nature of our public schools it would be extremely difficult to make such a course a part of the general curriculum. The approach to the problem should not be ". . . a crusade, with the priests and the parents in the first rows," (to quote Prof. V.) but an introduction of a course on "Sex Education" within the Church School program. I sincerely hope that Orthodox education in preparing such a program would look in an unbiased way at what the "so-called specialists" have to say on the subject.

Professor Verhovskoy's Reply To Mr. Michael Lopuchin

MR. LOPUCHIN'S letter confirms, I believe, the opinion which I expressed in my article, namely that modern psychologists hold views alien to the Christian concept of life.

Before I attempt to answer Mr. Lopuchin's article, I would like to mention several points at which he misunderstood my thought.

Modern thinking about sex is dangerous not because it considers sex important, but because it considers active sex life, sexual relationships, as essential to human life, as

necessary as, for example, food or sleep. According to these ideas, every human being, having attained sexual maturity, must have an active sex life; otherwise a person's nature will suffer repression and distortion.

I do not believe that sexual union in itself is evil, or that everything depends from the time at which it is accomplished.

I never said that boys and girls must discuss philosophy or theology, although among our better educated, intelligent young people such conversations are quite natural. Philosophical and theological problems and questions can be discussed by all people, even if they have no special training in this field.

I never thought that the talking about sex among young people necessarily leads to promiscuity. If I thought this I would not have given the present lecture.

The concept of sex can be used both in the wide and in the narrow sense of the word. In the wider sense it coincides with the concept of the difference between the male and the female character of the human being, with the concept of manliness and womanliness in the full sense of these words, which includes spiritual, moral and physical aspects of human nature. In the second, narrower sense, the concept of sex is limited to its psycho-physical functions. In this second sense relationships between a man and a woman will be called "sex relations," only if they include a physical union.

Mr. Lopuchin misunderstands the thought expressed by St. John Chrysostom. St. John does not think sex is the essence, the origin of all existence, but only that sex is outstandingly important in human life, because human beings are born from the union of man and woman. Sex is not the origin of all existence, but an indispensable form of the propagation of the living species in our world.

The basic idea of any spiritual approach to the matter of sex is that sexual life, in the narrow physical sense of the word, is good only if it is one of the elements of the total union of man and woman, in their total mutual love, inspired and blessed by God. Without the grace of divine power, an "only human" love is insufficient for a complete union of two human personalities. This is the purpose of the Church Sacrament of Matrimony. This great, real meaning of true married life in which are united its Divine, spiritual, moral, social, psychological and physical aspects remains foreign and strange to modern liberal ideology. The modern emphasis is on the physical, or at best the psychological and social aspects of matrimony.

Mr. Lopuchin says that sexual relations must be evaluated from the point of view of their motivation. To a certain extent this is true, but only to a certain extent. Certain relations are sinful, whatever is their motivation. All sex relations outside of marriage are wrong, even when those who enter such a relationship believe it to be right and beautiful. The evil of extra-marital sex relations does not depend on the psychology of those who entertain them. The evil, the defect, of unmarried love is that it cannot be part of a total, harmonious, unity in love, and therefore it contains within itself the seeds of its own failure, its spiritual tragedy. True love between a man and a woman is always all-embracing and eternal.

Sexual intercourse with a prostitute is abominable because there is no love in the relationship, only lust, and in this lust is consumed a sinful union with the body of a sinful woman. Apostle Paul says that our body belongs to God and not to harlots. We can belong to God and to a wife, because God Himself unites us, but we cannot belong to God and to a harlot. The psychological explanation given by Mr. Lopuchin of the reasons why the young man he mentions has intercourse with a prostitute, sound artificial to me. His evaluation of

the pre-marital sex relations of a "young man who feels a great intimate love for a girl he plans to marry" is based on his lack of understanding of Christian virtue. It is not a matter of Church legalism, but of God's grace given in the Sacrament of Marriage. The pre-marital sexual union of the bride and groom is repudiation, a rejection of Christian marriage. They are not united by God, but they have united themselves of their own accord. Thus they exclude God from their mutual relationship and have recourse to a church wedding as a means of legalizing the situation. Such a "belated" wedding has religious meaning only if the bride and groom approach it with a sincere feeling that excluding God from their first love relationship was a sin. Marriage, even a Church marriage, is no guarantee of its success or perfection, which depend on the love, and the wisdom of both husband and wife, on their attitude to family life and on God's presence in the family life they create.

Mr. Lopuchin's comments on the process of sex maturation and its consequences in the relationships between boys and girls are a good example of what might be called "Pansexualism." Can the development of male and female consciousness be narrowed down to the notice young people take of the physical changes within their bodies? Is it true that because of this, in meeting and talking about any subject, even theology, they can do it only from the point of view of sex? I think this is slandering our young people and is only true when speaking of sex maniacs. Our manliness or womanliness includes infinitely more than our physical, bodily organs and we must be possessed by a kind of "obsession by the flesh" if we cannot speak of anything otherwise than in terms of sex.

Sex information can do good, but its usefulness is determined by the interpretation and explanations given with it. A simple description of the physical aspects of sex life in most cases will merely stimulate sensuality. Only the kind of sex education is desirable which places sex life within the perspective of human life as a whole, showing all aspects of relationships between men and women in the fullness of their religious, spiritual, psychological, moral, social, and physical meaning. I hope that the curriculum of our Church schools will never include a course in sex education that will be based on a purely physical, non-normal, "pan-sexual" concept of relationships between man and woman.