

WHOSE WIFE SHALL SHE BE IN THE RESURRECTION? THE MOSLEM ANSWER

IT OFTEN increases our appreciation of Christ's teaching to note how the questions that were put to Him are answered in other religions. The Sadducees, in one of their attempts to catch Jesus by their captious questions, asked Him, "If a woman has been the wife of seven husbands, which one shall she have in the resurrection?" (Matt. 22:23-33). They thought the problem was so obviously impossible of solution, or even of consideration, that it proved conclusively that there was no resurrection, and no next world.

Jesus' answer, however, showed that the problem was no problem at all, for the simple reason that there was no such thing as marriage in the next world.

The Mohammedans answer that ancient question of the Sadducees in still another way. They reject the Sadducean solution, for they believe most strongly in the resurrection and the next world. The Christian position does not satisfy them, for Mohammed and all his followers have wanted the marriage relationship to continue in the next world. This relationship is not to exist only between the Moslem and the seventy-two *Haur-el-ain*, the Houries, that he is to have there. It is to exist also with the wives that he has had on the earth, if he wants them. Of course if he does not want them, he need not have them. He could divorce them in this life, and the Garden is not a place where a Moslem is to have less liberty than he had on the earth, not by any means! He was limited to four legal wives in this world. He gets seventy-two at least, in the next. In this lower life, capacity and satiety limited and restricted his appetite for food and drink. In the next life he has 300 maidens of the Garden bringing him 300 golden dishes of food and

drink at a time, and the last morsel is to be as agreeable as the first! So a Moslem retains his wives in the next world only if he wants them. Therefore, the very best way for a Mohammedan woman to be sure of getting into the Garden is always to behave so that her husband will want her there!

But that does not solve all of the problem for the Moslem men. It only applies when a man has been married to women who have had no other husbands. But suppose, as is so unfortunately frequently the case, that a woman has been divorced once or twice or even a dozen times. Which husband shall have her then, the first, or the last, or some one in between? It is the Sadducees' question precisely.

The Moslem answers are found in the Traditions. These Traditions may not represent authentic historical fact, but they do present authentic Moslem opinion upon the subjects. In this case the opinions are so various that they leave the problem as uncertain and as unsolved for themselves as it was before.

The following translations are made from the *Mukhtasar Tadhkirat* (Abridged Memoirs) of Al Imam Abu Abdallah Al Qartaby, and the chapter is headed, "If a man marries a maiden in this world, will she be his wife in the next?"

One tradition assigns the wife to her first husband:

"Malik (Allah, who is exalted, have mercy on him) reported that Zubair bin Al Awwam (Allah be pleased with him) often beat his wife, Isma bint Abu Bakr the Faithful (Allah be pleased with them both). He beat her with a great beating one day when she went out without his permission, after he had tied her hair to the hair of her partner wife (*lit.* 'wife of her husband'). The partner wife was the more modest, so that Isma got the greater beating. Then she complained to her father, Abu Bakr. But he said to her, 'Little daughter, have patience, for Zubair is a righteous man, and it may be that he will be your husband in the Garden (Paradise), for I have heard that if a man marries a virgin, he will be married to her in the Garden.'

This tradition incidentally indicates that a man may be a chronic wife-beater and still be a pious Moslem.

Two traditions are given which say that a woman will belong to the last of her husbands:

“Maawia bin Abu Sufyan asked in marriage the Mother of Al Darda, and she refused and said, ‘I have heard the Father of Al Darda relate about the Prophet of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) that he said a woman would belong, in the next world, to the last of her husbands, so do not marry after me.’ ”

“In another story it is said that Hadhifa bin Al Yamin (Allah be pleased with him) said to his wife, ‘If it pleases you that you should be my wife in the Garden, if Allah should gather us in it, then do not marry another man after me, for a woman belongs to the last of her husbands.’ ”

There are also two traditions given in the chapter which show that some thought that a woman of many husbands could have whichever one she wanted:

“The Imam, Abu Bakr bin Al Araby said, ‘A woman had several husbands. Then word reached the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) that she had her choice among the husbands and whichever one she chose, she was to be with.’ ”

“The Mother of Habiba said, ‘O Prophet of Allah, a woman had two husbands in this world. Then they both died. Then they foregathered in the Garden. To which one of the two would she be, to the first or to the last?’ Then he said, ‘She shall be for the more kindly of disposition while he was with her in this world.’ ”

In a previous chapter a tradition is related that a human wife in the Garden will be 70,000 fold better than the houries. The very possibility of that would make a Moslem want the wife or wives he has had in this world. But if the last series of traditions represents what is going to happen, and a woman can choose in heaven any husband she has had on the earth, suppose that some man should not be chosen at all! A Moslem woman, despised by men on the earth, but having her own way in the Garden! That would be irony indeed,—for the men!

Our Moslem authority, however, believes it is a possibility, and he concludes his chapter with a warning to those of his fellow Moslems who want to have their mundane wives in heaven as well. He says:

“So know that (your wives may or may not choose you) O brothers, and improve your habits!”

The excellence of the Christian teaching stands out with the greater clearness when it is compared with the unspiritual and confused answers of the Mohammedan traditions.

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