

The Comparative Study of the Marriage in Islam and Christianity

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Abstract

The best way to identify a phenomenon is a comprehensive study and reviewing it, in various perspectives. Comprehensive study and understanding the philosophy of the marriage is not possible without comparison and contrast. One of the most important aspects of this study is the comparison of the marriage in the Islam and Christian. So, the present study, reviews the philosophy of the marriage in Islam and Christian, and then compares them.

The main achievement of this study is that both of these religions believe that the only legitimate way to satisfy the sexual needs, make new generation and gaining love is the marriage. But there is a fundamental differences between these two religions. Monasticism and celibacy in the Christian has a special position. Christian considers the celibacy as the mean for being near to God, but in Islam the celibacy is completely rejected. Not only the marriage does not block the way to being near to the God, but also it can be the mean to reach the God.

Key words: Islam, Christian, Marriage, Celibacy

1. Introduction

The words of God not only have great content and are the best guide for the truth-seekers, but also it presents the facts in the best and the most unique ways. One of the Quran's methods to make the grant insight and vision, is to compare the issues in two sides. The Quran employs the same method of vision-providing and presents a noetic questions when it faces the ignorant with the wises; In this verse "and those who know equal with those who know not" (Al- Zamar, 9). Also it uses another way for achieving the man to the science and insight with comparing the blind with the seer people in this verse "and the blind man and the seer are not equal, neither are those who believe and do good works equal with the evil doers." (Al- GHafer, 58). In these verses Quran uses comparing and corresponding to open the unopened areas of the human knowledge.

As it is obvious, Islam and Christianity are two divine and heaven religions and both of them claim at correcting and training human and steering them toward perfection. "Marriage" is one of the most prominent and perhaps the most effective factors in heading human toward perfection and excellence. So these two divine religions should have sent a message to their followers in this issue; so that they open their followers the way to progress and perfection, through a correct and proper marriage; because no religion is found to have nothing about this most effective factor in human perfection.

Along with other research methods, comparative study has the special and unique position. Direct and un-comparing studying to the recognition and review of the phenomenon, is a barrier for both the reader and the researcher to get the awareness about many aspects of the subject and leads to superficiality in both of them; eventually they will lost the deep perception. But with comparative study, releases both researcher and readers from these hinds and opens the invisible dimensions of the intended issue through comparing and contrasting.

Therefore, the best way to comprehensive familiarity with the goals of the marriage, its position and philosophy, is comparisons and comparative study of these two heaven religions.

2. Marriage in Islam

2.1. The Philosophy of Marriage in Islam

From Islam's perspective, the nature of marriage is a contract and covenant with special conditions (Najafi, 1986: P 8). In addition to having a special strength, "A Strong Pledge" (An-Nisa, 21), marriage has a unique heaven value and dignity, and it is not at the same level of value with other social arrangements and does not strictly follow the rules of public contracts. Perhaps it can be said that marriage is the strongest and the most sacred covenant, that a man relies on it, leave his parents and siblings, ally to someone who doesn't have much knowledge of her, and with her, he shares all of his assets. It seems that for this reason the marriage referred to as "collar" in the narratives of Imams, and it has been warned that be careful whom you put aside yourself, to whom you give your reins, and to whom you share your assets, faith and secrets. (Alhr Almamly, 1982: P 14)

Now it should be seen, for what intention, Islam underpins and emphasizes on this contrast? But before stating the reasons and philosophy of the marriage, it is necessary to mention the deference between the "Philosophy" with the "aim or purpose", and explaining that why these two issues are distinct in this paper. "purpose" in this paper is an optimal status which is consciously recognized profitable, and the effort is done to fulfill it (Erafi. 1998). But in the case of "cause or philosophy" there is nothing to justify that, conscious selection, purposeful effort and human will, have no effect to fulfill it. It means that the "philosophy" of a phenomenon can be a non-

human factor; but “purpose” always fulfill with a purposeful human will. According to this article the purpose of the marriage is fulfill with the effort of the man who marry, as it should be so; While, when it talks about cause of canonization of marriage there is nothing related to human will to perform it .

Marriage legislation has one basic and several minor and non-basic cause and philosophy. Accordingly, these factors can be subdivided into two basic categories:

2.1.1. The main cause of canonization of marriage

The basic cause of canonization of marriage is to satisfy the human nature needs (spiritual, mental, physical). All of the Islamic rules and regulations are in line with the human innate and natural needs. These regulations, meet the needs of human innate and natural needs and guarantee the human health and development. The basic philosophy of marriage in Islam, like its other laws and regulations, is to satisfy the human God-searching nature. Marriage is encouraged and legislated in Islam because it can properly respond human natural needs and provide his social health and development. So, in fact, those who refrain marry, subconsciously struggle against their innate nature. As a result, because they act against their natural needs, they encounter many difficulties and problems and deviate from equilibrium, development and social evolution. (Rashid pour, 1998: P 8)

2.1.2. Secondary causes of canonization of marriage

2.1.2.1. Ensuring calm of the soul

One of the reasons of marriage, in Islam view point, is ensuring calm of the soul. “And of his sign is this: he created for you helpmeets from yourselves that ye might find rest in them.” This shows that these two genders are complement of each other and confirming each others’ joy, calm and happiness. (Makarem Shirazi, 1989: P 391)

2.1.2.2. The preservation of the human species

Healthy and legitimate reproduction of human species is the other reason of the canonization of marriage in Islam. This issue is so important to Islam to the extent that it is narrated in hadith if the Imams, that to be capable of childbearing, is considered as a good characteristic for a woman to whom a man wants to marry; and having child is considered the source of Gods’ blessing. (Kelini Razi, 1988: P 474)

2.1.2.3. Preservation of the religion

Marriage has an impact on the safety from deviation and errors in the married person, improves his position in the society, brings about a kind of virtue an excellence in the married person and protects him from violations, also it can be said that the married person feels more duty bound to virtues, religious and spiritual. It seems that for this reason the prophet Mohammad says: "the one who marry retain half of his religion." (Alhr Almamly,1982: P 14). And also he says: “give a single man a wife so that the God make his behavior good, increase his ration and widen his manliness.” (Meshkini, 1987: P 14)

2.1.2.4. Personal development and social responsibility

Marriage brings about a sense of responsibility and commitment to another person; consequently it causes to personal development and social responsibility. This amount of impact cannot be seen in any other individual and social behavior. A man can be personally mature and make his social figure only with marry (Makarem Shirazi,1997: P 340). The first stage of coming out of oneself and developing one’s personality, is the marriage (Motahari, 1983). If there exist another way to achieve this desire, Islam presented that, for sure. This kind of maturity cannot be achieve unless with marriage and making family.

3. Marriage in Christianity

3.1. Philosophy of the Marriage in Christian

In Christianity, marriage is a sign of God's love to human, and by performing this, a man and a woman form a holly and non-detachable connection. In fact, in Christian, marriage is contract between two people who love each other, and conclude to make a common life with trustee and collaboration (Motahari, 1983). Christians, when they marry, commit that consider these love, as a sign of the God’s love to human, and the Christ’s love to his trainees. But although marriage is considered a holly phenomenon in Christian and it is called “The Great Mystery”; celibacy and avoiding marry is more desirable. A single person worships the Lord with all of his ability and with ignoring his world life affairs; makes himself similar to Jesus and the holly persons. (Petros, 1882: p 345)

In other words, to Christians, one who marry; choose the easiest way, which most people choose. But the one who has modesty and avoid marry, choose the better way, and he becomes like angels. The person who marries, is not blameworthy, But he misses the blessing he would achieve with chastity. Chastity and modesty is the shortest way to reach the Lord. Even some Christians believe that marriage is a barrier to reach the Lord. With regard to these words, sanctify marriage, in Christianity, never meant to the inherent value of the marriage itself. Inherent value is in chastity and celibacy, because one can reach the Lord just with chastity, not with marriage. Marriage is the mean to escape the lust and impurity, not for achieving great and holly goals. Therefore, chastity and celibacy is the choice of special people, and the other, choose marriage because they are not able to be chaste.

3.1.1. The main cause of canonization of marriage

3.1.1.1. To maintain the purity

According to above said, we can say that in Christianity there are two levels of purity:

Purity of adultery and illicit sexual relations.

Purity of relation to opposite sex; although it takes place in the form of rituals such as marriage.

The primary purpose of the marriage in Christian perspective is to maintain and preserve the purity of the latter type. So, one who can protect himself from impurity, based on the second definition, and is able to provide himself the second type purity, should never marry. Such human beings, in Christian perspective, are considered as the best and preferred human, they need not marriage; for them marriage is not legislated; so, for them there is no need to talk about the philosophy of the marriage. Marriage is legislated for people who cannot provide themselves the second type purity. Therefore, priests, as the selected people, are not allowed to marry (Durant, 1994: P 26). In Christian, marriage is legislated when the person is unable to provide the second type purity, and its philosophy is to maintain the type one purity; it is legislated to protect human from adultery and illicit relations. Hence, after prohibiting priests from marrying, it is said that, priests' wife giving, is a right and correct rebel against this harsh law. (Durant, 1994: P 26-27)

In other words, marriage itself is not desirable in Christian, and it is not the first choice in Christianity, So here, there is no need to talk about the philosophy of the marriage because it is not something desirable for itself; but virginity and chastity which is against the marriage is the first choice. Accordingly, the philosophy of the celibacy should be stated not the marriage. But since through celibacy the first type of Christian's goal such as pure monastic and purity from illicit relations cannot be achieved, they refer to marry, so that they would be able to achieve its lower level goals.

3.1.2. Secondary causes of canonization of marriage

3.1.2.1. Salvation and redemption

In the definition of the religious rituals it is said that, they are invisible help to reach the God, and it can be said that they are Gods' help for human's salvation (Zibaei Nejad, 2003: p 315). Marriage is one of these rituals, so it can be a bridge to reach the Lord. Christians, also believe that religious rituals are necessary for human salvation; although, they are disagree in the kinds of the impacts these rituals have. Catholics say: salvation is not possible without using these religious rituals; in fact these rituals legislated for human to achieve salvation and redemption. But Protestants believe that these rituals are not as important as Catholics believe, although they may have some effect to achieve salvation, but they consider the Lord's will as the main factor (Brawn, 1920: p 286). However, in Christian view, marriage is brought for human salvation; either it considers as a major and unavoidable factor or as an intermediate one.

According to the first philosophy, celibacy is preferred in Christianity and the first channel to reach salvation and redemption is monastic and having no relation with the opposite sex; marriage is not the first and preferred way for salvation, even if it is performed in the legislated and lawful form. Accordingly if salvation and redemption are introduced as a reason of marriage, it is the secondary reason, which is legislated for people who are unable to reach salvation thought celibacy and monastic.

4. Similarities of the marriage in Islam and Christianity

The common points of view regarding Philosophy and position of the marriage in Islam and Christianity can be summarized as follow:

- a. Both of them agree that marriage is the only legal, lawful and valid way for sexual relations, respond to human instincts and make and increase new generation.
- b. Marriage has the great position and it is the only way to form a family and maintain the health of its members.
- c. Marriage is the only accepted way to provide the basis of human social development and protect them from hazards of sexual instinct (Salem Salim, 2004: p 163, p 183).
- d. In reviewing the position of marriage, both of them, consider it as a holly ritual, although their interpretations are different. Islam calls marriage as "a Holly Contract" and Christianity refers to it as "a Great Mystery", "a Contract of Chastity" and "a Holly Ritual".

5. Differences of the marriage in Islam and Christianity

The different viewpoints about the Philosophy, position, and goals of the marriage in Islam and Christianity are as follow:

- a. In Christian view celibacy has the superior and greater position than marriage, while, Islam give importance to marriage; in Islamic view, to God, celibacy is something repugnant and unaccepted. According to this Christian point of view, monasticism is an accepted and encouraged, it is considered as the Lord's blessing to human. Most of the Christians are encouraged to monasticism and they live in this way, spend all their life in praying, and refuse to live with other people; despite Christians,

- monasticism is prohibited in Islam, it is called as a undoable and non-divine innovation: “No Monasticism in Islam”. Marriage is encouraged in Islam (Salem Salim, 2004: p 184).
- b. Although both Islam and Christians talks about the purity, but the purity intended in Islam in much different from the one, in Christian. In Islam, not only purity doesn't mean not to answer to the human natural needs and avoid marry, but also marriage is privileged and it is referred as purity.
 - c. In reviewing the position of marriage in Islam and Christian, each one counts a specific place for that. Christian calls it "a permanent and unbreakable contract ", and Islam refers to it as "a source of blessing" and “Prophet and Imams’ practical ways of life”. Also in Islam, marriage is the main factor to reach the God, but in Christian, the main factor to reach the God is in celibacy; and marriage is a barrier and is a deviant path to reach the Lord.
 - d. Since Christianity refers to marry after its inability in celibacy, and celibacy is its first choice, it is allowed just the amount required, and never accept polygamy and remarriage. So it calls it “a permanent and unbreakable alliance”. But in Islam it isn't mentioned that the marriage should be “unbreakable”.
 - e. In stating the cause and philosophy of the marriage, each of these religions expresses a separate philosophy. In Islam, marriage is the answer to human innate and natural needs, but it seems that, in Christians, celibacy is the first answer to human natural needs. In stating the cause and philosophy of the marriage, each of these religions expresses a separate philosophy. In Islam, marriage is the answer to human innate and natural needs, but it seems that, in Christians, celibacy is the first answer to human natural needs. Therefore celibacy is superior to marriage in Christian, and it is believed that people who are not able to maintain purity with celibacy, have to marry. In the Christian view, human nature seems to be matched with the singlehood, and Marriage has been defined for people who have failed to provide celibacy with chastity.
 - f. Each one of the Islam and Christianity considers specific reasons for marriage. In Christian the reasons for marriage legislation are "to Keep purity" and "salvation and redemption"; and in Islam the reasons of marriage legislations are “to respond to the human nature needs”, “calm of the soul”, "The preservation of the human species" and "human development".

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