

Circuit Court for Prince George's County  
Case No. CAD21-08436

UNREPORTED  
IN THE APPELLATE COURT  
OF MARYLAND

No. 415

September Term, 2022

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SHELLY BELTON

v.

RONNELL GORHAM

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Kehoe,  
Beachley,  
Wright, Alexander, Jr.  
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

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PER CURIAM

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Filed: December 19, 2022

\*This is an unreported opinion, and it may not be cited in any paper, brief, motion, or other document filed in this Court or any other Maryland Court as either precedent within the rule of stare decisis or as persuasive authority. Md. Rule 1-104.

In this appeal from a domestic family action in the Circuit Court for Prince George’s County, Shelly Belton, appellant, challenges the court’s granting of a motion to compel discovery responses, and award of attorney’s fees to, Ronnell Gorham, appellee. For the reasons that follow, we shall dismiss the appeal.

On July 21, 2021, Ms. Belton filed a complaint in which she requested, among other relief, an annulment of her November 2011 marriage to Mr. Gorham. On January 25, 2022, the court issued a scheduling order, in which it ordered the parties to exchange certain financial documents, such as tax returns and pay stubs, by February 23, 2022. The court also ordered the parties to complete and answer discovery by March 1, 2022, and scheduled a settlement conference for March 30, 2022. The court stated: “Failure to complete Discovery by the settlement conference . . . may result in sanctions imposed against one or both parties and/or attorneys.”

On March 21, 2022, Mr. Gorham, through counsel, filed a “Motion to Compel Discovery Responses and For Sanctions,” in which he contended that on February 12, 2022, he served upon Ms. Belton a First Set of Interrogatories and First Request for Production of Documents. Mr. Gorham requested that Ms. Belton answer the interrogatories and produce the requested documents “within thirty (30) days of receipt.” Mr. Gorham contended that although he had “sent a Good Faith letter to” Ms. Belton and communicated further with her, she had not responded to the discovery requests. Mr. Gorham asked the court to compel Ms. Belton to respond to the discovery requests, and order her to pay Mr. Gorham’s “attorney fees associated with preparation of [the] motion.” On March 30, 2022, the parties appeared before the court for the settlement conference.

On April 21, 2022, the court issued an order in which it granted the motion, ordered that Ms. Belton “respond in full to [the] discovery requests within five (5) days of [the] Order,” and ordered that attorney’s fees of \$300.00 “be reduced to a judg[.]ment payable by” Ms. Belton to Mr. Gorham. Ms. Belton subsequently filed a notice of appeal.

Ms. Belton contends that, for numerous reasons, the court erred in ordering her to respond to the discovery requests within five days of the date of the court’s order, and in awarding attorney’s fees to Mr. Gorham. We shall dismiss the appeal for two reasons. First, “it is well settled in Maryland that discovery orders usually are not immediately appealable,” *St. Luke Institute v. Jones*, 471 Md. 312, 338 (2020) (internal citation, quotations, and brackets omitted), and Ms. Belton does not cite any authority that renders the court’s order an exception to this rule. Second, the Supreme Court of Maryland<sup>1</sup> has held that “an order directing a party to pay a fee . . . as a sanction . . . is not appealable under the collateral order doctrine,” *Yamaner v. Orkin*, 310 Md. 321, 322 (1987) (footnote omitted), because such an “order is not equitable in nature and . . . does not proceed directly to the person so as to make one against whom it operates directly and personally answerable to the court for noncompliance,” and the “court does not have available to it as a sanction for violation the sanction of imprisonment for contempt.” *Id.* at 325 (citations omitted). Accordingly, we dismiss the appeal.

**APPEAL DISMISSED. COSTS TO BE PAID  
BY APPELLANT.**

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<sup>1</sup>On December 14, 2022, the name of the Court of Appeals was changed to the Supreme Court of Maryland.