

## Marriage: Wars of Cultures and Religions - A Muslim Married in Church

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In the early 70s, after I had worked in London for about a year and a half, I met a young English lady from Sussex. We worked together at a summer resort hotel in Bude, which was in Cornwall. We fell in love and were soon engaged. At the end of the summer, we returned to London and lived together for a year. Everything was going well until the time of our wedding approached.

Two weeks before the wedding, we moved in with her parents. They were quite wealthy and lived in a huge six-bedroom house. Her father was the director of a big insurance corporation and her mother also had a good job. We began preparing for the wedding, and made an appointment with the vicar (priest) to talk about what needed to be done. This conversation worried me. As a Muslim, I didn't think I could get married in a church. My fiancée and I had talked about it, but it wasn't a big concern for us at the time. Now, it was a problem.

The day we met with the vicar, I felt an alarming sense of fear and betrayal towards my Muslim faith. I was nervous and indecisive. I didn't like the idea of a church wedding, and as we made our way to the meeting, we had a big argument.

The day of the wedding drew nearer, and the pressure increased. I felt like running away. In fact, I thought about it, but I wasn't sure how I could get my suitcase out of the house unnoticed. If I could have managed that, I would have left. There was a spiritual battle occurring inside me between Islam and Christianity! This day was going to be the worst day of my life. I thought to myself.

Then, I was overtaken by a spiritual phenomenon.

The day of the wedding, while at the altar, as we stood opposite each other, the minister began to read from a big, thick, black, leather-covered book. I later learned it was called the Bible. A strong wave of panic swept over me, and I began to tremble. Some people noticed how nervous I was and brought me a glass of water. It's a normal reaction, being nervous, so no one thought much of it. But they did not know what was going on inside me. My situation was different. I felt like I was about to die of fear. I had strong feelings telling me not to get married. I felt that if I got married in a church, I would destroy everything about my Islamic upbringing, as well as my future. I had never experienced such a fearful and life-threatening phenomenon as this before! I saw my wedding day as my death day, as well as the death of Islam, and the death of my ancestors.

As the minister continued to read from the Bible, I was praying desperately to Allah, begging him to

strike me down! In my heart, I was pleading with God, begging Him to let me die. I was in a dire state of mind, and I meant it. I wanted to die to prevent anything from happening to Islam, my ancestors, or my history. Wouldn't that be awful? I was terrified that marrying a person of a different faith would destroy my entire history.

It was too late now. The wedding was over! After the vows and exchanging of the rings, the minister blessed us and pronounced us husband and wife.

Our honeymoon was miserable! We went to a well-known seaside resort where we stayed at the apartment of a couple who were friends with my father-in-law. The entire time we were there, a negative spiritual element kept us at odds with each other. We didn't get along, arguing all the time.

After three days, we decided to go home. My wife returned to her family in tears, and, after a couple of days at her parents' house, we agreed to return to London. From that day on, things were different, and we began to realize we made a mistake by getting married.

We began to set rules and conditions, and religion, once absent, became the dominant factor in our lives. We differed in our opinions about having children, and in which faith should they be raised. I, of course, insisted they be raised as Muslims, and my wife argued they be raised as Christians, or at least have the option of choosing which faith they would like to be. I disagreed with this. Three months later, our marriage was over.

Only after I joined the Unification Church did I discover the meaning of this extreme experience. Before then, I thought my ancestors were angry with me because I got married in a church. Upon reflection, I realized that they were not upset about that. They were upset because they knew something better. They wanted me to be blessed in marriage with someone in the Unification Movement. They were upset and pretty much in panic of what this marriage in the church would do. They didn't want me to destroy everything for which they worked, as well as the sacrifices they made for God in their lifetimes. Who knows what they endured? Some may have been burned for their faith in God. This point cannot be fathomed without understanding the true meaning of salvation through the "blessing of marriage" from the Unification Church perspective, which I will explain later. It's no wonder why my ancestors expressed their concerns so intensely. They wanted me to be blessed in marriage by the Lord of the Second Advent!

Many mixed marriages suffered many serious problems. I know many families who were destroyed because of different religious and cultural backgrounds, particularly between Islam and Christianity. But, I believe the Unification Church offers Marriage blessing to mixed couples of different race, religion and culture as a mean of salvation, to end humankind enmity and hatred and bring humanity together as one family under God. The Unification mixed marriages are not only done for the interest of couple, but also to create a God-centered family that could resolve any problem, whether religious, racial or gender. I am not saying that blessed couples wouldn't have any difficulties of disagreements and fights, but when problems arises their marriage would be strong enough to overcome any problems because this type of blessed marriage is bounded with God, in other words, blessed couples regard their marriage blessing as a covenant with God and much stronger than religion itself!