

Don't Hate,

DEBATE!

Don't Hate,

DEBATE!

Imagine if I started this booklet by calling you names.

What if I used the most vile language to curse you or the person you love most.

Would you continue reading?

Even if you did, would you take seriously what it had to say? Would you have an open mind to try and understand what was written? Of course you wouldn't!

You would probably throw this booklet in the bin.

No human being should be expected to tolerate uncivilised, degrading language, deliberate abuse and repugnant expressions.

As humans, we qualify ourselves through the use of our language, our manners and our sensibilities. We are careful about how others perceive us; what we say is how we present ourselves to the world.

The philanthropist and anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela once said:

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”.



No-one prides themselves on the language of insults. Insults never appeal to anyone's mind or heart. In reality, insulting behaviour and speech is a throwback to the worst part of our childhood. In the playground we would see bullies using abusive language to belittle others weaker than them. Good parents, teachers and communities expend great efforts to inculcate in children kindness, listening skills, empathy and teaching them not to be abusive or offensive. How then, and according to what logic, does it become a right to offend, and how can such behaviour be deemed in any way appropriate, let alone civilised?

We only need to look back to the 1930's when the free language of bigotry was used against a minority group to demonise them, which led to the horrific events of the holocaust. As shocking as this may sound, it highlights a very important point; whether we like it or not, what we say can make or break our world.

Despite this, there are those who claim that we can say whatever we want in whichever way we want. Every free-thinking person will say that they believe in the freedom of speech. If we didn't, we wouldn't be free to discuss politics, religion, the evil of bigotry and racism, and much more. Our freedom to speak about these things is what makes us human - let's not use that humanity to dehumanise others.

The History of Freedom of Speech

When we examine the historical circumstances of freedom of speech, we will see that it emerged as a result of a specific problem.



Christian Europe was under the control of the Church and the 'Divinely chosen Kings' and was subjugated to centuries of authoritarian rule, absent of transparency and accountability. This is why people demanded the freedom to take the oppressive state to account, establish justice and learn about the truth of the world. Hence, freedom of speech was a concept that was born out of the European Enlightenment in order to account those in power, establish justice in society, and as a means for seeking the truth and facilitating human progression.

The inception of the modern concept of freedom of speech as we know it today, arose under this particular context. However, this notion of 'freedom' was never intended to insult, offend or defame any social group. This is why the 19th century British philosopher, and one of the founders of the free speech movement, John S. Mill, argued that for truth and justice we must be cautious with our language.

Freedom to Insult and Degrade?

In light of the above, you're probably thinking that something has seriously gone wrong.

You're right.

We are now far removed from the civilised discourse of the likes of John S. Mill, Aristotle, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill and William Shakespeare.

Think about it.

There are many news outlets, publications, websites and other media that have contradicted the fundamental objectives of freedom of speech by conflating it with the right to degrade, insult and defame. We have all seen and experienced the lies, hate and defamation of many in the media.

Sadly, it has led to more lies, hate and mistrust.

This manifestation of free speech cannot facilitate a harmonious society, where intellectual and rational dialogue between different communities can take place. The unfortunate reality today is that freedom of speech is politicised in practice, absent of the most basic human civility to respect others' ideas, beliefs and values.

Do we want to live in such a society?

A society that is free to curse, rather than converse?

The post-modern philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, aptly said,

“People demand freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use.”

Søren Kierkegaard

To illustrate this point, here are some reasons why being free to degrade and insult actually goes against the objectives of free speech:

Firstly, from the perspective of truth and progress: In order to acquire the truth and facilitate progress, reasoned and well-mannered argumentation and discussion is required, and this must be couched in human language. Insulting and degrading language or imagery does not facilitate truth and progress. Imagine the prominent physicist Stephen Hawking explaining one of his famous theories. What would happen if he then used pornographic imagery to denounce others who opposed it, or continually swore at them during his presentation? Would that expressionism facilitate discussion? It is more likely to create a barrier to knowledge and understanding.



Secondly, from the aspect of accountability and justice, accounting governments and individuals also requires good, polite and reasoned dialogue. If one was to approach a dictator, cursing them and using the most vile language, would one successfully bring them to account? That is very unlikely. In order to do so, it would be better to articulate a positive case against their crimes and injustices.

These examples show that insult and degradation defeat the very objective of the freedom of speech.

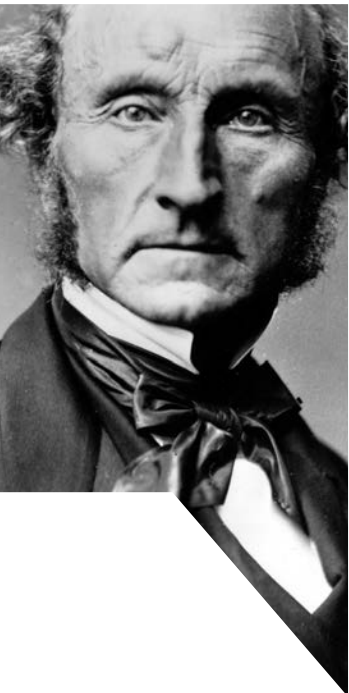
There is, however, a fine line between deliberate and unintended insults. After all, one person's insults can be another's form of dialogue. So it is not as simple as saying "don't insult or degrade each other". Rather than just allowing ourselves to be free to hate, curse and degrade—thereby not achieving the objectives of free speech—the onus is for us to try and understand each other's sensitivities so that we can better convince, educate and express ourselves. We've heard it before: with freedom comes great responsibility. We have a responsibility to engage with each other in ways that are best.

The Negative consequences of Insulting and Degrading

With freedom comes responsibility.

We cannot simply say whatever we like.

Imagine screaming “bomb!” in the middle of a crowded bus.



Such expressions lead to chaos, harm and disorder. The British Philosopher, John. S. Mill, argued that speech should be restricted if it leads to harm. Mill used 19th century corn dealers as an example: he argued that a mob should incur punishment if they expressed that *“corn dealers are starvers of the poor”* when *“assembled before the house of a corn dealer”*.

Clearly, some speech not only facilitates harm but causes unthinkable calamities. There is a broad consensus that the Nazi cartoons and imagery depicting the Jewish community as evil, greedy, and selfish, led to the social engineering of perceiving that they were less than human, and deserved to be punished and killed. The function of anti-semitic imagery in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* gradually initiated the wider parts of the German population to racism and dehumanisation of the Jewish community. This consequently led to the erroneous belief that the Jewish people were an illness and the cure was their extermination. This free speech was the blueprint for genocide.

The 20th century philosopher George Santayana famously wrote:

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

But despite all the holocaust memorials and remembrances, have we truly learned from the past? A similar discourse is being touted in some of the more sensationalist media outlets today, with there being a striking similarity between the anti-semitic satire from the Nazi-era, and that aimed at Muslims today. Many argue that this has facilitated a growing hatred against Muslims.

In an article analysing survey results that focussed on Muslims and Islam post 2001, Charles Kuzman, the Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina, concluded that the data indicates how:

“American attitudes toward Muslim Americans have grown more negative...a growing segment of the population is willing to express negative views about Muslim-Americans in recent years.”

Charles Kuzman



This growing negativity towards Islam and Muslims is not only an American problem, but a European one too. In its 2004 annual report, The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) found:

“Islamophobia continues to manifest itself in different guises. Muslim communities are the target of negative attitudes, and sometimes, violence and harassment. They suffer multiple forms of discrimination, including sometimes from certain public institutions. ECRI is worried about the current climate of hostility against persons who are or are believed to be Muslim.”

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Unfortunately, recent surveys, polls and publications are indicating a stark rise in hate crimes against Muslims. So isn't it time we stopped the hate and started to debate in a language conducive to positive and compassionate engagement?

Fear, anxiety and hate will continue to exist unless communities make the effort to understand each other. Not only by sharing our commonalities but by discussing and understanding our differences, will the fears and anxieties vanish - God-willing.

We need to stop the hate and start to debate in a language conducive to positive, respectful and compassionate engagement.



Does Freedom of Speech Exist?

Putting all of this aside. Let's talk about whether freedom of speech even exists.

Free speech has never existed in an absolute sense. It has always been restricted to the dominant values and laws of a society, and this is evident in Europe where race, treason, defamation, and public disorder laws dictate what someone can or cannot say. Taking this into consideration, it is shocking to see the media, an institution that is supposed to protect the oppressed and account those in power, justify the slander of revered figures—including God, Prophets and religion—under the banner of freedom of speech, often creating an atmosphere of hate.

What's worse is that freedom of speech is not applied fairly to all. There have been many examples of the media degrading and insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), yet the same media outlets have censored expression when it involved others. This hypocrisy creates animosity and a sense of injustice.



Here are just a few of many examples:

Political cartoonist Maurice Sinet, who worked for the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo for 20 years was fired in 2009 for his cartoons mocking the relationship of former French President Sarkozy's son with a wealthy Jewish woman.

A French court injunction banned a Jesus based clothing advert mimicking Da Vinci's Last Supper. A French judge ruled that the display was ruled "a gratuitous and aggressive act of intrusion on people's innermost beliefs".

In 2005, Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but rejected the publication of cartoons mocking Jesus (pbuh) because they would provoke an uproar!

This is why many Muslims today consider the media to have double-standards. Why the hypocrisy?

Isn't it time we stopped the hate and started to debate?

Islam encourages polite, warm and compassionate discussion. Even if we don't agree with each other, we can still talk. Islam rejects senseless violence, jungle justice and the killing of innocent people. The Qur'an, the book Muslims consider to be the word of God, mentions the word *jidal*, meaning debate, discussion, and dialogue many times. So there's no need to fear, Muslims want to talk. They always have!

The Islamic Perspective on the Freedom of Speech

Islam has always welcomed open dialogue and scrutiny. It is theologically engrained through the Qur'an's encouragement to question, seek and establish the truth through one's own rationale.

Looking back in history, Islamic civilisations were the epicentres of intellectual discourse between different sects, theologies, schools of jurisprudence, and religions. However, this discourse was carried out in a manner which respected the opposing sides' views, beliefs and principles. It very rarely entailed derogatory or satirical statements as the premise of sincere dialogue, because of the destructive repercussions it could have in society. This positive coexistence was due to the nature of what is expounded in the Qur'an, the Muslim holy scripture that is considered God's word. It is a book that reasons and argues to the truth, as academic, Rosalind Gwynne, asserts,

Reasoning and argument are so integral to the content of the Qur'an and so inseparable from its structure that they in many ways shaped the very consciousness of Qur'anic scholars."

Rosalind Ward Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments*



Islamic Values

The values of Islam emanating from the Qur'an and the words of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) pave the pathway to progress, truth and accountability, while maintaining good etiquette and upholding the best of all manners in dialogue and discussion.

The Islamic values evokes the search for truth:

“And do not mix up the truth with the falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know it.”

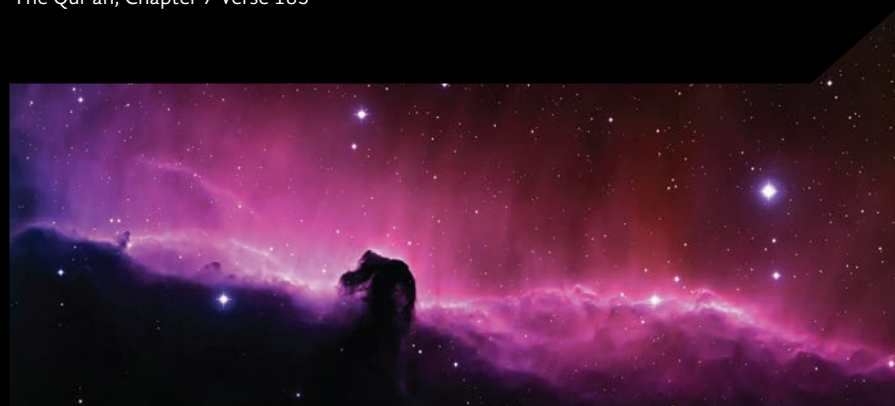
The Qur'an, Chapter 2 Verse 42

“...and enjoin on each other truth.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 2 Verse 42

“Do they not examine the realm of the heavens and the earth and whatever God has created?”

The Qur'an, Chapter 7 Verse 185



Concerning accountability, Islam promotes accounting the unjust ruler and preventing evil:

“The best of all struggles is a word of truth to a tyrant ruler.”

Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace)

“Let there be among you people that command the good, enjoining what is right and forbidding the wrong. They indeed are the successful.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 3 Verse 104

God commands His noble Prophets Moses (pbuh) and Aaron (pbuh) to speak mildly to the oppressive and unjust Pharaoh while discussing with him:

“And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 20 Verse 44

The 13th century scholar Imam al-Qurtubi said concerning this verse:

“If Moses was commanded to speak mildly to Pharaoh then it is even more appropriate for others to follow this command when speaking to others and when commanding the good and forbidding the evil.”

Imam al-Qurtubi. 13th Century Islamic Scholar

Islamic values promote sincere debate, dialogue and discussion:

“People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.”

The Qur’an, Chapter 49 Verse 13

“And do not insult those they invoke other than God, lest they insult God in enmity without knowledge.”

The Qur’an, Chapter 6 Verse 108



“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided.”

The Qur’an, Chapter 16 Verse 125

“I guarantee a house in paradise for the one who gives up insincere and useless arguments, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a home in the middle of paradise for the one who abandons lying even for the sake of fun; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of paradise for the one who has good manners.”

The Qur’an, Chapter 16 Verse 125

When the Islamic values were implemented in the Muslim lands progress was an inevitable product of the Islamic civilisation. For instance, the historian, Robert Briffault, in *The Making of Humanity* explains how progress was not only evident in Islamic history, but European growth was facilitated by the Islamic civilisation:

“For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic Culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the permanent distinctive force of the modern world, and the supreme source of its victory, natural science and the scientific spirit.”

Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*



Professor Thomas Arnold was of the opinion that the European Renaissance was rooted in Islamic Spain:

“...Muslim Spain had written one of the brightest pages in the history of Medieval Europe. Her influence had passed through Provence into the other countries of Europe, bringing into birth a new poetry and a new culture, and it was from her that Christian scholars received what of Greek philosophy and science they had to stimulate their mental activity up to the time of the Renaissance.”

Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*

In the Islamic paradigm, all of these objectives of freedom of speech are achieved within a framework of morality and decency. The Qur’anic values speak for themselves,

“...and they shall enjoy honour and dignity”

The Qur’an, Chapter 37 Verse 42

“Believers, no one group of men should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; no one group of women should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; do not speak ill of one another; do not use offensive nicknames for one another. How bad it is to be called a mischief-maker after accepting faith! Those who do not repent of this behaviour are evildoers. Believers, avoid making too many assumptions– some assumptions are sinful– and do not spy on one another or speak ill of people behind their backs: would any of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother? No, you would hate it. So be mindful of God: God is ever relenting, most merciful.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 49 Verses 11-12

“A true believer is not involved in taunting, or frequently cursing or in indecency or abusing.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 49 Verses 11-12

“Spy not and defame not others...”

The Qur'an, Chapter 49 Verse 12



“God does not love the public utterance of evil speech...”

The Qur'an, Chapter 49 Verse 12

“Do you not see how God sets forth a parable? A good word is like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach to the heavens - It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord. So God sets forth parables for mankind, in order that they may receive admonition. And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree: It is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth: it has no stability.”

The Qur'an, Chapter 14 Verses 24-26

In Islam, God has given guidance from His perfect knowledge to help people live in peace and harmony, informing us to use care and compassion with one another, not argument and harshness to cause discord.

Why Blasphemy is Wrong

How can we curse a man we should all love?

Imagine that someone cursed, degraded, insulted and dishonoured the person you love the most. You'd be quite upset. Now imagine someone drew a vile and degrading picture of that person and shared it with the whole world. How would you feel?

Wouldn't you try and get the picture removed?

Wouldn't you at least seek an apology?

The obvious answers to the above questions are exactly the type of responses Muslims have when God and His Prophets are degraded and defamed. As already highlighted in this booklet, the Islamic teachings are very clear on cursing and defaming anyone. They are also very specific when it comes to loving and respecting the Prophets (peace be upon them all).

The reason Muslims get very upset when the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is degraded and defamed is because they love and revere him more than any other person. Indeed, it is an indication of true faith, as the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) once explained that this was part of the sweetness of faith, that:

God and His Apostle becomes dearer than anything else."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

No Muslim will disagree that loving the Prophet (pbuh) is a part of a Muslim's faith.

"None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all of mankind."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

In fact, loving the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is to follow him, which ultimately leads to the love of God:

"Say, [O Muhammad], 'If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.'"

The Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 31

Therefore, there is a direct link between loving the Prophet (pbuh) and God's love. From a spiritual perspective in Islam, God's love is the greatest blessing anyone can ever achieve, as it is a source of internal tranquillity, serenity, and eternal bliss in the hereafter. One of God's names is al-Wadud, meaning "The-Loving". God is the source of love and His love transcends any love we can imagine. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught that God loves us more than our own mothers. The greatest worldly love we can think of is a mother's love, and if God's love is greater than this, it shows how transcendent and great His love is. Hence, a Muslim's faith cannot be complete without loving the Prophet (pbuh) more than anything in this world:

"No, by Him in Whose Hand my soul is, (you will not have complete faith) till I am dearer to you than your own self."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Loving God and His Prophet (pbuh) is a means to paradise, eternal bliss and Divine mercy. A man once asked the Prophet (pbuh) about the Day of Judgment saying, "When will the hour be?" The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "What have you prepared for it?" The man replied, "Nothing, except that I love God and His Apostle." The Prophet said, "You will be with those whom you love."

Finally, Muslims love all the Prophets because of who they were. They were the closest to God and a means to God's mercy and love. They had the best of character and sacrificed so much for us to be recipients of this spiritual and moral guidance. Just consider the teachings and integrity of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) life illustrates the integrity of his character. He was not a liar and to assert as much is indefensible. The reasons for this abound; for instance, he was known even by the enemies to his message as the "Trustworthy". Further proof of the Prophet's (pbuh) reliability and credibility is enforced and substantiated by the fact that a liar usually lies for some worldly gain, but the Prophet (pbuh) rejected all worldly aspirations, and suffered tremendously for his message. He rejected the riches and power he was offered to stop promulgating his message. Significantly, he was persecuted for his beliefs; boycotted and exiled from his own beloved city—Makkah; starved of food; and stoned by children to the point where his blood drenched his legs. His wife passed away and his beloved companions were tortured and persecuted. The psychological profile of the Prophet (pbuh) was obviously incongruent with that of a liar, and to suggest that he was dishonest is to make unfounded claims without any evidence.

The late Emeritus Professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies W. Montgomery Watt in, Muhammad at Mecca, explores this:

"His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as a leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement – all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves."

W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Mecca

It was the Prophet's (pbuh) truthfulness that was a key aspect of his success on both political and religious levels. Without his trustworthiness, which was an integral part of his moral behaviour, he could not have achieved so much in a relatively short space of time. This view is addressed by the historians Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley in History of the Saracen Empire:

"The greatest success of Mohammad's life was effected by sheer moral force."

Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley
History of the Saracen Empire

This “sheer moral force” is witnessed in the **Prophet’s teachings**. Here are a few examples:

“You must be compassionate. Whenever there is compassion in something, it adorns it, and when it is removed from something it disgraces it.”

“God is compassionate and loves compassion.”

“Whoever fails to show mercy to our children and honour to our elders is not one of us.”

“Those who show mercy will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful (God). Show mercy to those who are on earth and the One Who is in heaven will show mercy to you.”

“The most perfect in faith among the believers are those who possess the best morals and the best among you are those who are kindest to their wives.”

“The best among you is he who has the best manners.”



The Prophet (pbuh) was asked, “What sort of deeds or traits of Islam are good?” The Prophet said: “To feed others, and to greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know.”

“He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar.”

“By the one who has my soul in His hand, you will not enter the Garden until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another.”

“Islam is to testify that there is no deity of worship but God and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers, to pay the zakat, to fast in Ramadhan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do

In light of the above, would any of us wish to curse and defame someone else’s mother? Of course we wouldn’t. Therefore, how can we justify degrading the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who is more beloved than their own mothers to a population of 1.6 billion people worldwide. So is it not worth learning about the Prophet (pbuh) rather than reading the propaganda? Maybe, just maybe, you’ll fall in love with him like so many others before you.

Famous Quotes on Free Speech



“Some people’s idea of it [free speech] is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone else says anything back, that is an outrage.”

Winston Churchill
British wartime Prime Minister

“When widely followed public figures feel free to say anything, without any fact-checking, it becomes impossible for a democracy to think intelligently about big issues.”

Thomas L. Friedman
US Journalist

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets..”

Napoléon Bonaparte
Historic French Military and Political Leader

“You cannot provoke. You cannot insult the faith of others. You cannot make fun of the faith of others. There is a limit.”

Pope Francis
Sovereign of Vatican City State since 2013

“People demand freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use.”

Søren Kierkegaard 19th Century Danish Philosopher



“Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.”

“Do You Belong in Journalism?”
New Yorker, 4 May 1960



“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

Martin Luther King Jr
Christian Pastor & African-American
Civil Rights Leader (1929 to 1968)

Definition of Islamic terms used

Pbuh - Peace be Upon him

Whenever a prophet or messenger's name is mentioned then it is deemed part of Islamic manners to show respect by stating 'peace be upon him'.

Bibliography & References

1. Charles Kurzman. Anti-Muslim Sentiment Rising in the U.S: What Is Happening to Religious Tolerance? [<http://islamiccommentary.org/2014/02/anti-muslim-sentiment-rising-in-the-u-s-what-is-happening-to-religious-tolerance/>].
2. Daily Sabah. Cartoon World has Double Standard on Freedom of Speech Issue. [<http://www.dailysabah.com/world/2015/01/09/cartoon-world-has-double-standard-on-freedom-of-speech-issue>].
3. Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley. History of the Saracen Empire. London, 1870.
4. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Annual Report, 2004.
5. The Guardian, UK anti-Muslim hate crime soars, police figures show. Friday 27 December 2013. [<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/27/uk-anti-muslim-hate-crime-soars>].
6. The Guardian, Danish Paper Rejected Jesus Cartoons. Monday 6 February 2006. [<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/feb/06/pressandpublishing.politics>].
7. Hasan Gai Eaton. The Concept of God in Islam. [http://www.muslimsofcalgary.ca/userfiles/file/Useful_Links/The_Concept_of_God_in_Islam.pdf].
8. German Propaganda Archive. [<http://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/sturmer.htm>]. Cover cartoons from Julius Streicher's Der Stürmer. Streicher, one of Hitler's earliest followers, published the paper from 1923 to 1945. Included two promotional flyers from the 1930s.
9. Al-Jami'li Ahkam al-Qur'an.
10. John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty,' in On Liberty and Other Essays. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
11. Martin Lings. Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources. 2nd Revised Edition. The Islamic Texts Society. 1983.
12. Michael Hart, The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential People in History Golden Books Centre, 1989.
13. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as related in the collections of Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, and Abu Dawud.
14. Robert Briffault. The Making of Humanity. G. Allen & Unwin Limited, 1919.
15. Rosalind Ward Gwynne. Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments. Routledge. 2004.
16. Thomas Arnold. The Preaching of Islam. Second Edition. Constable and Company. London, 1913.
17. W. Montgomery Watt. Muhammad at Mecca. Oxford. 1953.

For more information about Islam please log onto www.onereason.org.

Don't Hate,

DEBATE!

"...and debate with them in ways that are best."

The Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 125

'Don't Hate, Debate!' is a campaign led by the Islamic Education and Research Academy (iERA) aimed at creating a platform for people of all faiths and none to engage in positive dialogue, without resorting to insults as a starting point of communication. In order to achieve social progression and community cohesion, it is pivotal that different groups within our society are able to discuss their differences without abusing or transgressing the boundaries of free speech, which will inevitably lead to animosity.

In light of the events in Paris, which led to the unfortunate deaths of 10 journalists, iERA believed it was imperative to have a nuanced discussion around the concept of freedom of speech and the 'right to offend'. The attack on the French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, has reintroduced the much-debated discussion around the limitations, or rather the unrestricted boundaries of the press in criticising and satirising religion, namely Islam.

Islam has always invited dialogue and scrutiny. In fact, classical Islamic libraries are filled with literature which openly criticise Islam, the existence of God, and the validity of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). These books authored by Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, and atheists, strongly scrutinised Islam, and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Humanists and atheists till today, continue to write academic books that question the foundations of the Islamic creed. Yet it is highly unlikely and near impossible, to find a single piece of classical and contemporary academic work criticising any religion on the premise of vulgar imagery or foul language.

Islamic values had allowed such discourse to flourish in order to fulfil the societal objectives of accountability, justice, progression and tolerance, centuries before Christian Europe, and this is well documented by western scholars from numerous scholastic backgrounds. Nothing has changed from the seventh century to today. Islam and Muslims in general still welcome open dialogue to fulfil the very objectives which the founding fathers of freedom of expression intended.

As a diverse community, there can often be feelings of resentment between groups of people due to a lack of understanding and interaction. This booklet is a small effort from the Muslim community to open the dialogue on issues that often drive communities apart. This booklet aims to highlight the importance of tackling hatred in our society and encourage people to 'debate our differences' rather than 'hate our differences'.

Don't Hate,

DEBATE!



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



SUPPORTED BY



WWW.ONEREASON.ORG