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Rocket Science

March 2015

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In the name of Allah,
most Gracious, most Merciful



Regent's Park Mosque,
London



Nick Clegg

Muslim population in England and Wales grows

75% in 10 years

A report for the Muslim Council of Britain¹, entitled *British Muslims in Numbers* indicates that the Muslim population of Britain rose from 1.5 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2011, a 75% increase. More than half were born outside Britain, but 73% regard themselves as British. One in 12 school-age children is now Muslim, and a third of all Muslims are aged 15 and under, with half under the age of 25.

The study was prepared for the Muslim Council of Britain by a team of researchers, led by Sundas Ali, of the University of Oxford.

However, the report also highlights the community's economic disadvantage.

Half the Muslim population live in the 10% most economically deprived areas, an increase since 2001, when the figure was one in three Muslims.

Only one in five Muslims was in full-time employment, compared with one in three of the wider population.

The researchers said Muslims face a "double penalty ... in entering

the labour market – of racial discrimination as well as Islamophobia. There is need for various stakeholders – Muslim civil society, policy institutes, employers, trade unions and the Department for Work and Pensions – to facilitate conditions and opportunities in the labour market. Muslim civil society needs to have a better appreciation of the social realities."¹

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said that the report highlights the challenges and opportunities facing British Muslims. "Taking data from the 2011 census, this important new report from the Muslim Council of Britain helps give us a snapshot of the socio-economic challenges and opportunities now facing Britain's Muslim communities. What's not in doubt is that British Muslims can be proud of the contribution they make to our country. Drawing on analysis like this, together, we can help create jobs, drive growth and enable more people to get on – building the stronger economy and fairer society we want for Britain's future."

The myth of absolute “freedom of expression”

Much has been written recently about the concept of “freedom of speech” or, more widely, “freedom of expression”. This followed the killings in Paris sparked by the publication of material offensive to Muslims in the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. The purpose of this article is to show not only that absolute “freedom of expression” should not exist, but also that it does not exist, and to highlight some clear examples of double standards in people’s reactions to offensive material.

Absolute “freedom of expression”

First, a clear distinction must be made between “freedom of expression” and absolute “freedom of expression”.

“Freedom of expression” means the freedom to express your point of view. Muslims have no problem with other people expressing their point of view, even if it is contrary to the Islamic point of view, provided it is presented in a respectful, logical manner, with supporting facts and evidence. At least then, it can form the basis of a rational discussion. The two parties may eventually fail to come to a consensus, and instead “agree to disagree”, but at least the various viewpoints have been aired, perhaps misconceptions have been corrected, the seeds for further research and thought have been sown, etc. As the 17th/18th century French philosopher and writer Voltaire said, “I do not agree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”

In contrast, absolute “freedom of expression” means the freedom to say absolutely anything, regardless of how unsubstantiated the

argument is, how obviously intended to cause offence the sentiment is, how laden with swearwords the language is, etc. It is this unbridled form of outburst that Muslims – like any other group, whether religious, racial, etc – object to. The recent protest marches by Muslims in London and other cities are against this second, absolute form of “freedom of expression”.

No absolute “freedom of expression” in the law

Regardless of whether we think that “freedom of expression” should or should not exist, there are clear examples to show that it simply does not exist.

Slander, libel

In many countries, the law prohibits absolute “freedom of expression”. If a person exercises their so-called right of absolute “freedom of expression” and says or writes something about another person, and the other person can prove that what was said or written is untrue and constitutes defamation of their character, then they can sue the first person. If it was expressed in speech, it is called slander; if it was in writing or other media, it is called libel. There are many instances of this, and the first person often has to issue an official apology, and pay reparation or a fine.

Naming children

Similar, but perhaps less strict, prohibitions exist in New Zealand. A report in the *New Zealand Herald*¹ gives examples of names that parents are not allowed to give their newborn children.



Protesters in London



A quick quiz: Can you guess which of the following names were allowed by the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs, and which were not allowed? (See the end of this article for the answer; we doubt that you will be 100% correct.)

*	E	Prince
Bishop	H-Q	Pyxibhel
Christ	Ill	Tchanze
Donny-Girl	Justice	Tequilla
Duke	Lucifer	V8

So, New Zealand parents are not allowed to exercise their so-called right of absolute "freedom of expression" and give their babies the names they want to. In addition, some of the prohibitions seem quite arbitrary. For example, Wikipedia² has a whole webpage devoted to famous people with the name *Prince*, including:

- Prince Amukamara (born 1989), National Football League cornerback
- Prince Daye (born 1978), Liberian former footballer
- Prince Fielder (born 1984), Professional baseball first baseman for the Texas Rangers
- Prince Hall (1735–1807), African-American abolitionist
- Prince Ihekwoaba (born 1989), Nigerian footballer
- Prince Michael Jackson I (born 1997), oldest son of singer Michael Jackson
- Prince Michael Jackson II (born 2002), youngest son of Michael Jackson, nicknamed "Blanket"
- Prince Johnson (born 1952), Liberian politician
- Prince Kudakwashe Musarurwa, Zimbabwean musician (born (1988))
- Prince Rogers Nelson (born 1958), known by his stage-name *Prince*, American singer-songwriter, multi-

- instrumentalist, and actor
- Prince Polley (born 1969), Ghanaian retired footballer
- Prince Tagoe (born 1986), Ghanaian footballer

Likewise, Wikipedia³ lists many famous people with the name *Duke*, including:

- Duke Ihenacho (born 1989), American National Football League player
- Duke Kahanamoku, Hawaiian athlete
- Duke McKenzie (born 1963), British retired boxer
- Duke Worne (1888-1933), American silent film director and actor

(The *Duke* of Duke Ellington, the jazz musician, was a nickname.)

Amazingly, Wikipedia^{4,5} also has pages for two Italian bishops with the name *Lucifer*:

- Lucifer Calaritanus (died 370 or 371), bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, venerated as a Saint in Sardinia
- Lucifer of Siena (3rd – 4th century), first bishop of Siena

In short, people around the world can name their babies *Prince*, *Duke* and *Lucifer*, but New Zealanders cannot. It is also perhaps worth noting that English-speaking New Zealanders cannot name their babies *Prince* or *Justice*, whereas Arabic-speaking new Zealanders can name their babies *Amir* (which can be translated as "Prince") and *Adl* (which can be translated as "Justice").



Church of Saint Lucifer Calaritanus, Cagliari, Sardinia



Musician Prince

In contrast, some people in some countries have been allowed to exercise their so-called right of absolute “freedom of expression” and give their babies extraordinary names. Perhaps the ultimate example of this is the Liverpool football fan in the UK who gave his daughter the name of all the players and managers of the highly successful 1960 Liverpool team: “Paula St John Lawrence Lawler Byrne Strong Yeats Stevenson Callaghan Hunt Smith Thompson Shankley Bennett Paisley”. Paula is not a member of the team but a real girl’s name. One wonders whether the New Zealand authority would have forbidden St John (after Liverpool great Ian St John).

Blasphemy

In terms of religion, many countries have laws against blasphemy, that is, the use of language that may be considered offensive to, or contrary to the mainstream teachings of, particular religions. However, these laws may only protect a certain religion(s) within a country, and are increasingly unlikely to be applied.

Nevertheless, a recent example of this shows that religious offence still causes widespread backlashes in some countries, not necessarily Muslim. A story carried by the *New Zealand Herald*⁶ and many other international media⁷, related to the New Zealand manager of a Yangon (Myanmar) bar appearing in a court after being arrested after a complaint by an official from Myanmar’s Religious Department for allegedly insulting the Buddhist religion by using an image of the Buddha wearing headphones in a promotion. The manager promptly issued an apology claiming ignorance.



VGastro management would like to express our sincere regret if we have offended the citizens of this wonderful city, who have welcomed us so warmly and generously. Our intention was never to cause offense to anyone or toward any religious group. Our ignorance is embarrassing for us and we will attempt to correct it by learning more about Myanmar’s religions, culture and history, characteristics that make this such a rich and unique society. We thank the citizens of Yangon for their patience and kindness and sincerely hope that our apology will be accepted.

Like · Comment

20 Shares

One wonders if the arrest and subsequent apology would have been so forthcoming if the promotion had shown the Prophet (saw) wearing headphones (a’uthu billah) in this Muslim-minority country.

Similarly, there are many countries where people exercising their so-called right of absolute “freedom of expression” and making offensive comments about the ruler are punishable by law (known as *lèse majesté*). A common example of this is Thailand, where the king is held in high regard by Thais, and comments held to be insulting to him (as in a recent Facebook example⁸) often lead to swift imprisonment.

Hypocrisy

Charlie Hebdo self-censoring

Many commentators have noted that the people defending the so-called right of absolute “freedom of expression” sometimes self-censor, that is, decide not to publish something because of fear of the backlash. This seems never to happen with insults against Islam, but with other religions. The most striking example of this is the fact that the satirical French magazine Charlie Hebdo, who sparked the current problems by publishing insulting material about Islam, have self-censored themselves for this reason.

As this is very controversial, it is quoted here verbatim from a report by the *Daily Telegraph*⁹:

"Maurice Sinet, 80, who works under the pen name Sine, faces charges of 'inciting racial hatred' for a column he wrote last July in the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. The piece sparked a summer slanging match among the Parisian intelligentsia and ended in his dismissal from the magazine. 'L'affaire Sine' followed the engagement of Mr Sarkozy, 22, [Jean Sarkozy, the son of the French president] to Jessica Sebaoun-Darty, the Jewish heiress of an electronic goods chain. Commenting on an unfounded rumour that the president's son planned to convert to Judaism, Sine quipped: 'He'll go a long way in life, that little lad.' ... Mr Val's decision to fire Sine was backed by a group of eminent intellectuals, including the philosopher Bernard-Henry Lévy, but parts of the libertarian Left defended him, citing the right to free speech. Last week, the anti-capitalist, anti-clerical Sine, who recently founded his own weekly magazine, Sine Hebdo, took Claude Askolovitch, the journalist who first accused him of anti-Semitism, to court for slander in a separate case. 'When I heard that I was being treated as anti-Semitic, my blood ran cold,' he said during the trial, adding that if Mr Askolovitch had turned up in person, 'it is not a trial he would have had but a head butt.'"⁹

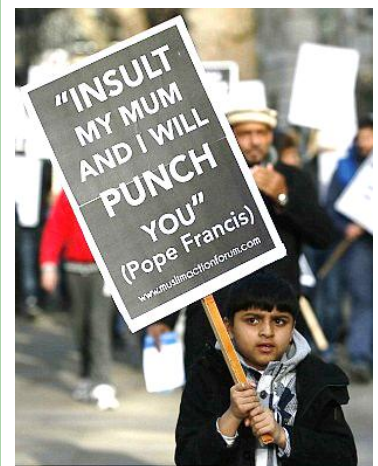
The threat of a physical response to insult was echoed by a recent comment by Pope Francis: "If my good friend Dr Gasparri [his aide] says a curse word against my mother, he can expect a punch."¹⁰

Similarly, the following report¹¹ highlights the hypocrisy of "free speech" campaigners. You can hardly claim your right to absolute "freedom of expression" if you do not acknowledge other people's absolute "freedom of expression" too:

"Forty-eight hours after hosting a massive march under the banner of free expression, France opened a criminal investigation of a controversial French comedian for a Facebook post he wrote about the Charlie Hebdo attack, and then this morning, arrested him for that post on charges of "defending terrorism". ... The apparently criminal viewpoint he posted on Facebook declared: 'Tonight, as far as I'm concerned, I feel like Charlie Coulibaly.' Investigators concluded that this was intended to mock the 'Je Suis Charlie' slogan and express support for the perpetrator of the Paris supermarket killings (whose last name was 'Coulibaly')."

Artistic "freedom of expression"

In the artistic world, "freedom of expression" is often alluded to for the sake of creativity and imagination. Just as Peter Parker as Spiderman is told, "With great power comes great responsibility", so artistic freedom of expression comes with responsibility. This is true regardless of the type of art (a novel, song, cartoon, painting, etc) and was debated over a quarter of a century ago when Salman Rushdie offended Muslims worldwide with his 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*. The lesson of responsibility in art does not seem to have been learnt.



A recent New Zealand example of this is an exhibit in a historical *T-shirts Unfolding* exhibition in Christchurch. More than 3,000 people signed a petition against one exhibit, depicting "a semi-naked nun masturbating on one side and offensive wording about Jesus on the other side."¹²

However, Canterbury Museum defended its inclusion, pointing out that it had been passed by the Office of the Chief Censor.

PC euphemisms

The *Herald on Sunday*¹³ and international media described an embarrassing episode for British actor Benedict Cumberbatch. "The *Hobbit* star was forced to apologise after talking about 'coloured actors' on US television." You may be wondering what he had to apologise for, especially given that "he was complaining about the lack of diversity on British screens", that is, he was supporting the cause of coloured actors by advocating that there should be more parts for non-white actors.

If you are still at a loss to explain the apology, it is that the PC euphemism for non-whites nowadays in the USA is apparently "people of colour" or "African-Americans". Of course, Cumberbatch can't talk about the lack of African-Americans on British screens, because that is not who he is referring to. As the *Herald* reported, even "the black British star of Oscar-nominated drama *Selma*, David Oyelowo, called the furore 'silly' and 'ridiculous'". (So, Oyelowo is happy to be called *coloured*, and the *Herald* is happy to refer to him as *black*.)

Also as the *Herald* reported, some people are extremely PC, or perhaps extremely thin-skinned, with PC euphemisms, even those who are perhaps the kind who champion "freedom of expression"

including insults to Islam. "When [Kiwi] Murray Deaker ordered a black coffee on a recent flight in the US, he was not expecting a confrontation. The former TV and radio sports commentator was thrown a withering look by the flight attendant before she angrily asked if he instead meant to request coffee without milk. It dawned on him she thought he was making a racist remark." Perhaps the best we can do is to put this down to the flight attendant's lack of overseas experience (presumably she is a domestic US flight attendant), and that, if she came to New Zealand, she would be confronted by short blacks, long blacks, flat whites, etc (all types of coffee), in addition to the All Blacks, All Whites, Black Caps, Tall Blacks, etc (all New Zealand national sports teams), without the slightest hint of them having racist overtones.

"Freedom of speech" in Islam

To conclude, let us reiterate the point made at the beginning of this article. There is a difference between "freedom of expression" and absolute "freedom of expression". Muslims have no problem with others expressing their point of view, provided it is presented in a respectful, responsible, logical manner, with supporting facts and evidence. However, there is no such thing as absolute "freedom of expression". Nobody can express anything they like in any way they like, without the possibility of consequences.

As always, the responsible, polite form of "freedom of expression" in Islam follows from ayats in the Quran (ie instructions from Allah, swt) and the hadith (ie stories of how Prophet Muhammad, saw, and his family and companions, ra, spoke and behaved). The following are a few such quotations.



Benedict
Cumberbatch

Quran

Almost the whole of Surah Al-Hujurat talks about polite speech, manners and behaviour (*akhlaq*). "Believers! Never raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak to him loudly, as you speak loudly with each other, lest your deeds be laid to waste without your realising it. Indeed those who lower their voices with the Prophet are the ones whose hearts Allah has purified for taqwa. They shall have forgiveness and a tremendous reward. Indeed, most of those who call for you (O Prophet) from outside the rooms (of your wives) have no understanding (of etiquette). ... Believers! If any sinner brings you any news, then verify it, lest you should harm any nation unknowingly and then become remorseful for your actions. ... Believers! Men should not mock other men for perhaps they (those mocked) may be better than them (those who mock). Never should any woman mock other women, for perhaps they may be better than them. Never find fault with yourselves (other Muslims) and do not call each other names. ... Believers! Refrain from excessive assumption. Indeed, some assumptions are a sin. Never spy and never backbite each other. ... Believers! We have certainly created you from a single male (Adam, as) and female (Hawa, ra) and made you into various nations and tribes so that you may recognise each other." (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49: 2-13)

"Moderate your walk (be calm, composed and modest) and lower your voice (speak gently to people). Indeed the most hateful sound is the braying of a donkey." (Surah Luqman, 31:19)

Hadith

"The most beloved of Allah's servants to Allah are those with the best manners." (Prophet Muhammad, saw)

"I wish I had a neck as long as a giraffe's, so I would have that much time to consider what I was about to say before it came out of my mouth." (Ali ibn Abi Talib, ra)

Seeing the truth

Finally, let us record that some good has come of the Charlie Hebdo episode, in that some people have converted to Islam after investigating Islam and Prophet Muhammad (saw) for themselves, in much the same way as in the aftermath of the wars in Iraq. For example, French director Isabelle Matic¹⁴ announced her conversion on her Facebook page shortly after the episode. "I will write you the text of the SMS that I received this morning from a mosque which agreed quite well with my thoughts since the beginning of the cartoons, well before I became a Muslim. They are making fun of Muhammad and do not harm him. They are making fun of a character that they have imagined and to whom they have given a name. This man is not our Prophet."

May Allah (swt) guide people to (the true picture of) Islam, and help us all to communicate with Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the proper responsible, respectful way.



Isabelle Matic

1 www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10836056
 2 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_\(given_name\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_(given_name))
 3 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_\(disambiguation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_(disambiguation))
 4 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucifer_of_Cagliari
 5 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucifer_of_Siena
 6 www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/new-zealand-bar-manager-held-in-burma-over-buddha-drinks-promotion
 7 www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2871044/Myanmar-bar-manager-accused-insulting-Buddhism.html
 8 www.thestar.com/news/world/2014/11/04/thai_student_jailed_for_insulting_king_on_facebook.html
 9 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/4351672/French-cartoonist-Sine-on-trial-on-charges-of-anti-Semitism-over-Sarkozy-jibe.html
 10 www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/charlie-hebdo-pope-francis-says-those-who-ridicule-others-religions-should-expect-a-punch-9980192.html

11 [France arrests a comedian for his Facebook comments, showing the sham of the west's "free speech" celebration.](http://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/01/14/days-hosting-massive-free-speech-march-france-arrests-comedian-facebook-comments/)
 12 tvnz.co.nz/national-news/museum-defends-masturbating-nun-t-shirt-exhibition-6234243
 13 Coloured certainly ain't the new black. *Herald on Sunday* 8 February. www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=11398327
 14 www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/01/149537/french-director-converts-to-islam-after-charlie-hebdo-attacks

Answer to newborn name quiz

Allowed: Donny-Girl, Pyxibhel, Tchanze, Tequilla

Not allowed: *, Bishop, Christ, Duke, E, H-Q, Justice, III, Lucifer, Prince, V8

Five before five

In an authentic hadith, the Prophet (saw) said:

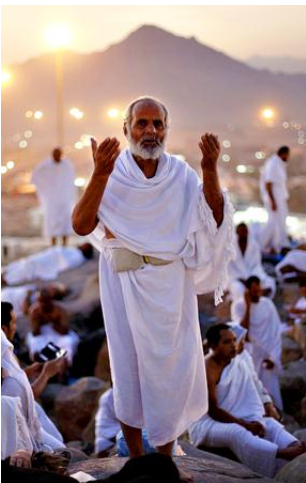
“Take the benefit of five [matters] before five [other matters]:

- Your youth before your old age,
- Your health before your sickness,
- Your wealth before your poverty,
- Your free time before your preoccupation,
- And your life before your death.”

1 Youth before your old age

Unlike the Western perception of youth, in Islam youth is considered up to the age of 40. Many youth these days take their youth for granted. When we are young, this is the time we have energy and time to do good for the community, and to worship Allah (swt).

One good example is hajj. It is very difficult to perform hajj once we get older. We are physically and mentally weak to perform the demanding rituals of hajj once we pass 40. We therefore must make the effort to perform hajj while we are still young, and make it easy on ourselves and others around us.



Youth is a time to give charity. Charity is not just in terms of money we spend in the way of Allah (swt) but also includes our time, resources, talent and energy. Unlike money, time is something that we give that cannot be taken back once spent and we spend it from our own selves.

2 Health before sickness

Like our youth, when we are young we often neglect the blessings of good health given to us by Allah (swt). We may be in good health today, but there is no guarantee that in the future we will continue to be in that state.

One day we are able to walk straight, the next day we become crippled due to an accident or infection. One day we can eat as we like, the next day we catch diabetes or cholesterol or any other long term illness. As the Prophet (saw) said, we need to learn to appreciate our good health while we can.

This means being able to fast Ramadan as well as some sunnah fasts; praying our fard prayers as well as nafl; reading the Quran while we still have our eyesight; and so on.

Once a person came to Yunus ibn 'Ubayy (ra), one of the scholars of the Salaf, and he complained of extreme poverty as he had not been blessed with much. Yunus ibn Ubayy asked him, "Would you be willing to give away your sight for a certain amount of money?" The man said, "No, of course not." Then he asked him, "Would you be willing to give your hands away?" He said, "No, of course not." He asked, "Your feet?" He said, "Of course not." When he finished, he said "I see that you have hundreds of thousands of millions of

blessings, yet you are complaining of poverty?"

3 Wealth before poverty

Wealth in this context does not mean extreme riches, such as having an expensive house, brand new car or large amounts of gold. Wealth here means having the resources to feed your family, to meet your daily needs such as a car to travel to and from work, a roof over our heads, and some clothes to wear. Already, this makes us among the wealthiest people on earth.

If we look at some of the people in the third world countries, they have nothing – no clothes to wear, very little food and water, and no place to sleep at night. Subhanallah! Look at how we are blessed! We need to think of these blessings and see how we can contribute back to the community.

Think of giving your old clothes in charity, or feeding a poor person, or helping someone put a roof over their heads. You will be rewarded by Allah (swt) for all these acts. In fact in a hadith, it is said that charity begins at home. And even a morsel of food that you buy for your wife with the intention of getting the reward from Allah (swt) will be rewarded in the hereafter.

So let us make the intention with everything we do that we are doing it for the sake of Allah (swt) and for our hereafter (akhira).

4 Free time before preoccupation

How often does our free time go unnoticed? In a typical day we spend about eight hours in sleep, and eight to ten hours at work or study (including travel time). That leaves us with six hours to spend any way we like.





But what do most people do with this free time? Television and vain talk. We literally spend hours in front the TV but gain very little that will help us in this world or the hereafter. We should aim to reduce the amount of TV in our lives and start thinking about our hereafter.

Instead, spend some time reading the Quran, even if it be five or ten minutes a day. A good tip for those who commute to work or place of education is to play the Quran on the stereo or your phone. Set it on repeat and insha Allah soon you will have memorised a new surah. Likewise, play the Quran with meaning or even listen to talks by esteemed scholars. The technology these days makes it so easy for us to do ibadah while we drive, or do other tasks.

The concept of time is so important in Islam that Allah swears by it in the Quran:

'By [the token of] Time. Verily man is in loss, except such as have faith and do good deeds, and [join together] in the mutual teaching of truth, of patience and constancy.' (Surah Al-'Asr)

As time passes, we will only have more and more things to worry about, such as old age, children, work, and home. So let us make an effort to appreciate the blessing of time from Allah (swt) and make use of it so that we will be rewarded for what we do.

5 Life before death

Everyone will die one day. Allah (swt) says in the Quran (surah Ar-Rahman), "Everyone upon the earth will perish."

How true is this? Even the Prophet (saw) passed away. So did the people who believed in him and those who did not. Did Firoun not die? Despite being the world's strongest power, he died too. It is no wonder that a time will come that we will also die and move to the next stage of our journey.

Allah says in the Quran (surah As-Sajdah) that some people will say: "Our Lord! We have now seen and heard, so send us back (to the world), we will do righteous good deeds. Verily! We now believe with certainty."

And Allah (swt) will say "No". You will be rewarded for what good you do and punished for what evil you do. We must take heed of these verses. This is no joke. We only live once, so make it count!

Every night we go to sleep, our soul returns to Allah (swt). And it is with his blessings that the soul is returned back to us to live another day. We need to be thankful for this by saying 'Praise be to Allah who gave me life after death, and to Him is the final return.'

Let us make an effort today to change our lives in light of these five things before the other five come to bite us. Ameen!



Buying time

"Mummy, do I have enough money to buy time?" my son asks innocently as we count the money in his bank.

"Uh, what did you say you wanted to buy?"

"I want to buy time".

So I did the usual grown-up thing of explaining to him why he simply couldn't buy time, no matter how much money he had.

It brought to mind Surah Al Asr, the 103rd surah of the Holy Quran:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. By time!
2. Surely man is in loss,
3. Except those who believe and do good, and exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience.

Al-'asr means an era, time, or the passing of time. This Surah was so highly regarded by the sahabah (ra) that, whenever they met, they would recite it and remind each

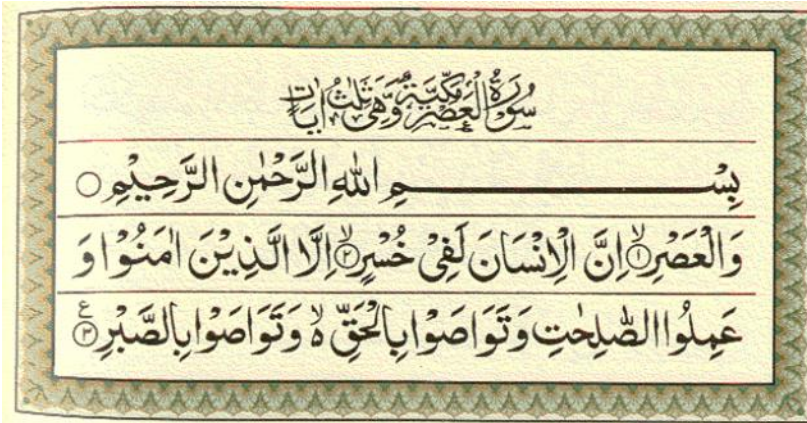
other of it. Imam Shafi (ra) is also reported to have been of the opinion that, had this been the only surah revealed to mankind, it would have been sufficient.

The significance of this can be understood when one looks closely at the message contained in the surah. Here, Allah (swt) talks to us about the true purpose of our lives and reminds us subtly about the fleeting nature of time.

The final verse of the Surah summarises the purpose of our lives as having faith, doing good and the exhortation to truth and to patience, for these constitute true honour and wealth. Allah (swt) is reminding us that time is passing, and that whoever spends his time in useful work is successful, while whoever wastes his time will end up in loss.

So as you go through the day or night, remember this:

Always be grateful to Allah for everything He has blessed us with and never ever take anything for granted.





Take the time to enjoy life, every single minute of it, for it may not come again.

Life is too short for worries, hatred or anger. So smile and be happy.

Make the most of what you have today.

Be grateful, even if you don't have much. So many others are worse off than you.

Leave others with kind words. It may be the last time you see them.

If someone is being rude to you, be polite to them, or simply ignore them.

Tell people how much you love them, every day.

Give gifts, even if it is just a smile.

If you don't have anything nice to say, keep quiet.

Remember your friends and family. Often we greet strangers kindly and yet neglect those dearest to us.

Remember death. It will make you appreciate life more.

Love unconditionally, expecting nothing in return, and live every moment knowing it will never come again. Who knows what may happen tomorrow.

If you think you're really busy and you don't have the time for anything, remember that every minute, life is passing you by. Think of what's really important to you. How much time do you really have?

May Allah (swt) help us use our time wisely and to worship Him in a manner which pleases Him. May He guide and protect us always.

Muslim scientists

This is the third, and final, instalment of an article about early Muslim scientists.

Astronomy

Of the many scientists in the field of astronomy, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Sufi (903-986), known in the west as Azophi, helped build a famous observatory under the Buwayh Sultan Sharaf-al-Dawlah. He prepared charts of the heavens with magnitudes and was the first to mark the nebula of Andromeda in his atlas.

Al-Zarqali (1029-1087) from al-Andalus invented the astrolabe and measured the rate of motion. He also constructed astronomical instruments and built a water clock.

Abu Abdullah al-Battani (862-929)

was a son of a scientist and also a famous astronomer, mathematician and astrologer. He is often considered one of the greatest astronomers of Islam. His career of 42 years included a number of important discoveries, including the accurate determination of the solar year as 365 days, 5 hours, 46 minutes, and 24 seconds, which is very close to modern estimates. He also determined with accuracy the obliquity of the ecliptic (the "tilt" of the earth, ie the angle between the plane of the earth's orbit and the plane of the earth's equator), the length of the seasons and the true and mean orbit of the sun.

He proved, in contrast to Ptolemy, the variation of the apparent angular diameter of the sun and the possibility of annular eclipses. His observations of lunar and solar eclipses were used by Dunthorne in 1749 to determine the secular acceleration of motion of the moon.

Jabir ibn Aflah (1100–1150) was a Spanish Arab who criticised Ptolemy's heliocentric theory of planetary motion. He designed the first portable celestial sphere to explain and measure the movements of celestial objects and led the way for spherical trigonometry.

Nur ad-Din Al-Bitruji (died ca. 1204), known in the West by the Latinised name Alpetragius, developed a new theory of stellar movements.

The names of many constellations, words like *zenith* and *nadir*, and even the names of craters of the moon all go back to the works of Muslim scholars of this time.

Geography

In the field of geography, Ahmad Ibn Majid (1421- ca. 1500) invented the compass. The Muslims traversed the Indian, Atlantic and Pacific Ocean as well as sailing around the African continent, in their trading with India, Iran and Greece. They wrote such books as *Akhbar al-Hind* (Reports on India), *Akhbar al-Sin* (Reports on China) and *Ajib al-Hind* (Curiosities of India).

Sulaiman Al-Makri wrote of his travels in *Al-Budat* and other books.

Abu al-Hasan al-Masudi (895-957), a historian and scientist, travelled the world journeying from Persia, Central Asia, India, the Near East and Madagascar, to the China Sea. He wrote an encyclopaedic volume

on his travels which included history, cosmology and geography.

Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni (973–1048) was the first known writer to identify certain geological facts, such as the formation of sedimentary rocks and the great geological changes that happened in the past. He was also the founder of geodesy and wrote about, and improved upon, the methods of measuring longitudes, latitudes, heights of mountains and the diameter of the earth. He also wrote on biological evolution.

Conclusion

Thus the contributions of early Islam were so rich, so voluminous, and so varied that they cannot be encapsulated in this brief descriptive survey. These Muslims drew from their pre-Islamic traditions, plus those of the civilisations they came into contact with, and they absorbed what went with their beliefs and rejected what did not. Over the centuries, they continued to develop and take part in the pursuit of knowledge with no hesitation. The destruction of Baghdad, and the Mongol invasions, did not even hinder them from learning and elaborating on the arts and sciences, despite the wholesale destruction of their books and knowledge.

However, what is most important about the early Muslims is not the discoveries themselves but the methodology and kind of thought behind what produced them. Inspired by the truth of Islam, by strong faith and by Quranic enjoinders to ponder, think and discover the world, they led the world in doing so. Only with this verve to relate the outward world of science, art and philosophy to inner spirituality and religion can we again reach the heights of the Golden Age of Islam.



Statue of Al-Biruni,
National Library,
Tajikistan



Abu Hurairah (ra)

The subject of this article is the great companion Abu Hurairah (ra). His name hardly goes unmentioned in Friday khutbahs, Islamic lectures, in the books of hadith, sirah, fiqh, ibadah and religious gatherings, because his is the foremost name in the roll of hadith transmitters. Through his prodigious efforts, thousands of hadiths were transmitted to later generations.

Although he narrated so many hadiths, he accompanied the Prophet (saw) for only four years. However, he took a considerable amount of pure and blessed knowledge from the Prophet. He once said, "You people say that Abu Hurairah is profuse in his narrations from Allah's messenger. And you also ask why the muhajirin [migrants from Makkah to Madinah] and the ansar [helpers in Madinah] do not narrate from Allah's messenger as he does. My muhajirin brothers used to be busy in the market and my brothers amongst the ansar also used to be busy with taking care of their wealth. Meanwhile, I was a poor man from among the poor living in the suffah or the surroundings of the Prophet's mosque. I used to stick to Allah's messenger satisfied with whatever filled my stomach, so I used to be present when they were absent and I used to remember when they forgot."

Abu Hurairah became a Muslim at the hands of At-Tufayl ibn Amr, the chief of the Daws tribe to which he belonged. The Daws lived in the region of Tihamah which stretches along the coast of the Red Sea in southern Arabia or present-day Yemen. When At-Tufayl returned to his village after meeting the Prophet (saw) and becoming a

Muslim in the early years of his mission, Abu Hurairah was one of the first to respond to his call. He was unlike the majority of the Daws who remained stubborn in their old beliefs for a long time. When at-Tufayl visited Makkah again, Abu Hurairah accompanied him. There he had the honour of meeting the Prophet who asked him, "What is your name?" He replied "Abdu Shams, or Servant of the Sun".

"Instead, let it be Abdur-Rahman - the Servant of the Beneficent Lord," said the Prophet.

"Yes, Abdur-Rahman (it shall be) O Messenger of God," he replied. However, he continued to be known as Abu Hurairah, "the kitten man", literally "the father of the kitten" because like the Prophet (saw) he was fond of cats and since his childhood often had a cat to play with.

Abu Hurairah stayed in Tihamah for several years and it was only at the beginning of the seventh year of the Hijrah that he arrived in Madinah with others of his tribe. The Prophet had gone on a campaign to Khaybar. Being destitute, Abu Hurairah took up his place in the Masjid with others of the Ahl as-Suffah. He was single, without a wife or child.

With him, however, was his mother who was still a mushrik. He longed, and prayed, for her to become a Muslim but she adamantly refused. One day, he invited her to have faith in God alone and follow His Prophet but she uttered some words about the Prophet which saddened him greatly. With tears in his eyes, he went to the noble Prophet who said to him, "What makes you cry, Abu Hurairah?"



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"I have not let up in inviting my mother to Islam but she has always rebuffed me. Today, I invited her again and I heard words from her which I do not like. Do make supplication to God Almighty to make the heart of Abu Hurairah's mother incline to Islam."

The Prophet responded to Abu Hurairah's request and prayed for his mother. Abu Hurairah said, "I went home and found the door closed. I heard the splashing of water and when I tried to enter my mother said, 'Stay where you are, O Abu Hurairah.' And after putting on her clothes, she said, 'Enter!' I entered and she said, 'I testify that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger.' I returned to the Prophet weeping with joy, just as an hour before I had gone weeping from sadness, and said, 'I have good news, O Messenger of Allah. God has responded to your prayer and guided the mother of Abu Hurairah to Islam.'"

Abu Hurairah loved the Prophet (saw) a great deal and found favour with him. He was never tired of looking at the Prophet whose face appeared to him as having all the radiance of the sun, and he was never tired of listening to him. Often he would praise God for his good fortune and say, "Praise be to God Who has guided Abu Hurairah to Islam. Praise be to God Who has taught Abu Hurairah the Quran. Praise be to God who has bestowed on Abu Hurairah the companionship of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace."

On reaching Madinah, Abu Hurairah set his heart on attaining knowledge. Zayd ibn Thabit (ra), the notable companion of the Prophet, reported, "While Abu Hurairah and I and another friend of mine were in the Masjid praying

to God Almighty and performing dhikr to Him, the Messenger of God appeared. He came towards us and sat among us. We became silent and he said, 'Carry on with what you were doing.' So my friend and I made a supplication to God before Abu Hurairah did and the Prophet began to say 'Ameen' to our dua. Then Abu Hurairah made a supplication saying: "O Lord, I ask You for what my two companions have asked and I ask You for knowledge which will not be forgotten.' The Prophet (saw) said, 'Ameen.' We then said, 'And we ask Allah for knowledge which will not be forgotten', and the Prophet replied, 'The Dawsī youth has asked for this before you.'"

With his formidable memory, Abu Hurairah set out to memorise within just four years many sayings which could not be remembered by many other sahabas who had much longer companionship with the Prophet (saw). Unlike many of the muhajirin he did not busy himself in the marketplace, with buying and selling. Unlike many of the ansar, he had no land to cultivate or crops to look after. He stayed with the Prophet in Madinah and went with him on journeys and expeditions.

Many companions were amazed at the number of hadiths he had memorised and often questioned him on when he had heard a certain hadith and under what circumstances. Once Marwan ibn al-Hakam (ra) wanted to test Abu Hurairah's power of memory. He sat with him in one room and behind a curtain he placed a scribe, unknown to Abu Hurairah, and ordered him to write down whatever Abu Hurairah said. A year later, Marwan called Abu Hurairah again and asked him to recall the same hadiths which the scribe had recorded. It was found that he had forgotten not a single word.





Abu Hurairah Mosque, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abu Hurairah was concerned to teach and transmit the ahadith he had memorised and knowledge of Islam in general. It is reported that one day he passed through the suq (market) of Madinah and naturally saw people engrossed in the business of buying and selling. "How feeble are you, O people of Madinah!" he said.

"What do you see that is feeble in us, Abu Hurairah?" they asked.

"The inheritance of the Messenger of God (saw) is being distributed and you remain here! Won't you go and take your portion?"

"Where is this, O Abu Hurairah?" they asked.

"In the masjid," he replied.

Quickly they left. Abu Hurairah waited until they returned. When they saw him, they said: "O Abu Hurairah, we went to the masjid and entered and we did not see anything being distributed."

"Didn't you see anyone in the masjid?" he asked.

"O yes, we saw some people performing salat, some people reading the Quran and some people discussing what is halal and what is haram."

"Woe unto you," replied Abu Hurairah. "That is the inheritance of Muhammad (saw)."

Abu Hurairah underwent much hardship and difficulties as a result of his dedicated search for knowledge. He was often hungry and destitute. He said about himself, "When I was afflicted with severe hunger, I would go to a companion of the Prophet and asked him about an ayah of the Quran and (stay with him) learning it so that he would take me with him to his house and give food. One day, my hunger became so

severe that I placed a stone on my stomach. I then sat down in the path of the companions. Abu Bakr (ra) passed by and I asked him about an ayah of the Book of God. I only asked him so that he would invite me but he didn't. Then Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) passed by me and I asked him about an ayah but he also did not invite me. Then the Messenger of God (saw) passed by and realised that I was hungry and said, "Abu Hurairah!"

"At your command" I replied and followed him until we entered his house. He found a bowl of milk and asked his family, "From where did you get this?"

"Someone sent it to you" they replied.

He then said to me: "O Abu Hurairah, go to the Ahl as-Suffah and invite them."

Abu Hurairah did as he was told and they all drank from the milk.

The time came, of course, when the Muslims were blessed with great wealth and material goodness of every description. Abu Hurairah eventually got his share of wealth. He had a comfortable home, a wife and child. But this turn of fortune did not change his personality. Neither did he forget his days of destitution. He would say, "I grew up as an orphan and I emigrated as a poor and indigent person. I used to take food for my stomach from Busrah bint Ghazwan (ra) who would later become his wife. I served people when they returned from journeys and led their camels when they set out. Then God caused me to marry Busrah. So praise be to God who has strengthened his religion and made Abu Hurairah an imam." (This last statement is a reference to the time when he became governor of Madinah.)

Much of Abu Hurairah's time would be spent in spiritual exercises and devotion to God. Qiyam al-Layl (staying up for the night in prayer and devotion) was a regular practice of his family including his wife and his daughter. He would stay up for a third of the night, his wife for another third, and his daughter for a third. In this way, in the house of Abu Hurairah, no hour of the night would pass without ibadah, dhikr and salat.

During the caliphate of Umar (ra), Umar appointed him as governor of Bahrain. Umar was very scrupulous about the type of persons whom he appointed as governors. He was always concerned that his governors should live simply and frugally and not acquire much wealth, even though this was through lawful means. In Bahrain, Abu Hurairah became quite rich. Umar heard of this and recalled him to Madinah. Umar thought he had acquired his wealth through unlawful means and questioned him about where and how he had acquired such a fortune. Abu Hurairah replied, "From breeding horses and gifts which I received."

"Hand it over to the treasury of the Muslims," ordered Umar.

Abu Hurairah did as he was told and raised his hands to the heavens and prayed, "O Lord, forgive the Amir al-Muminin."

Subsequently, Umar asked him to become governor once again but he declined. Umar asked him why he refused and he said, "So that my honour would not be tainted, my wealth taken and my back beaten." And he added: "And I fear to judge without knowledge and speak without wisdom."

Throughout his life Abu Hurairah remained kind and courteous to his

mother. Whenever he wanted to leave home, he would stand at the door of her room and say, "As-salaamu alaykum, yaa ummataah, wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu" ("Peace be on you, mother, and the mercy and blessings of God"). She would reply, "Wa alayka-s salaam, yaa bunayya, wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu" (And on you be peace, my son, and the mercy and blessings of God"). Often, he would also say, "May God have mercy on you as you cared for me when I was small," and she would reply, "May God have mercy on you as you delivered me from error when I was old."

Abu Hurairah always encouraged other people to be kind and good to their parents. One day he saw two men walking together, one older than the other. He asked the younger one: "What is this man to you?"

"My father," the person replied.

"Don't call him by his name. Don't walk in front of him and don't sit before him," advised Abu Hurairah.

Abu Hurairah (ra) lived beyond the time of the rightly guided caliphs and therefore often prayed to Allah asking for refuge from the evil of the sixtieth year and the authority of the youth. He was referring to the time of evil rulers and through this statement, it becomes clear that Abu Hurairah gained the knowledge of the time of the appearance of evil rulers through the Prophet (saw). Therefore, he stated, "I memorised two things from the Prophet (saw). The first one, I have spread it among the people; as for the second one, were I to disclose it, my neck would be cut."

Some deviant people have used this statement to infer that the shariah has two aspects, the apparent and the inner, and the latter can be gained only by certain selected people. However, what Abu Hurairah meant was something completely different: what he intended by his words "my neck would be cut" was that if some people find errors in their actions through his sayings they will put him to death. It is this knowledge he hid from people to avoid conflict and disorder but he never hid any sayings pertaining to religious guidance or worship which are not allowed to be concealed.

Allah (swt) answered Abu Hurairah's prayers and he died in the 59th year of Hijrah, just one year before the rule of Yazeed bin Muawiyah (ra) whose time is marred by bitter conflicts among Muslims themselves. He was 78 years of age at the time of his death.

Muslims owe a debt of gratitude to Abu Hurairah (ra) for helping to preserve and transmit the valuable legacy of the Prophet (saw). May God bless him and grant him peace.

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7 March

Quran 2: 21-23 Worship.

LECTURE: How to build a peaceful family by Imam Said Rageah.

DOCUMENTARY: Answers from the Quran 1 part 1.

14 March

Quran 2: 21-23 Worship.

LECTURE: Modesty and a sound heart by Abdul Hakim Quick.

DOCUMENTARY: Answers from the Quran 1 part 2.

No stone unturned: Prophet Jesus by Sheikh Bilal Dannoun.

21 March

Quran 43: 81-84 God is 1 and has no son.

LECTURE: Why you should believe in 1 God by Hussein Yee

DOCUMENTARY: Answers from the Quran 1 part 3.

Tid Bits: Pillars of Islam by Sheikh Yusuf Estes.

28 March

Quran 57: 1-4 Allah is the Creator of everything..

LECTURE: Deen a way of life for the Muslim by Sheikh Yusuf Estes.

DOCUMENTARY: Looking through the eyes of wisdom.



Hussein Yee

Watch VOI online, or order a free copy of the Quran: www.voitv.org

Auckland prayer timetable for March 2015

(from www.islamicFinder.org. For other cities in New Zealand, see www.fianz.co.nz).

Date	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr 1	Asr 2	Maghrib	Isha
1	5:37	7:05	1:34	5:12	6:10	8:01	9:26
2	5:38	7:06	1:34	5:11	6:09	8:00	9:24
3	5:39	7:07	1:33	5:11	6:08	7:58	9:22
4	5:40	7:08	1:33	5:10	6:07	7:57	9:21
5	5:41	7:09	1:33	5:09	6:06	7:56	9:19
6	5:43	7:10	1:33	5:08	6:05	7:54	9:18
7	5:44	7:11	1:33	5:08	6:04	7:53	9:16
8	5:44	7:11	1:33	5:08	6:04	7:53	9:16
9	5:45	7:12	1:32	5:07	6:02	7:51	9:15
10	5:47	7:13	1:32	5:05	6:00	7:49	9:11
11	5:48	7:14	1:32	5:04	5:59	7:47	9:10
12	5:49	7:15	1:31	5:03	5:58	7:46	9:08
13	5:50	7:16	1:31	5:03	5:57	7:44	9:07
14	5:51	7:17	1:31	5:02	5:56	7:43	9:05
15	5:52	7:18	1:30	5:01	5:54	7:41	9:03
16	5:54	7:19	1:30	5:00	5:53	7:40	9:02
17	5:55	7:20	1:30	4:59	5:52	7:38	9:00
18	5:56	7:21	1:30	4:58	5:51	7:37	8:59
19	5:57	7:22	1:29	4:57	5:50	7:35	8:57
20	5:58	7:23	1:29	4:56	5:48	7:34	8:55
21	5:59	7:23	1:29	4:55	5:47	7:32	8:54
22	5:59	7:23	1:29	4:55	5:47	7:32	8:54
23	6:00	7:24	1:29	4:54	5:46	7:32	8:53
24	6:02	7:26	1:28	4:52	5:44	7:30	8:49
25	6:03	7:27	1:28	4:51	5:42	7:28	8:48
26	6:04	7:28	1:28	4:50	5:41	7:27	8:46
27	6:05	7:29	1:27	4:49	5:40	7:25	8:45
28	6:06	7:30	1:27	4:48	5:39	7:24	8:43
29	6:06	7:31	1:27	4:47	5:37	7:22	8:42
30	6:07	7:31	1:26	4:46	5:36	7:21	8:40
31	6:08	7:32	1:26	4:45	5:35	7:19	8:39

Asr 1: Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali schools (single shadow length)

Asr 2: Hanafi school (double shadow length)

“One who adheres to the five (daily) prayers diligently, they shall be a means of illumination and salvation for him on the Day of Judgment.” (hadith)

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SwT, saw, as, ra

SwT: subhanahu wa ta'ala "Glory to Him, the Exalted" (when mentioning Allah)

saw: salallahu alaihi wassalam "May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him" (when mentioning Muhammad)

as: alaihis salam "Peace be on him" (when mentioning other prophets)

ra: radi allahu anhu/ha/hum "May Allah be pleased with him/her/them" (when mentioning members of Muhammad's family, companions, etc)