



Who Owns the Universal  
Rights to the Terms  
"Moderation" or  
"Moderate Muslim"?

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*Moderating Methods  
Used to Classify a  
Moderate Muslim  
in a Modern Society*

# WHO OWNS THE UNIVERSAL RIGHTS TO THE TERMS “MODERATION” OR “MODERATE MUSLIM”?

## MODERATING METHODS USED TO CLASSIFY A MODERATE MUSLIM IN A MODERN SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

*"The truth is the intermediate between negligence and excessiveness, and whoever stays away from both has been truly guided"<sup>2</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

How many times on social media outlets or on television have we heard statements such as **“There just has to be more ‘moderate’ Muslims in the public domain standing in opposition against their extremist brethren!”** Or **“Moderate’ Muslims need to be more vocal in separating themselves from other extremist Muslims!”** Putting aside the legitimacy of these assertions, have you ever wondered what the non-Muslim intends by the phrase “moderate Muslim”? Has it ever crossed your mind about the concept that embodies the phrase “moderate Muslim”? Is there even a universally accepted definition of the phrase “moderate Muslim”? Do the Muslims, themselves, have an agreed definition of a moderate Muslim, both past and present? Is the term “moderate Muslim” even an accepted reality by many anti-Islāmic individuals or organisations? Do you ever wonder what motivates some non-Muslims to label some Muslims, who we label as liberal Muslims, as moderate Muslims? However, the most important question is the question that distinguishes itself as this paper’s title: who universally owns the rights to the terms ‘moderation’ or ‘moderate Muslim’?

### THE INSIDE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHTS TO MODERATION

Before we endeavour to answer some of the queries we raised in the short introduction, it would serve us well, as a sturdy foundation, to first familiarise ourselves with the terms “moderation” and “moderate Muslim” as defined by Islām. Setting this sturdy foundation is a very important section of this paper because many Muslims nowadays have no clear Islāmic concept of what

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<sup>1</sup> Paper compiled by Abū Amīnah AbduRahmān Bennett.

<sup>2</sup> *Adwā al-Bayān* [1/322].

constitutes moderation, and thus they become susceptible to alien definitions of what defines a moderate Muslim. If we wish to identify for ourselves the Islāmic standards for defining a moderate Muslim, we are required to return back to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, as understood by the early illustrious generations.

Long before the term “moderate Muslim” became in vogue on Western shores, Islām, as dictated by the Noble Qur’an and the purified Sunnah, had an acutely defined concept on what constitutes moderation for the Muslim individual and Muslims as a whole. Allāh states in His Mighty Book,

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ

شَهِيدًا ﴿١٤٣﴾

And thus we have made you a just and balanced community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. (143)<sup>3</sup>

This verse teaches the Muslims that its true adherents are a just and balanced people who consistently conduct their affairs between two polar extremes. The great Mufasssir, al-Imām at-Tabari expounded on this verse by saying,

وأرى أن الله تعالى ذكره إنما وصفهم بأنهم "وسط" : لتوسطهم في الدين ، فلا هم أهل غلو فيه ، غلو النصارى الذين غلوا بالترهب ، وقيلهم في عيسى ما قالوا فيه ، ولا هم أهل تقصير فيه ، تقصير اليهود الذين بدلوا كتاب الله ، وقتلوا أنبياءهم ، وكذبوا على ربهم ، وكفروا به ، ولكنهم أهل توسط ، واعتدال فيه ، فوصفهم الله بذلك ، إذ كان أحب الأمور إلى الله أوسطها.

I hold that Allāh, the Most High, in His statement characterised them with the term “just/balanced” due to their moderation in all religious affairs. And therefore, they are not people who go to extremes in their religious affairs, neither the extremes of the Christians, who went overboard in monasticism and their views pertaining to Jesus, and nor do they go to the other extreme by falling short in giving him his rights (i.e. acknowledging his messengership), such as is the case of the Jews, those who altered Allāh’s Scripture, killed their prophets, uttered falsehoods regarding their Lord and disbelieved in Him. They, (i.e. the Muslims), however, are a just and

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Baqarah.

balanced people, and with such descriptions Allāh has characterised them because moderation in all affairs is from the dearest things to Allāh.<sup>4</sup>

This verse also reminds us what the early Muslims were and what the Muslims should be, but in these tragic times of ours, the general populace of Muslims are no longer witnesses over mankind as beacons for moderation and justice. Another verse in the Qur’ān, which instructs us to be balanced and to maintain moderation between two extremes, is a verse that every Muslim is required to recite in their daily prayers:

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray. (7)

By this verse, we ask Allāh at least seventeen times a day to situate us on a path that sits between two polar extremes: the path of those who went astray despite possessing knowledge (i.e. the Jews), and the path of those who went astray due to their ignorance (i.e. the Christians). The path between these two paths is the path of the prophets, the righteous and the truthful. If we remain faithful and true to the path that Allāh has laid down for His slaves, we will never fall into extremism. Alas, if we look around the Muslim world right now, we will see that our description is far from the description afforded to Allāh’s Messenger (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) and his Companions:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۗ ﴿١١٠﴾

You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. (110)

Another clear verse in the Qur’ān that demands moderation because it explicitly warns against extremism and excessiveness is

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<sup>4</sup> Tafsīr at-Tabari 3/142.

﴿ ١٧١ ﴾ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ

**O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion and say nothing about Allah except the truth. (171)**

As we well know, the Christians slid into the slipstream of extremism by elevating Isā ibn Maryam to a status that belongs exclusively to Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic. As is the nature of extremism, it starts off innocently enough whereby a person is praised, but with the passing of time and the fermenting of ignorance, the myths surrounding the person breed until they become polytheistic articles of creed that are held by the masses. And this is why the Prophet, due to his familiarity with how extremism breeds, stated

لَا تُظْرُونِي كَمَا أَطْرَبَ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ، فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدُهُ، فَقُولُوا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ.

“Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary; for I am only a slave. So, call me the Slave of Allāh and His Messenger.”<sup>5</sup>

Moving from the Noble Qur’ān over to the Sanctified Sunnah, we have wise words from our Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam) that warn us against the perils of extremism, excessiveness, radicalism and extravagance. In the hadīth of Abdullāh Ibn Mas’ūd who said that Allāh’s Messenger (sallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said,

هَلَاكَ الْمُتَطَّعُونَ هَلَاكَ الْمُتَطَّعُونَ هَلَاكَ الْمُتَطَّعُونَ.

“Those who go to extremes are destroyed! Those who go to extremes are destroyed! Those who go to extremes are destroyed!”<sup>6</sup>

The term التَّطَعُّ is defined by Imām an-Nawawi in his explanation of Sahīh Muslim:

هو المتعمق في الشيء ، المغالي فيه ، المجاوز حدَّ الشرع فيه ، سواء أكان قولاً أم فعلاً أم اعتقاداً  
“[It refers] to those who exceed the usual boundaries and go beyond what is legally acceptable in speech, actions and beliefs.”

<sup>5</sup>Sahīh al-Bukhāri 3445

<sup>6</sup>Sahīh Muslim 2670.

In this hadīth, the Prophet (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) warned us against extremism three times, which clearly tells us that moderation is a legal requirement in all of our affairs since no specific context was mentioned and thus the default is that the ruling remains general. Thus, the term التَّنَطُّعُ also includes excessiveness in acts of worship, and this really drives home Islām’s dedication to all things done in moderation because even though worship is the very purpose of man’s creation and the ultimate right of Allāh, Islām still requires that worship be offered moderately. The following hadīth proves this:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ، أَنَّ نَفَرًا، مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لَا أَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لَا أَكُلُ اللَّحْمَ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لَا أَنَامُ عَلَى فِرَاشٍ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَصُومُ فَلَا أُفْطِرُ . فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ " مَا بَالُ أَقْوَامٍ يَقُولُونَ كَذَا وَكَذَا لِكِنِّي أُصَلِّي وَأَنَامُ وَأَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي " .

It was narrated from Anas that there was a group of the Companions of the Prophet, one of whom said, “I will not marry women.” Another said, “I will not eat meat.” Another said, “I will not sleep on a bed.” Another said: “I will fast and not break my fast.” News of that reached the Messenger of Allah and he praised Allah then said, *“What is the matter with people who say such and such? But I pray and I sleep, I fast and I break my fast, and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of me.”*<sup>7</sup>

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-Uthaymīn further elaborates on the above hadīth with a complementary example:

**Another example can be three men who are confronted with an immoral man. The first of them states, “I will not give salāms to this immoral person; I will boycott and abandon him and will never speak to him!” The second states, “I will accompany this immoral person, give him salāms and smile in his face. I will invite him to my home and accept his invitation.” The third of the three states, “I hate this immoral person for who he is but love him due to his belief [in Allāh etc]. And thus, I will not boycott him unless it serves his best interests. If boycotting him only causes him to increase in sin and it does not help to reform his evil ways then I will not boycott him.**

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<sup>7</sup>Sunan an-Nasa'i 3217

**We say that the first person has gone to extremes; the second person is negligent and careless and the third one is balanced and moderate. The same applies to all acts of worship and worldly interactions: people fluctuate between negligence, extremism and moderation<sup>8</sup>**

There is nothing in Islām except that it has prescribed moderation. Even down to what or the way we eat or drink, Islām prescribes moderation. The Prophet (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) said,

الْكَافِرُ يَأْكُلُ فِي سَبْعَةِ أَمْعَاءٍ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ يَأْكُلُ فِي مَعَى وَاحِدٍ .

“A non-Muslim eats in seven intestines whereas a Muslim eats in one intestine.”<sup>9</sup>

He also said,

لا تشربوا واحداً كشرب البعير، ولكن اشربوا مثنى وثلاث، وسموا إذا أنتم شربتم، واحمدوا إذا أنتم رفعتم.  
“Do not drink in one gulp, like a camel, but in two or three (gulps). Mention the Name of Allah (i.e., say Bismillah) when you start drinking and praise Him (i.e., say Al-hamdulillah) after you have finished (drinking).”<sup>10</sup>

No religion or way of life prescribes moderation quite like Islām because no other religion or way of life receives its prescription from Allāh. If Islām requires moderation in the mundane affairs, how can it not require moderation in its major affairs?

In another hadīth, the Prophet (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) was more pronounced in his warning against extremism:

وَأَيَّاكُمْ وَالْعُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْعُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ.

“And beware of going to extremes in religious matters, for those who came before you were destroyed because of going to extremes in religious matters.”<sup>11</sup>

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-Uthaymīn briefly explains to us how to avoid going to extremes in all of our religious affairs:

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<sup>8</sup>Majmū’ al-Fatāwā wa Rasā’il Fadīlah ash-Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salīh al-Uthaymīn[1/42].

<sup>9</sup>Sahih Muslim 2060

<sup>10</sup>At-Tirmidhi [3/31]

<sup>11</sup>Sunan an-Nasā’i 3057

Moderation in the religion or intermediacy is that a person is situated between fanaticism and negligence, and this includes matters of belief and acts of worship. A prime example in matters of belief is that people, with respect to Allāh’s Names and Attributes, are divided into three groups: two are polar extremes and one is situated in the middle. One fringe group has gone to extremes in their attempts to free Allāh from all imperfections, so they strip Allāh of what He has named and described Himself with. The other fringe group has gone to extremes in affirming for Allāh what He has affirmed for Himself; however, their affirmation includes the belief of anthropomorphism. The middle group affirm for Allāh whatever he has affirmed for Himself. The difference here, however, is that this affirmation is done without likening Him to creation; rather, it is done to affirm His uniqueness and to show that nothing from His creation is like Him.

Just as we have polar extremes in matters of belief, we also have it in actions. There are those who go do things on an excessive level, making things very difficult for themselves, but there are also those who are negligent, careless and wasteful and as a result they lose so much. However, the best matters are those which are between the extremes. The rule for defining moderation is that, whatever has been mandated by the shari’ah then this is the middle path and whatever runs contrary to it then it is not the middle path; rather it is a curve that leads to excess or neglect.<sup>12</sup>

This means that included in this prophetic warning are types of extremism that migrate north (such as excessiveness, austerity and severity) and types of extremism that migrate south (such as negligence and permissiveness). Shaykh Sālih ibn Fawzān al-Fawzān gives us some valuable words on the polar opposites on either side of extremism:

However, there are some people who are the counter opposites of those who are excessive in the religion: those who go to extremes in leniency and tolerance in the religion. There is no doubt that our religion is one of forbearance, removing hardship and moderation, yet this tolerance has to be within the legal limits set by Allāh for

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<sup>12</sup> *Fatāwā Nūr ‘alā ad-Darb* (audio 226)



observing legislated concessions for whenever need arises. The whole religion, and all praise is for Allāh, is free of burdensome restrictions and shackles:

﴿ ٢٨٦ ﴾ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا هَا

“Allāh does not charge a soul except [with that which is within] its capacity.”

{*al-Baqarah* (2): 286}

And Allāh Says,

﴿ ٧٨ ﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

“He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty.”

{*al-Hajj* (22): 78}

And Allāh Says

﴿ ٦ ﴾ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

“Allāh does not intend to make difficulty for you...”

{*al-Maa'idah* (5): 6}

However, extremism in tolerance takes place by exceeding what Allāh has legislated, and therefore this cannot be called “tolerance”; rather it is hardship in and of itself. Thus, nullification of the foundation of loyalty and disavowal in Islām;<sup>13</sup> advocating equality between Muslims and non-Muslims on the pretext of ‘tolerance’; the partial or complete non-application of the nullifiers of Islām;<sup>14</sup> equality between religions—such as between Islām and Judaism or Christianity, rather between all of the religions, including polytheism and atheism; the view that the statement “there is no god worthy of worship except Allāh” does not necessitate disbelief in the Tāghūt... All of these are examples of extremism in leniency and tolerance and are to be

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<sup>13</sup> *البراء والبراءة* is a belief that requires loyalty to Allāh, His Messenger and the Muslim believers and disavowal of everyone and everything that opposes Allāh and His Messenger and goes against the path of the Muslim believers.

<sup>14</sup> A short explanation of [the ten nullifiers of Islām](#):

rejected, just as excessiveness in the religion is rejected. It could be the case that extremism in tolerance and leniency is more dangerous than excessiveness in the deen, as extremism in tolerance and leniency to the extent that the deen of the disbeliever is given equal status to the true deen is [major] kufr according to the consensus of the Muslims. Excessiveness in the deen, however, is viewed by many of the ‘Ulamā as misguidance and not something that reaches the level of [major] kufr. The ‘Ulamā of Islām mention that from the nullifiers of Islām is for one to not make takfeer of a disbeliever or to doubt his disbelief. So it is upon the one who falls into these dangerous errors to consider carefully his affair and to return to the truth, as returning to the truth is a virtue. Returning back to the truth is better than persisting on falsehood.

Such is the level of justice and balance in Islām that it even demands moderation and justice in the methods we use to forbid all deplorable evils. And this is why the true moderate Muslim when he stands opposed to extremist Muslims, such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, who use extreme methods themselves to combat other forms of despotic, highly-organised extremism, he enjoins the good and forbids evil according to the dictates of Islām. Ibnu Taymiyyah gives us a valuable lesson in remaining balanced in our struggle against internal or external forces of extremism:

When dealing with the people of sin, one must not exceed the limits prescribed by the *Sharee'ah* - neither in hating, censuring, preventing, abandoning or chastising them. Rather, the one who does so should be told: Worry about your own self. No harm will come to you from those who are misled, if you are truly guided, as Allāh - the Most High - said: "And do not let your hatred of others swerve you away from doing justice. But be just! That is closer to taqwā (piety)." [Soorah al-Maa'idah 5:8]. And Allāh said: "And fight in the way of Allāh those who fight you, but do not transgress the limits." [Surah al-Baqarah 2:190]. Indeed, many of those who command and forbid overstep the limits set by Allāh, either through *jahl* (ignorance) or *dhulm* (injustice). Thus, this issue (of justice) must be firmly maintained, whether it is in regards to censuring the unbelievers, the hypocrites, the sinners or the disobedient ones.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Translation from *al-Istiqaamah* magazine.

This quote from Ibn Taymiyyah lays the groundwork for a very important point. One of the strongest strains of extremism is the strain which develops and mutates in a climate of subjugation and injustice. Mass subjugation and degradation are heavy breeding grounds for hatred and extreme hostility, and hatred and hostility, as a result of subjugation and degradation, can make any form of extremism seem just and fair. For this reason, Allāh warns us about unbridled hatred:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا

تَعْدِلُوا ۖ اْعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

**O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. (8)**

An archetypal example of how mass subjugation and degradation of a people can lead to the apexes of extremism is found in the belief “all White people are devils”.<sup>16</sup> Where did this all-encompassing and extremely racist belief originate from? It originated from the furnaces of hate, forged from centuries of oppression, subjugation and degradation. This hatred became so fermented that it turned into the intoxicating belief: “all white people are devils”. This belief is a prime example of the hate that hate can produce, and it also reminds us that there is nothing more circular in nature than extremism forged from hatred born out of subjugation and degradation. Such is the concentration levels of this form of extremism that not only do a significant amount black people see the white people as devils but they also see themselves as gods!

Fast-forward to present day and we see that some radical Muslims are suffering from a similar strand of extremism with regard to their outlook towards a collective people. This similar strand of extremism, however, is perhaps more potent and deadly than the strand connected to racism

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<sup>16</sup> This incredulous belief is the ‘intellectual’ property of various black Afrocentric groups, such as the Nation of Islam. This pathetic but extremely dangerous belief even has its own fabricated historical origins which states “a black scientist who lived 6,600 years ago was responsible for creating the white race to be a race of devils. He did this through a form of selective breeding referred to as ‘grafting’, while living on the island of Patmos.” This story, which belongs on the bottom shelf of the fiction section of any bookshop, was initially concocted by the founder of the Nation of Islam (or better Mislam!) Wallace Fard Muhammad and was further colourfully developed by his successor Elijah Muhammad.

(1) it attempts to justify itself through revelation<sup>17</sup> and (2) it is not limited to any particular race or ethnicity. This extremist belief, which leads to extremist actions and conduct, comes in the form of “all non-Muslims are one and the same and thus all non-Muslims are legitimate targets”.<sup>18</sup> It is as if the whole planet, as far as the deviants are concerned, has become one big battleground and thus every non-Muslim is a legit target! So from whence did this belief originate?

We look around the world and we see that the Muslim world is being systematically raped, ravaged and ruined by Western foreign forces, which is all neatly packaged and benignly presented to the masses as “foreign policy” for the liberation of Muslims. The daily atrocities which we witness taking place in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria etc is breeding a level of unbridled hatred and animosity that has vaporised into a red mist of madness, wreaking havoc around the world. Since this cancerous hatred is emotionally driven and refuses to be contained by the dictates of Islām, it fails to distinguish between the types of non-Muslims, just as “all white people are devils” fails to distinguish between the types of white people. And now we have Muslims indiscriminately killing non-Muslims simply because they fall into the broad category of non-Muslim. They justify this rampant rage of theirs by quickly quoting snippets of verses, such as

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ ﴿١٩١﴾

And kill them wherever you find them, (191)<sup>19</sup>

but conveniently miss out part of the same verse that provides context:

وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُم ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ  
الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ يُقَاتِلَوكُمْ فِيهِ ۖ فَإِن قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٩١﴾

...and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah is worse than killing. And fight not with them at Al-Masjid-al-Haram (the sanctuary at Makkah),

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<sup>17</sup> The same could be argued for the Nation of Islam’s belief but they have no direct revelation to support their racist belief and black supremacy doctrine. The misguided Muslims, on the other hand, have verses which they can use to serve their indiscrimination.

<sup>18</sup> With respect to warfare and military operations, the ‘Ulamā of Islām has clear protocol and rules of engagement. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah stated in *Abkām Ablil Dhimmah*, “Killing is only obligatory when confronting warfare and not when confronted with disbelief. Therefore, women, children, the elderly, the blind and Monks who are not engaged in battle should not be killed. Rather, we fight against those who fight against us.”

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Baqarah*.

unless they (first) fight you there. But if they attack you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. (191)

Or what about the verse that states,

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ  
وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly. (8)<sup>20</sup>

Fanatical Muslims, in their desperation to justify what they do, even stoop to the level to argue arbitrary clichés, such as “One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter”, as if this adage condones everything they do because they are being oppressed. However, the undisputed king of all alien adages must be

الغَايَةُ تَبَرَّرُ الْوَسِيلَةَ

The goal justifies the means.

This Machiavellian principle serves as a mischievous means *itself* to circumvent Islāmic standards and protocols to usher in innovated methods for enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. Islām stands opposed to this idiom, but the one who is blinded by hatred and motivated by rage treats this idiom as if it were revelation sent from Allāh. Shaykh Sālih Aal ash-Shaykh gives us some good advice surrounding the reality of this innovated principle:

As for what people state that: “The ends justify the means” – this is wrong and not from our Islamic legislation. On the contrary, in the legislation, the means have specific rulings and with the condition that they be initially permissible. If the means are forbidden, such as a person drinking alcohol for medicinal purposes, then even if there may be some sort of remedy in it, it is still forbidden. So, not all means may have the same ruling as the end result. Rather, the means must be permissible in themselves.

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<sup>20</sup> *Al-Mumtabina*.

It is also not always the case that a servant (of Allah) may assume that since certain means are successful, he’s therefore allowed to take them. An example of this is political demonstrations. For example, if a large group of people comes and says, “If we stage a demonstration, this will pressure the leader and then consequently he will have to change and rectify the situation. The end justifies the means.” We say that this is completely false because the means in themselves are forbidden. These actions, even though the goal may be sincere and necessary, still the origin is impermissible. It is just like a person using a forbidden substance for some cure. Thus, there are many means and methods someone’s intellect may come up with, yet they may not be justified by the end result. So, this is for sure a false principle.

The means must be permissible in origin and then the ruling of the end result is applied to them; if the end result is allowable, the means are allowed. If it is obligatory, then the means are likewise.<sup>21</sup>

Despite Islām’s clear and uncompromising ethos on moderation, which includes acts of worship and worldly affairs, this, unfortunately, has not prevented countless Muslims over the centuries and up until this present day from falling into extremism and deviation. Islām has a straight path with signposts that lead directly to Allāh, thus all we are required to do is to faithfully follow this straight path by following its sign posts. However, despite this path being straight, one way, labelled clearly and even having human guides, Muslims can still verge away from this straight path, as there are deviant paths on either side:

خط رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خطا بيده ، ثم قال : " هذا سبيل الله مستقيما " وخط على يمينه وشماله ، ثم قال : " هذه السبل ليس منها سبيل إلا عليه شيطان يدعو إليه " ثم قرأ : وأن هذا صراطي مستقيما فاتبعوه ولا تتبعوا السبل فتفرق بكم عن سبيله .

The Messenger of Allāh (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) drew a line with his hand [in the sand] and said, “*This is Allāh’s path, leading straight.*” He then drew lines to the right and left of that line and said, “*There is not one of these paths except that there is a devil who calls to it.*” He then recited “*And verily,*

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<sup>21</sup> Translation from <http://salaf-us-salih.com/2013/02/18/does-the-ends-justify-the-means-shaykh-salih-ali-shaykh/>

*this is My straight path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His path.”<sup>22</sup>*

And what is the consequence of not following this heavily sign-posted path which contains the cemented footsteps of our the Messenger (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) and his Companions?

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ  
وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers' way. We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell - what an evil destination. (115)

This section of this paper contains a sufficient amount of evidence to categorically show that Islām came with a clear standard for determining what is moderation and what is extremism. This fact, alone, teaches us that we do not need to search outside of Islām for a universal standard of moderation that safeguards us against extremism. Having said that, why are so many Muslims in the West struggling to maintain moderation in their religious and worldly affairs and why do we buy into inferior concepts of moderation when we have the genuine article between our collective hands?

## **THE OUTWARD STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHTS TO MODERATION**

It is close to impossible to live in any non-Muslim society and not be affected or influenced by the zeitgeist and ideals that run through the veins of these societies, especially when you are part of a highly scrutinised minority who live in these societies. So, in spite of us having wonderful guidelines and standards for defining moderation, these guidelines and standards are not socially or politically realised in these alien societies. Therefore, in order to instil in ourselves and our children the Islāmic standards for moderation, we need to do it manually, in a makeshift manner. In other words, we have to fake an environment within a greater hostile environment wherein we can collectively adopt for ourselves a sense of moderation as defined by Islām. However, this is easier said than done because

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<sup>22</sup> Ahmad and Al-Hākim

- we have a ‘miscellaneous’ mixture of Muslims who reside in these non-Muslim societies who act as walking advertisements and billboards for what constitutes moderation in Islām. On one end of the spectrum we have Muslims like al-Muhajiroun and ISIS supporters who advertise a radical message of Islām that contradicts the very nature of moderation. On the other end, we have Muslims like the Quilliam Foundation<sup>23</sup> who repackage secularism and liberalism as moderation in Islām. So because the media gives the spotlight to these two polar extreme factions,<sup>24</sup> it makes it nigh on impossible for those between the two extremes to be heard and accounted for.
- When you live in a society (especially as a minority) that conflicts with your standards of moderation and morality, you are expected to integrate and assimilate (otherwise why are you leaving here?); yet integration, on some level at least, requires you to adopt ideas and concepts of moderation that exist in the host society. This places the Muslim in a highly compromised situation because his standards and the standards set by the society are often mutually exclusive. This places the Muslims, depending on their resolve, in a tug-of-war situation.
- The ideals that conceptualise western standards for moderation are not only realised societally but they are also highly endorsed by every conceivable means of communication which frequently frustrate our attempts to cultivate for ourselves the Islāmic standards for moderation.
- The disease of ignorance has gone airborne amongst the Muslims and they no longer know the Islāmic standards for moderation, and thus they become exposed to high doses of

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<sup>23</sup>The Quilliam foundation is a think-tank that challenges extremism (which is interesting given that the organisation, itself, is on the other end of extremism) and spouts pluralistic and secular concepts that are alien to Islām. Its co-founder and chairman is Majid Nawaz who, between 2007 and present day, successfully undertook an ideological expedition that began in the northern hemisphere of Hizbut Tahrir and ended in the western one (hardcore secularism). Another member is Usama Hasan, who is the senior ‘Islamic’ researcher. He came from a Salafi background and after suffering a strong bout of cognitive dissonance he now openly spouts evolution, secularism and an array of other liberal beliefs.

<sup>24</sup>A very recent of example of this can be found on the BBC News on the same day that the deadly attack on the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo took place. Who did the BBC invite on their show to represent the ‘moderate’ voice of the Muslims? Yes, of course, none other than your “moderate Muslim” poster boy Majid Nawaz. The same Majid Nawaz who thought he would take to twitter and tweet a satirical image of the Prophet Muhammad and Prophet Isā with the aim (we jest you not) to defend his ‘religion’ against those who have hijacked it because ‘they shout the loudest’. This bizarre method of defending the religion of Islām may seem highly contradictory, but all will be reconciled after you understand the type of ‘Islām’ Nawaz is defending. The point here is that Nawaz’s antics are very quickly pumped into the mainstream as the moderate voice of Islām. This is an almost invariable trend where all news agencies invite into their studios the most compromised of Muslims to represent the moderate voice of the Muslim masses.



social conditioning and eventually adopt for themselves standards of moderation that conflict with Islām.

- The non-Muslims, themselves, are constantly reinterpreting and repackaging their standards of moderation due to a rapid decline in moral and ethical standards, and because its definition is in a constant state of flux, it leaves the disorientated Muslim in no man’s land. Incidentally, this decline is in a perpetual state of freefall because secularism and many other ‘isms’ have done away with the existence of Allāh, and in the absence of Allāh there can be no objective, universal standard for moderation. Consequently, moderation and its rights are sold off to the highest bidder who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing.
- Many disorientated or disaffected Muslims have assimilated the Western notion of moderation and have jumped on the bandwagon. For example, you say to a non-Muslim during a dialogue that Islām requires such and such and does not allow such and such, but during mid-flow he interrupts you by telling you he has a friend called “Mo” who *does* such and such and that he is a great bloke! Thanks to “Mo”, you are now forced to go head-to-head with the adage “actions speak louder than words”.

As we said earlier, the non-Muslim definition of moderation is constantly under arbitrary revision because the very thing that anchors his moderation into something concrete has become brittle, fragile or non-existent over the passage of time. As far as the Muslims are concerned (or should be concerned), moderation and its definition has always been and will always be the property of Allāh. And for this simple reason, moderation never needs to be revised or reinterpreted because it is not based on whims, status quo or all-round fallibility. On the contrary, it stems from an infinite source of wisdom, knowledge and justice which prevails over time and space and objectively serves man’s well-being. As for the non-Muslim, what can he anchor his moderation in when he has either done away with belief in Allāh completely or he has become sceptical in His existence (which is required by necessity of existence)? When Allāh is artificially removed from the equation of life, wholly or partially, the capricious nafs steps up to assume an oppressive dictatorship:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ  
غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Then will you not be reminded? (23)

And what is the natural inclination of the nafs, except for the nafs that is rescued by Allāh’s Mercy?

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

Indeed, the soul inclines towards evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy.

Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful." (53)

Such is the soul’s inclination towards evil, the Prophet taught us to say in the sermon of need

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا، وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مَضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.

*“All praise belongs to Allah; we praise Him and seek His aid and forgiveness. And we seek refuge from the evil of our souls and from the evil of our deeds.”*

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim states regarding this verse in his book *ar-Rūb* (1/229)

وأما النفس الأمارة فهي المذمومة، لأنها التي تأمر بكل سوء، وهذا من طبيعتها إلا ما وفقها الله وثبتها وأعانها، فما تخلص أحد من شر نفسه إلا بتوفيق الله له.

“As for the soul and its inclination [towards evil] then it is rebuked and criticised because it has a wanting for all types of evil which stem from its nature, except of course the soul which has the good fortune of being guided, strengthened and aided by Allāh. Thus, no one is liberated from the evil of his soul except he who receives Allāh’s guidance.”

So, taking into deep consideration the nature of the nafs, how can the rights of moderation and morality, for that matter, be defined by a people who either deny Allāh’s existence or divest Him of His sovereignty by separating religion from state? Is not the denial of Allāh’s existence or the worship of man or stone the most extreme examples of immoderation? Should not moderation and extremism be initially and ultimately defined based on man’s relation with Allāh? How can there be objectivity in moderation in the absence of Allāh, and how can there be moderation when

it is left to the arbitrary decision of man and his roguish nafs? Thus, moderation can only truly thrive in a godly environment because the contents of moderation along with all of its vast variables can only be moderated and dictated by Allāh.

When we look around us in our adopted environment, we see, due to the absence of Allāh, the absence of moderation and morality. However, in spite of this gaping absence of the two, the non-Muslim still feels he has the right to decide which Muslims are moderate and which ones are not. The term ‘right’ is an interesting term since it has the capacity to carry an absolute legal meaning and a conventional meaning. What we mean here is that, what provides rights can either be sourced back to an absolute, supreme authority, namely Allāh, or it can be sourced back to something that arbitrarily spins the illusion of possessing such authority, such as the rule of man which is predicated on desire and a highly limited perspective of what constitutes moderation, morality and justice. Thus, the non-Muslim has a false conviction that leads him to believe that he is on equal grounds (or even higher) to dictate what defines moderation because he fails or refuses to trace back the word “right” to the Owner and Disposer of all rights, namely Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic.

When anyone chooses to deny Allāh’s existence, an artificial vacuum arises that must be occupied by someone or something else. In other words, when man turns away from his Creator, the only other place to turn to is towards His creation. So even though he feels he has escaped from Allāh by denying His existence, he can never escape from giving to His creation what exclusively belongs to Allāh. So in statement, he says “there is no God” but in belief and attitude he must have a god in some shape or form.<sup>25</sup> Thus, whenever we argue with a non-Muslim on what defines moderation, if we do not take our argument back to Tawheed then we can never argue back to the true definition of the term “right” which facilitates for an absolute definition of moderation. The key is to make him aware of whether he is arguing an arbitrary definition of “right” or if he is arguing a definition that transcends time, place, man and his makeshift definitions for moderation. If we can negotiate him back to this fundamental point, we stand a good chance at helping him realise who truly and ultimately deserves to define moderation.

## **THE PHRASE “MODERATE MUSLIM” IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS**

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<sup>25</sup> Denial of Allāh requires that His attributes be falsely assigned to creation and this is shirk through negation, which shows that even the atheist is in reality a mushrik!

Some non-Muslims are adamant that there can never be such a thing as a ‘moderate Muslim’. They myopically view the terms “moderate” and “Muslim” as mutually exclusive. The weird thing here is that, proponents of this proposition can be more ‘principled’ in their polemics than the Muslims and non-Muslims who hold hands together to argue against them, and as an ironic result, this also helps to redefine and, in turn, muddy the waters that Islāmically define a moderate Muslim. A good example of this can be viewed in a discussion that took place on “radical Islām” between Ben Affleck (American actor/ultraliberal), Bill Maher (chat show host/self-styled apatheist)<sup>26</sup> and Sam Harris (a staunch arrogant advocate of atheism).<sup>27</sup> Sam Harris gets the ball rolling by stating,

**Liberals have really failed on the topic of theocracy. They’ll criticise white theocracy; they’ll criticise Christians..., but when you want to talk about the treatment of women and homosexuals and freethinkers and public intellectuals in the Muslim world, I would argue that liberals have failed us. The crucial point of confusion is that we have been sold this meme of Islamophobia<sup>28</sup> where every criticism of the doctrine of Islām gets conflated with bigotry towards Muslims as people. And that is intellectually ridiculous.**

At this moment, Ben Affleck cuts in and asks **“So, hold on, are you the person who understands the officially codified definition of Islām?”** Then they fall into a back and forth on Liberalism and the right to criticise bad ideas which culminates in a statement from Harris, which showcases his attitude towards Islām in all of its splendour: **“Islām, at this moment, is the mother lode of bad ideas.”** However, the problem of non-Muslims defining a “moderate Muslim” begins to materialise through the argument of Affleck’s co-panellist on the show against Harris:

**The picture you are painting is to some extent true but it is hugely incomplete. It is certainly true that plenty of Muslims are fanatics and Jihadis, but the people who are**

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<sup>26</sup> *Apathism* is a linguistic blend of ‘apathy’ and ‘atheism’. The term denotes someone who fosters for himself an indifferent attitude towards God and religion.

<sup>27</sup> We say arrogant because he makes statements in his book (wishfully titled *The End of Faith*) about religious people like this: “And so, while religious people are not generally mad, their core beliefs absolutely are...”

<sup>28</sup> In the modern arena of sound-bite warfare, the term ‘Islamophobia’ is often used a shoot-from-the-hip, quick-fire response which can very quickly disable any productive dialogue. Having said that, however, if there were ever a term that could justify the suffix ‘phobia’ outside of its clinical usage, then that term would be ‘Islamophobia’, simply because there is nothing more irrational and phobia-like than the hatred and fear that is directed towards something (i.e. Islām) that has come to give mankind true purpose in this world salvation in the hereafter.

**standing up to them, [such as], Malala [Yousafzai],<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Ali, [unclear] in Irān, who was imprisoned for nine years for speaking up for Christians... a friend that I had in Pakistan that was shot this year, Rasheed Rahman, for defending people accused of apostasy.**

Now, people like Sam Harris and Bill Maher are not oblivious to the fact that Islām has legislation for apostasy. So look at how Bill Maher responds: **“All these billion people (Muslims) don’t hold these pernicious beliefs (apostasy rule etc)?”** So Ben Affleck answers the question, which (for Maher) was more rhetorical than anything, with a resounding **“No!”**. Maher quickly replies by stating, **“That’s not true, Ben. That’s just not true! The idea that someone should actually be killed for leaving a religion is just a view of a few bad apples?”** Ben Affleck and the liberal within spontaneously agree that this is **“just horrible”**<sup>30</sup> but then he goes on to maintain that this is not the Muslim majority view. And now here is where we arrive at the point that shows that those who believe that the terms “moderate” and “Muslim” are mutually exclusive can be more principled and informed in their methods of debate than those Liberals who prop up a particular brand of Muslims as the moderate majority. Sam Harris takes centre stage and states in his monologue,

**Just imagine some concentric circles<sup>31</sup> here: you have at the centre you have Jihādists; these are people who wake up in the morning wanting to kill apostates, wanting to...die trying; they believe in paradise; they believe in martyrdom. Outside of them we have Islamists; these are people who are just as convinced of martyrdom and Paradise and wanting to...foist their religion on the rest of humanity but they want to work within the**

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<sup>29</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malala\\_Yousafzai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malala_Yousafzai)

<sup>30</sup> Ben Affleck is a staunch supporter of ‘gay’ rights and even gay marriage. This observation is important to the overall point that is being developed at this point in the paper.

<sup>31</sup> The problem with Harris’ concentric circles lies in reconciliation between the definition of concentric circles and the way in which he has represented the various Muslim groups via these circles. By definition, concentric circles are required to share the same centre or axis, but when you observe the core circle in Harris’ analogy by way of concentricity, you see that the core circle is occupied by the Jihādists. This is problematic from two angles: (1) it suggests that the core values found in Jihādists are the core values found in the all other denominations of Muslims represented in these circles (2) the core circle is representational of the core beliefs/values of Islām and the core values are essentially depicted by the Jihādists thus implying that Islām is essentially radicalism and extremism and therefore the Jihādists are the true representatives of Islām. So, even though Harris can argue that he recognises unique distinctions found in each group that are concentrically represented that no way answers why (a) Harris made the Jihādists the core of these concentric circles (when in reality they should be its outer limits because they do not represent the core beliefs of the Muslims) and (b) what are these core beliefs that exist in the centre circle and to whom/what do they belong? This leaves his concentric analogy open to misguided interpretation and therefore the analogy itself is required to be quarantined.

system; they're not going to blow themselves up on a bus; they want to change governments; they want to use democracy against itself...Those two circles arguably are twenty percent of the Muslim world...Outside of that circle, you have *conservative* Muslims who...can...honestly look at ISIS and say “that does not represent us that we're we are horrified by that”, but they hold views about human rights and about women [and] about homosexuals that are deeply troubling. So...these are not Islamists; they are not Jihādists but... They also keep women and homosexuals immiserated in these cultures and we have to empower the ‘true’ reformers in the Muslim world to change it and lying about the link between doctrine and behaviour is not going to do that.

This quote clearly demonstrates that Harris' demographical view of the Muslim world is more informed than Affleck's. Harris is a renowned author, seasoned debater and a philosopher who enters any dialogue or debate with an inbuilt autocue that prompts him to present himself as an authority on Muslims and their beliefs. For the uninformed, like Affleck, Harris can be a force to be reckoned with, especially when you lack the tools that are required to dismantle the logic that underpins his tightly-structured arguments. So because Liberals, like Affleck, cannot confront such arguments head on, the only way is to circumvent them by appealing to their liberal views which allows them to define a moderate Muslim.

Affleck is attempting to form a merger between his core beliefs (which are not much different to Harris') and the beliefs of the Muslims by having a liberal outlook towards the Muslim world which requires a steady dose of intellectual denial and thus he becomes embroiled in some type of doublethink.<sup>32</sup> Harris' state of denial, however, starts from his militant denial of His Creator which allows him to arbitrarily redefine moderation and morality and then attack Islām and its root, based on self-determined ideals of what defines morality and moderation. Harris has taken his atheism to its logical conclusion and thus, in his mind at least, Islām, by definition, can never come in moderation unless Islām is completely disembowelled of its core contents and stuffed with liberal values (much like Christianity is today). People like Harris are not only accusing Muslims of being extremists; rather, they are accusing Islām itself of being a doctrine of extremism that by necessity requires from its adherents extremism. People like Affleck, on the other hand, are in a state of denial, and in the partition that this denial creates it allows them to reformat for themselves a liberal-friendly form of Islām which they stamp with their seal of moderation. Simply put, one is

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<sup>32</sup> Doublethink – a person who is completely unaware of the conflicts or contradictions that exist in his beliefs.

working from the top (i.e. the Muslims) and the other from the bottom (i.e. Islām) for the right to define what is and what is not a moderate Muslim. No matter which side represents the lesser of the two evils, both sides are still vying for the rights to define a moderate Muslim.

The consequences of all the above wreak havoc with the siege mentality which exists heavily amongst the Muslims in the West because when people like Affleck defend the Muslims against monsters like Harris, many besieged Muslims feel overwhelmed with gratitude towards their protector. This tends to make some starry-eyed, liberal Muslims fall over themselves to practically show the world just how right Affleck is in his understanding of a moderate Muslim. So you will find scores of Muslims professing proudly that they don't believe in the death penalty or that they do not have to wear the hijab because they wear the 'hijab of the heart'. People like Affleck, in spite of his intentions, just further exacerbate affairs when it comes to the Muslims embracing the true definition of a moderate Muslim.

### **“MODERATE MUSLIM” AND ITS MULTITUDE OF MEANINGS**

Non-Muslims, no matter how understanding or reasonable they are, will never define a moderate Muslim by the Islāmic standard, either because they do not know the Islāmic standard or because the Islāmic standard, for them, does not define moderation. In light of this fact, what exactly does the phrase “moderate Muslim” mean to them? Well, when we understand that there is no universally accepted definition in the lexicon of the non-Muslims, we learn that a “moderate Muslim” is nothing more than a synonym for **“what we see as a good Muslim”** or a **“moderate Muslim who embraces our values”**. Therefore, the more a Muslim embraces Western values, the more moderate he becomes according to Western standards.

The definition for a moderate Muslim, as debated over by non-Muslims, becomes even more up for grabs because, as we know, Western ideals and moral constructs vary from country to country, and as a result, a **“moderate Muslim who embraces our values”** is now culturally, spiritually and politically open to geographical and cultural interpretation. So vast is the room for its interpretation, many groups or denominations of non-Muslims can sometimes chime with Islāmic standards that are portrayed in the media as extreme. For example, homosexuality is explicitly forbidden by divine text and, as a result, we are constantly under siege for our stance in this matter. However, when we squint our eyes and focus on some of the denominations that exist amongst the non-Muslims, we find that they are in complete agreement with our beliefs on homosexuality.

This observation is poorly reflected in the media because the media and its love for yellow journalism is only interested in ‘extremism’ that is related to Muslims or Islām.

Related to the debate on homosexuality is same-sex marriage. Over the last couple years legislation in the UK has been amended to accommodate for same-sex marriages. The PR industry would have us believe that this amendment in law is representative of the voice of the masses and is held aloft as a victory for equality. However, when we look at the comment sections on various media outlets (e.g. Yahoo), wherein the masses can voice the views behind a proxy, we find that the majority of people who post comments on these sites are against same-sex marriage! So what does this show?

**The first thing** this shows is that the non-Muslims themselves radically differ on their ideals of moderation and morality, and if they have internal, conflicting ideals on what defines morality and moderation and can they now set standards for the Muslims?

**The second thing** this shows is that there is a strong trend for manufacturing norms in Western societies which has the marketing and political clout to present these manufactured standards as representative of the masses. Even though more and more people are embracing these manufactured norms, it is nowhere near the level that they would have us believe.

## **TRUE MODERATION REQUIRES A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TERMS “EQUALITY” AND “JUSTICE”**

What is the difference between equality and justice? Many non-Muslim social commentators would have us believe that there is no difference between the two and that they are completely and utterly interchangeable. The Muslim response to this question, however, should be defined by Islām and therefore nuanced, just like the following response we receive from Shaykh Muhammad al-‘Uthaymīn regarding the verse:

وَأَقْسُوا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

And act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly. (9)



Included in this verse is justice between one’s children in showing affection. The Prophet (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) said, “Fear Allāh and be just amongst your children.” Included in this verse is justice amongst the heirs of inheritance by giving each one his fixed share. Also included in this verse is equality<sup>33</sup> and justice by apportioning time between the wives equally. Another thing included in this verse is fairness towards your soul by not burdening it with more than it is capable. For your Lord has a right over you and your soul also has a right over you.

Here, we are required to bring to your attention that there are some people who have substituted the term “justice” for the term “equality”. This is erroneous because the term “equality” could imply parity between two things when conventional wisdom requires a separation.<sup>34</sup> And because of this unjust call to equality [in everything], they now question, “What is the difference between the sexes?! There should be no difference between them!” This has reached to the extent that the Communists now question the difference between a person in power and those whom he rules over. No one has mastery over another, not even the father over his son and so on and so on!

However, if we use the term “justice”, which is to give each thing what it deserves, the harm which comes from the term “equality” is removed and the term [justice] remains intact. And for this reason, you will never find in the Qur’ān Allāh ordering equality. Rather, we find

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ ﴿٩٠﴾

Indeed, Allah orders justice... ,(90)

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<sup>33</sup> We used the word equality in this section of the translation because it was apt in conveying what justice requires when involved in polygyny.

<sup>34</sup> A good example of this is the current debate regarding women being allowed to serve in British infantry units. Until this day, women are not allowed to be involved in close combat, but like everything else in pursuit of equality this is now up for review. In order for this restriction to be removed, conventional wisdom has to be circumvented and rules have to be re-written. For example, in order to join an infantry unit at recruit level, men have to complete a run of 1.5 miles in 12 minutes 45 seconds. They also have to pass a battle fitness test which requires infantry to be able to pick up another man with his rifle and equipment and then carry him in a fireman’s lift for 200 metres. Experts state that upper body strength in 99.9% of women would make it virtually impossible to pass the tests. This is how far these people are prepared to take equality.

and

وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۗ ﴿٥٨﴾

And when you judge between people to judge with justice (58)

Thus, he is mistaken the one who states that Islām is a religion of equality. Rather, Islām is a religion of justice because it provides equality between two things that are equal and distinguishes between two things that are not equal. However, if he intends by the term *equality* “justice” then he is correct in his intention but wrong in his choice of word. Moreover, most of the verses that comment on equality come in a negative context:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (9)

And

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ ﴿١٦﴾

Say, "Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Or is darkness equivalent to light?"

And

لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِنَ الَّذِينَ

أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا ۗ ﴿١٠﴾

Not equal among you are those who spent before the conquest [of Makkah] and fought [and those who did so after it]. Those are greater in degree than they who spent afterwards and fought. (10)

And

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ



Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled - and the mujahideen, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah.<sup>95</sup>

There is not a single word in the Qur’an that commands equality; [on the contrary] it only commands justice.<sup>35</sup>

When we look at the term equality as it relates to the sexes, even though Islām makes a distinction between justice and equality, that does not prevent equality from being the default between the sexes in matters of reward and punishment, acts of worship, piety, legal duties, mutual conduct and many other matters. “Inequality” between the sexes only arises when the legal text or nature requires it. In spite of all this, a day does not go by without someone in the media complaining about the lack of equality in Islām between the sexes. However, when we look at these complaints, we see that they are more a by-product of feminism than they are of equality. We know this because every so-called case of “inequality” that is brought to the public’s attention is always a case that involves “inequality” towards women. We always hear about how the Muslim woman only inherits half of the sum of the man or how the women cannot travel without a mahram. Is it not strange that we never hear from these “defenders of equality” how it is not fair how only males are required to fight legitimate Jihād and lay their lives on the line, or how it is not fair that women get to keep their wealth but men have to share their wealth with their wives.<sup>36</sup> Or how we are required to honour our mothers three times more than we are required to honour our fathers. It is truly strange that the call for equality only surfaces when the equality is in the interest of Muslim women. The irony here is that, this bias call for equality is itself a case of inequality and thus a clear example of sexism.

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<sup>35</sup> *Sharh al-Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah* [2/229].

<sup>36</sup> A couple of centuries ago, this was the reality in Britain: “Before 1870, any money made by a woman either through a wage, from investment, by gift, or through inheritance automatically became the property of her husband once she was married. Once a woman became married her property was no longer her own and her husband could choose to dispose of it whenever he thought suitable.”

## **FOR THOSE WHO ASPIRE FOR THE TRUE DEFINITION OF MODERATION AND BALANCE**

We will end this paper with a beautiful section of a post from a brother that we found on an Arab forum:

**The third type [of those who claim to be balanced]:** whoever ascribes to Wasitiyyah (moderation) in speech and action, and in creed, worship and manners. This is the complete situation of the worshippers of Allāh and in actuality it is rare for people to ascertain it, and only the sincere ones from Allāh’s servants achieve it, I ask Allāh to join us with them. So if it is said, “what is the way to achieve this status?”

**The answer:** there has to be effort in the following:

**First reason:** asking Allāh for guidance, help and success. He who clings on to the sturdy rope of Allāh shall not be deprived of success, as “whoever truthfully asks Allāh for martyrdom Allāh will make him reach the rank of the martyrs”, and likewise is the case when one truthfully asks for guidance.

**Second reason:** exerting effort in finding the truth through traversing the path of seeking knowledge and embarking on this path in a certified and established way which reaches the main aim.

**Third reason:** freeing oneself from hateful desires and entrenched biases, as the truth is far from the person of desires and the one full of biased fanaticism and blind following will not be granted success in obtaining the truth.

**Fourth reason:** abundant practice and application of knowledge, as there is no ascertainment of Wasitiyyah except via combining between knowledge and action. When action is removed, knowledge can become a trial for a person and a proof against him rather than for him.

If you know of these reasons, and seriously practice them, and you spend that which is expensive and precious in order to achieve it, you will reach that which you want by Allāh’s power and might. Allāh is the One Whom we ask for aid, and upon Him

we rely; there is no power or movement except with Allāh. He is Sufficient for us and He is the Best Disposer of Affairs. May prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, companions and all who succeeded them in goodness up until the last day.