

Islam is Moderate among Religions

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One of the characteristics of Islam is that it is moderate and balanced.

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 Hijrī – 1328 C.E.), may Allah have mercy on him, said:

Allah (تبارك وتعالى) has endowed Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) with certain characteristics by which Allah distinguished him from all other prophets and messengers. He made for him religious legislation and a methodology, the best legislation and the most complete and clear methodology.

Likewise, He made his nation the best nation to emerge among mankind. They are greater in the sight of Allah in their virtue and honor than seventy nations of other people. Allah guided them with His book and His messenger in what they differed in from the truth (that came) before them. And He made them moderate, just, and virtuous.

They are moderate in worshipping Allah alone with true monotheism (*tawhīd*) and moderate with respect to Allah's names and characteristics. They are moderate in their belief in His messengers, His books, and in the rules of His religion: the commands, prohibitions, the *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*.

Allah commanded them with (all) good and forbade them from (all) evil. He made lawful for them (all) good things and forbade them from (all) harmful things. He did not forbid for them any good foods as He forbade for the Jews. And He did not allow them any filthy and harmful foods like the Christians made allowable (for themselves).

He neither overly restricted for them the rules of physical purity and impurity as He did for the Jews, nor did He completely neglect for them the concept of cleanliness from impure actions as the Christians neglected. For they neither consider it necessary to cleanse after intimate relations, nor do they consider cleanliness and avoiding impurities basic requirements for prayer. Rather, many of their monks believed their uncleanliness to be a means of drawing near (to Allah) and a form of obedience, so much so that it was once said praising the "virtues" of a monk, "For forty years he has not even touched water!" For this, they also stopped (in the past) practicing circumcision even though it is part of the law and code of Abraham, the friend of Allah, and his followers.

As for the Jews, if a woman begins her menses, they used to neither eat or drink with her or even remain in the same house with her. As for the Christians, they do not prohibit even intercourse with a menstruating woman. They Jews used to also not believe in simply cleaning impurities; if such impurity touched the garment of one of them, they would even cut that piece off with scissors. As for the Christians, they consider nothing impure, nothing forbidden to eat and nothing forbidden with regards to prayer.

In such a way, Muslims are moderate in religious legislations. They neither reject that a particular religious edict may abrogate another as the Jews do, nor do they change anything from His (Allah's) perfect and complete legislation or innovate religious practices

that Allah did not prescribe as the Christians do. They do not go to extremes with regards to (worshipping) the prophets and righteous people like the extremism of the Christians, and they do not belittle and deny their rights like the Jews. They do not describe the creator with characteristics specific to the creation with their weaknesses and deficiencies such as poverty, stinginess, or inability to do something as the Jews do. And they do not describe the creation with characteristics specific to the creator, as nothing is similar to Him in any of His attributes, like the Christians do. They neither are too arrogant to worship Him like the Jews, nor do they worship others along with Him like the Christians.

The people who follow the *Sunnah* (prophetic methodology) and adhere to the mainstream community (*Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*) in Islam are like the people of Islam compared to the people of other religions. They (*Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*) are moderate with respect to the attributes of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) between the people who blatantly deny and reject them and those who consider them similar or equal to the attributes of the creation. They describe Allah just as He describes Himself or His messenger described Him without denying His characteristics or believing them to be similar to the characteristics of the creation. They affirm His characteristics of perfection and believe He is far above having any characteristics equal or similar to His; it is an affirmation with no similarities (with creation) and a belief with no rejection (of His attributes), as Allah (تعالى) says:

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾

There is nothing like Him.

[Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:11]

...which refutes the notion of anything being similar to Him...

﴿ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴾

And He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

[Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:11]

...which refutes the notion of outright denying His attributes.

He (تعالى) also says:

﴿ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ. اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ. لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ. وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴾

Say: He is Allah, One. Allah, *al-Ṣamad*. He neither begot (children), nor was he begotten. And there is nothing equal to Him.

[Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ, 112:1-4]

The name, *al-Ṣamad*, means the lord who is deserving of all attributes of perfection. And He is the One who has neither an equal or anything like Him.

They (Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah) are moderate with respect to the actions of Allah between the people who deny the notion of pre-decree (the *Mu'tazilah*), and those who negate the notion of Allah's wisdom, His mercy, and His justice (the *Jabariyyah*). They also differ from those who oppose Allah's pre-decree, His commands and prohibitions, His rewards and punishments.

With respect to the (texts containing) threats of punishment, they are moderate between those who believe that Muslim sinners are destined to remain in the fire forever (the *Wa`idiyyah*), and those who reject some of His threats and Allah's preference of the righteous people over the sinners (the *Murjiah*).

And they are moderate with respect to the companions of Allah's messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) between those who go to extremes with some of them, claiming them to be divine, prophets, or infallible, and those who criticize them, claiming them to be disbelievers or wicked sinners while they were the best of this nation.¹

He (Ibn Taymiyyah) also said, "Likewise, in all aspects of the Sunnah, they are moderate because they stick to the book of Allah, the Sunnah of His messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), and to what was unanimously agreed upon by the foremost predecessors from the first Muslims to migrate (the *Muhājirūn*) and those who supported them (the *Anṣār*) as well as those who follow them in righteousness."²

¹ This finishes the statements of Ibn Taymiyyah in his book, al-Jawāb al-Sahīh (1/6-8).

² Majmū' al-Fatāwá (3/375).