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## LIBERALISM AND RELIGIOUS MODERATION: THE DILEMMA IN INDONESIA

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*Abstract:* Liberalism was born from European society's condition that was oppressed by feudalism. It is a paradigm that is easily accepted due to its principle of freedom and its emphasis on the human ratio. In its development, liberalism influenced various aspects of the Eastern world, including Islam as the religion of the majority of Indonesians. The two basic problems of this research are: (1) how does liberalism influence Islam and (2) what efforts are required to prevent liberalism's influence on Islam. This research used the qualitative method with the literary and historical approaches. Results showed that liberalism is currently the mainstream paradigm of thought and culture in the world. The atmosphere of thought as well as the constellation of contemporary humanity are dominated by this paradigm. One of the important efforts to prevent liberalism and extremism is to strengthen the scholarly system of Islam through religious moderation that still strongly holds on to the Qur'an and Hadits, making people knowledgeable and religious. Serious studies on Islamic thoughts should be conducted to be placed from the Islamic worldview perspective. There should be the development of science using the Islamic concept and perspective, rather than using Western methods to assess Islamic concepts.

*Keywords:* domination, liberalism, religious moderation, Islam, moderate.

### Introduction

Western philosophy was estimated to be founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., although some also opined that it was founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Differing opinions on the exact century of philosophy's establishment is not shocking as there

are no official documents that explain in detail the date, month, and year Thales created philosophy (Hamdi, 2021, p. 155). Philosophy keeps on developing up to the modern era.

Historically, the modern century started from the Middle Ages. It started in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe, as a movement that de-

manded the return of all of the philosophic and cultural glory as what happened during the Renaissance era and during the golden age of Ancient Greek. Renaissance means the rebirth, i.e., the rebirth of the Greek and Roman cultures (Wiramihardja, 2009, p. 59).

At that time, the symptoms of society's efforts to break free from the restricting church dogma started to be visible in Europe. Even so, philosophy did not find its form in the Renaissance Era, but it was founded in the era after it. In that modern era, science experienced development and many findings on the results of scientific development were found. This implied the weakening the power of Christian Church (Tafsir, 2000).

The emergence of philosophy is closely linked to various issues in human life. Philosophy sought answers and solutions to every problem using the ratio as the main instrument, including those related to God's existence, the reality in the universe, to the issues of human essence as creatures (Hidayat, 2001). In reality, it is not only philosophy that seeks responses to various basic problems in human life, but religion also has the ability to answer them (Anshari, 1982).

Philosophy's arrival as a thought method has different patterns according to each era. Every era has its own characteristics that are influenced by the demands of the time. Thus, each has differences and specific characteristics. This keeps on occurring, making philosophy develop and have different characteristics according to its areas. Thus, the terms "Eastern philosophy" and "Western philosophy" were created, and conveyed by each of their figures. Philosophers use philosophy to resolve the issues around them. They radically discuss all occurring issues starting from those related to the reality of nature, the reality of God, up to human culture using the ratio as the first instrument (Jauhari, 2020).

Apart from that, philosophy was developed to find causes of various occurring problems. There are many unresolved issues, one of them being injustice. Philosophy has also created various differing paradigms that sometimes oppose each other. Even so, justice becomes a very disturbing problem. It is just that philosophy has found that in the reality of life, humans hope for justice to always be present and they committed to achieving it (Arif, 2018).

The development of philosophy, as well as the emergence of various paradigms in the West, has brought influences to Islam. An example of this is the emergence of the liberalism paradigms in the West that historically originated from Ancient Greek. It is one of the most crucial elements in the Western civilization. But when tracked to the Middle Ages, liberalism was triggered by the conditions of the economic and political systems that were dominated by the feudal system. In such a system, kings and aristocrats had special rights. Meanwhile, grassroots were not given an unrestricted chance to use their rights, especially their rights to participate in the social mobilization that can deliver them to become part of the higher class (Zarkasyi, 2009).

Through colonialism, the West tried to influence the use of their concepts, philosophies, and thoughts (including the liberalism paradigm) on the heads of Muslims. This coercion is known as Westernization (Latouche, 1996) and globalization projects. The use of the terms "fundamentalist Islam", "liberal Islam", "traditional Islam", "modern Islam" etc. are some examples of how Western terminologies and concepts were introduced to Muslims. To counter the spread of the field of Islamic thought, the Orientalism movement was used. This was to extend the acceptance of Western cultures and beliefs.

The West's efforts to spread Western values, ideas, concepts, systems, and cultures to the Islamic world became ever rampant. Cohesive teamwork between colonialists and orientalist happened in Aceh province, Indonesia (formerly the Dutch East Indies), where the Dutch succeeded in defeating Aceh after undergoing profound research with Orientalist executors such as Snouck Hurgronje. The change of the era led to the change of methods. Thus, the media used to spread liberal concepts and thoughts in the form of scientific works such as books, papers, and workshops. They can also be in the form of opinions in electronic and mass media. But the most effective medium to spread theories, concepts, and ideologies are university classrooms through the oral transmission of intellectuals, Islamic scholars, scientists, and cultural practitioners. Through this facility, Western liberalism paradigms, ideas, concepts, systems, and theories are technically spread to the Islamic world (Zarkasyi, 2009). In this case, Islam in Indonesia also obtained influence from the entrance of this liberal-

ism.

Ellian (2008) suggested that Western countries that are rooted in the liberalism, pluralism, and secularism trilogy have a role in the development of science, technology, and economy. Based on that, he and some other liberal Islam figures wanted to ignite the spirit of Muslims to reach development by adopting these thoughts. But in its journey, he obtained sharp polemic-causing critiques from Kamrava (2006) about this idea. The peak was the issuing of the *fatwa* (legal pronouncement) of the Indonesian Islamic Scholar Assembly (Majelis Ulama Indonesia /MUI) which prohibited liberalism (Samsudin & Lubis, 2019).

## Research Method

From the background above, the two basic problems of this research are: (1) how does liberalism influence Islam and (2) what efforts are required to prevent liberalism's influence on Islam. Methods from this research was juridical normative with philosophical approach. This research used the qualitative method with the literary and historical approaches. Then, the obtained data were analyzed deductively.

## Results and Discussion

### *The Concept of Liberalism*

Liberalism is currently the mainstream paradigm of thought and culture in the world. The atmosphere of thought as well as the constellation of contemporary humanity are dominated by this paradigm. Various changes that gave birth to global idioms, such as the freedom of the press, free market, as well as democracy, seem to be inseparable from liberalism as their departing point. These idioms imperatively force changes in various areas of the world. It does not only influence the political and economic order, but it has also influenced culture and even religion (Tibi, 2007).

Etymologically, the word "liberal" originated from the word *liberté* in French and *liberty* in English, meaning freedom or independence (Rachman, 2018). In Latin, *liber* means free or not a slave. It refers to a condition where one is

free from another person's ownership (Zarkasyi, 2009). Up to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this term still referred to the concept of people who are independent from birth or those who are freed from slavery. Liberalism comes in a packet with the capitalist ideology.

Liberalism was born from the sick European people during the Dark Ages. The shackles of the king's dominance in the name of God threatened development, science, and technology. Kings collaborated with religious leaders to oppress people. The solution was that these shackles must be eradicated by providing people with the greatest liberty (Reed, 2002).

The peak of political liberalization happened in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the liberalism paradigm kept on rolling in the form of ideas on freedom and revolutionary movements in several European countries. From a philosophical perspective, liberalism means a system or a paradigm that highly upholds individual freedom and independence. It provides protection from any form of oppression. The contrary of this paradigm is power absolutism, despotism, or the authoritarian paradigm. In the economic sector, liberalism is a paradigm which grants individuals the freedom to undergo economic activities without state interference in economic life. Among the supporters of this paradigm was Adam Smith in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This paradigm is contrary to the socialism and communism paradigm.

In the social sector, liberalism can mean different things depending on the subject. For women, for instance, it means emancipation, gender equality, the eradication of social control on individuals as well as the fall of familial values. There is also the freedom to choose gender and sexual preferences as well as feminism (Reed, 2002)

In other words, liberalism is a thought paradigm that orients towards individual freedom. There is respect for the independence of every individual. It also believes that the state's main task is to protect the freedom of its citizens, such as the freedom to think, the freedom to express thoughts, and the freedom of ownership. Such as what was illustrated in the thought of the Age of Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), this concept positions human beings as gods in every aspect. This paradigm perceives that humans with all of their ratios can understand everything. Humans can develop themselves and their society through

rational and free activities. This paradigm was also built above the principle of secularity which glorifies humanity and which perceives that humans can automatically know all of their lives' needs (Burdah & Sudrajat, 2015).

Nicholas F. Gier (1980), from the University of Idaho, United States of America concluded the thought characteristics of American (Western) liberal figures are as follows:

*First*, the belief in God, but not the God in religious beliefs. Because their God is not orthodox, they are often called atheists. God's characteristics according to religious doctrines as a person with special characteristics were rejected by the liberal group as they prefer the concept of God extracted from the human ratio. In this belief, God is deemed to not know humans' lives in detail and He does not meddle with the affairs of individual humans.

*Second*, the liberal group separates Christian doctrines and Christian ethics. By decreasing the emphasis on doctrines or beliefs, they hold on to the principle that Christians and non-Christians must accept each other and carry out good deeds. A person becomes religious not only due to affirmations towards dogma, but due to one's ethics and moralist attitudes. This was what brought the liberal group to conclude that even atheists can become moralists.

*Third*, the liberal group do not believe in orthodox Christian doctrines. They reject part or the whole trinity doctrine, the divinity of Jesus, a birthing virgin, the Bible as literal words of God, fate, hell, Satan, and the creation from nothing. The only doctrine they believe in apart from the existence of God is the immortality of the soul.

*Fourth*, they absolutely accept the separation between the church and the state. The founders of the United States of America realized the impacts of governments in European countries that forced the application of certain religions' doctrines while oppressing other religions. Thus, the words "God" and "Christianity" cannot exist in the law. This situation was inseparable from the influence of liberal religious figures in the constitutional convention in 1787.

*Fifth*, they fully believe in freedom and tolerance in embracing religions. Initially, tolerance was only limited to sects in Christianity. But then, tolerance and full freedom for atheists and embracers of non-Christianity religions happened during the rule of Benjamin Franklin,

Jefferson, and Madison. The full freedom of religion does not only mean the freedom to embrace religions but also to be free from religion. It means that a person is free to either embrace a religion or not.

Thus, liberalism in Western civilization's social and political sectors has slowly marginalized or separated religion from political and social affairs. Religion is not given any space over social and political interests. When liberalism entered Catholic and Protestant Christianity's religious thought, it subordinated the church under political interests and humanism. It has also decreased the role of theology in the sectors of life. In the end, the liberalism of religious thoughts changed into secularism. This was influenced by post-modernist thought waves that highly upheld pluralism, equality, and relativism (Zarkasyi, 2009).

### *Liberalism's Domination in Muslim Countries*

Domination means great influence towards a certain thing or a community. Liberalism is a Western system, perspective, or ideology. Thus, for the West, Islam is a challenge to liberalism. Since its birth in the Western world, liberalism has been highly developed as it can easily be accepted by global society. This was because this paradigm emphasizes individual freedom and is only sourced from the human mind. The current domination of liberalism also poses a challenge to Islam.

Francis Fukuyama in his book juxtaposed Islam with the liberalism and communism ideologies, even though Islam has its own concepts of moral values, political doctrines, and social justice. According to him, because Islam's teachings are universal, it has become a challenge for liberal democracy and liberal practices. But he also acknowledges that Western liberal values are also a threat to Muslim society. In this case, Fukuyama (1992) stated: "*It cannot be denied, the Islamic world in the long term will seem to be weaker in facing liberal ideas rather than the contrary, because since half a century ago, liberalism has mesmerized many strong Islamic followers. One of the causes of fundamentalism's emergence was the strong threat of liberal and Western values towards the traditional Muslim*



*society*".

Fukuyama clearly placed Islam, liberalism, and communism as ideologies or thoughts with different doctrines that oppose and threaten each other. What is deemed as a threat is not one's shadow of fear towards the other. But it is a fact that liberalism and Islam are highly different. These differences can be tracked by the fact that humans are created in nations and all nations have their own civilization. Each civilization also has different ways of thinking and perspectives. These differences tend to be in the form of differences in perceiving life. They have different worldviews. The different worldviews between one nation and another are influenced by culture, religious beliefs, race, etc.

In an article entitled *If Not Civilizations, What?* (Samuel Huntington Responds to His Critics), Huntington stated that the substance or principle of civilization is religious and philosophical principles. Because of that, the factors to identify a person as well as the factors that lead them to be ready for war and death are faith, family, blood (read: race), and beliefs. Samuel P. Huntington also theorized and outlined differences in identities and then friction between one civilization or worldview and another as a "*clash of civilization*". The issue is not only due to differences between civilizations, but because Western civilizations and nations claim that their perspectives are "universal" and can be embraced by all of humankind.

The issue is that what the West deems as "universal" is actually not for Muslims. In fact, there are unnegotiable differences between Western and Islamic concepts. These differences in the level of social life may cause conflicts and clashes. According to Peter L. Berger, as quoted by Zarkasyi, it is called the collision of consciousness. At the individual level, it leads them to experience conflicts of thought. Then, at the conceptual level, it leads to an overlap or conceptual confusion. Indonesian Muslims are currently experiencing these wars of thought at the individual level. Thus, great-scale wars of thought are currently happening between Islamic civilization and Western culture, in other words between the Islamic and Western worldviews (Zarkasyi, 2009).

When perceiving from the aspect of its meaning, "liberal Islam" is highly contradictory. Etymologically, Islam came from the Arabic lan-

guage, meaning submission or compliance, while liberal originated from European languages, specifically from the Greek language, meaning free. Apart from that, liberalism in the Western perspective has a positive sense. But when it is brought to the Eastern world, especially to the Islamic world, it already has a bad and negative connotation. Even so, it is clear that these two terms clash. But there is a term called "liberal Islam", where according to its embracers, Muslims can also become liberal, meaning that liberalism can be accepted in the discourse on Islamic thought (Thoha, 2018).

Liberal Islam means an Islamic paradigm that is accommodative to the idea of individual freedom to encourage social advancement. According to Kurzman, liberal Islam is a style of thought that is a plenary blend between the dialectic critique philosophy, i.e., Socrates (470-400 B.C.) with the rationality of Descartes (1596-1650) and blended with the *Muktazilah* thought (a theological paradigm that emphasizes the ratio) (Rachman, 2018). The term "liberal Islam" is also often used by Western writers to analyze the development of Islamic figures that support the idea of freedom and development. Some figures that are famous in Indonesia are Leonard Binder and Charles Kurzman (Samsudin & Lubis, 2019).

Charlez Kurzman provided a basic character on what is called liberal Islam as follows, "There are various versions of Islamic liberalism. But a common element is its critique, both of customary Islamic traditions and revivalist Islam, that the liberals deem as backwardness, that, according to them, inhibits the Islamic world from enjoying the "fruit" of modernity: economic advancement, democracy, legal rights, etc. Apart from that, liberal traditions opine that Islam, if properly understood, is in line with – or even, is a pioneer of – the road of Western liberalism" (Kurzman, 2003).

For Kurzman, two things become the basic characteristics of liberal Islam. *First*, critique of customary Islamic traditions and revivalist Islam that cause the backwardness of the Muslim community. *Second*, the desire to achieve development by emphasizing Islamic values that are actually in line with Western liberalism, such as economic advancement, democracy, legal rights, etc. What Kurzman meant as customary Islam is the Islamic group that combines local customs

and general customs that apply in the Islamic world (Bachtiar, 2017).

This term is parallel with the term “traditional Islam” which was initially popular among researchers on Islamic movements in Indonesia, such as in the classical works of Deliar Noer (1993). Meanwhile, he juxtaposed revivalist Islam with Islamism, fundamentalism, and Wahabism. This tradition attacked customary interpretations that lack attention towards the core of Islamic doctrines. Such a definition is similar to that given by Kamal Hassan. He stated that the main idea that binds these various liberal Islam thoughts is that they always prioritize what they call the most universal values of Islam rather than the formality of the Islamic teaching’s practices. Either purposefully or not, these values actually have consequences towards the humanism and secularism values promoted by the West (Hassan, 1987).

Zuly Qodir provided a more rigid definition of liberal Islam, especially in the context of Indonesia, i.e., those who have an inclusive understanding towards Islam with the following characteristics:

1. placing al-Qur’an and hadiths as scriptures that are open to interpretation without being fixated on a form of hegemonic interpretation;
2. undergoing reconciliation between faith and modernity;
3. being willing to adopt the constitutional and cultural systems of the modern world;
4. having freedom in interpreting religion;
5. following modern-style education by adopting rationality;
6. not having sectarian thoughts, thus, they can understand the different perspectives that occur without judging other different parties;
7. acknowledging the existence of religious pluralism;
8. being inclusive-tolerant in practicing religion;
9. thinking and having opened characteristics exceeding the thought framework boundaries of Nahdlatul Ulama or NU (Indonesia’s largest Islamic organization founded in 1926) and Muhammadiyah (Indonesia’s second-largest Islamic organization founded in 1912) religious organizations, even though many liberal intellectuals in this country have the background of NU and Muhammadiyah;
10. being uninterested towards the idea of the formalized application of Islamic sharia; and
11. having a pluralist-inclusive theology, rather than an exclusive one (Qodir, 2010).

Polemics on the thought of liberal Islam were caused by differences in the paradigms of thought and methodologies in understanding Islamic teachings such as in seeing the reality that happens in society during the contemporary era. The liberal Islam group has a progressive paradigm of thought. Liberal Islam has great potential for dynamics. Meanwhile, groups that criticize liberal Islam use a neo-revivalist paradigm of thought, that epistemologically strives to undergo a purification of Islam, by always holding on to the basis of al-Qur’an and hadiths. Apart from the differences in the paradigm of thought, there are also methodological differences, where liberal Islam figures used hermeneutic and rational methodologies (*tafsir bi-ra’yu*) as well as uncovered the holiness of Islam’s teachings. Meanwhile, figures that are against liberal Islam use a methodology that departs from the revelation that was sanctified through a historical process, thus leading sanctification to occur. Then, it used the textual approach (*tafsir bil-ma’sur*). Thus, every one of its opinions is based on texts (Samsudin & Lubis, 2019).

Meanwhile, the negative influence of liberalism towards Islamic teachings that happened and their development are as follows:

1. Doubting Muslims, concerning the basic principles of Islamic teachings that are absolute in *aqidah* (Islamic creed), sharia, the nobility of its teachings, and its history.
2. Undergoing great efforts to market Western theories and philosophies that are not in line with Islamic principles such as the theory of freedom to undergo sex before marriage.
3. Undergoing great efforts to immediately legalize conventional laws sourced from Western laws in various aspects of life, such as the legalization of LGBT marriage.
4. Announcing moral depravity and blurring the noble values of Islamic teachings towards individuals as well as the extensive society so long as they do not disturb public interest.
5. Eradicating the curriculum of the Islamic religion and its teachings from the elementary school, middle school, high school, and campus (bachelor’s degree) levels.

6. Deviating the household institution and destroying the order of the relationship between husbands and wives, between children and parents with the mainstreaming of individual freedom.
7. Deviating the identity of the Islamic religion by directing its embracers to a "Western-style" life in the cultural tradition aspect that becomes special characteristics of some Indonesians, such as the *adat basandi syara* (customs based on religious teachings) of Western Sumatera Province.
8. Emphasizing nationalism and secularism as efforts to shift Islam and conflicting nationalism with religion.
9. Utilizing mass media, printed media, electronic media, as well as television channels to spread their ideas that harass Islam, al-Qur'an, and Prophet Muhammad such as what was carried out by a Danish cartoonist.
10. Carrying out efforts to spread cultures of promiscuity and immorality by emphasizing lust, inviting sexual deviations, and eradicating the natural limits of different genders (Zainuddin & Kadir, 2014).

The liberalization phenomenon does not happen accidentally, but it is something that has been elaborately planned and well-programmed. Their strategies resulted in quite a memorable product. It cannot be denied that liberal thoughts have spread in Indonesia, including at *da'wa* (Islamic missionary) institutions, education institutions, campus institutions, and even among university students.

At the start of the 1970s, simultaneous with the emergence of the New Era in Indonesia, some threats were posed to Muslim society. Some Muslim intellectuals tried to give a response towards the situation that is deemed to not provide freedom of thought. This group then created ideas on "The Renewal of Islamic Thought" that tries to interpret Islam, not only textually but with a greater tendency towards contextual interpretation.

They can be categorized as liberal Islam, in the sense that they reject *taqlid* (accepting one's opinion without knowing its source or basis), encourage *ijtihad*, as well as reject the authority that only certain individuals or groups have the right to interpret Islamic teachings (Mudzar, 2011). The Indonesian Islamic Scholar Assembly saw the dangers of the thought devel-

oped by this group. Thus, in its 7<sup>th</sup> National Deliberation on July 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005 they issued a *fatwa* that pluralism, secularism, and liberalism are paradigms that contradict the Islamic religion's teachings.

Because of that, it is prohibited for Muslim society to follow the liberalism and secularism paradigms. It is stipulated in the Decision of the Indonesian Islamic Scholar Assembly No. 7/MUNAS VII/11/2005 that what is meant by liberalism is understanding religious *nash* sources (God's revelation to Prophet Muhammad, i.e., al-Qur'an and As-Sunnah) using free ratio and only accepting religious doctrines that are in line with the ratio (Rachman, 2018).

Apart from liberal Islam, there is also the fundamentalist Islam group in Indonesia that is deemed to always monopolize truth and enforce them with methods that actually contradict Islamic values. Because of that, to inhibit or balance militant (Husaini & Hidayat, 2000) or fundamentalist Islamic groups and the liberal group, there needs to be religious moderation. Religious moderation means building a religious life that is based on respect for differences. Religious moderation supports and spreads religious ideas (especially Islam) that are pluralist, open, and humanist. Religious moderation prevents militant and pro-violence religious perspectives from overpowering the public (Ahmad, 2010).

The Liberal Islamic Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal/JIL*) has agendas that are not much different from the extreme Islamic groups in general (Husaini & Hidayat, 2000). Islam certainly highly respects human rights. Thus, it also respects the freedom of expressing opinions (Ahmad, 2010). Thus, to become humanists and respect human rights and differences, there is no need to become liberal.

Religious moderation strives to open dialogue rooms that are free from the pressures of conservatism. They believe that the opening of dialogue rooms will spread healthy Islamic thought and movements. This is an effort to create just and humane social and political structures (Dinia et al., 2015).

Religious moderation strives to undergo several things, i.e., first, opening rooms of discussion, increasing people's critical capabilities and providing an alternative perspective that is different from both liberalism and extremism. Second, it strives to encourage the publication of

books and research. Third, in the long term, diversity can become a good alternative with more straightforward semantics compared to liberalism and extreme religiosity (Zainuddin & Kadir, 2014).

The paradigm of liberalism and extreme religious thoughts are deemed by Muslims to have deviated from the important aspects of Islamic teachings and destroyed the beliefs and understandings of society towards the teachings of the Islamic religion. Muslims also perceive that the supporters of these two paradigms have carried out a free (liberal) interpretation of religion without guiding principles, thus resulting in the *Ibahiyah* paradigm (permitting any action based on freedom) which relates to ethics and religion as well as other impacts. Meanwhile, extreme Islam paradigms easily condemn others as infidels and they are not shy from committing violence (Sajari, 2015).

As one of the great religious thoughts and philosophies that still exist up to now, Islam has special historical roots and intellectual traditions. Every civilization writes their civilization's history according to its perspectives. It is worse if people become a priori towards Islamic traditions and scholars, and then easily criticize or blaspheme great Islamic scholars without undergoing serious and profound studies.

Early Islamic scholars also came into contact with thoughts from foreign cultures. They also adopted and filtered foreign thoughts. But they certainly do so after they have truly mastered the intellectual tradition and perspectives of Islam. Thus, what happened was the Islamization of foreign concepts, leading to the Islamic golden age with a strong scientific culture while staying religious. This also applies to Western thinkers. They took the thoughts of Muslim intellectuals in various sectors. But then, they also filtered them so that they still embrace the Western life philosophy.

Seeing the increasing efforts of liberalism in Indonesia that try to denounce Islamic teachings, one of the efforts to inhibit this is by developing religious moderation. The word *moderation* originated from English, meaning the act of being in the middle and or having a non-excessive attitude. Thus, moderate people can accept existing differences. They believe that being different does not mean hostility. But differences are an absolute beauty (Nisa & Yani, 2021). People do

not need to become liberal to undergo *ihsan* (to carry out beautiful things, excellence). Justice means a manifestation of equality and balance between rights and responsibilities. Human rights cannot be decreased due to obligations.

Efforts for religious moderation in the effort to decrease the negative influences of liberalism and extremism are carried out by strengthening the method and scholarly system of Islam while simultaneously undergoing serious research on Islamic thoughts to be placed and assessed in the perspective of the Islamic worldview. Public and private Islamic universities in Indonesia must become the centers of the Islamization of contemporary sciences. The concepts of religious pluralism, inclusivism, moderatism, gender equality, rationalism, etc., may be studied, placed, and accessed in the Islamic perspective, rather than the contrary. This is the great task of Muslims from all over the world, especially Muslim scientists, which must be seriously and sustainably carried out. The religious moderation that emphasizes the Qur'an and Hadits must become the main direction in developing moderate Islam and *rahmatill'alamiin* (blessing for the universe).

Thus, according to Adian Husaini, the existence of religious moderation is a manifestation of communion, peace, and tolerance, both at the local and national levels. Thus, to manifest this, it is currently very crucial to undergo what *al-Attas* called the "Islamization of science", where one of its activities is the application of deliberalization and dewesternization of science and education for the moderate young Muslim generation (Dinia et al., 2015).

## Conclusion

Liberalism was born from the condition of European society that was shackled by the domination of kings under the name of God, threatening the development of science and technology. The kings collaborated with religious leaders to oppress the people. Thus, the people strived for their rights to obtain freedom, including the freedom to carry out political activities, economic freedom, social freedom, etc. Liberalization believed in freedom as a principle and orientation; motivation and goal; as well as the core and result in human life. Liberalism is a thought system used to characterize the free activities of human



beings.

Liberalism brings changes to the thought and methodological paradigms in understanding Islamic teachings, such as the use of hermeneutic and rational methodologies (*tafsir bi-ra'yu*) that emphasize ratio as well as uncover the holiness of Islamic teachings. Apart from liberalism, there is also religious extremism that likes to undergo persecution and violence. They claim the truth for themselves and like to condemn other parties as infidels.

One of the important efforts to prevent liberalism and extremism is to strengthen the method and scholarly system of Islam through religious moderation that still strongly holds on to the Qur'an and Hadits as the guidelines for knowledge. Thus, people can become knowledgeable and religious at the same time. Serious studies on Islamic thoughts should be conducted to be placed and assessed from the Islamic worldview perspective. There should be the development of science using the Islamic concept and perspective, rather than using Western methods to assess Islamic concepts. Thus, religious moderation can make Indonesia the largest center of scientific studies in Indonesia, as it emphasizes the values of truth in science is above the value of justice and tolerance, which must exist in science.

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