



## **The Social Dimension of Justice in Islam: The Contribution of Theology<sup>1</sup>**

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Any discussion of justice or adâlah in the Islamic context must be related to the key concepts of balance or mîzân and moderation or wasatiyah. To be in a state of moderation means to establish a balance between two extremes. The establishment of that balance is the achievement of justice. This is because a specific attribute of adâlah is mîzân or balance. This is given by the Qur'anic view of God's justice: "And we shall set up balances (al-muwâzîn) of justice for the day of resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything. And if there be the weight of a mustard seed, we will bring it. And sufficient are we to take account." [Al-Anbiyâ' (21): 47]. It follows, therefore, that justice is moderation, that is, achieving moderation is the establishment of justice. This applies not only to God's justice but to that of humans as well. As Ibn Khaldun noted, "justice is a balance set up among mankind." This is in reference to social justice. This paper examines the different dimensions of moderation in society that would together define social justice. I focus on specific dichotomies such as zahir-batin, tradition-modernity, private-public, and autonomy and regulation in order to develop a contemporary understanding of moderation that satisfies the requirements for social justice. I then illustrate the efficacy of this concept of social justice with reference to two contemporary problems in the Muslim world, that of sectarianism and the destruction of heritage. This is

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followed by a brief discussion on the social theology of Nursi, which I present as a framework for the articulation of a contemporary understanding of social justice.

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