

DYNAMICS OF ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT DEVELOPMENT IN THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

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Abstract

The discourse surrounding the issue of classical Islamic theology that has developed so far is: First, that the emergence of schools in Islamic theology was predominantly due to political factors, even though if explored more deeply it turns out that differences in methods of thinking were the main factor; Second, there is an assumption that mutaqaddimin scholars understand theological verses in the Koran textually and do not understand them rationally, even though in reality many Muslim theologians interpret these theological verses rationally and freely. Based on these two issues, this article will reveal the dynamics of Islamic theological thinking of Islamic scholars in the classical period. The aim is to find the significance of the influence of the thinking activities of Muslim theologians during the classical period on the growth and development of Islamic theological thought and the birth of firqahs in Islamic theology during that period.

Keywords: *Method of Thought, Early Scholars, Islamic Theology*

Abstrak

Diskursus seputar persoalan teologi Islam masa klasik yang berkembang selama ini adalah: *Pertama*, bahwa munculnya aliran-aliran dalam teologi Islam lebih dominan disebabkan faktor politik, padahal jika ditelusuri lebih mendalam ternyata faktor perbedaan metode berpikir yang menjadi faktor utamanya; *Kedua*, ada anggapan bahwa ulama mutaqaddimin memahami ayat-ayat teologis dalam Alquran secara tekstual dan tidak memahami secara rasional, padahal pada kenyataannya banyak teolog Muslim yang menginterpretasi ayat-ayat teologis tersebut secara rasional dan bebas. Dari dua persoalan ini, maka tulisan ini akan mengungkap dinamika pemikiran teologi Islam ulama pada masa klasik. Tujuannya untuk menemukan signifikansi pengaruh aktifitas berpikir para teolog muslim pada masa klasik terhadap pertumbuhan dan perkembangan pemikiran teologi Islam serta lahirnya firqah-firqah dalam teologi Islam di masa tersebut.

Kata Kunci: *Metode Pemikiran, Ulama Mutaqaddimin, Teologi Islam*

A. Introduction

Theology in Islam was not known during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), but potentially and conceptually, theological concepts existed since his time, especially when the Quran began to be revealed. These concepts include the concept of tauhid (monotheism), prophets and messengers, the Day of Judgment, sin and reward, the rewards of paradise and the punishments of hell, believers and disbelievers, human actions, goodness and evil, and so on. What Allah conveyed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) initially applied singularly. This means that the Quran was received and conveyed by one person, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and was practiced directly by him during his lifetime.

According to Allah's decree, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) passed away. The companions were inevitably required to think more about various aspects of life because Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was no longer available to ask. Meanwhile, the revelation contained in the Quran provided an opportunity for anyone to interpret it according to their life issues and moral responsibilities, resulting in diverse perspectives. Since scholars had different views in formulating the core of a doctrine, the concept of "streams" or "schools of thought," commonly known as "madhhab," emerged, and among these streams or schools of thought is the stream or school of thought of kalam (Islamic theology) (Muhammad Imarah, n.d., p. 186).

To understand the emergence of various perspectives that have led to the birth of diverse streams in Islamic theology, one can observe, for example, the significant diversity of views among Muslim theologians in the classical period regarding the concept of the divine (Hanafi, 1974, p. 11). Based on the guidance from the mutawatir naş, particularly the Quran, all Muslims believe that Islam indeed has a monotheistic structure of divinity (Allah SWT is One) (Departemen Agama RI, 2019). However, in empirical reality, the One God has given rise to various views and theological concepts. This means that although God as the object of belief for Muslims is the same, namely Allah SWT, when this singular Allah SWT is responded to and understood by many individual Muslims, it actually gives rise to various concepts of divinity. Some argue that God has attributes, while others argue otherwise. There are also those who argue that God can be seen with the eyes on the Day of Judgment, and others who argue otherwise.

The differences in theological views stem from the diversity of paradigms they use, a consequence of differing methods of thinking. Based on this framework, researching the dynamics of Islamic theological thought development in the classical period is interesting. The question then arises: what are the dynamics of scholars' thought in the classical period regarding the development of Islamic theological thought? Therefore, this paper will focus on discussing the issue of the method of thinking of classical Muslim theologians and how it is implemented in the discourse of the Islamic theological heritage. The discussion is conducted through descriptive analysis based on relevant sources.

B. Method

The research conducted on the discussion of the Dynamics of Islamic Theological Thought Development in the Classical Period is carried out using the method of literature review (library research). This method involves gathering a variety of documents related to issues discussing the Dynamics of Islamic Theological Thought Development in the Classical Period.

C. Discussion

1. Early Development of Islamic Theological Thought

Etymologically, the term "pemikiran" originates from the word "fikir," with its verb form being "berfikir," which translates to "thinking" in English. Initially, the word "fikir" came from Arabic "fakara-yafkuru-fikran." In Indonesian, the letter "f" is replaced with "p," resulting in the word "pikir." According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), "pikir" refers to what is in one's heart, intellect, memory, imagination, inner words, opinion, and consideration. Meanwhile, "pemikiran" denotes the process, manner, or act of thinking about problems that require thought and resolution. "Pemikir" describes an intelligent person whose thoughts can be utilized by others (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1995, pp. 1072–1073).

In terminology, "pemikiran" can be defined as an activity of rational strength (intellect) inherent in humans, in the form of *qalbu*, *ruh*, or *dzihnun*, involving observation and research to discover hidden meanings of issues that can be known, or to arrive at laws, or relationships between things (Lorens Bagus, 1996, pp. 841–842). Furthermore, the word "pemikiran" is linked with the word "Islam" to become "Islamic thought," which means the activity carried out by Muslims in seeking causality or the origin of a material or essence (Longman Group, 1987, p. 1105), as well as contemplating the existence of something, both in terms of its material and essence, thereby revealing the causal relationships of a material or essence, its origins, and the substance of the existence or essence of something that becomes the object of that thought (Ibnu Khaldun, 1986, pp. 523–525).

Meanwhile, the term "teologi" in Islam is also referred to as 'ilmu al-kalam. The word "kalām" means "speech or conversation". In a theological sense, kalām is referred to as the words (speech) of God. Thus, theology in Islam is called 'ilmu al-kalām. The term 'ilmu al-kalām is also used because Islamic theologians debate with words to defend their opinions and positions. Therefore, theologians in Islam are called *mutakallimīn*, which means skilled debaters who adeptly use (Harun Nasution, 2002, p. 9).

From the aforementioned understanding, it can be inferred that Islamic theological thought constitutes the ideas or outputs of Islamic scholars or theologians, commonly referred to as *ulama kalām*. These ideas are drawn from the Quran and the Sunnah to address evolving theological matters within Islamic society. In essence,

Islamic theological thought represents a culmination of human intellect, undergoing significant development from the era of the Prophet Muhammad's companions to the present day.

Since the era of the companions, Islamic theological thought has progressed alongside Islam's expansion into various new territories. Its developmental process mirrors that of other scientific disciplines in general. Within this framework, the genesis of thought typically traces back to contextual events, including encounters between divergent viewpoints, variations in the intellectual capacities of thinkers, and cultural disparities among different regions. These encounters and disparities occasionally result in conflicts, acculturation, and even assimilation.

Numerous factors contribute to the emergence and evolution of classical Islamic theological thought. Nonetheless, two pivotal and interconnected factors stand out, intimately linked to Islam's historical trajectory. These primary factors are:

a. Factor of Political Turmoil

The majority of Islamic theologians or historians conclude that the issue of theological thought in Islamic studies is perceived as a reflection of political turmoil that subsequently evolves into theological matters. Based on this assertion, the genesis of Islamic theology is regarded by some as an exceptional occurrence. It is considered exceptional because the genesis of diverse theological issues in Islam did not stem from religious concerns, but rather from political circumstances.

Historical records indicate that the political upheaval during the reign of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan culminated in his assassination. Some Muslims of that era dared to analyze the assassination of Uthman, pondering whether the perpetrator was culpable or not. Furthermore, they also scrutinized who instigated the perpetrator's actions, whether it was the individual themselves or God. Therefore, the assassination of Uthman appears to mark the inception of debates on Islamic theological thought and the primary catalyst for the emergence of theological thought factions among Muslims (K. Ali, 1997, p. 132).

Debates among Muslims persisted during the caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib, leading to the Battle of Jamal (between Ali and Talhah, Zubair, and Aisha) and the Battle of Siffin (between Ali and Mu'awiyah). Historical records indicate that these events took place in the latter half of the first century of the Hijri calendar or the seventh century CE.

The conflicts during Ali's rule reached a climax with the event of tahkim (arbitration), an effort to peacefully resolve the dispute between Ali and Mu'awiyah during the Battle of Siffin. The arbitration, originally intended to settle the dispute between Ali and Mu'awiyah, ultimately disadvantaged Ali. Faced with this dilemma, Ali appeared to acquiesce and accepted the arbitration, which appeared unjust and detrimental to his cause, without resistance.

Subsequently, some of Ali's followers dared to analyze and concluded that all parties involved in the arbitration process committed a major sin by rendering a judgment contrary to the Quran. According to their analysis, those committing a major sin are considered disbelievers. These individuals are known in the annals of Islamic theology as the Khawarij group, who separated from the faction of Ali ibn Abi Talib (Ath-Thabari, 1979, p. 32).

Based on the events described above, it is evident that the Khawarij group is regarded as the initial political faction to introduce theological dilemmas in Islam. This transpired when they asserted that individuals who acquiesced to the arbitration outcome were engaging in a major sin and thus became apostates (Harun Nasution, 2002, p. 3). The doctrine of apostasy propagated by the Khawarij against those who accepted arbitration outcomes subsequently evolved, sparking numerous analyses and debates within the Muslim community.

In response to the Khawarij's assertion, which deemed those involved in arbitration as apostates for committing a major sin, a second faction emerged known as the Murji'ah, presenting an opposing viewpoint to the Khawarij (Abu Zahrah, 2009, pp. 127–132). This faction argued that a believer who commits a major sin does not automatically lose their faith but remains a believer (Muhammad 'Imarah, 2008, pp. 35–43). According to their analysis, individuals committing major sins still retain hope for forgiveness from Allah SWT because faith persists in their hearts (Ahmad Amin, 1975, pp. 279–280). Therefore, discussions regarding the status of those committing major sins should be postponed until the Day of Judgment (Fazlur Rahman, 1984, pp. 117–118).

Following that, another faction known as the Mu'tazilah surfaced in response. This group delved deeper into theological matters, embracing a more philosophical approach, and their discussions were characterized by rationality. The viewpoint advocated by this group was that individuals committing major sins are neither believers nor disbelievers but simply Muslims. Concerning major sins, the Mu'tazilah developed the concept of the "middle position" or what is known as *al-Manzilah bain al-Manzilatain* (a position between two positions) (Abd al-Qahir al-Bagdadi, n.d., pp. 20–21).

The Mu'tazilah sect refrains from categorizing individuals who commit major sins as disbelievers, unlike the Khawarij, nor do they regard them as believers, as the Murji'ah group does. Instead, the Mu'tazilah designate those who commit major sins as *fāsiq*. Their rationale is that individuals who engage in major sins cannot be classified as disbelievers because they still maintain belief in God and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). However, they cannot be considered believers either because their faith is no longer complete (Abu Qasim al-Barkhi dkk, n.d., p. 19).

Following the emergence of the Mu'tazilah sect, it didn't take long for three distinct theological schools of thought to emerge within Islam: the Khawarij, Murji'ah, and Mu'tazilah. The Mu'tazilah, known for their rational approach, quickly encountered strong opposition from traditionalist factions within Islam, particularly the followers of the Hanbali school of thought, founded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The group opposing the Mu'tazilah doctrines then evolved into the traditional theological school of Ash'ariyyah, with its foundational principles championed by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (w. 324H/935M) (Ahmad Mahmud Shubhi, 1969, p. 187).

Besides the Ash'ariyyah school, another sect emerged in Samarkand aiming to oppose the Mu'tazilah sect. Founded by Abu Mansur Muhammad Al-Maturidi (w. 333H/944M), this sect later became known for its theology called Maturidiyyah (H.A.R. Gibb, 1995, p. 70). The Maturidiyyah group subsequently divided into two factions: the Samarkand faction led by Al-Maturidi himself, whose ideas aligned more closely with the core teachings of the Mu'tazilah group, and the Bukhara faction led by Al-Bazdawi, whose ideas were more akin to the core teachings of the Ash'ariyyah group. The Maturidiyyah sect is one of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah sects that emerged alongside the Ash'ariyyah (Hanafi, 1974).

Apart from the aforementioned groups, among the specific factions considered as schools of Islamic theology are the Qadariyyah and Jabariyyah schools. The Qadariyyah school was established by Ma'bad ibn Khalid al-Juhani (79H/699M). This school asserts that humans possess freedom and autonomy in shaping their life's trajectory (free will and free act). However, the Qadariyyah doctrine encountered opposition from the Jabariyyah doctrine, initiated by Jahm ibn Shafwan (127H/745M). The central tenet of this doctrine is that all human actions are determined by the power of God, encompassing matters of faith, virtue, and vice (Asy-Syahrastani, 2006, pp. 71–72).

b. The Interaction of Islam with Philosophy

The term "filsafat," known as "falsafah" in Arabic and "philosophy" in English, originates from the Greek word "philosophia." The term "philosophia" consists of two words, "philos" or "philein," meaning love, and "sophia," meaning wisdom. Thus, etymologically, philosophy means the love of wisdom (Surajiyo, 2007, p. 3). In its Arabic expression, which is more equivalent, it is called 'ulum al-hikmah (sciences of wisdom), corresponding to the Greek sophia (Nurcholish Madjid, 1992, p. 218). In terminology, Harun Nasution states that philosophy is thinking according to the rules of logic freely, not bound by tradition, dogma, and religion, and profoundly delving into fundamental issues (Harun Nasution, 1991b, p. 3).

Looking at its history, it's evident that philosophy emerged long before Islam. Islam arose in the Arabian Desert, specifically in Mecca, in the 6th century SM, while philosophy originated in Greece around the 5th century SM or even earlier. The encounter between Islam (the Muslim community) and philosophy took place in the 8th century SM or the 2nd century SM, as the Muslim community expanded its influence and reached new regions. In this context, it can be understood that philosophy is one of the foreign cultures encountered by Islam in its historical journey (Muhammad Abduh, 1979, p. 36).

In recorded history, it is known that the contact between the Muslim community and Greek philosophy and science was preceded by direct contact between the Arab world and Greece before the advent of Islam, through regions such as Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. Greek philosophy and science reached these regions during the conquests by Alexander the Great in the east in the 4th century SM (331 SM) (Harun Nasution, 1991a, p. 54).

The first emergence of philosophical thought in the Islamic world occurred in the 9th century CE, under the rule of the Abbasid caliphs, successors to the Umayyad dynasty. However, during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik (685-705), various fundamental cultural changes took place, including the translation of Persian and Greek works into Arabic, for both administrative purposes and societal discourse (Harun Nasution, 1992, pp. 26–27). The interest of Muslims in studying philosophy and science at that time was exceptionally high due to direct government encouragement, making it a prominent endeavor (Madjid Fakhri, 1987, p. 97).

It is noteworthy that the most positive outcome of the interaction between Islam and Greek civilization is the emergence of rational thought among classical scholars. However, a fundamental disparity exists between Greek rational thought and classical Islamic rational thought. In Greece, there was no acquaintance with Semitic religions, thereby allowing their thinking to be unencumbered by religious doctrines. Conversely, classical Islamic scholars' rationality was confined by the tenets of Islam as delineated in the Quran and Hadith. Nonetheless, the doctrinal constraints of Islam on the rational deliberations of classical Islamic scholars provoke inquiries into the acceptable framework for the intersection of Islam and Greek philosophy over approximately a century (Harun Nasution, 2001, p. 9). Greek philosophical doctrines, however, flourished and evolved within a non-Semitic religious milieu, characterized by a spiritual life grounded solely in philosophical ruminations (Hanafi, 1974, p. 83).

2. Typology of Classical Islamic Theological Thought

Classical Islamic theological thought inherits from previous theological discourses throughout Islamic history and is distinguished by its apologetic nature. The

assassination of the third caliph, 'Usman bin 'Affan, serves as the starting point for debates within classical Islamic theology. Subsequent discussions have emerged regarding major sins, evolving into debates concerning the status of believers and non-believers. This has led to debates about the originator of human actions and the concept of Allah's unity (Tawhid), a fundamental principle of Islam. Other issues include the nature of Allah's speech in the Qur'an, deliberations on whether it is created or eternal, interpretations of ambiguous verses, discussions on predestination and free will, among others. These debates have been extensive, protracted, and have spawned various theological schools.

Within the realm of classical Islamic theological thought, there exists a perception associated with major sins and the omnipotence of God. This theological framework originated from the discourse between the Khawarij and Murji'ah and subsequently gave rise to schools such as Qadariyyah, Jabariyyah, Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Maturidiyyah. The emerging viewpoints during this era serve as the cornerstone of classical Islamic theological thought. Each of these perspectives exhibits dual inclinations: some lean towards reliance on revelation, while others base their reasoning on intellect. These inclinations evolved over time, undergoing continual shifts and modifications (Suryan A. Jamrah, 1996, p. 1). For example, the Ash'ariyyah school sought to reconcile between the rationalist Mu'tazilah and the determinist Jabariyyah, leading to dialectical developments in subsequent generations, as exemplified by figures such as al-Baqillani, al-Juwayni, and al-Ghazali.

The varied theological perspectives, with their diverse dynamics of thought and backgrounds, further enrich the treasury of classical Islamic theological thought. Besides inheriting a variety of ideological patterns, the legacy of classical Islamic theological thought has given rise to the potential for a "two-faced Islam" stemming from the schism between 'Ali ibn Abi Thalib on one side and Mu'awiyah on the other. The "first face of Islam" is evident in the emergence of the Khawarij within a small group of companions. In brief, the Khawarij represent one side of the two faces of Islam, displaying a literal (textual), emotional (anger-driven), intolerant, and exclusive aspect. Meanwhile, the "second face of Islam" acknowledges differences, diversity of thought, and contextual considerations, always striving for peace. This face is exemplified by the tolerant attitude of 'Ali ibn Abi Thalib towards the group of Mu'awiyah, despite the eventual deception and harm caused to 'Ali's faction (Steven Sulaiman Schwatz, 2007, pp. x-xi).

Among the early schools of Islamic theology mentioned above, the emergence of the Mu'tazilah stands out as a pivotal stage in the history of classical Islamic theological thought. They were trailblazers genuinely dedicated to engaging in rational-philosophical discourse concerning Islamic creed in a more systematic manner. As a result of their intellectual pursuits, they were subsequently acknowledged as the precursors to the establishment of a new discipline within Islamic studies, known as 'ilm al-kalam (Islamic theology). Therefore, the Mu'tazilah group is recognized for

introducing theological issues that are deeper and more philosophical in nature compared to those brought forward by other schools (Harun Nasution, 1985, p. 38).

The teachings formulated by the Mu'tazilah school encountered challenges along their path, notably from the As'ariyyah school. The As'ariyyah school, attributed to Abu Hasan al-As'ari, emerged as a distinct doctrine. Initially, al-As'ari was an adherent of the Mu'tazilah school, but later on, he renounced Mu'tazilah doctrines and diverged from Mu'tazilah ideology (Imam Muhammad Abu Zahrah, 1996, p. 190).

The primary reason al-As'ari distanced himself from the Mu'tazilah school stemmed from the division experienced among Muslims due to Mu'tazilah teachings. As a devout Muslim deeply concerned about the unity of the Muslim community, Al-As'ari feared that the Qur'an would become a "victim" of the liberal ideas of the Mu'tazilah, which he deemed unacceptable. On the other hand, there also emerged the Ahl al-Hadith, who were feared to make the Qur'an a "victim" by adhering only to the literal meanings of the texts and neglecting their essence. Therefore, al-As'ari took a middle path between the rationalist Mu'tazilah and the textualist Ahl al-Hadith, and this approach proved acceptable to the majority of Muslims.

The Maturidiyyah school shares similarities with the As'ariyyah. The name Maturidiyyah is derived from its founder, Muhammad bin Muhammad Abu Mansur, also known as Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. In their development, the Maturidiyyah and As'ariyyah schools share common ground, likely because they both faced the same opponent, the Mu'tazilah. However, they also have differences in their thinking. Although both strive to solidify the creed contained in the Qur'an through reasoning and logical evidence, one of these schools grants greater authority to reason than the other. For example, the As'ariyyah considers ma'rifat (knowledge of Allah) obligatory based on sharia, while the Maturidiyyah, following the method of Abu Hanifah, believes that ma'rifat can be attained through rational reasoning. The As'ariyyah does not recognize that something can be evaluated as good based on its substance alone, without instructions from sharia, whereas the Maturidiyyah acknowledges that something can be evaluated as good based on its substance and can be reached by human reason. Thus, it is clear that the Maturidiyyah school gives significant authority to human reason, but this capacity for reasoning is not contrary to sharia.

One significant aspect in the history of classical Islamic theological thought is the differentiation between two primary trends: rationalist and traditionalist theological thought. Rationalist theological thought affirms human freedom of action and will, emphasizes the power of reason, acknowledges the limited power and will of God, does not adhere strictly to the literal meanings of the Quran, and often employs metaphorical interpretations of Quranic verses. This perspective is evident in the Mu'tazilah and Maturidiyyah Samarkand schools.

Conversely, traditionalist theological thought, known as kalam, denies human freedom of will and action, considers reason to have limited significance, emphasizes the absolute power and will of God, and strictly adheres to the literal meanings of

Quranic verses. This theological perspective tends to cultivate a fatalistic outlook on life and is prevalent in the As'ariyyah and Maturidiyyah Bukhara schools (M. Yunan Yusuf, 2003, p. 7).

During the Abbasid era, rationalist Islamic theology experienced rapid advancement. This progress stemmed not only from the initiatives of the caliphs but also from the contributions of scholars, particularly from the Mu'tazilah. The Mu'tazilah played a crucial role in providing significant moral support for this advancement. Their rational theological framework was highly relevant to the development efforts promoted by the Abbasid rulers. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Mu'tazilah theological school was widely embraced by state officials and even established as the official state doctrine during that period.

Following its establishment as the official state doctrine during al-Ma'mun's reign (872 M), the Mu'tazilah disseminated their teachings throughout all segments of the Muslim community. One contentious issue that caused upheaval was their assertion that the Quran was created (makhluk). This stance served as a litmus test for gauging the adherence of Muslims to Mu'tazilah teachings. The enforcement of this belief triggered responses from hadith scholars (ahl al-hadith) such as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. This scenario persisted during the reigns of three Abbasid caliphs: al-Ma'mun, al-Mu'tasim, and al-Wathiq (813-847 M), resulting in numerous hadith scholars becoming targets during this era (Muhammad Ibn Abdul Karim al-Bazdawi, n.d., p. 51).

The tension arising from the violence and imposition of the belief in the created nature of the Quran was mitigated with the ascension of al-Mutawakkil as the Abbasid caliph. Al-Mutawakkil subsequently rescinded the Mu'tazilah's position as the exclusive official state doctrine (848 M), thereby reinstating the freedom to adhere to various schools of thought (P.Sj. Van Koningsveld, 1993, p. 69).

Following the decline of the Mu'tazilah, rationalist theological inquiry in Islamic theology experienced a period of stagnation. In contrast, the Ahl al-Hadith school, particularly the As'ariyyah, underwent significant development and dissemination across the Islamic world, especially from the 11th to the 13th centuries. This advancement was primarily championed by Nizam al-Mulk, a vizier of the Seljuk dynasty deeply committed to As'ariyyah theological doctrine and the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence.

Nizam al-Mulk initiated the establishment of madrasas promoting Ahl al-Hadith ideology in Baghdad in 1067 M. Subsequently, the prestigious Nizamiyyah madrasa was replicated in various Islamic cities such as Basra, Mosul (Iraq), Isfahan, Nishapur, Merv, Balkh, and Herat (Iran). Other Muslim rulers in the Middle East followed Nizam al-Mulk's lead. These madrasas not only served as centers for knowledge dissemination but also played a pivotal role in producing scholars specializing in Ahl al-Hadith. Hence, it is evident that traditional Islamic theological thought generally revolves around ideological religious perspectives and Islamic practices, manifested through

adherence to As'ariyyah theology, Shafi'i jurisprudence, and Ghazali's Sufism (Azra, 2003, p. 147).

By this point, it can be understood that the Islamic theological thought of al-As'ari stands out as one of the most successful in the history of classical Islamic theological thought. He managed to cripple the Mu'tazilah movement by using their own logic. With his theological system, he became the champion of the Muslim community in responding to the challenges posed by the first wave of Hellenism. It can be said that he not only solidified Sunni doctrine but also safeguarded Islam itself from the danger of total Hellenization. In other words, if the Mu'tazilah were the pioneers in the emergence of Islamic theological knowledge, then in the hands of the As'ariyyah, the existence of Islamic theology and classical Islamic theological thought reached its completion.

D. Conclusion

Based on the above exposition, it can be asserted that the historical dialectic of kalam (Islamic theology) has been shaped by the struggles of various socio-political and socio-religious groups, leading to the formation of distinct schools of thought or doctrines within Islamic theology. While numerous theological schools or doctrines have emerged within this historical context, characterized by their diversity and complexity, not all have endured throughout the history of the Muslim community. Notable theological schools or doctrines mentioned include the Khawarij, Shia, Murji'ah, Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Maturidiyyah.

Formally, the Khawarij, Murji'ah, and Mu'tazilah schools no longer exist except in the annals of history. The schools that have persisted are the Ash'ariyyah and Maturidiyyah, commonly known as the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah on one hand, and the Shia school on the other. The resurgence of rationalist thought in the Islamic world, previously introduced through classical Greek culture but now through modern Western culture, has led to the revival of Mu'tazilah teachings. This resurgence is particularly evident among educated Islamic intelligentsia influenced by Western education, often referred to in Western literature on Islam as neo-Mu'tazilites.

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