



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MU'TAZILITE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the historical development of Mu'tazilite theological school of thought which arises from speculative method and influences of Greek thought that sparked the discursive tradition of early Islamic intellectual history. This was essentially brought forth by the textualist and rationalist school and their classical debate that had formative influence in the rational school developed by the Mu'tazilites in the early centuries. The paper studies the history and development of Mu'tazilite theology and their conceptual and doctrinal impact on modern neo-Mu'tazilite works. The study is based on classical works that provide underlying textual and interpretive history of Mu'tazilism. It uses qualitative method based on documentary survey and content analysis. Data were collected from related primary and secondary sources and analyzed using descriptive, normative, historical and theological approaches in order to make accurate findings. The finding shows that the Mu'tazilites ideology was historically developed to counter the alleged philosophical influence of deviant sects of the heretics, Magians, Manichaeism, atheism, naturalists and materialists by refuting their philosophical premises. This contributes to the formative development of kalam or speculative theology thanks to the flowering of Mu'tazilite theology and their rational expression that helps to foster higher ethical and religious norms and theological ideas and its consequential influences on contemporary contexts that espouses neo-Mu'tazilite outlook calling for the return of reason and their enlightened movement.

Keywords: *Mu'tazilite; Theological School; Islamic Creed; Rationality; Liberty*

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyorot latar sejarah pertumbuhan mazhab Muktazilah yang timbul daripada pengaruh idea-idea falsafah Yunani yang membentuk tradisi diskursifnya yang khas yang berkembang dalam period awal sejarah intelektual Islam. Fahaman ini terkesan oleh perdebatan klasik antara mazhab rasional dengan mazhab tekstual yang membentuk idea-ideanya yang formatif dan teologi spekulatif yang dikembangkannya di abad klasik. Ia mengkaji konsep dan doktrin pemikiran yang dibangunkan dalam perkembangannya sejak zaman pertengahan ke abad moden serta karya-karya yang menyediakan garis besar dan ikhtisar tentang intisari pemikirannya. Kajian bersifat kualitatif dari jenis penelitian pustaka dan analisis isi. Data-data diperoleh dari sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder yang terkait

Ahmad Nabil Amir, Tasnim Abdul Rahman -94-

dan dianalisis secara deskriptif, normatif, historis, juridis dan teologis bagi mendapatkan kesimpulan dan perumusan akhir yang akurat. Temuan mendapati ideologi pemikiran Muktaẓilah yang berkembang dalam sejarah pada asalnya bertujuan menangkis tantangan-tantangan luar yang menyimpang daripada akidah Islam seperti fahaman zindiq, Majusi, manikeisme, ateisme, naturalis dan materialis yang dihujat dengan senjata logika dan filsafat. Ia menyumbang kepada pertumbuhan formatif ilmu kalam yang terbangun dalam sejarah awal Islam dan memberi pengaruh yang konsekuensial dalam konteks mutakhir sebagai wahana pemikiran dan sarana dakwah yang berkesan yang dimanfaatkan oleh penganjur aliran neo-Muktaẓilah moden dalam menghimbau kepada pemugaran akliah dan pencerahan.

Kata Kunci: Muktaẓilah; Mazhab Pemikiran; Iktikad; Rasio; Kebebasan

INTRODUCTION

The paper examines the historical background of the Mu'tazilite school of thought which was developed in early 3rd Hijrah/9th and 10th centuries AD (Martin et al., 1997). It outlines basic concepts developed in its fundamental principle and tenet known as *usul al-khamsah* (five principles). This formed the basic framework in the principles of its movement which rooted on five basic pillars, namely *al-'Adl* (justice), *al-Tawhid* (tawhid), *al-Wa'd wa'l-Wa'id* (promise and threat), *al-Manzilah Bayna al-Manzilatayn* (the intermediate position) and *al-Amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar* (commanding good and forbidding evil).

In contrast with this doctrine, is the school of thought espoused by Abul Hasan al-Asy'ari, that choose a middle path between two extremes of *Jabariyah* and *Qadariyah*, by proposing the theory of *kasb*, namely human actions do not absolutely originated from him, but also do not absolutely originated from God (Fatawi, 2020). Allah is the Essence (*Dhat*) who brings about human actions, but humans have the power to realize their own actions, whereby Allah is *the Fa'il* (Creator) of their actions, but humans are *kasib*, namely creatures who strive to realize those actions through the power they possess (Fatawi, 2020; Zahrah, 1996).

The Mu'tazilah took a rational and liberal path of theological stand, following the creed of Qadariyah, establishing its believe that humans have free will and choice to act. Based on its rational framework, it critically addressed problems of human will, as summarized in *the usul of al-khamsah*, responding to such intense and complex political and sectarian discourse of that time. They believe that human was given freedom to determine their will and actions, and were responsible for their own actions. In advocating this notion, the Mu'tazilite adhered to God's words in surah al-Sajdah verse 17: "as a reward for what they used to do."

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It is interesting to learn in this context the implication of their influential rational view connected with the ideas of *hurriyah* (liberty) and *ikhtiyar* (free will) and the essential

framework developed by the rationalist group better known as *ahl al-'adl wa'l-tawhid* (Imarah 1971) - group that upholds justice and oneness of God (Rohidin, 2018)

This study offers new perspective and insight on the historical aspect of the Mu'tazila by taking account of its contribution to the early development of kalam in Islamic intellectual history. Toward this aim, it studies various aspect of its theological and epistemological works that highlights Mu'tazilite traditional views and influence in formative period of Islam. It has conducted comprehensive literature review to trace a number of related works that discussed basic historical aspect of Mu'tazilite theological and historical tradition, known as the largest and oldest school of Islamic theology (Rohidin, 2018). In her article, Elizaloo ks at the contribution of the Mu'tazilah through their efforts to respond to philosophical argument and multiple attacks of blasphemy using the theological and structural argument of kalam (Eliza, 2011).

In his work that highlighted this medieval polemic, Zulhelmi review the epistemological foundations of Mu'tazilite thought and their influence on the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia. It refers to the prototype figure of its leading advocate, i.e., Harun Nasution that champion the controversial idea of restoring Mu'tazilite theology in current situation as a prerequisite for the revival of modern Islam. Harun's hermeneutical ground was broadly differed from conventional Muslim theologian and jurist. Instead of focusing on the meaning of verses, he projected its understanding and interpretation figuratively through general themes and rational ground, emphasising on moral principles, ethical responsibility and social justice (Harahap et al., 2024).

An extensive and detail theological discussion of the Mu'tazilite was brought forth by (Muhyidin & Nasihin, 2020) in their paper highlighting Mu'tazilite principle of rationality. Its existing pillars had already flourished since 2nd century which was attributed to its founder, Wasil bin 'Ata', that outlined its five fundamental principles (*usul al-khamsah*) and theoretical ground. Its relation was articulated in such a coherent, systematic, and logical manner which reflect and complement each other.

Further discussion on the role of reason and principle of freedom was expounded by Analiansyah, (2013) in his article describing Mu'tazilite metaphysical ideas and philosophical views that basically differs from the Sunnite and Shiite religious belief and concept. It highlighted historical factors leading to its emergence in formative period of Islam, and their philosophical and doctrinal impact that was instrumental in the development and emergent of theological problems that have attracted profound speculative and theological discussion on transcendental issues and forming central themes in classical Islamic thought.

The development of Mu'tazilite symbolic ideas and thought since the classical era to the modern period was developed by Martin et al., (1997) in their work *Defenders of reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from medieval school to modern symbol* that highlights the foundational aspect of their rational theology, and the conflict between the "defenders of God" Lawrence, (1989) and the "defenders of reason" and the entrenched cause of the controversy. This book was originally a Master's thesis of Dwi Surya Atmaja submitted to Arizona State University, now Professor of Arabic at Islamic University (IAIN) Pontianak, Indonesia that he collaborated with Richard C. Martin, an expert in Mu'tazilite theology, and Mark R. Woodward, an anthropologist specializing in Islam in Indonesia. The purpose of this book is to introduce two

major texts and compendium on Mu'tazilite theology that represent two different eras, namely *the Commentary on Five Principles (Sharh usul al-khamsah)* by Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1024) [10th century AD] and *Kaum Muktazilah dan Pandangan Rasionalanya* (The Mu'tazila and their Rational Philosophy) by Harun Nasution which was composed around 1970s.

Thus, this article attempts to analyse the theological views of Mu'tazilite on aspects of speculative debates of religious grounds and its transcendental and metaphysical implication and significant on early Islamic discourse. Their intellectual legacy had form an important part of religious thought that was instrumental in the development of early scientific and intellectual breakthrough in Islamic history, and to analyze its connection with current development of modern rationalist school of thought as a continuation of its discourse on issues of neo-Mu'tazilite thought and the development of its critical religious tradition.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted using qualitative method in the form of literature survey and content analysis. The data was collected from related primary and secondary sources derived from latest epistemological and philosophical works that discusses Mu'tazila's speculative and epistemological postulate. It also surveys certain form of manuscripts, theses, books, magazines, newspapers, personal blog, and essays that further analyse the topics. The collected data and materials were then analyzed in a descriptive, normative, historical and juridical approaches to reach final conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Background: The Formative Period of Mu'tazilite Thought

In Islamic intellectual and scientific tradition, religious polemics arise from conflicting ideas on fiqh and kalam that often gave rise to theological and ideological conflict in matters of law, practice and belief (Pakpahan, 2017). Political issues of caliphate had led to radical theological difference with regard to faith and unbelief, major sins, qada' and qadar, heaven and hell (Rohidin, 2018). The classical debate between rationalist and textualist school of thought which has been prolonged pertaining to divine issues has given rise to clashes between various sects and schools. This is where major divisions arise among the people regarding issue of major sins, the origin of the Qur'an, interpretation of controversial verses, the attribute, substance, nature and acts of God.

The dominant theological appeal of the principle of freedom or free will (*hurriyat al-insan*) which emerged since the dispute over the *tahkim process*, resulted in the birth of various theological schools in Islam (Fatawi, 2020). The history of the emergence of the Mu'tazila generally begins since early 3rd AH. Its theological ideas were adopted from Greeks philosophical thought and its underlying Hellenistic, Mesopotamian and ancient Egyptian legacies of religion and philosophical concept which was gaining current in Islamic intellectual history (Ayub, 2021). The introduction of the Mu'tazilite rationalist school of thought was made possible by the rise of 'Abbasid dynastic rulers and its recognition as the official school of belief in 212 AH by the Caliph al-Ma'mun. As a result of his arbitrary manner, its influence began to decline and challenged by Caliph al-Mutawakkil who eventually disclaim its position as an official school in 234 AH (Eliza, 2011; Pakpahan, 2017). Political unrest and

hostility from the masses led to the declining influence of the Mu'tazila which slightly vanish and disappeared from the scene and becoming "fragmentary theology" (Azra, 1992). It was replaced by Asha'rite theological school and the *Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah* ideological creed as the dominant group representing the mainstream Islam.

In the history of Islamic thought, the Mu'tazila seemed to raise theological questions that were profound and deeper in its philosophical nuance and dialectics compared with other theological schools. Mu'tazilism was recognized as "the systematically rationalist theological school of the early centuries of Islam" (Kerr, 1966) whose enlightening ideas had preserved ancient philosophy and learning. The Golden Age of Islam, i.e. 9th-13th centuries A.C., was mainly attributed to their existence of "a strong rationalist tradition, carried on by a group of Muslim thinkers known as the Mu'tazilites" (Hoodbhoy, 2002). They work to reconcile religion with reason (*al-tawfiq bayn al-din wa'l-'aql fi'l-Islam*) and hold it as *asl* (the prime cause) which eventually led all their principal tenets being adopted by Zaydi doctrine (Madelung, 1965). Due to this, its proponents were also known as Islamic philosophers and rationalists. The Mu'tazilite established five basic doctrines known as *usul al-khamsah*, namely *al-'adl* (justice), *al-tawhid* (tawhid), *al-wa'd wa'l-wa'id* (promises and threats), *al-manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn* (the intermediate position), and *al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar* (commanding good and forbidding evil).

The Principle of Freedom

The classical debate regarding the principle of freedom advocated by the Mu'tazilite seems to continue in modern thought between traditionally conservative camp and the radical tradition of modernist rationalist school. The conflict between these two extremes has been harmonized with balance approaches of simplicity advocating middle path or *wasatiyyah* Islam (R. Z. Khaidir, 2020) between those who rely on reason and those who rejecting textual-revelation. This was shown by Muhammad Imarah (1931-2020) in his book *Al-Mu'tazilah wa Mushkilah al-Hurriyyah al-Insaniyah* (Mu'tazilite and the conflict of human freedom) which raised new consciousness in reflecting the consequential and implications which relate to the position of reason with revelation, and the attitude of revelation towards reason.

Imarah addresses this issue with historical, methodological discussions, substantively referred to rational arguments (reason) and revealed sources and tradition (*naql*), intelligibly discusses such intense theological problem. It shows deeply-rooted clash between the textualist Salafiyah (*al-salafiyah al-nususiyah*) that rejecting and denying reason and rationality (*al-'aqlaniyah*) even with historical reality of the *Salaf* itself which concerned with human experimentation (*al-tajribah al-basyariyah*) and *ijtihad* (*al-ijtihadat al-insaniyah*) with Westernize Movement (*al-mutagharribun*) orienting towards the West and wanting to westernize people thought and behavior towards development and progress (P. H. Khaidir, 2020).

As a solution, Imarah introduced Islamic rationality (*al-'aqlaniyah al-Islamiyah*) which combined two legs and wings, reason (*al-'aql*) and revelation (*al-naql*) as a harmonious complement to human thought. It provides a balance theological path by combining Islamic freedom (*al-hurriyah al-Islamiyah*) with human freedom (*al-hurriyah al-insaniyah*) whereby their freedom as individuals, citizens, members of society, even in great family of humanity is

determined by the dignity, values and norms of religion - something that reflects Islamic views of the nature of their freedom as caliph of Allah Swt. on earth that must submit to and follow the heavenly law and its values in creating welfare and justice.

He also separated this from the ideology of *jabr* and *jabariyyah* (where humans do not have the freedom to choose because everything depends on the will of Allah) as well as the absolute immersion in God's divine entity (*al-fana'*) to become naught without the power of will, in consequence of its mystical penetration (Imarah, 2020). The importance of his discussion is clear in awakening the spirit of freedom and responsibility rather than the state of being in fatal submission and tyranny, refuting both westernization, orientalism and colonialism. He combines the characteristics of *aql* and *naql* in the understanding of religion and its renewed spirit, including the understanding of *waqi'* and its development in the future - an original discourse on *the law of freedom* which characterize the backbone of the his project of reform and civilizational renewal that he envisions, based on the essence of *'aqlani* (rationality). He seeks to foster spirit of openness and criticality towards all cultures and civilizations, which rejects stagnancy, closedness and dependency on others.

This book, *Al-Mu'tazilah wa Mushkilah al-Hurriyyah al-Insaniyah* basically explores the basic principles and philosophy of the doctrines of *al-hurriyyah* (freedom) and *al-ikhtiyar* (free will) which was espoused by the Mu'tazila or better known as *Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawhid*. It was originally a thesis produced by Imarah describing significant development of the rational thought and principles of Mu'tazilite and their breakthrough in history that reveal its critical influence in Islamic thought as manifested in its intellectual impact in classical and medieval Islamic scholarship. His writing highlights the essence of rational force of coherent doctrine and philosophy inspired by Mu'tazilite rationalism, derived from its five pillars (*usul al-khamsah*), namely, *al-'Adl* (justice) , *al-Tawhid* (tawhid) , *al-Wa'd wa'l-Wa'id* (promise and threat), *al-Manzilah Bayna al-Manzilatayn* (the Intermediate Position, a position between two positions) and *al-Amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar* (commanding good and forbidding evil).

This book also formulates arguments based on the views of Ibn 'Arabi and Ibn Rushd, in situating these crucial theological issues and problems and explaining its basic speculative and doctrinal implication arising from the conflict between the Mu'tazilite and the Asha'rite. Its historical analysis also suggests the Greek origin of the Mu'tazilite principle arising from historical disputes that emerged since the beginning of the 2nd century. This was reflected from the practice and logical ideas brought forth by 'Amru bin 'Ubaid and Abu Hudhayfah Wāsil b. 'Atā' (80-131 H/699-749 AD) that giving rise to *I'tizal's* doctrine (Zahrah, 1996).

Its theological views were developed from the philosophical premises of Aristotle which was "dressed in Arabic clothes and coloured with Islamic creed" (Dick, 1986). This dialectical approaches was instrumental in the growth of the theological school that emerged in the third century A.H. in the hands of Mu'tazilite scholars such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) and Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915-16). This philosophical belief lead to rational understanding with regard to the attribute, substance, nature and acts of God, freedom (*hurriyyah*) and free will (*ikhtiyar*) of human being, *ru'yah* Allah (the vision of God), prophecy and revelation and the principle of tawhid (Islamic monotheism).

The basic principles of rationalist thought and postulates (in comparison with the belief of *Jabariyah*, *Jahmiyah* and *Qadariyah* - otherwise known as *al-ikhtiyariyah*) were discussed in major works of al-Sāhib b. 'Ubad, *Al-Ibanah 'an Madhhab Ahl al-'Adl* and Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar b. Ahmad al-Hamadani (d. 415 AH), *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-'Adl*, who uphold the significant teachings and beliefs of *Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawhid* and promoted the development of the 'aqlaniyah school which was influential in medieval ages. It brought forth their higher philosophical consideration and the moderating position of *al-'aqlaniyyah al-Islamiyyah* school which was articulated by the Mu'tazila in defending religious beliefs and formulating its underlying philosophy as the basis of rational theology that inspired its scholastic tradition and the unprecedented breakthrough it made in Islamic intellectual history.

In response to significant rational argument discovered by the Mu'tazilites, Hamka once recorded his characteristic belief of their notion: "We are amazed by the Mu'tazilites who, as explained by Ahmad Amin (1886-1954) in his book *Dhuhul Islam*, argued that the Mu'tazilah were very religious people and generally lived simply, dressed in distinctive and unluxurious clothes. Because they themselves realize that the steadfastness of a conviction until it becomes a living belief that is carried out until death, is if what is said is in accordance with what is practiced." (Hamka, 2018).

The rational breakthrough that was projected by the Mu'tazilite in the medieval era was unprecedented in inspiring philosophical inquiry and the reflowering of dynamic human thoughts and its crucial impact in modern context. It would demands intellectual and logical abilities to solve nuances theological issue and its intricate problems and subtleties, as emphasized by Hamka in his book *Principles and Wisdom of Islamic Da'wah*: "At such a time there is great need for arguments based on reason and logic (*mantiq*). Expressing reason solely without need to use verses or hadith. There were no other people capable of doing this except the Mu'tazilite. They were very happy to be invited to exchange ideas like that because *good and evil* is the fifth pillar of their lives. They were willing to face wherever an exchange of ideas arises regarding these matter. They can uphold the argument with reason and necessary logic that the (sending) of Prophet is something necessary in upholding religion." (Hamka, 2018).

According to Hamka, the widespread rational discussion on deep philosophical and metaphysical principles has giving rise to important breakthrough in scientific era which necessarily call for independent investigation and reasoning in explaining the nature of God. With regard to the rational beliefs of the Mu'tazila and the manifestation of their broadly coherent and logical thought and influence in modern period, it is possible to exemplify this by furthering and developing their principles and understanding of the fundamental aspect of rationalism: "The progress in the use of machines and industry has naturally led to the growth of people who can command good and forbid evil using Mu'tazilite system, able to face the intelligence of the mind with the intelligence of the mind as well. Able to think logically, even dialectically." (Hamka, 2018).

The ability of the Mu'tazilite to use rational and dialectical considerations in their proper discussions of the theme of freedom (*al-hurriyah*) is what Imarah highlighted in his book explaining the principal framework and method (*manhaj*) brought forth from their

unique theological understanding and formulating its possibilities for developing progressive and dynamic *'aqlaniyyah school* in modern century.

Rational Theology

The rational advocacy of the Mu'tazilite pertaining to theological disputes in classical Islam, mostly related to their metaphysical standpoint and concepts of God's transcendency in philosophical inquiry. In principle, rationalism is a philosophical approaches that emphasizes on reason (*ratio*) as the main source of knowledge apart from sensory observation (Zulhelmi 2014, 3). In his analysis of the historical growth of kalam formulated in the tradition of *ahl al-sunnah*, Sirajuddin Abbas described the Mu'tazila as: "the people who made excitement in tumultuous world of Islam during the first three hundred years of centuries, using a lot of reason and prioritized reason over the Qur'an and hadith" (Eliza, 2011).

The consequences of Mu'tazilite rational principle provided a meaningful implication of its ingenuity which emphasize on the role of reason and rejecting the idolatry of texts. The strong impression of its dynamic movement was highlighted by Harun Nasution (1919-1998) in his book *Pembaharuan dalam Islam: Sejarah Pemikiran dan Gerakan* (1991) that pronounced its idealism, affirming that was in Islam that religion and reason were able to coexist for the first time. Impressed by its social and theological projection, in his book *Teologi Islam: Aliran-Aliran, Sejarah, Analisa, Perbandingan* (1986) Harun stated that the combination of Muhammad Abduh's (1849-1905) thought and the Mu'tazila conception was able to lead society away from disorder and confusion, even without revelation (Nasution, 1978). This was partly explained by Muhammad Asad (1980) in his Qur'anic interpretation, *The Message of the Qur'an* in surah *al-Ahzab* (33) verse 72: "Verily, We did offer the trust (of reason and volition) to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up – for verily he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish", which is perhaps the closest definition that describes the meaning of trust - appears to be 'reason' or 'intellect' and 'the faculty of volition'.

This rational theory believes in the regularity of natural laws, where according to Mu'tazila, the heavens created by God must operate according to rational laws, in accordance with the function of their occurrence in the Divine Order. This tradition has been pioneered since the earliest era in the period of Islamic caliphate in Baghdad (the 'Abbasid era under the Ma'mun, Mu'tasim and Wathiq caliphates), with inquiring spirit and scientific investigations that preceded its time in all fields and culminated with the establishment of Baitul Hikmah (House of Wisdom) (Supriyanto, 2023) whose treasures have become an important reference for the exchange of ideas and transference of knowledge in the far-reaching horizon of Eastern and Western empire.

The intellectual tradition and rational philosophical principle of the Mu'tazila help to create such highly glorious and powerful era, by accepting reason and logic as complement to revelation, giving reason and intellect their rightful position to resolve complex scientific problems, and contributing to promote Islam through philosophical inquiry and dialogue while countering enemies through logical arguments (Baharudin, 2010; Hanafi, 1983). According to Sheikh Mustafa al-Ghurabi, if it had not been of God's destiny for the Mu'tazila to rise up for the sake of Islam, the science of kalam would not have emerged with its rich

treasures and we would be unable to defend Islam from external assault (Eliza, 2011) who painstakingly refute the ideas of the mujassimah, rafidah, zindiq and other doctrine (Zahrah, 1996) with the weapon of philosophy.

The Mu'tazilah were the first school to manipulate weapons used by the opponents of Islam at the beginning of the Abbasid rule (Amin, 1977), and their disappearance was a tragedy for Muslims (Dahlan, 2001). In fact, it was Mu'tazilite leading figures such as al-Nazzam and Abu al-Huzail al-Allaf who succeeded in countering the arguments of the Magi, Manichaeism, atheists and naturalists, causing more than three thousand leaders from various religious and philosophical schools to embrace Islam (Dahlan, 2001).

Historical Revision

According to Muhammad Abu Zahrah, if Mu'tazila's ideology had been spreaded scientifically from the start, without coercion, it would have been more widely accepted than it is now, since apparently after the controversy over the creation of the Qur'an, many scholars reviewed their opinions and agreed with Mu'tazila. The large number of people who agree does not arise from high-handedness, but arises from discussions and exchanges of thoughts of the ulama and from scientific works distributed by the Mu'tazila (Abu Zahrah 1996, 186). The Mu'tazila's mistake was that they excessively politicized the Caliph's orders, even though these orders were not intended to use forceful and coercive powers (Zahrah, 1996).

In their struggle, they were forced to act in realizing systematic Islamic thought, but within Islamic circles, they had gone too far outside the boundaries that could be legally recognized by traditionalist Islam. After external dangers were eliminated, their struggle within Islamic circles showed a rigid and intolerant attitude, and ultimately failed due to their own weapons (Eliza, 2011; Rahman, 1992).

CONCLUSION

Mu'tazilah was born in difference context and ages unprecedented of contemporary challenges. Nevertheless it has successfully brought an enlightening narrative in responding to theological dispute of the days by challenging such rigid and dogmatic traditionalism with religious pluralism and rationalism. Its theological basis occupied an important place in religious discourse in Islamic history, colouring the social fabric of classical Islam and its traditional belief. This was intrinsically linked with Mu'tazilite theological standpoint and dialectical heritage as brought forth in their canonical works that were produced since 9th and 10th centuries that has continuing significance and legacy in modern context. It shows rigorous nature of their argumentative and articulative skill manifesting its speculative and logical tendency, and the ability of interpretative hermeneutics (ta'wil) and empirical inquiry. The Mu'tazilite aspirations were realized in modern religious movement advocated by leading exponent of rationalist school such as Jamal al-din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Ahmad Amin, Abu Zahrah, Ahmad Subhi, and Harun Nasution who exemplified profound and systematic picture of their ethical and metaphysical postulates, reflecting its broad horizon of allegorical and symbolic allusion to prophetic career and proof and its metaphysical meaning and outlook. Looking at this consciously structured vision and critical principle, the spiritual

and intellectual tradition they left has bring heighten awareness of Islamic speculative tradition and its significance in projecting unprecedented scientific breakthrough and ideological tradition and impact in history. Their ideas was instrumental in bringing forth rational perspective and in restoring dialectical spirit of ijihad and reasoning in current ages. This constitute part and parcel of their religiosity and their underlying religious vocation and struggle, appealing us to uphold and rediscover the authentic Mu'tazilite thought and restoring the symbolic significance of the five principle of *al-'adl wa'l-tawhid* in interpreting religious law, scholastic tradition and philosophy and the complex doctrine of historical kalam.

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