FROM NORMATIVE THEOLOGY TO CRITICAL THEOLOGY: RECONSTRUCTING ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN RESPONSE TO MODERNITY

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Abstract

This article examines the transformation of Islamic theology from a normative paradigm to a critical paradigm in responding to the challenges of modernity. The main problem addressed in this study is the methodological limitation of normative theology when it is reduced to a defensive and textualist model that is less responsive to contemporary issues such as religious pluralism, human rights, gender justice, ecological crisis, digital modernity, and the fragmentation of religious authority. This study aims to analyze the relationship between normative theology and critical theology and to formulate an integrative model of Islamic theological reconstruction. The research uses a qualitative library research method with descriptive-analytical, historical-philosophical, and reconstructive approaches. The findings show that normative theology remains important as the doctrinal foundation of Islamic belief, while critical theology functions as a methodological expansion that enables Islamic thought to engage modern realities through hermeneutics, maqāṣid-oriented reasoning, and interdisciplinary dialogue. The article argues that normative and critical theology should not be positioned as opposing paradigms, but as complementary dimensions. The proposed integrative model combines normative foundation, critical method, and transformative orientation, allowing Islamic theology to remain rooted in revelation while becoming ethically responsive and socially relevant in the modern world.

Keywords: *Islamic theology; normative theology; critical theology; modernity; theological reconstruction*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji transformasi teologi Islam dari paradigma normatif menuju paradigma kritis dalam merespons tantangan modernitas. Masalah utama yang dibahas dalam penelitian ini adalah keterbatasan metodologis teologi normatif ketika direduksi menjadi model teologi defensif dan tekstualis yang kurang responsif terhadap isu-isu kontemporer seperti pluralisme agama, hak asasi manusia, keadilan gender, krisis ekologi, modernitas digital, dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara teologi normatif dan teologi kritis serta merumuskan model integratif rekonstruksi teologi Islam. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, historis-filosofis, dan rekonstruktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teologi normatif tetap penting sebagai fondasi doktrinal keimanan Islam, sedangkan teologi

kritis berfungsi sebagai perluasan metodologis yang memungkinkan pemikiran Islam berdialog dengan realitas modern melalui hermeneutika, penalaran berbasis maqāṣid, dan dialog interdisipliner. Artikel ini menegaskan bahwa teologi normatif dan teologi kritis tidak perlu diposisikan sebagai dua paradigma yang saling bertentangan, melainkan sebagai dua dimensi yang saling melengkapi. Model integratif yang ditawarkan menggabungkan fondasi normatif, metode kritis, dan orientasi transformatif, sehingga teologi Islam tetap berakar pada wahyu sekaligus responsif secara etis dan relevan secara sosial di era modern.

Kata Kunci: *teologi Islam; teologi normatif; teologi kritis; modernitas; rekonstruksi teologi*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic theology has historically functioned as an intellectual discipline that preserves the doctrinal foundations of Muslim belief while also responding to the intellectual challenges of each period. Classical kalām was not merely speculative discourse, but a rational-theological effort to defend tawḥīd, prophecy, revelation, and eschatology against internal sectarian disputes and external philosophical challenges.[1] In this context, normative theology has played a significant role as the guardian of Islamic orthodoxy. However, the emergence of modernity has produced new social, political, and epistemological questions that cannot always be answered through a purely doctrinal and defensive approach.[2]

Modernity has brought issues such as secularization, democracy, religious pluralism, scientific rationality, human rights, gender justice, technological transformation, and the crisis of religious authority into the center of contemporary Islamic discourse.[3] These issues require theology not only to maintain doctrinal continuity, but also to develop critical, contextual, and transformative modes of reasoning.[4] Therefore, the central academic problem of this article is how Islamic theology can move from a purely normative paradigm toward a critical theological model without losing its normative foundations.[5]

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[1] Zulkarnain, "Telaah Kritis Teologi Islam," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi dan Peradaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022): 74–87.

[2] Muhammad Latif, "Membumikan Teologi Islam dalam Kehidupan Modern: Berkaca dari Mohammed Arkoun," *Jurnal Dakwah Tabligh* 14, no. 2 (2013): 169

[3] Muhammad Said, "Rethinking Islamic Theology: Menggagas Teologi Sosial dalam Konteks Pluralisme dan Multikulturalisme Perspektif Pemikiran Teologi Fethullah Gülen," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 2 (2015): 111

[4] Iim Halimatus Sa'diyah, Siti Baimunah, and Eko Nursalim, "Methodological Transformation in Islamic Theological Studies," *International Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2025).

[5] Yusriyah Yusriyah, "The Reconstruction of Islamic Theology in the Unity of Sciences," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 23, no. 2 (2015): 401

Recent studies show that Islamic theological studies have undergone methodological transformation from textual and doctrinal approaches toward more contextual, interdisciplinary, and dialogical models.[6] This transformation reflects the growing awareness that theology must not be isolated from historical change and social realities.[7] Studies on Islamic modernity also indicate that the relationship between Islam and modernity should not be framed as a simple opposition between religion and secular reason, but as a complex negotiation between tradition, reform, authority, and ethical responsibility.[8]

Nevertheless, previous research still tends to be fragmented. Some studies emphasize the preservation of classical theological authority, but they often give insufficient attention to contemporary social and ethical problems.[9] Other studies stress the need for contextual reinterpretation and reform, but they do not always explain how such reform remains connected to the normative structure of Islamic theology.[10] As a result, the relationship between normative theology and critical theology is frequently presented as a binary opposition between tradition and modernity, orthodoxy and reform, or textual fidelity and contextual relevance.[11]

This article argues that such a binary perspective is inadequate. Islamic intellectual history itself shows that theological reasoning has always involved a dynamic interaction between revelation, reason, historical context, and the needs of the Muslim community.[12] From the classical debates between Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite theologians to modern reformist thinkers, Islamic theology has continuously negotiated between doctrinal stability and intellectual renewal.[13] Therefore, critical theology should not be

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[6] Sholikha Dwi Wulandari, Winda Nur Syahidah, and Nur Anwar, "Metodologi Studi Islam: Tinjauan Filosofis, Sejarah, dan Teologis dalam Pencarian Kebenaran Keagamaan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 7, no. 3 (2023): 265

[7] M. Amin Abdullah, "Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, dan Transdisiplin: Metode Studi Agama dan Studi Islam di Era Kontemporer," *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* 26, no. 1 (2024)

[8] Kurniawan Dwi Saputra and Agus Himmawan Utomo, "Mapping the Intellectual Landscape of Islamic Modernity: A Bibliometric and Critical Discourse Analysis of Global Scholarship," *Muharrik: Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2025)

[9] H. Zahrani and Rubini, "Pendekatan Hermeneutika dalam Pengkajian Islam," *SALIHA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2023): 171

[10] Ahmad Izzan Syakir, Ahmad Nabil Daulay, and Siti Rahma Fitri, "Metode Tafsir Kontekstual Fazlur Rahman: Double Movement dan Sintetis Logis," *Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 7, no. 1 (2022)

[11] Muhammad Yusuf and Anwar Sadat, "Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement and Its Contribution to the Development of Religious Moderation," *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2021)

[12] Muhammad Yusuf Al Ibrohim and Nur Muhammad, "Hermeneutika Double Movement Fazlur Rahman: Mewujudkan Hukum Islam yang Lebih Eksistensialis," *El-Banat: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2022): 104

[13] Mohammad Taufik, "Kontekstualisasi Teologi Modern: Kritik Hassan Hanafi terhadap Teologi Tradisional," *Refleksi: Jurnal Filsafat dan Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 2 (2020): 147

understood as a rejection of normative theology, but as a methodological expansion that allows Islamic theology to respond more constructively to modern challenges.[14]

The research gap of this article lies in the limited number of studies that systematically integrate historical, methodological, and critical analysis in mapping the transition from normative theology to critical theology. While many studies discuss theological reform, maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, hermeneutics, and Islamic modernity, only a few explicitly formulate an integrative model that connects normative foundations with critical responsiveness.[15] The novelty of this article is its attempt to propose a synthetic model in which normative theology provides doctrinal grounding, while critical theology offers contextual, ethical, and interdisciplinary tools for engaging modern realities.[16]

Methodologically, this article uses a qualitative library research approach. The primary data consist of classical and contemporary works on Islamic theology, especially discussions of kalām, theological reform, Islamic hermeneutics, maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, and Islamic modernity. The secondary data include recent journal articles on Islamic theological transformation, contextual interpretation, religious pluralism, and contemporary Islamic thought.[17] The literature is selected based on its relevance to Islamic theology and modernity, its contribution to methodological debates in Islamic studies, and its publication in credible academic journals or scholarly platforms.[18] The data are analyzed through descriptive-analytical, historical-philosophical, and reconstructive methods.[19] Through this method, the article seeks to formulate an integrative framework that bridges doctrinal authenticity and contextual responsiveness in contemporary Islamic theology.[20]

DISCUSSION

1. Normative Theology: Between Doctrinal Preservation and Methodological Limitation

Normative theology has a central position in the history of Islamic thought because it preserves the fundamental doctrines of Islam. In the classical tradition, kalām

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[14] Sur'Azizi and Masyhur, "Hermeneutika Kiri Islam: Hassan Hanafi terhadap Teks Al-Qur'an," *JIC Nusantara* 4, no. 1 (2023)

[15] A. Waid and N. Lestari, "Teori Maqashid Al-Syari'ah Kontemporer dalam Hukum Islam dan Relevansinya dengan Pembangunan Ekonomi Nasional," *Maro: Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah dan Bisnis* 5, no. 1 (2020)

[16] R. M. Fadli and A. M. Helmi, "Maqasid Syariah Perspektif Ibnu 'Ashur: Kajian Kritis dan Kontekstual," *Al-Bustan: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial Keagamaan* 1, no. 1 (2024): 98

[17] Nurhikmah, "Maqashid Al-Shariah: Kerangka Adaptif Hukum Islam untuk Tantangan Kontemporer," *Journal of Dual Legal Systems* 1, no. 2 (2024): 103

[18] S. Muhammad and S. A. Razak, "A Gadamerian-Maqasid Hermeneutical Approach for Islamic Studies in the Digital Era," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 21 (2022): 95

[19] Fiona Fu and Jan Gresil Kahambing, "Islamic Modernity and the Question of Secularism: Revisiting the Political Thought of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī," *Religions* 16, no. 8 (2025): 10

[20] Mohammed Gamal Abdelnour, "Artificial Intelligence and the Islamic Theology of Technology," *Religions* 16, no. 6 (2025): 79

was developed to defend the principles of tawḥīd, prophecy, revelation, divine justice, human freedom, and eschatological accountability. It was not simply an abstract intellectual discipline, but a rational-theological response to internal theological disputes and external philosophical challenges. Through kalām, Muslim theologians formulated arguments to protect the integrity of Islamic belief and to maintain the continuity of orthodoxy within the Muslim community.[21]

The strength of normative theology lies in its ability to provide doctrinal stability. It gives Muslims a clear framework for understanding God, revelation, human responsibility, and salvation. This function is significant because every religious tradition requires a normative structure that safeguards its identity from fragmentation and relativism. Without normative theology, Islamic thought may lose its connection with revelation and become merely a historical or sociological discourse. Therefore, normative theology should not be dismissed as outdated. It remains necessary as the doctrinal foundation of Islamic intellectual life.[22]

However, the problem arises when normative theology becomes the only accepted model of theological reasoning. When theology is reduced to the repetition of inherited doctrines, it tends to become defensive, textualist, and less responsive to social transformation. In this condition, theology functions mainly to protect the past rather than to interpret the meaning of faith for the present. This is the major limitation of normative theology in the context of modernity. Modernity produces questions that were not directly faced by classical kalām, such as democracy, secularization, religious pluralism, gender justice, human rights, ecological crisis, technological disruption, and artificial intelligence. These issues require theological reasoning that is not only doctrinally correct, but also ethically responsive and contextually aware.[23]

The central problem, therefore, is not normativity itself, but methodological closure. Normativity becomes problematic when it refuses to engage with history, social reality, and contemporary knowledge. A theology that only defends inherited formulations may preserve doctrinal identity, but it risks losing its transformative power. It can speak about God in correct doctrinal language, yet remain silent in the face of injustice, violence, ecological destruction, poverty, and the crisis of knowledge in the digital age.[24]

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[21] Zulkarnain, "Telaah Kritis Teologi Islam," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi dan Peradaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022): 74–87.

[22] Yusriyah Yusriyah, "The Reconstruction of Islamic Theology in the Unity of Sciences," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 23, no. 2 (2015): 401

[23] Muhammad Latif, "Membumikan Teologi Islam dalam Kehidupan Modern: Berkaca dari Mohammed Arkoun," *Jurnal Dakwah Tabligh* 14, no. 2 (2013): 169

[24] Muhammad Said, "Rethinking Islamic Theology: Menggagas Teologi Sosial dalam Konteks Pluralisme dan Multikulturalisme Perspektif Pemikiran Teologi Fethullah Gülen," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 2 (2015): 111

For this reason, Islamic theology today requires a reconstruction of its methodological orientation. Normative theology must continue to function as the doctrinal foundation, but it needs to be complemented by critical, contextual, and ethical reasoning. This reconstruction does not mean replacing revelation with modern thought. Rather, it means rereading the normative foundations of Islam in order to reveal their ethical relevance for contemporary life. Thus, the challenge is not to choose between orthodoxy and modernity, but to develop a theological model in which orthodoxy becomes ethically productive and modern engagement remains rooted in revelation.[25]

2. Critical Theology as Contextual Reconstruction of Islamic Thought

Critical theology emerges as a response to the limitations of a purely defensive theological model. It does not reject revelation, tradition, or Islamic orthodoxy. Instead, it seeks to reconstruct theological reasoning so that Islamic doctrines can respond more meaningfully to modern problems. The word "critical" in this context does not mean destructive skepticism toward religion. Rather, it refers to the capacity to examine inherited theological formulations, identify their historical conditions, evaluate their contemporary relevance, and reformulate their meaning in light of current realities.[26]

Critical theology works through three intellectual movements. First, it retrieves the Islamic intellectual tradition as a living source of meaning. Classical kalām, philosophy, Sufism, jurisprudence, and tafsīr are not treated as dead archives, but as resources for contemporary reflection. Second, it analyzes the present context by engaging philosophy, social sciences, ethics, political theory, environmental studies, and technological discourse. Third, it reconstructs theological meaning so that Islamic belief can contribute to justice, human dignity, public welfare, and moral transformation.[27]

This approach is necessary because many contemporary problems cannot be answered merely by repeating classical formulations. For example, classical theology discussed divine justice in relation to free will and predestination. Contemporary theology must extend this discussion to structural injustice, poverty, ecological degradation, gender inequality, and political oppression. Classical theology discussed the relation between reason and revelation. Contemporary theology must also address the crisis of knowledge

[25] M. Amin Abdullah, "Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, dan Transdisiplin: Metode Studi Agama dan Studi Islam di Era Kontemporer," *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* 26, no. 1 (2024)

[26] Dina Wilda Sholikha, Wilda Nayla Syahidah, and Najih Anwar, "Metodologi Studi Islam: Tinjauan Filosofis, Sejarah, dan Teologis dalam Pencarian Kebenaran Keagamaan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 7, no. 3 (2023): 265

[27] H. Zahrani and Rubini, "Pendekatan Hermeneutika dalam Pengkajian Islam," *SALIHA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2023): 171

produced by digital media, algorithmic authority, and artificial intelligence. In this sense, critical theology does not abandon kalām; it expands the horizon of kalām.[28]

A key element of critical theology is the hermeneutical turn. Hermeneutics allows Islamic theology to connect text and context without dissolving textual authority. Fazlur Rahman's double movement method is relevant here because it proposes a movement from present problems to the historical context of revelation, and then back to the present in order to formulate general moral principles for contemporary life. This method is important because it prevents interpretation from becoming either literalistic or excessively relativistic. The text remains authoritative, but its ethical direction is interpreted in relation to changing human circumstances.[29]

The maqāṣid al-sharīʿah approach strengthens this theological reconstruction. Maqāṣid enables Islamic thought to move beyond formalism by focusing on the higher objectives of revelation: the protection of religion, life, intellect, dignity, family, property, justice, mercy, and public welfare. In the context of theology, maqāṣid functions as a bridge between normativity and critical reason. It allows Islamic theology to evaluate modern issues not only through textual citation, but also through the moral purposes of revelation.[30]

Through maqāṣid-oriented theology, issues such as human rights, democracy, gender justice, and ecological ethics can be discussed within an Islamic framework. Human rights can be connected to the Qur'anic principle of human dignity. Democracy can be evaluated through consultation, justice, accountability, and public welfare. Gender justice can be discussed through moral equality, dignity, and protection from harm. Ecological ethics can be developed through the concepts of khalīfah, amānah, mīzān, and responsibility before God.[31]

Critical theology therefore does not weaken Islamic doctrine. It strengthens theology by making it capable of responding to real human problems. A theology that cannot address suffering, injustice, violence, and moral crisis will lose its relevance.

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[28] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[29] Muhammad Yusuf and Anwar Sadat, "Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement and Its Contribution to the Development of Religious Moderation," *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2021).

[30] Muhammad Yusuf Al Ibrohim and Nur Muhammad, "Hermeneutika Double Movement Fazlur Rahman: Mewujudkan Hukum Islam yang Lebih Eksistensialis," *El-Banat: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2022): 104

[31] Yulia Anita Wahdah, "Hermeneutika Double Movement Fazlur Rahman dalam Studi Hadis," *Fawatih: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 2, no. 2 (2021).

Conversely, a theology that remains rooted in revelation while engaging contemporary realities can become a source of ethical renewal for Muslim societies.[32]

3. Modernity, Pluralism, and the Crisis of Religious Authority

Modernity should not be understood simply as an enemy of Islam. It is a complex historical condition that brings both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, modernity introduces rational inquiry, scientific development, human rights discourse, democratic participation, and global communication. On the other hand, it also produces secular reductionism, moral relativism, ecological crisis, technological domination, and the fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic theology must therefore avoid two extremes: total rejection of modernity and uncritical acceptance of modernity.[33]

A purely rejectionist attitude often produces intellectual isolation. It sees modern questions only as threats and responds to them through defensive rhetoric. Meanwhile, uncritical acceptance of modernity can cause theology to lose its normative grounding. Critical theology offers a third path: selective and evaluative engagement. It accepts modern insights that are compatible with justice, dignity, and public welfare, while criticizing aspects of modernity that contradict tawḥīd, moral responsibility, and spiritual integrity.[34]

Religious pluralism is one of the most important examples. In plural societies, Muslims live with people of different religions, beliefs, cultures, and worldviews. Normative theology is needed to preserve the distinctiveness of Islamic truth claims. However, if normativity is not balanced with ethical openness, it can produce exclusivism and social tension. Critical theology develops a dialogical model that allows Muslims to affirm Islamic conviction while respecting the dignity and rights of others. Dialogue does not mean relativism. It means the ethical ability to live with difference without surrendering one's theological identity.[35]

This issue is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where religious diversity is a lived social reality. The discourse of religious moderation has become important in managing pluralism, but it must be treated critically. Moderation should not become merely a political slogan or an instrument of state control over religious expression. It must be grounded in a strong theological foundation: tawḥīd, justice, mercy, human dignity, and

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[32] Mohammad Taufik, "Kontekstualisasi Teologi Modern: Kritik Hassan Hanafi terhadap Teologi Tradisional," *Refleksi: Jurnal Filsafat dan Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 2 (2020): 147

[33] Hassan Hanafi, *From Faith to Revolution: Theoretical Foundation* (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1988).

[34] Mohammed Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Saqi Books, 2002).

[35] Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (London: Routledge, 2006).

public responsibility. In this regard, critical theology can give deeper substance to religious moderation by connecting it with Islamic ethical reasoning.[36]

Modernity today is also digital. Religious authority is no longer shaped only by scholars, pesantren, universities, books, and traditional chains of transmission. It is increasingly shaped by social media, search engines, online preachers, and artificial intelligence. This creates a new theological problem: the rise of algorithmic authority. In the digital age, popular content can be mistaken for valid knowledge, and instant answers can replace disciplined learning.[37]

This situation demands a critical theology of knowledge. Islamic theology must ask: Who has authority to interpret religion? How is religious knowledge verified? What is the difference between information and understanding? What is the role of scholarly discipline, sanad, adab, and accountability in digital religious knowledge? These questions show that contemporary theology must move beyond old debates and address the epistemic structure of modern life.[38]

Normative theology is needed to preserve the authority of revelation and scholarly tradition. Yet critical theology is needed to analyze how modern systems of knowledge shape religious perception. Without normativity, Muslims may lose the criteria of truth. Without critical reflection, Muslims may accept algorithmic religious authority without verification. Therefore, the digital age confirms the need for an integrative theological model that is both rooted and reflective.[39]

4. Toward an Integrative Model of Islamic Critical Theology

The main contribution of this article is the formulation of an integrative model that connects normative theology and critical theology. This model rejects the binary opposition between tradition and modernity, orthodoxy and reform, textual fidelity and contextual relevance. It argues that Islamic theology must be built upon three interconnected dimensions: normative foundation, critical method, and transformative orientation.[40]

The normative foundation refers to the essential doctrines of Islam: tawḥīd, revelation, prophecy, moral accountability, and eschatological responsibility. These

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[36] Zaprulkhan, "Maqāṣid Al-Shariah in the Contemporary Islamic Legal Discourse: Perspective of Jasser Auda," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 26, no. 2 (2018): 445

[37] Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008).

[38] R. M. Fadli and A. M. Helmi, "Maqasid Syariah Perspektif Ibnu 'Ashur: Kajian Kritis dan Kontekstual," *Al-Bustan: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial Keagamaan* 1, no. 1 (2024): 98

[39] Nurhikmah, "Maqashid Al-Shariah: Kerangka Adaptif Hukum Islam untuk Tantangan Kontemporer," *Journal of Dual Legal Systems* 1, no. 2 (2024): 103

[40] S. Muhammad and S. A. Razak, "A Gadamerian-Maqasid Hermeneutical Approach for Islamic Studies in the Digital Era," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 21 (2022): 95

principles ensure that theology remains rooted in Islamic belief and does not dissolve into secular social theory. The critical method refers to historical awareness, hermeneutics, maqāṣid reasoning, and interdisciplinary dialogue. These tools enable theology to interpret Islamic teachings in relation to contemporary realities. The transformative orientation refers to the practical function of theology in promoting justice, dignity, compassion, public welfare, and ethical responsibility.[41]

This integrative model avoids two weaknesses. First, it avoids rigid traditionalism, which reduces theology to repetition and defense. Second, it avoids uncontrolled liberalism, which risks detaching theology from revelation and tradition. The model affirms that Islamic theology must remain faithful to its sources while being open to contextual reconstruction. In this framework, normative theology and critical theology are not enemies. Normative theology provides roots, while critical theology provides movement. Normative theology gives identity, while critical theology gives relevance. Normative theology protects doctrine, while critical theology activates doctrine in history.[42]

The synthetic model can be formulated as follows. First, theological reflection must begin from revelation and the core doctrines of Islam. Second, these doctrines must be read through historical and philosophical awareness. Third, their ethical purposes must be interpreted through maqāṣid-oriented reasoning. Fourth, their contemporary relevance must be tested through engagement with social realities. Fifth, their practical meaning must be directed toward justice, humanity, and public welfare.[43]

This model shows that the transformation from normative theology to critical theology is not a rupture from tradition, but an internal renewal of Islamic thought. Islamic theology has always developed through interaction between text, reason, history, and social needs. Therefore, contemporary reconstruction is not foreign to Islam. It is part of the continuing responsibility of Muslim intellectuals to make revelation meaningful in every historical context.[44]

A theology that is only normative may preserve identity but lose relevance. A theology that is only critical may gain relevance but lose foundation. The integrative model proposed in this article seeks to overcome this tension by developing an Islamic theology that is doctrinally rooted, intellectually reflective, ethically responsive, and

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[41] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[42] Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[43] Tunggul Ganggas Danisworo, Mudiyati Rahmatunissa, and Caroline Paskarina, "Religious Moderation in Indonesia: Navigating Conflict and Pluralism through Agonistic Democracy," *Muharrik: Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosial* 7, no. 2 (2024): 183

[44] Mohammed Gamal Abdelnour, "Artificial Intelligence and the Islamic Theology of Technology," *Religions* 16, no. 6 (2025): 79

socially transformative. This is the conceptual contribution of the article: to position critical theology not as the negation of normative theology, but as its methodological expansion in responding to the complexity of modernity.[45]

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that the transformation of Islamic theology from a normative paradigm to a critical paradigm should not be understood as a rejection of classical theological tradition. Rather, it represents an internal reconstruction of Islamic thought in response to the complexity of modernity. Normative theology remains essential because it preserves the doctrinal foundations of Islam, especially tawḥīd, revelation, prophecy, moral responsibility, and eschatological accountability. However, when normative theology is reduced to a defensive and textualist model, it becomes less capable of responding to contemporary issues such as religious pluralism, human rights, gender justice, ecological crisis, digital modernity, and the fragmentation of religious authority.

The main finding of this study is that critical theology functions as a methodological expansion of normative theology. Critical theology does not negate Islamic orthodoxy, but reinterprets it through historical awareness, hermeneutical reasoning, maqāṣid-oriented analysis, and interdisciplinary dialogue. Through this approach, Islamic theology can move beyond doctrinal repetition toward ethical and transformative engagement with modern realities. In this sense, theology is not only a discipline that explains correct belief, but also a framework for guiding moral action, social responsibility, and human dignity.

This article also shows that the relationship between normative theology and critical theology should not be framed as a binary opposition. Normative theology provides doctrinal roots, while critical theology provides contextual relevance. Normative theology safeguards religious identity, while critical theology activates that identity within historical and social realities. Therefore, the proposed integrative model combines three dimensions: normative foundation, critical method, and transformative orientation. This model enables Islamic theology to remain faithful to revelation while also becoming responsive to contemporary human problems.

The conceptual contribution of this article lies in its attempt to formulate Islamic critical theology as a synthetic model. This model avoids two extremes: rigid traditionalism, which reduces theology to repetition and defense, and uncontrolled liberalism, which risks detaching theology from revelation and tradition. By integrating normativity and criticism, Islamic theology can become doctrinally rooted, intellectually reflective, ethically responsive, and socially transformative. Thus, the future of Islamic

[45] Kurniawan Dwi Saputra and Agus Himmawan Utomo, "Mapping the Intellectual Landscape of Islamic Modernity: A Bibliometric and Critical Discourse Analysis of Global Scholarship," *Muharrik: Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2025)

theology depends not on abandoning its classical foundations, but on reconstructing them so that they remain meaningful and relevant in the modern world.

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