



kontemporer seperti sekulerisme, pluralisme, globalisasi, atau neo-atheisme. Berangkat dari problematika tersebut, muncul upaya-upaya pembacaan baru atas ilmu kalam klasik dengan lebih memperhatikan konteks dan kebutuhan zaman. Di antara upaya tersebut adalah pembaharuan ilmu kalam dengan menyoroti aspek metodologinya, sebagaimana dilakukan oleh seorang teolog dan filsuf kontemporer Maroko, Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān. Penelitian ini mencoba untuk mendeskripsikan sekaligus menganalisa corak pembaharuan ilmu kalam dalam perspektif Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān. Penelitian ini merupakan studi tokoh yang menggunakan metode kualitatif, yang kemudian data yang ada dianalisa secara kritis-analisis. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa corak pembaharuan ilmu kalam Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān menitikberatkan pada upaya pembaharuan metodologi ilmu kalam klasik dengan cara mereformasi metode ilmu dialog (munadzarah) melalui piranti lingustik dan logika kontemporer, menata ulang pola analogi (*qiyās*), dan membangun nalar kalam yang berbasis pada prinsip logika dan moralitas serta penggabungan antara ilmu dan amal. Signifikansi pembaharuan Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān dalam teologi Islam kontemporer terletak pada teorisasi konsep-konsep dalam ilmu kalam klasik dengan pendekatan kontemporer serta konstruksi metodologi ilmu kalam kontemporer untuk menjawab isu-isu teologis yang selalu berkembang.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Ilmu Kalam, Metateologi, Modernitas, Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān, Turāth.*

## Introduction

*‘Ilm al-kalām* as described by ‘Aḍuddīn al-ījī (d. 756 H) in his *book al-Mawāqif*, is “a science with which he can prove religious beliefs by stating arguments and repelling the likeness”. The existence of *‘ilm al-kalām* as a means to achieve a strong and complete belief in religious beliefs, both in the divine, prophetic, and eschatological aspects (Idris 2018a, 262).

To achieve this goal, Muslim theologians do not only use religious textual arguments (*naql*), but also adopt rational methodologies (*aql*), such as the use of Greek logic in building their theological arguments (Shāfi‘ī 2013, 125). This adaptive and accommodative style to the development of scientific methodology has subsequently become a distinctive character that is strongly attached to *‘ilm al-kalām*, in addition to finding scientific relevance in each era as well as responding to theological demands and issues more contextually.

New theological issues will always emerge along with the development of Islamic thought and its contact with other civilizations. The contact between Islam and modernity has implications for the emergence of theological cases and issues such as secularism and neo-atheism which require adequate answers from theology. Therefore, efforts have emerged to carry out critical and reconstructive studies of the building of theology so that it is relevant and contextual to the times. One of these efforts came from Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān who saw the relevance of Arab-Islamic *turāth*, especially traditional kalam, to be revived in the contemporary Islamic era. According to him, *‘ilm al-kalām* must reinvent its adaptive and accommodative character to the development of science and knowledge methodology. Instead of totally dismantling the treasures of the

traditional kalam science tradition and rebuilding it anew, Ṭahā instead begins his reading of kalam science by departing from the tradition itself, namely by prioritizing the reading of the methodological constructions that underlie the emergence of kalam science products contained in the books of Muslim theologians.

So far, studies of *'ilm al-kalām*, both from traditional and modernist circles, have paid little attention to efforts to revitalize the main ideas and the methodology that underlies them. The traditionalist group is considered to be trapped in the sacredness of past traditions by only studying the books written by Islamic theologians without making further modifications, while the modernist group is considered to be too oriented towards western methodologies in reading theologians so that in the end, they negate the urgency of the theologians' traditions themselves. Out of these two major tendencies, Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān tries to bridge the two by continuing to emphasize the existence of the traditional Islamic science methodology on the one hand and continuing to adopt modern scientific methodology on the other.

Departing from this, this study describes the style of reformation of *'ilm al-kalām* in the perspective of Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān, a Moroccan national theologian and contemporary Islamic philosopher. This departs from the importance of examining more deeply the renewal of theology of kalam as the basis of Islamic theology to deal with changes, demands and developments of the times. More than that, through Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān's thoughts, this study seeks to raise alternative readings to the treasures of kalam which in turn reveal its contribution and urgency in the contemporary Islamic era. This research is a character study using qualitative methods, in which this research model produces descriptive data from Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān's theological thoughts. These data are then analyzed critically-analytically to reveal the strengths, weaknesses, and significance of the character's thoughts critically, without losing a sense of objectivity.

### **Contemporary 'Ilm al-Kalām Study: In Literature Review**

The term Neo-Kalam (*'ilm al-kalām al-jadīd*) was first introduced by one of the Indian philosophers, Shiblī Nu'mānī al-Hindī (d. 1914), in his book entitled "*Ilm al-Kalām al-Jadīd*". In his book, Shibli invites to broaden the range of discussion of theology on new issues related to prophecy and miracles that arise as a result of interactions with modern Western civilization and the development of scientific methodology. Apart from Shiblī, efforts to re-read *'ilm al-kalām* due to friction with the West were also carried out by Islamic modernist thinkers in the era of Western colonialism, such as Muḥammad Iqbal, Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, and also Muḥammad 'Abduh in his book "*Risālah al-Tawḥīd*". In a more in-depth and comprehensive manner, efforts to answer the demands of this new

scientific context were also carried out by Muṣṭafa Ṣabrī in “*Mawqīf al-‘Aql wa al-‘Ilm wa al-‘Ālam min Rab al-‘Ālamīn wa ‘Ibāduhu al-Mursalīn*” (Idris 2018, 266–67).

In the contemporary era, a new reading of *‘ilm al-kalām* has received quite intense attention from Islamic thinkers and intellectuals. At the Egyptian school, Ḥassan Ḥanafī appears with his anthropocentric theological concept which he describes in his book “*Min al-‘Aqīdah Ila al-Thawrah: Muḥāwalah li I‘ādah Binā’ ‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Dīn*” (*From Faith to Revolution; Efforts to Rebuild Islamic Theology*). In his book, Hanafi criticizes traditional theology which is too abstract, is theocentric, and far from the progressive ethos of humanism. According to him, the traditional science of kalam must be overhauled in its methodological roots to be directed at contemporary needs, no longer discussing the problems of *ilāhiyyat* (the God), *manṭiqiyyāt* (logic), or *ṭabi‘iyyāt* (physics). Whereas humans need anthropocentric theological concepts that can be actualized in empirical life (Falah and Fariḥah 2015, 219).

In India, a Muslim thinker and human rights activist, Asghar Ali Engineer, emerged with his liberation theology. Through three praxis frameworks of liberation theology, namely the concepts of monotheism, faith, and jihad, Asghar Ali wanted to design a theological building that concentrates on efforts to defend the oppressed (Ahmad 2016, 63). Engginer asserted that religion could be opium or a revolutionary force. It all depends on how the religion is interpreted and used. Religion becomes opium when it is in conjunction with the power of the status quo. Religion will only be a tool of human complaint. In other words, religion no longer gives meaning to the oppressed because it acts more as a condition that does not humanize humans. On the other hand, religion can also be an instrument of change when it is formulated the form of liberation theology. It is in this formulation that religion can be a very powerful ideological weapon (Karwadi, Nugraheni, and Lestari 2021, 59).

In the Moroccan school, among the contemporary figures who discuss the renewal of theology in their writings are ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān, and ‘Abdullah al-‘Arawī. All three have different styles of approach to *turāth* and modernity which give rise to different styles of reading *‘ilm al-kalām*. This difference stems from their anxiety in trying to build bridges for the progress of Muslims, whether by cutting off contact with *turāth* as in al-‘Arawī’s Historicism or by building interaction with *turāth* as in the al-Jābirī Arabic Reason Criticism project and in the *turāth* methodological reform project on Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān ( Mashrūḥ 2009, 138–39).

### **Biography of Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān**

Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān is a contemporary Islamic philosopher who concentrates on the study of logic and linguistics. He was born on January

01, 1944 in the city of al-Jadīdah, Morocco, and grew up in a religious family and loved knowledge, where his father was a *faqīh* who taught children to memorize Qur'an and Hadith, as well as basic Islamic sciences. It was from his father that Ṭahā obtained the basis of Islamic sciences such as theology and jurisprudence. The strong foundation of classical literature that young Ṭahā acquired influenced his way of thinking and updating. Besides being able to master in depth the sciences of logic, linguistics, and *uṣūl fiqh*, Ṭahā also opens himself up and explores science and modern thinking. This is shown by the sharp criticism he directed at the epistemological building of Islamic modernist thought on the one hand and Western civilization on the other, where he then offered a new epistemological reading that was rooted in Islamic tradition itself (Mashrūḥ 2009, 27).

Ṭahā completed his primary education in his hometown, al-Jadīdah. Then continued high school in the city of Casablanca and graduated as a philosophy scholar from Muhammad V University in the same city. Ṭahā's interest in philosophy motivated him to continue his studies at the Sorbonne University, Paris. At this university, in 1979, Ṭahā wrote a dissertation entitled "*Essai sur: Langage et philosophie les structure linguistiques de l'ontologie*" (Language and Philosophy; Study of Linguistic Construction of Ontology), in which he emphasized the importance of linguistic tracking of Arab-Islamic philosophy as a philosophical basis in building an original Arab-Islamic philosophy. This dissertation can be said to be the initial foundation of the project to find the originality of Arabic philosophy which he describes in his book *Fiqh al-Falsafah*. In 1985, at the same university, Ṭahā wrote his second dissertation entitled "*les logics de raisonnements argumentative et naturels*" (Treatise on the Logic of Argumentative and Natural Inferences), which was a continuation of his previous dissertation. Ṭahā in this case emphasizes the strong link between philosophy and linguistics and dialectical devices and culture, to then be directed at the construction of original Arabic philosophy (Mashrūḥ 2009, 28).

To understand Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān's ideas, it is necessary to refer to the context of Moroccan thought in the 1960's to 1970's. During this period, Marxist thought dominated the university and intellectual trends at the time. 'Abdullah al-'Arawī is alleged to be the figure most keen on voicing Marxist thoughts and representing leftist currents in Morocco that seek to seize the domination of the Moroccan elite and politics. Apart from al-'Arawī, the early generation of modern Moroccan thought who was at odds with al-'Arawī was Muḥammad 'Azīz al-Habābī as a figure oriented towards traditional Islam. In the next generation, the debate on a wider scale was continued by Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī and Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān. Al-Jābirī represents the liberal wing of Morocco and continues some of al-'Arawī's ideas, especially the need for a critique of

Islamic *turāth* as a whole and rationalization of *turāth* as a basis for his later critical projects (Belhaj 2018, 24–26)

Contrary to the mainstream Moroccan intellectuals at that time, especially ‘Abdullah al-‘Arawī and ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān represented the thinking of the Moroccan traditionalists and continued al-Habābī’s tendencies. The strength of Moroccan Islamic thought and tradition has made some intellectuals and the general public not simply accept the liberal ideas brought by al-‘Arawī and al-Jābirī. This is where Ṭahā’s thoughts find momentum and context because they are closer to the spirit and traditions of Morocco at that time (Belhaj 2018, 26).

Ṭahā sees *turāth* as historical facts that cannot be separated from the awareness of Muslim-Arabs. In order to explore the identity and existence of Muslims, inevitably they have to refer back to *turāth* (‘Abdurraḥmān 2011b, 15) In many of his writings, Ṭahā criticizes the liberal reading model of *turāth*, especially the al-Jābirī reading model.

Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān served as a professor of philosophy of language and logic at Muḥammad V University from 1970 until his retirement in 2005 (Hashas 2015, 72) at the faculty, he faced opposition from his colleagues who were under the strong influence of Marxism. Over the years, he managed to secure a group of students and students who went on to take up positions at various universities and schools in Morocco. To facilitate this new generation, on March 9, 2002, Ṭahā founded *Muntada al-Ḥikmah li al-Mufakkirīn wa al-Bāḥithīn* (Forum of Wisdom of Intellectuals and Researchers). According to Belhaj, there are at least three components of Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān’s education that influence his thinking and intellectual projects. *First*, as a student of philosophy at the Muḥammad V University in Rabat, the household of imported leftist philosophies, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān fully mastered the ideas and the methodologies of his opponents. A second component in his training is his studies of philosophy and logic at the Sorbonne University in Paris with a dissertation on language and philosophy in 1972 and another on patterns of argumentation in 1985. A third and no less major component is his Sufi education as a member of the Qādiriyya-Būdshīshīyyah Sufi order. Disappointed with the lack of spirituality in the leftist-dominated environment, he turned to Sufism. Contrary to most of his Moroccan colleagues, he found refuge in Muslim Sufis rather than in Averroes (Belhaj 2018, 27)

In genealogy of thought, Ṭahā is much inspired by the post-colonial Islamic progressive figure, ‘Alāl al-Fāsī, both in terms of his critical spirit and in the effort to integrate modernity and Islamic-Arabic *turāth*. Meanwhile, in the discourse on kalam and philosophy, Ṭahā ‘Abdurraḥmān was heavily influenced by the thoughts of Ali Sami Nasr and Muḥammad ‘Azīz al-Habābī. ‘Alī Sāmī Nashār is an expert in Asy’arian theology. According to Nasr, the essence of Islamic philosophy is actually stored in the science of kalam, because the methodology of kalam is an authentic

product that was born from the womb of Islam itself. Meanwhile, al-Habābī is a Moroccan philosopher who carries the philosophy of Personalism. In addition, what cannot be separated from Ṭahā's thought is his influence on *ṭaṣawwuf-tajribah rūḥiyyah* (spiritual experience) in Ṭahā's own terms. It is not surprising that spiritual tendencies are strongly attached to Ṭahā's thought construction, because since childhood he studied and was close to the great Moroccan Sufi, Sayyidī Ḥamzah, murshid of the Qādiriyya-Būdshīshīyyah order in Morocco (Mashrūḥ 2009, 28). Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's interest and involvement in Sufi practice dates back to his youth, when his father introduced him to a local sheikh (Viersen 2020, 172).

Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān wrote many works both in Arabic and French. In these various works, Ṭahā presents a critique of the domination of western modernism and shows a reaction to the attitude of Muslim intellectuals who tend to be blind to taqlid towards this domination (Hk 2020, 278) According to him, the tendency to follow the West, both in totality and as part of its aspects, will only distance Muslims from a strong attachment to their own tradition (*turāth*), which is their true identity ('Abdurraḥmān 2011b, 15).

### ***'Ilm al-Kalām* in Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's *Turāth* Reformation**

*turāth* became one of the central themes in the contemporary Islamic era, which gave rise to various approaches and methodologies in reading *turāth*. Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's study of Islamic-Arabic *turāth* departs from his anxiety and criticism of the tendency of the *turāth* reading model that developed at his time. He sees the call to leave *turāth* echoing among contemporary Islamic intellectuals of his time, under the pretext of keeping up with the times. The assumptions that believe that progress and modernity are always identified with the West, in the end give birth to readings of *turāth* that tend to be oriented towards Western civilization, both in terms of the parameters of rationality, approach and study methodology. Even though readings that follow the rationality of other civilizations outside of the rationality of *turāth*-both in whole and in part-will produce conclusions that are not appropriate to the character of *turāth* themselves ('Abdurraḥmān 2011, 29).

Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān defines *turāth* as:

The Arab Islamic heritage is a set of contents and rhetorical and behavioral means that define the Arab Islamic cultural existence, whether they are written texts or spoken words, and whether they are apparent behaviors or hidden behaviors, and whether we - individually or collectively - keep them in mind and work with them, or we become to Cancel it and leave it working.

In general, Ṭahā considers that *turāth* is not only a collection of thought, cultural and scientific products that have been established, but also includes the methodology that underlies the emergence of

these products. This methodological aspect is the main capital for adequately understanding the levels of understanding in *turāth* products ('Abdurraḥmān n.d., 23)

In most discussions surrounding the Arab-Islamic heritage during the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *turāth* and its opposition to modernity featured as a problem (Viersen 2023, 7) 'Abdurraḥmān's criticism was leveled at *turāth* reform projects which lead to separatist (*tajzī'ī*) and differential (*tafaḍuli*) conclusions towards *turāth*, as happened in al-Jābirī's Arab Reason Criticism project, especially in his three works: *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabī*, and *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabī* ('Abdurraḥmān 2011b, 28). Ṭahā found two forms of inconsistency in al-Jābirī's *turāth* reform model, especially in his three works. The inconsistency is in the form of a conflict between the reform discourse he is carrying out and what he is practicing in *turāth*. In these works, al-Jābirī calls for *turāth* reform with an integrative approach (*nazrah shumūliyyah*) but in his application he uses a separatist approach (*nazrah tajzī'iyah*). In addition, he also called for reform of the *turāth* methodology ('*āliyyah*), but in its application it only focused on *turāth* products (*maḍamim*). In addition, al-Jābirī's use of an objective, secular, and singular approach has implications for the separation between morality and reality, knowledge and spirituality, and dialogue and truth. In fact, the integration between these three aspects is the main character of *turāth*, which cannot be separated ('Abdurraḥmān, n.d., 29)

Departing from his criticism of the separatist-differential reform of *turāth*, Ṭahā developed *turāth* reform with an integrative approach (*al-takāmuliyyah*). Updating the reading of *turāth* within the framework of the Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān project is carried out through four principles:

*First*, reading that emphasizes the methodological aspect ('*āliyah*) of *turāth* text, in addition to its products (*maḍamin*), and uses this methodology to understand the products it produces.

*Second*, reading that relies on contemporary methodological developments, not to bury *turāth* methodology or to merge its character, but as a tool to theorize and update its mechanisms.

*Third*, to conduct a critical study of these other absorption methodologies before they are applied in Islamic-Arabic *turāth*, so that it can be seen how far their capacity is in descriptive-interpretative interests.

*Fourth*, this methodological reform effort is not only carried out unilaterally, but is carried out in two directions, for example not only reforming the Islamic-Arabic *turāth* methodology with the Western methodology alone, but also the Western methodology with the Islamic-Arabic *turāth* methodology. According to Ṭahā, this principle will open a new way in Islamic-Arabic thought, that is, apart from 'fertilizing' the methodology itself, it will also provide another perspective and horizon



for contemporary Western methodology ('Abdurraḥmān 2011b, 20–21). Like other contemporary thinkers, Ṭahā also seeks to bridge and dialogue between *turāth* (tradition) and modernity.

Ṭahā's *turāth* reform project focuses on renewal in the methodological aspects that underlie the emergence of *turāth* products rather than the product itself. He thinks that Arab-Islamic tradition itself is rich in methodology that needs to be explored again, especially from a linguistic and logical point of view. This methodological reading does not only attempt to revitalize old traditions, but is also based on critical and reformative studies, namely by relying on contemporary methodological developments. Readings that combine these two methodologies aim to avoid repeating old methodologies that are irrelevant and no longer produce novelty, as well as not to fall into the sacredness of old thoughts.

One of Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's practical efforts in this reform project he applied in the methodology of *'ilm al-kalām*. He saw that the most visible methodology that underlies Islamic-Arabic *turāth* is the method or science of *munāẓarah*—further defined as the science of dialogue. He proved this premise by the many dialogue assemblies (*munāẓarat*) held between Muslim scholars and scholars, the many writings on the science of dialogue and debate written by Muslim scholars, as well as several discourses and discussions contained in the Islamic sciences, such as the difference chapter (*khilāf*) in *fiqh*, the *qiyas* chapter (*analogy*) in *nahwu*, or *al-naqaid* in *balāghah* ('Abdurraḥmān 2011a, 68–69). This is what later made Ṭahā pay special attention to the dialogue method in many of his writings and became one of the important objects in his reform project.

Operational contemporary linguistic and logical methods in reading this *munāẓarah* science, Ṭahā describes in detail in one of his works entitled "*Fi Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa Tajdīd 'Ilmi al-Kalām*". Where this work, apart from explaining the linguistic-logical basis of the *ḥiwār* (dialogue) method in *turāth* reform in general, is also a project of reforming *'ilm al-kalām* initiated by Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān. No wonder then that he gave the title of his book "Principles of Dialogue and Reform of theology". In this book, Ṭahā wants to build a conception of dialogue based on open ethics and rationality, which he hereafter refers to as *jadāl maḥmūd* (productive debate) ('Abdurraḥmān 2011, 54).

Therefore, before explaining his neo-kalam theory, Ṭahā first described the construction of the methodology that underlies it, namely the dialogue method (*ḥiwār*). According to him, *'ilm al-kalām* is a product of Islamic heritage that best represents the *ḥiwār* (dialogue) methodology—a methodology that characterizes Islamic *turāth* itself. He considers that the reform of *'ilm al-kalām* must be directed at how to build a deep dialogue between sects in Islam. In addition to finding common ground for differences between these sects and transcending these differences, it is also how to come up with contemporary theological concepts that are

in line with the needs of the times (‘Abdurrahmān 2011, 70).

### **Metatheology: The Methodological Reform of ‘*Ilm al-Kalām***

The basic assumption regarding the urgency of presenting a new ‘*ilm al-kalām* (‘*ilm al-kalām al-jadīd*) is the emergence of new theological problems which imply new answers as well. Issues such as secularism, globalization, neo-atheism, religious pluralism are issues that have not been discussed in classical theology – even if they have been discussed they still require adjustments to be applied in a different era. The themes that have been discussed at length in classical kalam regarding issues of divinity, prophecy, and unseen news (*sam‘iyyat*) need to be shifted to a more contextual and urgent discussion. If the debate about the perpetrators of grave sins, the novelty of the Qur’an, the resurrection of the body is widened again, it will certainly be contrary to the principles of productivity and the needs of the times. So, the question that arises is how to address and respond to contemporary theological issues with relevant answers? And how effective is the methodology of the classical Muslim theologians in answering and accommodating theological issues in their era, so that they can still be used in subsequent eras?

For Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān, contemporary theological issues and problems require ‘*ilm al-kalām* as a solution (Yildirim, 2022., 1110). ‘*Ilm al-kalām*, which in fact is a science that aims to establish the theological beliefs of Islam and reject confusion (*shubhat*) in it (Idris 2018b, 262), will always be needed to answer the theological problems that arise in every era. To accommodate this, a deep understanding of the methodology of classical theology is needed in the form of logic and argumentation used by Muslim theologians. Without adequate understanding of the methodology and its application, the renewal of the science of kalam will not work as expected (Yildirim 2022, 1110).

Ḥasan Shāfi‘ī in his book “*al-Madkhal ila Dirāsah ‘Ilm al-Kalām*” explains that the theologians in building their arguments are guided by rational arguments (*dalīl ‘aqlī*) and textual arguments (*dalīl naqlī*). From these two propositions, the theologians concocted their arguments in several forms, in which these forms of argumentation developed with the development of the methodology that developed in the Islamic intellectual community at that time, including the analogy pattern of *tamthīl* (*qiyās ghayb ‘ala shahīd*), pattern deduction (*istiqrā’*), pattern of absence of signified because of absence of argument (*intifā’ al-madlūl li intifā’i dalīlihi*), and patterns of dialogue (*uslūb al-jadal*) (Shāfi‘ī 2013, 161–79). Through these methods and patterns of argumentation, according to Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān, theologians have succeeded in carrying out their scientific mission, namely their success in dealing with schools of thought, schools of thought that are contrary to Islamic principles and their skills in formulating these arguments logically and methodological

(‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 72).

Through the rapid development of contemporary scientific methodology, especially in the fields of linguistics and logic, Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān saw the need to theorize the methodology of classical theology with a contemporary linguistic and logical approach. This is in addition to accommodating and critically evaluating patterns of thought and methodologies that are constantly new, especially as a result of technological developments and industrialization within the Muslim community (‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 157–58), also as a form of revision of the methodology of theology which has always been adaptive-evaluative to scientific developments, just as classical Islamic theologians adopted the tools of logic and linguistics that developed in their era. In this way, reformation of contemporary kalam is a reading that focuses on the methodologies that underlie the construction of kalam and produces products of kalam thinking (‘Abdurrahmān, n.d., 81).

Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān’s new reading of *‘ilm al-kalām* can be understood through his efforts to theorize Islamic-Arabic *turāth*. *Turāth* for him is not only a ‘product’ of Arab-Islamic civilization, more than that it is rich in methodology that needs to be revitalized so that it finds relevance in the contemporary era. His efforts were then directed at theorizing the method of the science of dialogue (*munāẓarah*) which he considered to be the method that best represented Islamic-Arabic *turāth* and theology of kalam—which he also termed the science of theological dialogue (*ilm al-munāẓarah al-‘aqādi*). He attempts to theorize by combining two methodologies, namely the science of *munāẓarah* (dialogue) as the basic methodology (*manhājiyyah taḥṭiyyah*) which represents *turāth* with contemporary logic and linguistics as the top methodology (*manhājiyyah fawqīyyah*) as a tool for basic methodological reform (‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 70)

Dialogue (*ḥiwār*) occupies a significant position in the scientific construction of kalam. Often Muslim theologians practice this method in building their arguments, both between one sect or theological sect and another, or between Islam and other religions or beliefs. For example, there is a dialogue between the Asyairah sect and the Mu’tazilah, or between Islamic and Christian theological beliefs. This dialogue process necessitates rational arguments based on logical arguments to build their theological views, for example in proving God (Saifuddin and Tulung 2021, 149). The purpose of this dialogue is to reach a truth, or at least reach a certain agreement between two or more parties having a dialogue. Therefore, Ṭahā defines *‘ilm al-kalām* as:

The science that is based on confronting beliefs, whether between people of the same religion or between people of different religions (‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 70).

In addition to reforming the science of *munāẓarah*, one of the forms

of reform of Ṭahā 'Abdurrahmān's *'ilm al-kalām* is by analyzing and rearranging the pattern of the *qiyas* (analogy) and *tamthīl* (resemblance) methods through the tools of discourse analysis and logic. He made this effort to obtain the construction of discourse and logic in the methodology used by Muslim theologians as well as to build new *qiyas* patterns and mechanisms in producing new ideas and scientific products. According to him, these two methods have strong significance for contributing to contemporary theoretical studies as well as in the renewal of Islamic thought ('Abdurrahmān 2011a, 140).

The most important aspect of Ṭahā's efforts to reform *'ilm al-kalām* in this constellation of the contemporary world is how he presents the reasoning of kalam (*'aqlāniyyah kalāmiyyah*) as the main basis for new readings of theology of kalam. The reasoning of kalam that he refers to here is dialectical reasoning based on logic and morality which he theorizes from the principles of dialogue in the science of kalam. He departs from the basic assumption that in the dialectics of theology there are two or more people who are in dialogue with each other on a particular issue. In the process of this dialogue, they throw arguments at each other. This dialogue begins when one party throws a certain issue and then the other party gives a response, either positively (affirmative) or negatively (rejects), and so on until it reaches the intended end point, namely truth (*ṣawāb*) or agreement (*ittifāq*).

This reasoning of kalam is what Ṭahā wants to bring out in the readings of kalam by contemporary theologians. The main principle of building dialectical reasoning is that both parties have the nature of *'āqilah* and have the nature of *mu'aqalah*. *First*, the two *mutakkalim* are reasoners (*'āqilah*), that is, if they fulfill several criteria: (1) The practice of dialogue has specific goals, (2) the practice of dialogue is based on certain motives, so it is not counterproductive, (3) the practice of dialogue is based on freedom and without coercion, (4) the practice of dialogue in order to pursue good and deny evil, (5) the practice of dialogue is *ta'aqul* (reasoning), namely the ability to achieve goals and use the most relevant tools and equipment. *Second*, both of them reason with each other (*mu'aqilah*), in the sense that both of them rationalize the problem being posed or dialogued with, by fulfilling two specific principles, namely: (1) the principle of recognition of equal rights and obligations as reasoners (*'āqil*) to opponent's dialogue, (2) the principle of following universal rules in dialogue.

For Ṭahā, the dialectical reasoning of kalam which is based on the principles of logic and morality is the main capital in the construction of contemporary kalam. With these principles, the new science of kalam is not only directed at re-actualizing the traditional methodology of kalam to answer contemporary problems alone, but also on how to make efforts to refresh the methodology using contemporary logical and linguistic

tools. In addition, the dialectical reasoning of kalam requires integration between theoretical and practical aspects. The science of kalam must be kept away from both theoretical aspects which have no practical value, as well as from practical aspects which have no theoretical basis. In the contemporary Islamic era, the science of kalam must eliminate its tendency to “go soar” on the one hand and be more adaptive and contextual in responding to contemporary problems, especially the problem of morality (‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 56–57).

The kalam reasoning (*‘aqlāniyyah kalāmiyyah*) can be understood as a form of disagreement and Ṭahā’s criticism of al-Jābirī who said that kalam reasoning is *bayānī* reasoning, which argumentatively does not reach the *burhānī* degree, as well as his criticism of Arkoun who said that Islamic reasoning is sharia reasoning, not scientific reason (‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 146). In an interview, Ṭahā expressed his disagreement with the definition which states that Islamic science is the use of pure reason (*mujarrad*) in explaining religious concepts. According to him, the reason used in theology is *musaddad* reasoning (*‘aql musaddad*), because the object of study is religious concepts which incidentally cannot be separated from moral values (*qiyām*) (Yildirim 2022, 1110).

He termed this renewal of methodology by Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān as metatheology or theological jurisprudence (Yildirim 2022, 1110–11). The renewal that Ṭahā wants is not only a transfer of discussion from classical issues to contemporary issues, more than that he wants to build a methodological foundation for anyone involved in contemporary theological issues. As Ṭahā’s initial premise was, that the reform of theology would not be successful if it was not based on an understanding of the methodology of theology itself. Therefore, he requires that someone who is involved in issues of contemporary Islamic theology must meet the following criteria: *First*, people who believe (*mu’taqid*). That is, a scholar of theology must depart from the construction of faith in God, prophets, holy books, and the sharia that they bring – from this point of view, theology of theology is often termed ‘the science of monotheism’ and the knowledge of the Existing (*al-mawjūd bi ma huwa mawjūd*). *Second*, a thinker (*nadhīr*). That is, a kalam expert must have a critical and contemplative attitude to look for arguments and roots of theological concepts in his religion. *Third*, like dialogue (*muḥāwir*). In this case, an expert on kalam positions himself as the debater (*al-‘arīḍ*) and the one being debated (*al-mu‘arīḍ*) at the same time, so that a theological dialectics occurs which builds ‘ilm al-kalām itself to achieve certain truths (‘Abdurrahmān 2011a, 70–71).

### **The Signification of Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān’s Renewal of ‘Ilm al-Kalām in Contemporary Islamic Theology**

Ṭahā ‘Abdurrahmān wants to bridge the gap between *turāth* and modernity through methodological studies, especially through logical and

linguistic approaches. The approach he uses in reading *turāth* is different from the majority of contemporary Islamic thinkers who use historical or ideological approaches to *turāth* products. Just as Ṭahā's attempt to revise the methodology of theology is also different from the traditional reading of theology which considers the relevance of the old methodology without having to update it again. For Ṭahā, *turāth* products must be read with a logical and linguistic approach that builds the *turāth* themselves, not with approaches and methodologies absorbed from other civilizations.

The application of Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's efforts to renew '*ilm al-kalām* can be seen when he reads the theory of causality (*al-sabābiyyah*) in al-Ghazālī's view using the tools of the possible world theory (*al-'awālim al-mumkinah*), a theory which in the last four periods has experienced significant development and spread. in the study of modern logic and philosophy. Possible world theories are theories that recognize the possibility of other worlds, parallel to our current world, in which we live subjective and objective experiences with other people. With this theory, Ṭahā renewed the construction of al-Ghazālī's theory of causality with the construction of contemporary logic and methodology ('Abdurraḥmān 1998, 347–48). This is because the possible world theory is closely related to al-Ghazālī's theory of possibility (*al-imbkān*). The purpose of this new reading is to build a new construction of al-Ghazālī's theory of causality (*al-sabābiyyah*).

The reading of '*ilm al-kalām* with the methodology that forms the construction of the science of kalam itself is a distinctive feature of Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's reading. Because according to him, the science of kalam has distinctive linguistic and logical constructions, which cannot be fully understood without using these two logical and linguistic tools. With this renewal of the methodology of theology, both classical and contemporary theological issues can be read in a more contextual and relevant manner in the contemporary era of Islam. Thus, this reading model is not only affirmative towards the existence of Islamic classical theology, it is also affirmative for contemporary scientific and methodological developments.

The significance of Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's renewal in contemporary theology is to provide methodological tools for contemporary Muslim theologians in responding to theological issues that are constantly evolving along with the development of science. In addition, the reading of classical theology with a new methodology provides a new context for concepts and issues in classical theological *turāth* in the contemporary world, as Ṭahā did in reading Imam al-Ghazālī's concept of *sabābiyyah* through a contemporary logical approach and possible world theory.

## **Conclusion**

Ṭahā 'Abdurraḥmān's critique of contemporary Islamic thinkers on the one hand and Western civilization on the other hand made him

aware of the existence of a gaping gap in Islamic thought that needs to be criticized and re-evaluated. Through updating the reading of *'ilm al-kalām* which focuses more on aspects of its methodology which he termed metatheology, Ṭahā wants to build a healthy culture of dialogue (*ḥiwār*), both among fellow Muslims and with other religions. *'Ilm al-kalām* is the most representative product of the Islamic tradition to be approached with modern linguistic and logical methodology, in order to find its relevance and power again in the contemporary era. In addition, Ṭahā's renewal of *'ilm al-kalām* emphasizes a balance between theoretical and practical aspects. For Ṭahā, the renewal of contemporary kalam must be able to answer the problems of Muslims in the contemporary era as a result of the changes that have occurred in the era of technology and industrialization, namely through the revitalization of the reasoning of kalam in the tradition of Islamic theology.

In an effort to theorize the construction of argumentation and the logic of discourse in theology, Ṭahā focuses only on the aspect of dialogue (*muḥāwarah*) in theology with a linguistic-logical methodology, and ignores several other aspects of theology's methodology. This is what makes Ṭahā's methodological reform project very specific and detailed. From the facts above, other in-depth studies are needed to examine other aspects of the methodology of Islamic science. This is also recognized by Ṭahā himself. He reasoned that the focus of his reform project was to revitalize in depth (*ḥafr daqīq wa ṣabr 'amīq*) existing discourses in *'ilm al-kalām* to demonstrate the richness and relevance of theology in the contemporary era.

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