

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL ISSUES IN URBAN SOCIETY: A REVIEW OF QASIM MATHAR'S ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING THEOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN MAKASSAR, SOUTH SULAWESI

Barsihannor^{1*}, Gustia Tahir², M. Ilham³, & Ireena Nasiha⁴

¹⁻²Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

³Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

⁴Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam, Malaysia.

*e-mail: barsihannor@uin-alauddin.ac.id

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Contemporary Theological Issues in Urban Society: A Review of Qasim Mathar's Islamic Thought and His Contribution to Building Theological Awareness in Makassar, South Sulawesi Licensed Under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Abstract

Due to the rapid development of information technology, the world is increasingly open. This causes the people of the world be intensely connected to each other. The diversity of cultures, beliefs, and religious practices is becoming more open. If society is not educated about the importance of diversity awareness, then conflict can occur. This study discusses the thoughts of Moh. Qasim Mathar on contemporary theological issues and his contribution to building theological awareness in the city of Makassar. The data collection method was carried out through an in-depth study of his thoughts (content analysis) which were published periodically in the mass media through the Jendela Langit column in the Fajar Newspaper, as well as through in-depth interviews with a number of sources. The results of the study confirm that Qasim Mathar offers valuable insights into the importance of building an inclusive theology and maintaining pluralism in the midst of urban society to ensure the presence of harmony and coexistence of pluralistic, heterogeneous, and dynamic urban society. This study also reveals how Qasim Mathar's thoughts contribute to presenting theological awareness in the midst of urban society. The presence of religious dialogue spaces in several institutions such as in MUI, Postgraduate Program, Cadar Garis Lucu Community, House of Philosophy, and Matahari Islamic Boarding School Foundation is the real evidence of Qasim Mathar's contribution to urban society. The findings of this study indicate that Mathar's thoughts provide a framework for understanding the flexibility and resilience of theology in facing modern challenges, and highlight the importance of contextualizing religious values in the socio-cultural realities of urban society.

Keywords: Contemporary; Islamic thought; Qasim Mathar; Theological awareness; & Urban society.

A. Introduction

In urban society theological issues enter the realm of critical thinking. The biggest theological challenge in urban society is how a person can define himself in the midst of other people's religions or beliefs (Fuadi 2018). Social interaction among people of different religion, ethnicity and cultures is something that can be avoided anymore, even if the intensity is getting higher. This social interaction in urban society occurs due to among other things; the similarity of profession, neighbors, daily activities and others, or due to certain differences such as political, economic and cultural aspirations, some of which develop into conflicts with ethnic and religious interest. These differences are sometimes not warmly welcomed by most people, especially in belief and theology. The inability to understand these differences bring about the justification for misleading a person or group of people who have a different understanding (Sihombing 2021).

Besides, the rapid social changes in urban areas have significantly impacted the religious life of society (Irwan et al. 2022). Large cities, such as Makassar South Sulawesi, serve as centers of dynamic social, economic, and cultural interactions that influence how people perceive and practice religion and religious values. The emergence of contemporary theological issues such as religious pluralism, liberation theology, and Eco theology in urban societies highlights a shift in the way Muslims understand and practice their faith, particularly in adapting religious values to the demands of modern life (Bisanti et al. 2024).

As Muslims around the world have faced global development, a more open interpretation on the religion has emerged. This has resulted in the contestation of values amongst the faithful. Recognizing that critical studies have focused on the authoritative figures who produce knowledge rather than the contesting discourses of religious knowledge (Sakup, Nikendro, and Ridwan 2025), it is important to explore the epistemic frame of religious inclusivism. Studies of global thought have informed us that at times a Muslim (scholars) thought can be accepted and in another time rejected, and as such controversy has been common (Saumantri 2023). This can be seen in the case of Qasim Mahar, an inclusive Muslim thinker in Indonesia who has been seen as bucking the mainstream.

In this context, the thoughts of Islamic theologians and intellectuals, such as Moh. Qasim Mathar become relevant to study. Qasim Mathar is known as a progressive Muslim intellectual who offers a critical approach to various religious and social issues, especially in addressing the challenges of modernity within urban Muslim communities. His ideas on the construction of religious values in urban societies provide a significant theoretical foundation for understanding how religion remains relevant amidst the dynamics of modernity and globalization.

A specific article discussing Qasim Mathar's thoughts was not found, but there are a number of articles that link their discussion to Qasim Mathar's thoughts. such as Abbas's writing *Paradigma and Patterns of Classical and Modern Islamic Theological Thought* (Abbas 2015). This article compares the characteristics of classical and modern Islamic theology in which Mathar's thoughts are referred to as an example of an attempt to reconstruct Islamic theology that is more humanistic and contextual. Muhaemin through his writing *Membincang Ulang Teologi Islam Klasik dalam Dunia Kontemporer* (Latif 2019). The article evaluates the relevance of classical Islamic theology in a modern context. Qasim Mathar is referred to as one of the academics who encourages the renewal of Islamic theology to be more responsive to social issues. Muhammad Zaini (Zaini 2023) discusses various methods and patterns of thought in Islamic theology. Qasim Mathar's thoughts are studied in the context of an attempt to

integrate traditional and rational approaches in Islamic theology. M. Rusli (Rusli 2012) in his article *Reorientasi Kajian Teologi Islam; Ikhtiar Kontributif atasi Problematika Kekinian* cited Qasim Mathar as a figure who encourages the reinterpretation of Islamic theology to be more relevant to social reality. Of all the articles above, we have not yet found any specific thoughts from Qasim Mathar that specifically discuss contemporary theological issues. Thus, this research attempts to fill this gap by analyzing how Mathar's Islamic thought provides a framework for building religious values in urban society, especially in the context of Makassar's diverse and continuously developing urban landscape. Through this analysis, this research contributes to broader discussions regarding the relevance of Islamic theology in contemporary urban contexts.

This research aims to identify Qasim Mathar's Islamic thought on the contemporary theological issues particularly pluralism, and religious inclusivism. This article also examines how Qasim Mathar's religious thought has contributed to modern-day society in Makassar. This study is essential as it opens up dialogue between Islamic theology and modernity in the urban context, offering new insights into the relevance of religion in complex urban life.

B. Methods

This research is a field and library research with a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out by mapping Qasim Mathar's religious thoughts related to contemporary theological issues and his contribution in building theological awareness of urban society in Makassar. Data related to Qasim Mathar's thoughts were obtained through his writings published in a number of mass media, while data related to his contributions were obtained through in-depth interviews with a number of informants such as members of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), Chairperson of Qasim Mathar Institute (QMI), members of Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB), and the House of Philosophy. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis, where the researcher read articles and books written by Qasim Mathar and analyzed them contextually. The internal coherence of the text was analyzed to map its meaning. The analysis consisted of three stages: restatement, description, and interpretation. Through this process, Qasim Mathar's thoughts on contemporary theological issues were analyzed.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

Qasim Mathar's Thought and His Contribution

To understand Qasim Mathar's thoughts, it is necessary to briefly explain the background of his life. He was born in Rappang South Sulawesi. After graduating from senior high school in 1967, Qasim Mathar continued his studies at the Faculty of Ushuluddin at Alauddin State Institute of Islamic Studies. Seeking to obtain a deeper knowledge and understanding of Islam, in 1988 Qasim Mathar received a scholarship to study at Postgraduate School of Syarif Hidayatullah State Institute of Islamic Studies in Jakarta. Under the guidance of Harun Nasution (a prominent scholar of Islamic thought in Indonesia), Qasim Mathar completed his master's and Ph.D and became a lecturer of The faculty of Theology and Philosophy of Alauddin State Islamic University in Makassar.

Qasim Mathar's work experience and social interactions further influenced his views on pluralism and inclusivism. He routinely advocates through non-governmental organizations, to resolve conflicts in society. He is also an active member

of the Interfaith Forum (FAUB). In the mid-2000s, Qasim Mathar was entrusted to lead the forum. Forum members meet monthly at various places of worship. They discuss ways to promote interfaith dialogue and facilitate post-conflict reconciliation. Qasim Mathar promotes inclusivism theology not only by sending Christmas greetings to fellow Christians, but also by attending church services during Christian holidays. Qasim Mathar is also a member of the Jakarta-based Indonesian Democracy Community (KID). This institution regularly holds seminars to discuss democracy and its application in all aspects of Indonesian life. This gives him significant space to develop his religious thinking.

Qasim's Thought on Theological Issues in Urban Society

a. Inclusive Theology

According to Qasim Mathar, inclusive theology is needed in urban society to frame the awareness of religious people to understand each other. Understanding does not shake and interfere with other people's beliefs. In this regard, Qasim Mathar did not hesitate to fulfill the invitations of the priests to attend celebrations at the church or conduct hospitality with priests or other religious figures.

In the context of this inclusive theology, Qasim Mathar regrets the attitude of some people who forbid Christmas greetings to Christians. According to him, such utterances are not prohibited because Allah mentions them in the Koran. It is true, according to him, that there are scholars who forbid it, but there are also many well-known scholars who allow it (Mathar 2023).

Qasim Mathar even hinted at the permissibility of *Kifayah* prayer for non-Muslims who are considered to have nobility. Regarding this, Qasim Mathar stated that when he heard that Pope Johannes Paul II had died on April 3, 2005, he opened the Quran and studied several verses that allowed for certain awards to be given for the death of the Spiritual Leader of humanity. The verses of the Quran, for example, QS. Al-Maidah/5: 82)

"Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant".

Another verse of the Koran is QS. Ali Imran/3: 113-114;

"Not all of them are alike: of the People of the book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of God all night long and then prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in God and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; and they (hasten in emulation) in (all) good works; they are in the ranks of the righteous".

Based on verses from the Quran, he performed the *kifayah* prayer, and together with a number of his friends went to the Church to express his deepest condolences for the death of the Pope. Qasim Mathar wants people to understand and be aware of the importance of living together and co-existence with different beliefs and understandings, not the exclusivity of attitudes and thoughts that are always highlighted in life. He stated that these days, religion is absent in coexistence consciousness. Religious adherents feel they have the right to live and also have the right to regulate other parties. Such negligence is seen in some Muslims. They think that they have to regulate other people's religion or beliefs. Religion as a blessing is only lip service, because in reality violence often occurs in the name of religion. On this day, people who go to the house of worship are still filled with anxiety that they will

be surrounded and evicted. Assault, attack and repel is the religious language used by a radical group of religious people. Togetherness, let alone humanity, has not yet become a common language in religious life in this country. Religious people still need a long time and patience to depart and get out of a primitive religious attitude (*jahiliyyah*) towards a civilized religious attitude. Qasim Mathar also wrote:

"A few days ago, I read news in the print and electronic media regarding the statement by the Coordinating Board for Supervision of the Community Beliefs of the Indonesian Attorney General's Office regarding the ban on the Ahmadiyya Congregation. On the same day, I watched an international Ahmadiyya TV broadcast showing the Ahmadiyya Khalifah, Masroor Ahmad, preaching Islam among hundreds if not thousands of African Ghanaians. My little heart whispered, there Ahmadiyah worked hard to convey Islam, here Ahmadiyya was declared not Muslim. Seeing this fact I pray " May Allah ease the life of the minorities and guide the nation's leaders to always protect the minorities!"(Mathar 2019).

From the above statement, Qasim Mathar wants to see a harmonious and peaceful life among adherents of religions or religious schools. According to him, society should not be divided just because of a narrow understanding of religion. The diversity of understandings and beliefs is actually a good force for building a harmonious life by embracing each other instead of hitting each other. That is why Qasim Mathar really regrets the imposition of ideology or beliefs/understandings in society. According to him, the Prophet did not force his will, because he was only a warner.

b. Religious Pluralism

In this contemporary era, the most widely discussed theological issue is religious pluralism, namely the understanding that teaches all religions originate from the same source. Due to religious understanding is relative, adherents of a religion should not claim that only their religion is correct while other religions are misguided (Amani et al. 2024). The discourse of religious pluralism has become a polemic in urban society. There are groups that support and those who oppose the concept of religious pluralism. Both have the same argument referring to the Qur'an and hadith.

According to Qasim Mathar, religious pluralism is a social fact that has always existed and has enlivened the traditions of religions. However, in facing and responding to the fact various religions are so pluralistic, it seems that every religious community is not monolithic (Mathar 2023). They tend to take different ways and responses; First, a group that rejects the idea of religious pluralism. They are usually referred to as exclusivity groups. They have a tendency to justify their religion, while blaming others. They praise their religion while vilifying other religions. They base their views on a number of verses in the Quran.

Second, groups that accept religious pluralism as an unavoidable fact. They adhere to the view that there are points of similarity as a common thread that connects all the doctrinal provisions brought by each prophet (Mathar 2023). For the second group, it is quite clear that what distinguishes each teaching is the technical-operational dimensions, not the substantial-essential ones, such as regarding the mechanisms or procedures for worship rites and so on. The views of this pluralist group also refer to a number of verses in the Quran (Hitami 2021). Qasim Mathar belongs to this group. According to him, Pluralists believe that all adherents of religions have the same opportunity to obtain God's salvation and grace, because God's grace is vast beyond the vastness of the universe, God's love exceeds all the accumulation of mother's love for her children (Mathar 2023).

From a number of Qasim Mathar's thoughts spread across his various writings, it appears that he supports the idea of pluralism. According to him, it is very difficult to

unite all the diverse and different beliefs. In fact, according to him, it is impossible to integrate and unite all beliefs and have an understanding in religion. Therefore, let this understanding live in the hearts of every adherent of a religion or belief without having to force anything. Pluralism requires us to respect each other for the plurality that exists in this universe. Pluralism is a *sunnatullah* that Allah created to test humans who are the best in serving Him. Qasim Mathar regrets that there are groups who want to impose their beliefs on other people. According to him, it seems that people do not understand the *sunnatullah* of life and instead present a ferocious face of religion (Mathar 2023).

The above expression implies Qasim Mathar's anxiety about the phenomenon of human diversity, which always wants to impose its will while blaming other parties. According to him, some Muslims consider the face of religion to be unfriendly, not *rahmatan lil alamin*. This happens because the understanding of the diversity of beliefs is still very shallow. In fact, said Qasim Mathar, the climate of reform and democracy that already exists in urban society is used to respect the human rights and religious rights of each individual. However, what is happening currently is that there are people who take advantage of this freedom or the nature of democracy to express their disagreement with other people and then use coercion and even repression.

Qasim Mathar stated that in the field of religious life, the era of democracy opened up space for anyone to express their religious style or belief. According to him, people or groups can express their beliefs openly and honestly, without fear. This open and honest statement is very positive, because we can know exactly what the religious beliefs of a person or group are. Thus, we can also determine a good way of dealing with such people or groups. He further stated that having different religious beliefs is not a crime. According to him, someone who believes in X and another believes in Y, another believes in Z, then XYZ is not necessarily a crime. XYZ may be each of the pieces of truth that are owned by different parties. Crime is immoral (barbaric) action in response to differences in beliefs as a whole while defending beliefs by eliminating morals is also a crime (Mathar 2023).

The idea of thoughts is not without epistemological basis. There are at least three main reasons why he is so persistent in promoting inclusive theology and pluralism in urban society. *First*, textual-contextual thought construction. Qasim Mathar criticizes the tendency for communities to limit themselves to textual understandings, and thus belittle those whose perspectives differ from their own. Often, such (Mathar 2013). According to Qasim, a contextual understanding of religious texts can promote *kaffah* practices of religion. In his writing *Dakwah Kultural*, Qasim stresses that a contextual approach can ensure that Islam always suits its cultural and temporal conditions (Mathar 2009). Combining textual and contextual approaches, according to Qasim, has several benefits: (a) it avoids deviant and manipulative understandings of Islam; (b) it promotes adherence to religious teachings, rather than the transformation of teachings; (c) it ensures that Islam and its teachings are applied continuously and regularly; (d) it ensures that Islam's teachings are embraced by all elements of society; and (e) it enables Islam to respond to various social issues (Mathar 2016).

Second, dialogic and democratic construction. Qasim Mathar argues that ideal and historical Islam have been perceived as separated by space and time (Mathar 2006). He seeks to integrate ideal and historical understandings of Islam, promoting a paradigmatic Islam that promotes dialogic and democratic practices in all aspects of social life (Mathar 2015) rather than a dogmatic theological paradigm that stifles creative freedom and rejects other views (Mathar 2005). It is not uncommon for conflict and unrest to take religious overtones, and in such cases religion cannot provide

comfort and stability to the faithful (Mathar 2016). In his writing *Berdemokrasi dan Beragama*, Qasim Mathar states that all religions have values of goodness; no religion teaches evil. However, where religion is practiced through violence, anarchy, terror, coercion, and suffering, should it be embraced? (M. Q. Mathar 2015). According to him, religion and democracy must begin with the family. It cannot be forced upon others; it must be created through example. Religion and democracy require more than commitment. They necessitate good examples at the grassroots (M. Q. Mathar 2015).

Third, Islam should be substantive not symbolic. In his writing *Islam dan Politik*, Qasim Mathar states that an inclusive Islam should prioritize substantive values rather than particular symbols (M. Q. Mathar 2016b). Similarly, Islamic teachings must be substantive, rather than symbolic. Social order cannot be created through symbols. It requires the implementation of Islamic values such as democracy, justice, honesty, concern, and love, all of which were practiced by the people of Medina under the Prophet Muhammad's guidance (M. Q. Mathar 2016a). In *Politik Islam dalam Sorotan*, Qasim Mathar rejects political parties' use of Islam to curry favor with voters. Instead, he recognizes political Islam as the implementation of Islamic values, ideals, and beliefs in social life and in the political system (M. Q. Mathar 2012). According to Qasim Mathar, the rise of "Islamic" political parties in Indonesia is nothing but means of obtaining temporary worldly (M. Q. Mathar 2016b). He argues that these parties use Islam only as a symbol, which they can refer to advance their interests through the support of the Muslim community. He similarly rejects the formal implementation of Islamic sharia, as advocated by organizations such as the Preparatory Committee for Implementing Islamic Sharia (KPPSI, Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syariat Islam) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. He asks which "sharia" these organizations desire: is it Wahabi, Syafi'i, Hanafi, or Maliki? According to Qasim Mathar, faith cannot be forced upon others. It is necessary to understand others' views, and this, in turn, necessitates a deeper understanding of theological values (M. Q. Mathar 2012).

2. Discussion

Qasim Mathar's Contribution in Urban Society

Makassar city, the capital of South Sulawesi Province is a miniature of Indonesia on a regional scale. This city is not only the center of government and economy in the Eastern Indonesia region, but also a stage for very complex socio-cultural diversity. Its strategic location on the west coast of Sulawesi Island makes Makassar a meeting point for various flows of migration, trade, and interaction between tribes and cultures from classical times to the present. Therefore, the diversity in this city is not something that is made up, but a historical reality that has been tested by time (Ayatullah et al. 2024).

Demographically, the population of Makassar City consists of various ethnic groups. In addition to the Bugis and Makassar tribes as the majority native population, there are also the Toraja, Mandar, Buton, Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese, Batak, as well as the Chinese and Arab tribes. Each of these ethnic groups brings with them various customs, languages, traditions, and even diverse value systems. This diversity can be clearly seen in various aspects of city life, from the architecture of houses of worship, culinary diversity, and social language, to local political dynamics (Said Ahmad et al. 2023).

In terms of religion, the population of Makassar City adheres to various beliefs. Islam is the majority religion, followed by Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Houses of worship stand side by side in various corners of the city, marking the presence of a diversity of beliefs that have long grown in a relatively peaceful atmosphere. Interaction between religious communities

in Makassar takes place in various forms, ranging from social cooperation, interfaith activities, to joint participation in religious forums that strengthen citizen solidarity (Misuari et al. 2020).

This condition shows that the diversity of Makassar City is not only horizontal (inter-ethnic and inter-religious), but also vertical, namely in terms of social and economic structure. This city accommodates various levels of society, from the working class, street vendors, dock workers, to the professional middle class, big businessmen, academics, and bureaucrats. The dynamics of this social class, although sometimes causing tension, also reflect the diversity of backgrounds of the population who live and develop together in the same city space (Laessach M. Pakatuwo, et.all. 2023).

Culturally, Makassar is also very dynamic. The local Bugis-Makassar culture that upholds the values of *siri'* (self-respect), *pesse* (empathy), and *sipakatau* (humanizing each other) is the moral foundation in interacting. These values have long been a social instrument that maintains harmonious relations between residents despite their different backgrounds. The Bugis-Makassar migrant culture that is open to the outside world also strengthens the inclusive character of the city's people. They do not close themselves off to those who are different, but instead make it part of city life (Muhamad Hadis Badewi, 2019).

This diversity certainly has the potential for conflict if not managed properly. However, the long history of Makassar City proves that harmony is not impossible, as long as there is a collective awareness to respect each other and build trust between residents. In various events, both political and religious, the people of Makassar have shown social maturity in responding to differences. They are not easily provoked by sectarian issues that come from outside, because they have an internal social mechanism to resolve tensions dialogically (Ahmadin 2023).

In the context of the diversity of the city of Makassar, Qasim Mathar consistently creates theological dialogue in urban society. He invites a number of community and religious figures to gather and discuss. He creates a discussion space that accommodates people from various religions and schools of thought. During his tenure as assistant director of the Postgraduate Program at Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, he invited religious minorities (including members of Ahmadiyah and Shia) to participate in every academic discussion, and even discuss their religious teachings. This confirms that his contribution is very clear in building openness to religion and belief.

Qasim Mathar argues that Islam must remain relevant amidst rapid social change, including how urban communities construct their religious identities. His thoughts enrich contemporary Islamic theological discourse, especially regarding the adaptation of religious values in urban environments such as Makassar. He initiated various communities to actively engage in humanitarian and environmental issues. The establishment of the Qasim Mathar Institute (QMI) in 2015 is proof of his contribution in building theological awareness and promoting religious inclusivism. Saleh Tajuddin, one of the members of QMI said; "*QMI has a vision and mission to improve interfaith relations and promote interfaith communication, thereby creating togetherness, co-existence and social harmony*" (Tajuddin 2023).

Gustia Tahir, a member of QMI, also said; "*in the increasingly developing city life, diversity is bound to occur, especially as communication and information become more open, so QMI can be a bridge to accommodate this diversity*" (Gustia 2024). The presence of QMI indicates that Qasim Mathar's thoughts have made a significant contribution to maintaining and caring for the harmony of community life amidst the development of

increasingly pluralistic cities. Muh Natsir Sialo, the former Dean of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy of Alauddin State Islamic University (2015–2019) and also the Chairperson of the MUI (Islamic Brotherhood Council) of South Sulawesi stated that the openness of inter-religious or inter-school dialogue in Makassar City was more or less motivated by Qasim Mathar's ideas about tolerance and inclusivity. At the Faculty, he added, the inter-faith dialogue is inspired by Qasim Mathar's thoughts (Siola 2024).

Qasim Mathar also inspired the formation of Philosophy Studies Center (Rumah Kajian Filsafat) established in 2018 by Indah Rahayu and Nurliani, as well as Komunitas Cadar Garis Lucu (Funny-Line Cadar Community) established by Ainun Jamilah and friends. All of them were students of Qasim Mathar. These organizations hold weekly discussions to disseminate the values of peace, the universality of Islam, and religious moderation and discuss other important issues from a scientific perspective. Nurliani stated; *“Qasim Mathar's inclusive thinking encouraged a number of friends to form a community that discusses philosophy and religion. This forum is expected to open the eyes of society to see the reality of religiosity which is inevitable”* (Nurliani 2024). Ulfa, a member of Cadar Garis Lucu said; *Through his critical and universal thinking, Prof. Qasim Mathar invites the young generation like us to dare to take steps that may seem out of the box. As someone who was taught by him in college, I felt how he not only taught a discipline, but also instilled values and principles. It was not only his intellectualism that he explained through his logical argumentation skills, but the fruit of his thoughts that I think was very impactful was the way he related to others. I observed that this attitude is what impacts and inspires others more than wise words. However, a good attitude can also only be achieved through harmony between thinking and awareness”* (Wulandari 2025).

One of Qasim Mathar's most prominent contributions to promoting inclusive theology is the education system he built. Qasim Mathar founded the Matahari Foundation which runs boarding schools from kindergarten to high school. The mission of this boarding school is to instill an understanding of inclusivism and religious tolerance in students. Here, students learn to play with peers from different backgrounds, visit different houses of worship, and interact with religious leaders. The main mission of the Matahari Foundation is to promote pluralism, inclusive theology, mutual respect, and togetherness. Qasim Mathar believes that education is the key to building an intellectually and spiritually strong society. Therefore, he designed education that encourages critical thinking, reflection, and openness to modern social realities. With this approach, a generation of young urban Muslims who are not only knowledgeable about Islamic teachings textually but also able to apply them in the wider context of life (M. Q. Mathar 2010).

Qasim Mathar's theological thoughts has also influenced local society through his students, who have disseminated it in the course of their professional activities. His students, having become lecturers at Alauddin State Islamic University, Palopo State Institute of Islamic Studies, Bone State Institute of Islamic Studies, Ternate State Institute of Islamic Studies, and other religious institutions in Indonesia, incorporate his teachings into their own lessons. Syarifuddin (Dean of the Faculty of Law, Palangkaraya State Islamic Institute), one of his students said; *I found the progressive Islamic ideas from Qasim Mathar's thoughts. During following his lecture, I got a lot of ideas or thoughts related to contemporary Islamic laws. Sometimes the ideas sound beyond the times which causes controversy. I also often convey these ideas to my students* (Syarifuddin 2025). His thoughts have also been incorporated into several books, such as *Islam di Jendela Langit* (Barsihannor 2019) and *Membuka Jendela Langit (Membuka Jendela Langit 2019)* which are available to the general.

These examples show that the religious understanding that lives in urban society is increasingly shifting from being exclusive to a more contextual, dialogical, and functional meaning. This is the essence of theological awareness as proposed by Moh. Qasim Mathar. Through a contextual approach, Qasim Mathar argues that urban Muslim communities need to develop a new understanding of Islamic teachings that can answer the challenges of modernity. For him, religious values are not something static, but must be reconsidered in facing the complexity of urban life. His approach provides a framework for Muslim communities in cities like Makassar to find the relevance of religion in everyday life influenced by globalization, technology, and modern culture. He said, "*If you feel uncomfortable being religious in a place where you are a minority, you must have misunderstood religion*".

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, Qasim Mathar's theological thought and his views on religious inclusivism and pluralism can be seen simultaneously as a response to interreligious conflict and tension, and as a means of generating new knowledge. In the midst of a very complex urban society with diversity, including ethnicity, language, religion and belief, Qasim Mathar advocates a new way of thinking, namely a way of thinking that teaches people to accept other people - no matter their differences in religious beliefs - and fosters social harmony. Technological disruption, as well as the crisis of faith, can only be overcome by recognizing brotherhood between humans. All humanity is one nation, united in its humanity. They should not be divided because of their religious beliefs or ethnic background. The results of this study confirm that Moh. Qasim Mathar has offered a model of theological thinking that is relevant to the conditions of plural, heterogeneous, and dynamic urban society. Through his writings in the mass media, especially in the *Jendela Langit* column in the *Fajar Daily*, Qasim Mathar consistently voices the importance of building an inclusive theology and pluralism that is able to embrace diversity. His ideas about pluralism and humanistic religiosity are not only normative, but also applicable in the daily lives of urban communities that are full of social and cultural challenges.

Mathar's thoughts are a bridge between traditional theological discourse and the spiritual needs of modern society. He not only prioritizes doctrine, but also links religious values with the ever-evolving social reality. In this context, his contribution is not only in the form of ideas, but also in efforts to build adaptive and reflective theological awareness in urban society. The awakening of openness to differences in religion and belief, community involvement in humanitarian and environmental issues and the presence of ethics in society, are real forms of theological awareness. According to him, theology should not be rigid, but must be flexible and open in order to be able to answer the challenges of the times without losing its transcendental roots. This research shows that media is not just a communication tool, but also a potential theological space for conveying contextual religious ideas.

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F. Author Contributions Statement

The authors of this article declare that the names listed in this article each have contributed to the writing; Barsihannor: Design and conduct experiments, and analyze data. Gustia Tahir: Design and conduct experiments, and analyze data. M. Ilham: Interpret data and review, and provide critical feedback. Ireena Nasiha: Complete writing and editing, and language rejuvenation.

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