

Journal editorial

His Eminence, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar

Prof. Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb

Editorial of the First Issue

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, and may blessings and peace be upon our leader and beloved Muhammad, and upon his family and companions. To proceed:

Islamic civilization, from its earliest dawn, was founded on the integration of reason and revelation. It emphasized the importance of rational thought as a means to understand the texts of Islamic law and deduce its rulings, fostering a unique harmony between intellectual reasoning and transmitted knowledge.

This integration played a key role in constructing a profound intellectual and civilizational framework, whose legacy continues to bear witness to the depth and richness of the Islamic approach across all fields. At the forefront of these were the rational sciences, which were never in conflict with revelation. Rather, they acted as tools for understanding it and affirming its proofs, while addressing deviation, skepticism, extremism, and baseless interpretations made without a sound method or proper principles.

At the heart of this intellectual tradition stands Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, one of the most prominent scholars of Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamā‘a. Through his distinctive approach in the discipline Islamic theology (‘ilm al-kalām), he established solid foundations for affirming and defending Islamic beliefs. These foundations were grounded in the strength of rational evidence and a clear, accurate understanding of transmitted texts. His school of thought gained widespread acceptance among

the scholars of the Islamic community (umma) over the centuries.

What al-Ash‘arī accomplished, in truth, was the formulation of a theological school that championed the Qur’ān and Sunna through the use of rational evidence. He demonstrated that the texts of revelation align seamlessly with pure reason when it is free from the distortions of personal desires, the distortions of bias, excessive argumentation, fallacies, and deliberate obfuscation of truths.

Scholars affirm that this school of thought is not a novel or newly invented approach but rather a revival and return to the original teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), he entrusted to the Muslims to follow. This is evidenced by the chain of thought that al-Ash‘arī relied on, revived, and upheld is deeply rooted in authentic tradition, as exemplified by the narration recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: “Whoever performs our prayer, faces our Qibla, and eats from our slaughtered animals is a Muslim under Allah’s protection and the protection of His Messenger. Do not betray Allah by violating His protection.”⁽¹⁾ This authentic hadith served as a guiding principle for al-Ash‘arī in everything he wrote and articulated. When his death approached, he said to one of his students in Baghdad: “Bear witness that I do not declare any person of the Qibla disbeliever, for all of them point to one and the same Worshipped Being. All of this is merely a difference in expression.”⁽²⁾

In this context, the students of Al-Ash‘arī continued his legacy, dedicating themselves to integrating wisdom (ḥikma) and Sharī‘a. They viewed the disciplines of ḥikma not as separate from Sharī‘a but as essential tools for understanding and deriving its principles. These disciplines enhance humanity’s ability to comprehend the existence of a coherent framework rooted in divine revelation. This is exemplified in the works of scholars such as al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, al-Rāzī, and al-Āmidī, among others.

This highlights the importance of the school (madhhab) of Ahl al-Sunna and its balanced approach, which Muslims today urgently need to understand. It offers a

(1) Narrated in Al-Bukhārī, Book of Prayer, Chapter: The Superiority of Facing the Qibla, Ḥadīth No. 391.

(2) Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī, Ibn ‘Asākir, p. 149.

means to navigate the sectarian and theological divisions that some may unknowingly fall into, particularly, the dangerous issue of takfīr (declaring others as disbelievers). It also underscores the contemporary relevance of this madhhab, particularly in its perspective on renewal as an essential characteristic of Islam. Through this principle, Islam remains a dynamic and effective system actively engaging with the realities of human life. The scholars of this madhhab remain committed to this principle, utilizing all available knowledge, logical arguments, and evidence to affirm religious beliefs and counter opposing views.

Amid these efforts, Al-Azhar stands out as a beacon of knowledge and civilization, with an undeniable role in preserving the moderation of Islam. It has upheld the cause of defending the creed of Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamā‘a and has worked actively to promote the values of justice and tolerance in the face of extremism, deviation, and fanaticism. The contributions of this institution, along with its pioneering role in advancing the rational sciences and formulating epistemological frameworks that harmonize revelation and reason, cannot be overlooked. These efforts have earned Al-Azhar a prominent position among academic and religious institutions.

Underpinning this rich heritage, the “Al-Imām Al-Ash‘arī Center” at Al-Azhar emerges as a beacon of scholarly promise. Dedicated to reviving the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah, it seeks to renew theological and intellectual discourse, confront extremism and deviation, and challenge superstition and chaos. The center aims to strengthen the path of moderation, which form the essence of Islam, while leveraging rational sciences to tackle contemporary intellectual challenges, including refuting the doubts propagated by orientalist and skeptics.

From this foundation arises the mission of Al-Ḥikma al-Islāmiyya, a journal published by the Imām al-Ash‘arī Center, seeks to revive this integration and contribute to the renewal of Islamic thought amidst contemporary challenges that threaten faith and undermine sound religious awareness.

The Journal of Al-Ḥikma al-Islāmiyya represents an ambitious academic initia-

tive dedicated to serving readers and researchers by publishing in-depth studies in Islamic theology, philosophy, and related intellectual disciplines. It also addresses issues related to the principles of religion within the tradition of Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamā‘a. Contributions are presented in various languages and authored by both Muslim and Western scholars with a keen interest in these fields.

The journal provides a platform for scholars and intellectuals, whether from Al-Azhar or elsewhere. It publishes academic studies that enrich the contemporary Islamic library and bridges tradition with modernity in the service of Islam and its sciences. By fostering intellectual awareness, it aims to promote the values of moderation and balance in a world overwhelmed by intellectual and cultural challenges and conflicting currents.

At the Journal of Al-Ḥikma al-Islāmiyya, we extend an open invitation to academics and thinkers across the Islamic world to contribute to this esteemed academic project. We encourage the publication of studies and research that strengthen the position of Islamic rationalism, uphold the principles of moderation and renewal, promote intellectual tolerance, foster systematic inquiry, and maintain unwavering dedication to the truth.

Surly, Allah is the ultimate guide and source of success.



Ahmed al-Tayeb

The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar

President of the Imam Al-Ash’ari Center

Chairman of the Board of Directors

