

Editor-in-Chief's Foreword

By His Eminence Professor Dr. Hasan Al-Shafi'i

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of all worlds, and peace and blessings be upon all the Prophets and Messengers, particularly Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the Seal of the Prophets, sent as a mercy to all creation.

It is with great pleasure, dear reader, that we present to you the inaugural issue of The Islamic Wisdom Journal, published by the Imam Al-Ash'ari Centre of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif. This is an international, peer-reviewed academic journal published in three languages: Arabic, English, and French. Its primary aim is to serve and renew Islamic thought, particularly within the framework of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (the people of the prophetic way and the community of consensus), while engaging with the abundant currents of contemporary intellectual discourse. This mission is carried out in the spirit of intellectual openness, tolerance, and positive centrism, which have been hallmarks of the Ash'ari-Maturidi tradition—a tradition upheld and nurtured by Al-Azhar Al-Sharif for over a thousand years.

This issue contains a collection of valuable scholarly articles: four in Arabic, two in English, and one in French. It also starts with a blessed introduction penned by His Eminence, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Professor Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb (may Allah preserve him).

The first article, entitled “Primordial Covenant and Innate Knowledge”, is authored by the distinguished contemporary philosopher, Professor Dr. Taha Abdel Rahman, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco, whose scholarly contributions are widely recognized. In this work, he engages in a rigorous academic dialogue

with Ibn Taymiyyah’s perspective, critiquing the latter’s view that shahadah (witnessing) is a sensory event tied to the concept of “taking from the backs of their forefathers.” In contrast, Dr. Abdel Rahman interprets shahadah through an “amānī hermeneutic,” framing it as a metaphysical witnessing that underscores the relationship between scriptural texts and transcendent realities. He also offers a critical assessment of Ibn Taymiyyah’s understanding of the innate disposition (fiṭrah) and explores other significant issues in depth.

The second article is authored by His Eminence Professor Dr. Mohamed Abdel Rahman Al-Duwaini, Department of Comparative Jurisprudence, Faculty of Sharia and Law for Boys, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, Deputy of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and a member of the Council of Senior Scholars. Titled “Epistemological Integration Between ‘aqida’ (Creed) and Sharia (Islamic Law) in the Perspective of Ahl al-Sunnah”, the article sheds light on the efforts of Ahl al-Sunnah in achieving a harmonious integration between creed (‘aqīdah) and law (sharī‘ah). It explores the interconnectedness of the disciplines of theology (‘ilm uṣūl al-dīn) and the principles of jurisprudence (‘ilm uṣūl al-fiqh), emphasizing the outcomes of this integration, particularly the equilibrium achieved between reason (‘aql) and revelation (naql). The article further highlights the pivotal role of Al-Azhar in fostering this balance, which has resulted in an intellectual culture characterized by tolerance and moderation.

The third article, entitled “The Role of Al-majaz (Trope) in Interpreting Texts Alluding to a Resemblance Between Allah and His Creations”, is written by His Eminence Professor Dr. Salama Gomaa Dawood, Faculty of Arabic Language, Al-Azhar University, President of Al-Azhar University. The article identifies a unique linguistic dimension, focusing on the role of figurative language—particularly illustrative metaphors—in interpreting scriptural texts that may suggest anthropomorphism. By employing such linguistic tools, the article underscores the transcendence (tanzīh) of Allah, the Most High, from any resemblance to His creation.

The fourth article, “The Ash‘arī Doctrine: Its Features and Characteristics”, is by His Eminence Professor Naẓīr Muḥammad ‘Ayyād, the Mufti of Egypt. The article asserts that the Ash‘ari school derives its creed from the pious predecessors (salaf), emphasizing that Imam Al-Ash‘ari did not innovate a new theology but rather systematized and articulated the creed of the early generations. The article also highlights wasatiyyah (moderation) as a defining characteristic of the Ash‘ari tradition, evident throughout its methodology, particularly in its balanced approach to reason and revelation, predestination (qadar) and free will, the affirmation of the Beatific Vision (ru’yat Allāh), and its refusal to excommunicate (takfīr) those who commit major sins.

Among the articles in other languages, the first in English is authored by His Eminence Prof. Doctor Muhammad Abdel Haleem, SOAS, University of London, Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of London. Titled “Al-Ḥikama in Surat al-Jumu‘a”, his study underscores the critical importance of structural and linguistic analysis in understanding Qur’anic chapters (suwar). Dr. Abdel Haleem applies this methodological approach to Surat al-Jumu‘a”, addressing the errors made by some contemporary Western scholars who have interpreted the chapter in a fragmented manner, neglecting its broader context and holistic structure. This oversight, as the study demonstrates, has led to inaccurate conclusions regarding the intended meaning of the surah.

The second article in English is authored by Dr Badreldeen Ismail, a researcher at The classical institute UK. “Tracing Contemporary Western Scholarship in Sunni Kalām: Philosophical, Mystical, and Rational Contours”, His study traces contemporary Western scholarship on Sunni kalām (Islamic theology), highlighting the significant attention given to Imams Ash‘ari and Maturidi creeds in Western academic circles. The article further notes how modern studies have moved beyond earlier Western perspectives that portrayed kalām as restrictive to intellectual thought. Instead, it emphasizes the originality and rationality inherent in the methodologies and discourses of this profound Islamic intellectual tradition.

The article presented in French is authored by Professor Dr. Éric Geoffroy, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Strasbourg. Titled “Islamic Theology and Contemporary Science: Issues Related To Our Reading of the Qur’ān”, the study explores the potential for revitalizing Islamic kalām (theology) as a dynamic discourse capable of engaging with modern intellectual and scientific challenges. It emphasizes the capacity of the Ash‘ari school and its success in offering balanced perspectives on theological issues.

The article critiques the diminished efficacy of kalām, noting its transformation from an open, dialectical discourse aimed at establishing doctrinal truths into a defensive and reactionary discipline. Furthermore, the study highlights intersections between Ash‘ari theology and certain contemporary scientific and intellectual paradigms, underscoring the relevance of kalām in addressing modern inquiries.

In conclusion, I express my profound joy at the publication of the inaugural issue of The Islamic Wisdom Journal (al-Ḥikmah al-Islāmiyyah.) It is our aspiration that this journal attains the distinguished position we envision for it, serving the cause of knowledge and its seekers, and contributing to the welfare of our nation, civilization, and humanity at large.

We ask Allah success, for He alone is the ultimate aim, and He suffices us as the best disposer of affairs.



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