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## CHAPTER III AL-AZHAR'S DISCOURSE ON RELIGIOSITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF THE ACADEMIC AZHARI INSTITUTES

### الفصل الثالث: خطاب الأزهر الشريف للتعليم قبل الجامعي من خلال المناهج الأكاديمية

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#### 3.1. Introduction

Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf leads exacerbating efforts and diligently works as an enormous Islamic institution to spread Islam through its moderate edifice and tolerant lofty ethics. In the framework of such touchable efforts, His Excellency Prof. Dr. At-Tayyib has prioritized developing the educational students' curricula, especially pre-university, as these stages are the main key building blocks of the pupils' minds. Such exacerbated efforts aim to instill moderate, enlightened Islamic teachings away from exaggerated and delusional thought.

In line with the development of Al-Azhar's curricula at the pre-university stage, Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf has been working on developing Al-Azhar educational curricula, since the Grand Imam, Dr. Aḥmad At-Tayyib, Shaykh of Al-Azhar issued Decree No. 8 of 2013 to form various specialized committees and bodies, as a way of the development of Al-Azhar educational curricula in all stages. As a result, Al-Azhar could complete more than 90% of the development, thanks to the efforts of the curriculum development committees formed by the Grand Imam and represented by the agent of Al-Azhar. The committee has finished reviewing and reformulating the curriculums to be contemporary with reality, based on the Islamic heritage and the Azhari nature.<sup>1</sup>

In the same time, the development of Al-Azhar curricula included deleting some chapters of *Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)* on *Al-Madhāhib Al-*

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*Arba'ah* (The Fourth Schools) unrelated to our contemporary reality. Besides, the *Jihād* chapter was removed from the preparatory stage to the secondary stage, and the chapters that present our daily life were approved in the Noble Hadith. In addition, some subjects were also merged, such as the subjects of Hadith, *At-Taḥsīn* (*Interpretation*), *At-Tawḥīd* (*Monotheism*), and *As-Sīrah* (Biography of the Prophet) Muḥammad (PBUH). These books were combined in an independent book as the Book of *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn* (*The Roots of Religion*). In addition, teaching the subject *Ath-Thaqāfa Al-Islāmiyyah* (*The Islamic Culture*) has been approved by the Grand Imam, Shaykh of Al-Azhar, and includes many issues related to our contemporary life. Besides, these issues develop the spirit of belonging to the homeland, confronting all destructive ideas, addressing contemporary issues, and correcting misconceptions. Meanwhile, such remarkable development has also included the style and presentation of those books.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of Aṭ-Ṭayyib's concern to develop the educational process in Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf, His Eminence continues his meetings with those responsible for the educational process to complete the development of the Azhari education system to provide the nation with the needs of scholars who are efficient and enlightened. Those experts work on safeguarding our community from ideas of terrorism, bigotry, and extremism. His Excellency focuses on implementing comprehensive strategies (short-medium and long-term) through experts and specialists who can develop Al-Azhar educationally and religiously. He also gives priority over the fieldwork as the slogan of the coming academic year, activating student exercises and focusing on sports and cultural tasks for students at all educational levels.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, Al-Azhar has formed scientific committees that have lasted more than a year and a half and continued to work day and night to review books and curricula for pre-university education. These committees have already completed the development of all pre-university education curricula and applied to start from the current academic year, as His Excellency has ordered to review those books annually to be developed per three years. Moreover, *Ath-Thaqāfa Al-Islāmiyyah* (*The Islamic Culture*)<sup>4</sup> has been introduced for the first secondary class, the two sections, to enlighten the students' minds and protect them from any extremist thought, besides establishing the specialized committees that work on developing the educational university curricula.<sup>5</sup>

From this prominent role that is played by the majestic institution of Al-Azhar under the auspices of the Grand Imam, Prof. Dr. Aḥmad Aṭ-Ṭayyib, the researcher presents the stages of educational development undertaken by

Al-Azhar through the students' educational curriculums pre-university level, which are as follows,

### 3.2. Al-Azhar Curriculums for the Primary Stage

Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf pays more concern to the primary stage. It is the first stage upon which the foundation is built, and religious education is the subject that deserves accumulated attention and noticeable development. Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf also develops the other primary school subjects and curricula in line with the developments of life, especially concerning the Case of National Unity and issues of belonging to our homeland.<sup>6</sup>

There are many lessons aimed at cultivating the spirit of love with non-Muslims, as follows,

#### 3.2.1. Inculcating the Concept of Citizenship

Significantly, Al-Azhar has focused through the primary school books on installing the roots of loyalty and belonging in our pupils' minds and teaching them that citizens in one state have the same rights and duties. Besides, it has affirmed that worship houses have their sanctity and status, and it is unlawful to violate, and these houses are safeguarded and protected.<sup>7</sup>

In the book on *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)* of the elementary stage, through the sixth grades, Al-Azhar is keen on teaching the students to accept others, and spread peace, especially when they meet their Christian friend; they have to greet him and treat him kindly. Such influential methods, Islamic religious education subjects have worked at all primary levels. Besides, the significant role of the intimate dialogue, knowing others and accepting others, as the means of communications of the Azhari pupils, to be a practical lesson of the principle of citizenship.<sup>8</sup>

In the primary stage, the textbook of *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)* in the first primary year of the first term spotted the light on the students accompanying their Christian friend, saying,

During meeting their Christian friend; they greet him and talk to him. After the students leave the institute, they meet with their affectionate friend, Mina. They all were walking along the road; they faced a stone in the middle of the road. Then they cooperated and protected him.<sup>9</sup>

In the same context, the book, *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)*, has followed the same style to qualify the Azhari students to be sincere to Christian brothers. Besides, it emphasizes the acceptance of the other and works on instilling the principle of citizenship.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)* of the first primary year of the second semester,<sup>11</sup> a complete unit with pictures

talks about greeting in Islam and the necessity of greeting people, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, because Islam is a religion of peace.<sup>12</sup>

Referring to such significant meaning, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) said, Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him; the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

(You shall not enter Paradise so long as you do not affirm belief (in all those things which are the articles of faith), and you will not believe as long as you do not love one another. Should I not direct you to a thing which, if you do, will foster love amongst you).<sup>13</sup>

Such meanings signify the linkage between Islam and our current events as a solution on earth, not pie in the sky. It also rearranges the relationship between a human being and his brother in all fields of life.<sup>14</sup>

Remarkably, *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)*, assigned for the second primary year of the first term, confirms that belief in God and the Messengers without distinction of complete perfection of faith. It also stresses that there is no difference between a prophet and another. Indeed, believing in all the Messengers is a condition of believing in God.<sup>15</sup>

As for the second term, the same book, *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)*, includes a complete unit designed for congratulations on occasions. Then, an assigned unit on cooperation, and a third one presents the virtue of tolerance. Within the congratulations unit on occasions, the book ardently shows the ruling on congratulating non-Muslims on several occasions, giving actual examples of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). It also clarifies that God, the Almighty, has permitted us to eat the food of the People of the Book, and our food is permissible for them. In the virtue of tolerance unit, the book shows the value of tolerance with all people on an equal footing, and the true Muslim tolerates both Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

In *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)* book Primary Third in the first term, the students study a complete unit of loving homeland and how this concept is inculcated from the beginning of childhood to the end. Such a practical lesson leads them to cultivate love for their country since their childhood.<sup>17</sup>

In the second term, students study lessons about the virtue of honesty in dealing with others and recommending treating neighbors with kindness, all related to the Muslim's relationship with other Muslims and non-Muslims. In the lesson on the virtue of honesty, students learn the necessity to speak truthfully, whether with Muslims or non-Muslims, showing that lying is a

hateful characteristic that people hate. Then, in recommending treating neighbors with kindness lesson, it focused on the non-Muslim neighbor and how Islam enjoined excellent treatment for him. In addition, they both have the same rights and duties, and we should treat them with utmost concern and keep them safe.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.2.2. Consolidating The Relationship with Non-Muslims**

Seeking Al-Azhar's pursuit to strengthen the children's relationship with other than those who disagree with him on religion, in the book of *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah (The Islamic Education)*, the fourth primary year, there are many lessons about the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims; among these lessons are the honest merchant who trades with people, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims.<sup>19</sup>

Referring to such significant meanings, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) said, Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

(He who took up arms against us is not of us, and he who acted dishonestly towards us is not of us).<sup>20</sup>

From here, through developing the primary academic books, Al-Azhar inculcates the spirit of love and brotherhood with non-Muslims, strengthening the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. He creates a generation that loves everyone and is aware of the wars waged around to distort the relationship between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.

### **3.3. Al-Azhar Curriculums for the Preparatory Stage**

Al-Azhar Al-Sharif's journey to develop and renew curricula for the preparatory stage focused on Shar'ī books in particular *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)*.<sup>21</sup>

Remarkably, the book's introduction of the first preparatory year shows the affectionate relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims and clarifies the rights and duties assigned to each. Besides, a bunch of the noble hadiths showed the tolerance of Islam, adding to the generosity and the morals of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), besides his noble biography and treatment of non-Muslims. It also introduces an aspect of the Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), which embodies the correct Islamic morals. It also presents a new image that brings originality and contemporary together with attention to clarity and ease, underlining the value of scientific methods.<sup>22</sup>

The same book includes the lesson on equality between people in creation, based on the principle of citizenship, showing that Muslims and Christians are equal and share the homeland.<sup>23</sup>

Allah, the Almighty says,

*"People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you".<sup>24</sup>*

The book mentions the verse's interpretation as follows, Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, addresses all people of different times, places, and colors and commands them to guard and protect themselves from God's punishment and wrath. He is the Most Glorified, who brought them up with His grace, favors them with His benevolence and His mercy, and He is the one who created them from one race and origin. It is Adam; peace be upon him, so all people are equal lineage.<sup>25</sup>

There are many additional lessons aimed at strengthening relations with non-Muslims. They can be seen as follows,

### **3.3.1. The Etiquette of Greeting in Islam**

Focusing on the same lofty value, strengthening the student's relationship with other religions, it is mentioned in the book *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)*<sup>26</sup> for the preparatory stage, many lessons focusing on consolidating the manner of the greeting in Islam, which means having a good relationship with Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>27</sup> It stated that this greeting is an indication that the Islamic religion is a religion of acquaintance, brotherhood, and peace. It also means spreading the greeting of Islam among people achieves love. The Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), conditioned the one who would enter Paradise and triumph on the Day of Resurrection by faith, and faith is suspended by love.<sup>28</sup>

Such significant meanings are mentioned in the Prophet's saying, 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

(All of you) worship Ar-Raḥmān, feed others, spread the (greeting of) Salam, then you will enter Paradise in security).<sup>29</sup>

In the same context, the book, *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)*, covers a complete lesson on the relationship of a Muslim with non-Muslims,<sup>30</sup> as it is in the interpretation of Allah, the Almighty's saying,

*, and He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just. But God forbids you to take as allies those who have fought against you for your faith, driven you out of your homes, and helped others to drive you out: any of you who take them as allies will truly be wrongdoers.<sup>31</sup>*

In such verses, Allah, the Almighty, instructs us that it is not forbidden, Believers, to deal kindly and justly and show reverence to non-Muslims, judge justly, and treat them as they treat you. That is because Allah loves the just, which means those who are just in sayings, actions, and rules, those who support the weak and be gentle to others.<sup>32</sup>

In the same book,<sup>33</sup> *Usūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)*, to build a sound relationship between Muslims, we read the following hadith of ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Āmir narrated that the Prophet Muhammad, Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him, said,

(A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue or his hands, and an emigrant is the one who gives up (abandons) all what Allah has forbidden).<sup>34</sup>

Consecutively, the book mentioned in such a prophetic hadith that Islam calls on people to be crowned by ethical values. That is what is meant by the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to bring up Muslims to develop good morals, do good, and abandon evil and harmful actions. Thus, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) clarified that a Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue or his hands. Referring to people here, that is to include all Muslims and non-Muslims, to restrain your tongues from vicious sayings, like cursing, backbiting, insulting, etc. Among the forms of harm is to be assaulted by punishment, killing, theft, etc. Besides, the sincere believer is the one whose people are secure for their blood, money, and all forms of evil and harm. Therefore, Muslims must prevent all forms of harm, like cursing, insulting, etc.<sup>35</sup>

The book of *Usūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)* also included an explanation of the Prophet’s hadith that he is free from those treacherous people. It is mentioned in the following hadith:

‘Amr Ibn Al-Ḥamiq narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad (may Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

(If a man trusts someone with his life, then he kills him; he will carry a banner of treachery on the day of Resurrection).<sup>36</sup>

In addition, we read in the book *Usūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)* that the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) warns people from treachery and betrayal. Besides, the believer has to be loyal to all people around him, and the sanctity of blood in Islam has great significance, as it is forbidden to kill the infallible soul.<sup>37</sup>

In this regard, Allah (the Almighty) says,

*"Do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by right: if anyone is killed wrongfully, We have given authority to the defender of his rights, but he should not be excessive in taking life, for he is already aided [by God]".<sup>38</sup>*

It is reported on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah, said:

"A faithful believer remains at liberty regarding his religion unless he kills somebody unlawfully".<sup>39</sup>

The prohibition of murdering someone is not only for Muslims, but it extends longer to non-Muslims. They are like the people of Dhimmah, protected communities such as Jews and Christians who live in Muslim territories, and the covenanters. In addition, Muslims should protect souls, property, and honor from any aggression as they live in a Muslim community.<sup>40</sup>

### **3.3.2. Dealing Justly with The People of the Book**

To strengthen the bond of love between a Muslim and the People of the Book, turning to *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)*, many lessons are assigned for the second preparatory year of Azhari Institutes; such a knowledgeable book includes a lesson about achieving equality with the people of the Book,<sup>41</sup> as it is instructed by Allah's verse, as following,

*We have sent down the Scripture to you [Prophet] with the truth so that you can judge between people in accordance with what God has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who betray trust. 106 Ask God for forgiveness: He is most forgiving and merciful. 107 Do not argue for those who betray their own souls: God does not love anyone given to treachery and sin. They try to hide themselves from people, but they cannot hide from God. He is with them when they plot at night, saying things that do not please Him: He is fully aware of everything they do.<sup>42</sup>*

It also covers a comprehensive lesson about securing the non-Muslim,<sup>43</sup> as it is illustrated in the following Noble hadith in which Um Hāni' (the daughter of Abū Tālib) narrated,

I visited Allah's Messenger (PBUH) in the year of the Conquest of Mecca and found him taking a bath, and his daughter, Fātimah was screening him. When I greeted him, he said, "Who is it"? I replied, "I am Um Hāni', the daughter of Abū Tālib". He said, "Welcome, O Um Hāni'!" When the Prophet (PBUH) had finished his bath, he stood up and offered eight Rak'āt (a specific set of movements in prayer) while he was wrapped in a single garment. When he had finished his prayer, I said, "O Allah's Messenger (PBUH)! My maternal brother assumes (or claims) that he will murder some



man whom I have given shelter, i.e., so-and-so". Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "O Um Hāni! We shelter him whom you have sheltered".<sup>44</sup>

Remarkably, *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)* for the third year of the preparatory year of Azhari Institutes illustrated the Objectives of Islamic *Sharī'ah*. It focused on protecting honor.<sup>45</sup> Referring to such an essential rule, the same lesson stated that Islam aimed to build a clean community and secure property, honor, and blood. It also elevates the values of purity and chastity. Therefore, the divine guidance and God's revelation came to order the believers to lower their glances and guard their private parts: that is purer for them. Accordingly, it started with lowering their glances because it is the main gate for the heart, and an evil glance is a poisoned arrow from Iblis, as it is the way to committing sins.<sup>46</sup>

In this context, we are illuminated by such Qur'anic verses: Allah, the Almighty says,

*Prophet, tell believing men to lower their glances and guard their private parts: that is purer for them. God is well aware of everything they do. 31 And tell believing women that they should lower their glances, guard their private parts, and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal; they should let their headscarves fall to cover their necklines and not reveal their charms except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their womenfolk, their slaves, such men as attend them who have no sexual desire, or children who are not yet aware of women's nakedness; they should not stamp their feet so as to draw attention to any hidden charms. Believers, all of you, turn to God so that you may prosper.*<sup>47</sup>

In such a prophetic hadith, the Prophet Muhammad, (PBUH) draws the attention of such poisoned evil glance in the following hadith,

On the authority of Abū Buraydah said,

(The Prophet (PBUH) said to 'Alī: Do not give a second look, 'Alī, (because) while you are not to blame for the first, you have no right to the second).<sup>48</sup>

Since women are counterparts of men, and the same rulers are applied to them, Allah the Almighty followed that verse with a necessary command for women, ordering them to lower their glances and guard their private parts, which is purer for them. They are also ordered not to display their charms beyond what is acceptable, to uncover what is indispensable, such as their faces and hands.<sup>49</sup>

*In Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion), several paramount issues shed light on the debate of the People of the Book, where the text of the study book focused on the interpretation of the Noble verse, saying,*

*"[Believers], argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God are one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him".<sup>50</sup>*

*In such a versatile book, we read that the People the Book took priority over other topics because of the importance of their coexistence within the Muslim community and have to argue with them in the best way. That is because we share many interests, like believing in Allah. Distinctively, they are People of the Book, not like others, who accept the dialogue and an invitation with proof and evidence.<sup>51</sup>*

*Many lessons are learned from such Qur'anic verses; they are as follows, - To discuss and debate with the People of the Book decently and in intimate conversation, as Islam confirms the freedom of opinion, expression, and belief. It also included a complete lesson titled Caring for non-Muslim Rights.<sup>52</sup>*

Such significant meaning is illustrated in the hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), who said 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad, (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

"Whoever killed a person having a treaty with the Muslims, shall not smell the smell of Paradise though its smell is perceived from a distance of forty years".<sup>53</sup>

It is also stated in the book *Uṣūl Ad-Dīn (The Roots of Religion)* that the Prophet Muḥammad (PBU) has warned us in such a noble hadith from killing the covenanter, mentioning the meaning of this hadith simply, saying:

A person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims and then commits such heinous crimes shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise. It is also forbidden to kill any innocent soul for any reason, and such a major crime would never be exempted under any claim.<sup>54</sup>

As the above lines show, it is noted that Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf works to inculcate moderate thought by strengthening the students' relationship with those who oppose them in religion. It also presents virtual lessons through which the student can benefit from them. Among these lessons are the greetings of peace upon all and dealing justly with the People of the Book and others. Thus, the fresh student completes his studies by understanding

how much Islam is keen on encouraging the seeds of love and strengthening relationships among people.

### **3.4. Al-Azhar Curriculums for the Secondary Stage**

The secondary stage is one of the most significant educational levels that Al-Azhar gives more priority over other stages. Some academic subjects have been approved and renewed. Remarkably, *Al-Muwātanah Wa-Huqūq Al-Insān (Citizenship and Human Rights)* is approved as an integrated academic subject for secondary students. Such fruitful amendments aim to establish the foundations of citizenship, instilling religious values that seek peaceful coexistence, accepting the other, and building dialogue based on mutual sharing.<sup>55</sup>

From such significance, the researcher presents the reviewed or amended books that have been renewed by Al-Azhar, especially the secondary stage, to cope with the new modern age. It has also sought to respond to any deviant thought. Such reference books can be drawn as follows,

#### **3.4.1. *Al-Muwātanah Wa-Huqūq Al-Insān (Citizenship and Human Rights)***

The students of Al-Azhar institutes, like other students of the Ministry of Education, study the book *Al-Muwātanah Wa-Huqūq Al-Insān (Citizenship and Human Rights)*.<sup>56</sup> It is scheduled in the second year of secondary school in literary and scientific sections of various Azhari institutes. Such an abundant book introduces the importance of enhancing citizenship values, promoting peace, and adopting human rights.

The book comprises four chapters about citizenship. Such a significant study introduces the following points: Human rights and the role of women in society, shedding light on the importance of volunteer work for the community. It establishes the basic concepts of citizenship and its values, with citizens' need for positive participation. Besides, it confirms the importance of highlighting the Egyptian national identity and strengthening the spirit of belonging to the homeland.<sup>57</sup>

Such a precious book elevates volunteer work, where the importance of such volunteer work for individuals, as mentioned, is to gain new experiences, develop loyalty and belonging, increase a sense of social responsibility, and develop personal capabilities and skills. It also instills a sense of self-esteem and confidence, provides the opportunity for teamwork and work in a team, and seizes opportunities to participate in solving community problems and serving them. As such, the most pivotal role in volunteer work for the community is to support the development processes and change the negative trends and values that hinder the development

process. It also fills the deficits and gaps in the various community needs, helps provide government efforts, and increases community adherence among society members.<sup>58</sup>

The other part of the book discusses human rights in detail, defining what human rights means as a set of rules and principles stipulated in international treaties that secure the freedom of individual and people rights. Besides, it illustrates that such human rights allow neither derogation nor encroachment, as the state abides by guaranteeing. Such a significant part sheds light on the tireless, arduous journey of the Egyptian woman, highlighting the position of women who had passed throughout Egyptian history. It also presents the woman's role in the development of Egyptian societies, showing the vital role of women in international agreements and conventions, and illustrates several examples of female models that contributed to the Renaissance of Egypt throughout history.<sup>59</sup>

In this part of the book, there is a strong emphasis on the role of the woman's advancement in society, and the progress of the community is measured by the degree of cultural and social development of the woman and her influential contribution to the inherited civilization. Considering the heavy burden on women's shoulders and the society that respects women, defends their rights, and believes in their influential role in its construction and development gives a super progress degree and advancement. Therefore, there is a heavy responsibility laid down on the community towards the status of women; they are as follows,<sup>60</sup>

We should eliminate illiteracy among women by teaching them to read and write; it is the first step to raising the cultural level of women and increasing their awareness to be influential in constructing and developing the community. In addition, we urgently support and promote the effective participation of women in all different cultural, artistic, political, and societal activities. Moreover, we keep their rights by issuing legislation to protect women's freedom, guarantee their full civil rights, unleash their creative energies, and defend their rights and social standing. Meanwhile, we have to protect them from violence and outdated social customs, norms, and traditions that degrade their dignity and personality.<sup>61</sup>

In the same context, we should support civil society organizations, especially feminists, to play their factual role in building women's culture and increase awareness by establishing clubs, societies, and cultural centers. These organizations have an energetic role in guiding the community to develop the children's minds to respect women and appreciate their role in

building and developing society. In addition, we should continue to rise with the trend towards respecting women and recognizing the importance of their role within the educational curricula in schools and universities, admitting their prominent role in preparing a conscious generation that works on building and prospering the nation.<sup>62</sup>

### 3.4.2. *Ath-Thaqāfah Al-Islāmiyyah* (The Book of Islamic Culture)

This academic book, *Ath-Thaqāfah Al-Islāmiyyah* (The Islamic Culture), works on educating young people and protecting them from falling into the web of extremism, armed by knowledge and contemporary issues, which we all suffer.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf concentrates on this fruitful subject scheduled for the students at the Azhari institutes. It is now conditioned for students in the first grade of secondary school at Al-Azhar institutes. This book is considered of the most outstanding books scheduled for Al-Azhar students because of its importance to familiarize students with the thorny religious issues that have emerged urgently in recent years. Thus, it introduces many social issues that touch the Egyptian society. These issues can be outlined as follows,<sup>64</sup>

Clarifying the correct concept of immigration,<sup>65</sup> which aims at protecting Al-Azhar students from falling into the trap of extremist religious organizations and currents.<sup>66</sup>

This concept signifies that it is not permissible to abandon the community because of defectiveness and negatives, but it is obligatory in this case to follow these rules,

Everyone in society should perform his legal duty towards correcting misconceptions, each according to his ability, and it is not correct to abandon the society. That is because abandoning society for committing objectionable actions is also a sharing of corruption and destruction towards this society.<sup>67</sup>

We read such prophetic instructions in the hadith of An-Nu'mān Ibn Bashīr (may Allah be pleased with them both), narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said,

“The example of the person abiding by Allah’s order and restrictions in comparison to those who violate them is like the example of those persons who drew lots for their seats in a boat. Some of them got seats in the upper part, and the others in the lower. When the latter needed water, they had to go up to bring water (and that troubled the others), so they said: Let us make a hole in our share of the ship (and get water), saving those who are above us from troubling them. So, if the people in the upper part left the others to do

what they had suggested, all people of the ship would be destroyed, but if they prevented them, both parties would be safe".<sup>68</sup>

Such a prominent book has presented *At-Takfir* (Throwing Others of Disbelief);<sup>69</sup> and such accusations are of paramount importance and upon which many harms affect our community, which is presented as follows,<sup>70</sup>

The first thing is causing discord between a man and his wife and not allowing the Muslim children to be under the authority of their father, who is an infidel. Besides, he is not entitled to the Muslims' rules: washing his dead body, funeral prayer, and burying in the Muslim's tomb. Moreover, in the case of inheritance, he neither inherits nor be inherited.<sup>71</sup>

Undoubtedly, the one who understands the verses of the Qur'an and the Sunnah correctly are the scholars. Besides, those who have the authority to judge between people in their disagreements and explain the rules are the judges who know Islamic Shar'ah. Thus, it is not permissible for a Muslim, nor for a group, to accuse a Muslim of infidelity because such a heavy responsibility is meant to the Islamic scholars and the judges. As such, a Muslim is the person who prays as we pray, turns to face the honorable *Qiblah* (The Direction of Prayer), and eats the Muslim's food, and anyone who used to do such Muslim actions, no one can accuse him of infidelity.<sup>72</sup>

In this regard, Anas Ibn Mālik narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: The Messenger of Allah said:

(Whoever prays as we pray, then turns to face the same Qiblah as us and eats our slaughtered animals, that is a Muslim).<sup>73</sup>

Then, the book introduced the concept of *Jihād*.<sup>74</sup> It explains that Jihād is legalized when our country is in danger, and it is for defense, not for aggression against people. It is a necessary result of the Qur'an's affirmation of the reality of the plurality of religions, colors, languages, and races among human beings. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that it is Allah's Will, and if he was to create the universe united in religion, faith, and language, He could, but He wanted difference and diversity. Then, in Islamic knowledge, there is no space for the possibility of imposing beliefs and coercing others, even the Islamic Creed. Therefore, all forms of coercion are forbidden, physically and mentally, and there is no place in the philosophy of Islam for taking advantage of beliefs and faith in the field of interests and the exploitation of people's needs.<sup>75</sup>

The other issues that imply such an informative book are the Caliphate. It illustrates that the Caliphate concept,<sup>76</sup> as in the early era of Islam, is not guided by the explicit texts of the Qur'an. Then, it is known that the Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) died and had not confirmed for Muslims a specific form of the ruling system, but he left the matter as a consultation among Muslims. So, any political system that achieves justice and equality suffices to achieve governance. Thus, if the democratic system now provides Ash-Shura (The Consultation Order) and the principle of equality, justice, and freedom of people, then it is a system that fulfills the goals of Islam for the rule and the politics of Muslims.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, Islam is ardently careful to obey the rules by all means, to block the gates of sedition, close the doors of evil, and keep stability and safety. In addition, it prevents Satan's deep grudge to be disseminated among Muslims.<sup>78</sup>

In the regard, Allah, the Almighty says,

*"You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day: that is better and fairer in the end".*<sup>79</sup>

In the hadith, it has been narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Sacred Prophet (PBUH) said:

(Whoso obeys me, obeys God, and whoso disobeys me, disobeys God. Whoso obeys the commander (appointed by me) obeys me, and whoso disobeys the commander disobeys me. The same tradition transmitted by different persons omits the portion: And whose disobeys the commander disobeys me).<sup>80</sup>

Among other issues introduced by the book is *Al-Hākimiyyah* (Governorship) from the Islamic perspective.<sup>81</sup> According to such a controversial concept, these main points can be outlined as follows,

The ruler is one of humankind who is fallible and chosen freely by the people, or a public referendum, known as a direct ballot in the contemporary term, or the pledge of allegiance (as an old term). Such a chosen ruler has some essential requirements that should be achieved in the process of uttering rules, like justice, consultation, and diligence in enacting laws and legislations that his community needs within the constitution framework, consistent with Islamic law. This glorious mission also demands rules and judges to fulfill righteousness and justice for his people. Such pronounced rules should be neither revoked nor contrasted to Allah's saying that the Authority belongs to Allah, the Almighty alone. That is a conspicuous declaration of the wrong understanding of the *Al-Hākimiyyah* (Governorship). As such, the most poisonous ideas about misunderstanding the concept of *Al-Hākimiyyah* (Governorship) are the position of the ruler to

be a competitor to Allah, the Almighty, and the perpetual comparison of the Divine source to the human sources. Subsequently, if we submit to such fake fallacies, *Al-Ijtihād* gate will be blocked entirely for those with solid knowledge.<sup>82</sup>

Several Islamic Sharī'ah texts have urged Muslims to think and occupy their minds; among these sources is the following hadith. Some companions of Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal said,

When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) intended to send Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal to Yemen, he asked: How will you judge when the occasion of deciding a case arises? He answered, saying that he would make judgments under Allah's Book. He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in Allah's Book? He replied: (I shall act) by the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). He asked: (What will you do) if you do not find any guidance in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and Allah's Book? He replied: I shall do my best to form an opinion, and I shall spare no effort. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) then patted him on the breast and said: Praise be to Allah, Who has helped the messenger of the Messenger of Allah to find something which pleases the Messenger of Allah.<sup>83</sup>

As long as the Muslim sincerely believes that Allah's Legislation is true without rejecting it by his heart or denying it by his tongue, it is not permissible for a person to accuse him of infidelity. In addition, the one who accuses others of infidelity will be a guilty Muslim. Such an insurgent Muslim, as *Ahlu-Sunnah*, confirmed that he should repent. If he repented before dying, Allah would accept him, but if he died insisting on his sin without repentance, the matter lies in Allah's hands; if He wishes, He will forgive him, and if He wishes, He will punish him.<sup>84</sup>

The book also presents violence and terrorist groups in pursuit of illustrating their fake face to the students of Al-Azhar, where it shows them the Islamic perspective from the terrorist organizations. In addition, it portrays that such delusional groups are more dangerous to Islam and Muslims. Those groups are also more dangerous than enemies because they distort the image of Islam, deface its brightening image, and show it erroneously. Moreover, the book shows that such actions committed by these terrorist organizations are contrary to the tolerant Sharī'ah of Islam, which calls for tolerance and coexistence with others.<sup>85</sup>

The book also delineates the concept of terrorism comprehensively and how to deal with it, stressing that some foundations contribute to confronting such a pivotal concept. In the same context, it is mentioned that examining



the causes and mechanisms of terrorism helps us confront it on all levels, each in occupation. Moreover, the soldier and policeman have an influential role in confronting terrorism and confronting it with force. The family also has a prominent spine that starts from its unity and integrity to pave a suitable environment for the better upbringing of children and growing up. Each one has a significant role: scholars, intellectuals, and media professionals have pioneering leadership in refuting the ideas of extremists and spreading health awareness. They also immunize the youth from drifting into the swamp of the pernicious terror. Such an incurable disease cannot be eradicated by words but by actions and each in his field.<sup>86</sup>

These are some significant steps that contribute to preventing us from joining such violent and extremist groups,

Confronting those deviant groups with spreading the moderate Azhari thought to stop them from propagating their excessive thought. We have also to provide job opportunities for young people and engage them in charitable work. It is urgent not to open media platforms to be exploited by groups with violence and extremism to spread their ideas. Finally, we have to instill the spirit of love for the nation in the hearts of the young and consolidate the values of peaceful coexistence between societies.<sup>87</sup>

Regarding the citizenship concept, the book on Islamic Culture<sup>88</sup> devotes a complete lesson on citizenship in Islam,<sup>89</sup> explaining the concept of citizenship in Islam. It is also one pillar of Islam, which is love for the nation. It illustrates that citizenship covers Muslims and non-Muslims as long as they live together in one country under the shadow of one homeland.<sup>90</sup>

The book also introduces several examples of the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and his companions. For instance, after the Prophet immigrated to Medina, Islam became a homeland that included Muslims and others. The Treaty Provisions of Madīnah Document<sup>91</sup> has texted the respect of religions and sacred places, human rights, and the prevention of injustice, aggression, and oppression. After having concluded, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) held a meeting with all the Companions and delivered speeches to them, as in the following hadith:

Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them, narrated that the Messenger of Allah Muḥammad, Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, said,

(Whoever killed a Mu'āhid (a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of traveling)).<sup>92</sup>

Such an instructive book presents the concept of citizenship conspicuously, which stands for achieving equality of duties and rights that all people can enjoy in justice. Therefore, we should stop using Al-Aqalliyāht (Minorities), which carries a profound sense of isolation and inferiority that paves the seeds of discord and discord. In addition, the relationship between East and West is necessary, and we cannot replace or ignore them. For the sake of such reciprocal interest, both civilizations would be sufficient through the exchange of intercultural dialogue.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.4.3. *Taysīr Fath Al-Mubdī* (The Summary of Inspiring the Beginner)

Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf is still working to introduce the academic students' lessons that touch reality and also work to form moderate thought among students, especially at this critical stage. Practically, the students of Azhari secondary institutes study several hadiths that illustrate the relationship between Muslims. The book of *Taysīr Fath Al-Mubdī* (The Summary of Inspiring the Beginner) also contains other subjects that touch on the status quo.<sup>94</sup>

These issues are various, and the most outstanding are the consideration of respect for others,<sup>95</sup> the prohibition of bloodshed,<sup>96</sup> and the prohibition of carrying a weapon.<sup>97</sup>

One hadith that strengthens relationships between all the people of the same nation and respects the feelings of others regardless of the religion can be drawn as follows,

‘Abdullāh, may Allah be pleased with them, narrated that the Messenger of Allah Muḥammad, Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him, said,

(When you are three persons sitting together, then no two of you should hold secret counsel excluding the third person until you are with some other people too, for that would grieve him).<sup>98</sup>

Such glorious hadith instructs us not to be three in a group sitting together, then two of them hold secret counsel, excluding the third person because it would grieve him. It also would be desirable when the three are mixed with others, or he permits them. The prohibition is due to the feeling of despising him because when one remains alone, and the two who are beside him leave him alone, perhaps he thinks it is a withering contempt for him, and it would be misunderstood. On the other side, that meaning would be safe when they are mixed and no two of them hold secret counsel, excluding the third person, and that number would extend to the ten. Because it is forbidden to leave one and the meaning of indulging the group leaving the one, and whatever the purport of meaning is present, the same rule is attached.<sup>99</sup>

We read several hadiths refer to the prohibition of blood-shedding; one of them is the following, it is reported on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah, Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, said:

(A faithful believer remains at liberty regarding his religion unless he kills somebody unlawfully).<sup>100</sup>

In such instructive hadith, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) illustrated that the one who kills a soul unlawfully will fail to find ample space in his religion because it is an intentional murder unjustly. Thus, the criminal deserves the punishment, like the place of the disbeliever. The meaning of finding ample space in religion means the space of finding good deeds, but when he commits such a heinous crime, he feels uncomfortable because of such a major sin.<sup>101</sup>

In another hadith, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) shows us the prohibition of carrying a weapon. 'Abdullāh narrated that the Prophet Muhammad, Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, said,

(Whoever carries arms against us is not from us).<sup>102</sup>

The Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) clarifies in this hadith that he is not among the Muslims, the one who makes it permissible to fight and kill them unlawfully. It also illustrates that the person who commits such a heinous crime is not a Muslim because he carries arms against him. Then that would intimidate and terrify them. It is also the Muslim's right to support his brother and kill him, not to terrorize him by carrying arms against him, because in such a case, he wants to fight him or kill him. In brief, it is not a Muslim who takes up arms against his brother because such a heinous crime is unlawful.<sup>103</sup>

#### 3.4.4. *Al-Iqnā' Fī Hal Alfāz Abī Shujā'*

Within the framework of the continuation of the development process in Al-Azhar and the renewal of Al-Azhar curricula, the curriculum development committee has finished reviewing and revising the book *Al-Iqnā' Fī Hal Alfāz Abī Shujā'* (*Understanding the Texts of Abī Shujā'*) in Shafī'ī school. Such an extensive review has included all the issues that lead to an attack on the book. Then, the book focuses on presenting issues related to modern life, where it is submitted for review and development to show the contemporary jurisprudential matters in touch with our current events and the topics of the book that do not affect our reality have been removed.<sup>104</sup>

The Curriculum Development Committee also has removed issues related to the rulings of captives and Jihad, such as issues of the rules of eating carcasses and human dead or eating unlawful animals. These rules cover captives and those who are killed in wars and mutilated dead bodies have been removed. The committee also has approved the rulings of dealing with non-Muslims because Muslims and non-Muslims alike are partners in

the homeland without discrimination. Such essential Islamic rulings like prayer, fasting, and Haj (Pilgrimage) are kept. Then, the rulings of marriage and divorce and what relates to them, such as *Zihār* (The one who says to his wife, 'You are to me like my mother's back), 'Iddah (The period prescribed by Islamic law for a woman during which she may not remarry after being widowed or divorced), and *Khul'* (The wife separation for compensation); are kept. In addition, the book has kept the rulings of felonies; it showed the prescribed punishment in Islam, such as the prescribed punishment of adultery, false accusations, and drinking wine, and how to apply them. Besides, it introduced the rulings of vows and '*Aqīqah* (shedding blood for a newly born boy) and the regulations of sacrifice. In addition, the book also focused on a comprehensive chapter on fighting the prostitutes and corrupt people on earth, referring to the terrorists and all the rulings related to them and how Islam obliged the state to fight them.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, several chapters are kept as they have an impressive effect on the current situation, like the chapter on *Khul'* (The Wife's Separation for Compensation). It is mentioned that the wisdom of the legality of divorce: When it is permissible for the husband to enjoy the sexual intercourse of compensation; he is allowed to remove that with compensation, too. It is often for preventing harm to women, but it is undesirable because it stops the marriage contract, which is recommended by Shar', as it implies the divorce form.<sup>106</sup>

Regarding this meaning, Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them, narrated that the Messenger of Allah Muḥammad, Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, said,

(Of all the lawful acts, the most detestable to Allah is divorce).<sup>107</sup>

### 3.5. The Chapter Conclusion

It is seen that Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf exerts remarkable effort and works tirelessly to develop Al-Azhar educational curriculum and inculcates moderate thought. It brings up the pupil since childhood because the primary stage is the origin, upon which the other stages are built. That is because when pupils are well-being-educated, the branches will be fruitful and beams in the sky. His Eminence, the Grand Imam, works on reviewing and developing books; it is objectively noted that the process of reviewing and revising books is perpetual so that the pupil, who is still a sprout, is aware of what he studies. Significantly, the educational curriculum is not barren of symbols or recited texts; thanks to Al-Azhar, the educational curriculums are open to others and characterized by easiness and lenience. Besides, they cope with the current changes in modern technology to be in touch with our daily life.

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- <sup>10</sup> “What Al-Azhar’s Curricula Presents Christians ... Mina and Azhari Student in the First Primary Year”, (*Sawt Al-Azhar Newspaper*, 28 Dec. 2017). Look at this link:

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<sup>16</sup> Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf, *At-Tarbiyyah Al-Islāmiyyah*, Second Primary Year, 2<sup>nd</sup> Term, Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf, Sector of Al-Azhar Institutes, Curriculum Development Committee of Al-Azhar Ash-Sharīf, 2018), pp. ٦, ٢١.

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[الأزهرية-عام-من-التطوير](#)

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