

it hard, because of its propensity for the irrational, to incorporate scientific thought, the keystone of the incredible success of Western societies.

...

KASRAVI, AHMAD ii. ASSASSINATION

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During the period of late 1941 to mid-1945 Kasravi wrote some of his sharpest critique of the clergy and tenets of Shi'ism, Bahatism and Sufism. He became the embodiment of intellectual revision of official religious and cultural thought and the self-appointed, outspoken adversary of the resurgent Islamic movement. Kasravi let it be known through seventeen books and pamphlets, as well as numerous articles in his newspaper *Parcam*, that he believed the renaissance of political Islam and attempts to hold the government to Islamic law (*šari'a*) were hostile to the modern values and institutions espoused by the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, in which Kasravi was a young participant (Kasravi, 1990, pp. 30-33; see above, i, and below, v).

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KASRAVI, AHMAD v. AS SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORMER

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Historical context. Students of the modern history of Iran are presented with two distinctive religious reform movements since the mid-19th century. The first was begun by some disciples of Shaikh Ahmad Ahsai'i and Sayyed 'Ali-Mohammad Bab (qq.v.). Later, those influenced by and close to Sayyed Jamal-al-Din Asadabadi (see *afgani, jamal-al-din*) used new religious concepts to challenge the established Shi'ite hierarchy as well as the social order. This socio-religious reform movement left two lasting legacies. One was the creation of the Bahai faith (see *BAHAISM*), and the other was unquestionable, though indirect, influence it had on the 19th-century Modernity Movement and early 20th-century Constitutional Revolution in Iran (see *ISLAM IN IRAN* xiii. *MOVEMENTS IN 20TH CENTURY IRAN*).

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It is evident from Kasravi's writings during the final years of his life that his assessment of Islam, in particular Shi'ism and to some extent Bahatism, as not based on a desire to return to the origin of Islam and emulate the 'forefathers' (as advocated by salafi Muslims). Rather he upheld *kerad* (that is, reason and knowledge) as the most valuable faculty bestowed on mankind by God. But Muslims do not distinguish this faculty—which all should recognize and cherish as a part of a universal creed—as a God-given gift. Instead, they affirm the opposite by believing that the past was better than today, and the future promises no hope (Kasravi, 1943b, pp. 8-9).

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In Šiʿigari followed by Bahaʿigari (1943c), Kasravi left no doubts that he sought no dialogue with the most ardent proponents of the sanctified belief that the Twelfth Imam (Imam-e zaman) disappeared and will return on the Judgement Day. To him, it made no difference that Shiʿites believed that the Imam-e Zaman is yet to appear and Bahai faithful saw Bab as personification of the absent Imam. Kasravi wrote that the entire concept of believing in an absent Imam was ludicrous, against reason, and therefore a hindrance to progress and enlightenment (ibid., pp. 138- 45). He saw no shortcuts or back roads toward a modern and secular Iran without an intellectual confrontation with some of the most sacred tenets of the dominant religious thinking (ibid., pp. 224, 233-34).

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