

Akhbari and Usuli Controversy

It is but natural that while discussing modernism in the Shi'ah school the author has given a detailed account of the developments that took place in Iran during the last few centuries, with particular reference to the Usuli-Akhbae controversy, which resulted in the ultimate victory of rationalism and decided the role of the `ulama' in socio-political affairs.

Enayet himself has indicated that it would be wrong to construe that all Akhbari `ulama' were politically reactionary and all Usuli `ulama' were progressive. He has also referred to the view that held that this controversy was mainly directed towards establishing the 'Ulama' as *de facto* regents of the Imam (A.F.) in social and political affairs.

Here it would be unnecessary to go into the details of this interpretation, which obviously seems to be hostile towards Usuli `ulama'. A reviewer's objection that Enayet failed to grasp this point is unfounded.

Enayet has rightly emphasized the significance of the Shi'i notions of *taqiyyah* and martyrdom. *Taqiyyah*, as he has pointed out, was not liked even by Shi'i thinkers of our age. Enayet's reference to the Islamic Revolution of Iran is passing. He refers to Murtada Mutahhari and Shari'ati as `semi-revisionist' thinkers, despite acknowledging his indebtedness to Mutahhari for writing the present book.

In my humble view such terms and categories should be applied to Muslim thinkers with utmost caution, or rather must be avoided, for they lead to half baked, misconceived judgements. What is strange is the fact that the author has avoided expressing any view on the leadership and ideology of the present Iranian Revolution.

He seems to be over-cautious, and thus betrays his fear of being dubbed a fundamentalist or a fanatic by the so-called westernized critics in case he fully supports the Iranian conception of revolution.

In order to have a closer look at the content of the book, it would be appropriate to give a critical account of some of the reviews on the book.

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