

**The Role of Clergy in Education during the Pahlavi Period**

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**Abstract**

Before the introduction of modern Western civilization, education in Iran was primarily under the control of the clergy and considered one of their main responsibilities. With the arrival of Western culture and civilization in Iran, particularly during the Pahlavi era, formal education, like many official governmental institutions, came to be managed by graduates of the new educational system. As a result, today some people view the clergy's involvement in official education as unconventional. The central question of this research is whether, with the formation of new schools and the informal status of old schools during the Pahlavi period, the clergy still played a role in formal education. The author's investigation indicates that a comprehensive and focused study on this topic has not been conducted. Although various academic works have touched upon the role of religious movements and clergy during the Pahlavi era, as well as memoirs related to active clerics in this area, these references are scattered and lack coherence. The present study, by descriptive and historical analysis methods, aims to explore this issue in historical documents. The findings indicated that after the reign of Reza Shah and with the opening of the political and cultural atmosphere, Shia scholars and clerics undertook two fundamental actions to play their role in education: The first was a gradual reform of the government's new education system, conducted in four stages: Requesting the inclusion of religious subjects in schools, selecting suitable teachers for instruction, separating girls' and boys' schools, and the writing of textbooks by clerics with their presence to teach these books. The second action was the establishment and management of new private schools by clerics. This involvement of the clergy provoked a reaction from the Pahlavi regime, resulting in pressure on these schools and even the closure of some of them.

**Keywords:** Clergy, New Schools, Education, Pahlavi Period, Religious Texts, Teaching, Authorship.

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### Introduction

In most human societies, the first educational institutions evolved within religious organizations and institutions. In the Islamic world, the mosque-school system emerged, where one of the activities of clerics in public education was the management and teaching in schools. Education in Iran initially took the form of "School-house," which gradually increased in number and teachers, to the extent that there was often one or several School-house in every village (Dalmani, 1936 AD/1335 SH: 153-154).

Historical sources generally recognize the city of Nishapur as the cradle of the first Shia schools (Sultanzadeh, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 93-94). Iranian families sent their children to School-house at the age of six (Jean Chardin, Travelogue: 3, 936). Over time, non-Muslim children also began to attend this School-house (Seddiq, 1937 AD/1316 SH: 298).

The School-house has always acted as a prerequisite system for higher (religious) schools, while also equipping people with the minimum necessary literacy for life, trade, and mutual communication (Salour, 1969 AD/1348 SH: 3390). In Iran, schools were part of mosques. Over time, schools became separated from religious venues, and the educational content became more diverse. Many Iranians who traveled abroad criticized this educational system and called for the establishment of new schools in the style of Western countries. During the Qajar period, the first modern schools were established by European missionaries who focused on teaching their culture and language and promoting Christianity. In the Nasiri era, new schools such as Dar al-Funun, Maktab Mushiriyah, and the Military School were established (Rawandi, n.d.: 352), and their development continued during the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah (Dalmani, 1956 AD/1335 SH: 152).

Regarding the Christian propaganda in the new schools and the content of some lessons, which included materialistic and anti-monotheistic perspectives, there were objections from scholars and clerics towards these new schools (Kazama, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 141–144). The late Naeini, an enlightened scholar from the Constitutional Revolution who was aware of the educational and political systems of the modern world, also critiqued these schools seriously:

"For centuries, the Crusaders have used every scheme to eradicate the noble word of Islam and the Holy Quran, spending substantial resources in the name of benevolence for their singular goal, yet they have achieved nothing but through the establishment of educational institutions and schools that sow the seeds of irreligion and non-belief in the minds of simple Muslims, so that they might wish to reach their

goal. If, after clarifying their intentions, the genuinely faithful Muslims remain oblivious and find comfort in their ignorance, nothing but materialistic and Darwinian views will prevail across Iran, far worse than pre-Islamic Magism... Hence, sending innocent children, who are divine gifts and blessings, to such institutions of irreligion and supporting and promoting them is, in any case, a major sin and one of the greatest prohibitions, striking at the roots of Islam." (Jafariyan, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 78–79)

This concern among clerics and the faithful led some scholars and clerics during this period to establish new schools with a religious orientation to attract more believers to these institutions. Among them were the late Ayatollah Aqa Najafi Isfahani and Aqa Noorullah Isfahani, who founded two new schools in Isfahan during the Qajar era (Najafi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 149)

Also, the late Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai established a school named Islam in Tehran. The managers of these schools were clerics (Golshan Abrar, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 6, 86).

During the Pahlavi period, considering the anti-Islam stance of the Pahlavi regime, opposition to School-house and efforts for new schools intensified, leading to the effective elimination of old schools and serious changes in the curriculum of the official education system. This article seeks to examine the role of the clergy in new schools during the second Pahlavi period. The research indicates that a specific study has not been conducted on this topic. Although there are books that address the role of religious movements during the second Pahlavi period, such as "Religious Movements and Political Organizations 1320-11357" by Rasul Jafariyan, and books about the lives of notable clerics, including the biographies of the late Haeri Fumani, Haeri Tehrani, and other clerics, as well as a collection of books relating to Imam's companions based on SAVAK documents, and the book Golshan Abrar, these discussions have been mentioned in a scattered and individual manner. Accordingly, this research aims to provide a coherent and specific response to the research question using descriptive and historical analysis methods.

### **1. Reforms and Changes in the Religious and Educational Status of Existing Public Schools**

During Reza Shah's reign, his and his advisors' Western-oriented outlook led to the dominance of the Western educational system and secularism over the country's education. Gradually, with the elimination of School-house and the establishment of new schools founded by Westerners implementing the Western educational system, religious

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subjects were phased out from the curriculum. After Reza Shah's downfall and the opening of the political and cultural atmosphere in the 1320s, the clergy's activities in cultural fields, including education, were revived, which we will address in this section.

The first action initiated by the religious movement centered on scholars and clerics at the beginning of the second Pahlavi era aimed to reform the educational and religious status of new schools. The clerics pursued several steps in a gradual manner for these reforms.

### 1.1. Adding Religious Subjects to Existing Schools

The first step in reforming public schools was the revival of religious subjects and laws in school curricula. In 1321, a bill was passed in the parliament concerning the introduction of religious subjects in schools, but it did not reach implementation. Clerics and religious authorities inside and outside of Iran pursued the implementation of this resolution in various ways. The late Ayatollah Sayyid Noor al-Din Shirazi, in a telegram to the Minister of Education, requested a reconsideration of the school curriculum, noting the shortcomings in the spiritual education of students.

Following this telegram and with the pursuit of Abolfazl Hazeghi, the representative of Fars in Parliament, the Minister of Education promised that religious subjects would be added to the secondary educational curriculum (Jafariyan, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 91).

### 1.2. Selecting Qualified Teachers for Religious Education and Separating Coeducational Schools

The second step focused on selecting qualified teachers for teaching these subjects and separating coeducational schools. In 1324, the scholars of Shiraz and Ayatollahs Sayyid Abul Hassan Isfahani and Haj Aqa Hussein Ghomi pursued this matter and emphasized that Muslim and qualified teachers needed to be selected for teaching these subjects and that coeducational schools should be separated. This was approved by the Council of Ministers but was not implemented. Ayatollah Boroujerdi also followed up on this issue, and the then Minister of Education issued another order for the implementation of this bill, promising its execution, yet again, nothing happened. In 1326, religious organizations and publications began to pursue this matter again, sending multiple letters and telegrams from Shiraz and Ahvaz to Parliament and the government. Finally, at the beginning of 1327, during the premiership of Hazhir, this matter was put into practice under his instruction to Dr. Iqbal. Consequently, it was decided to invite various individuals, including clerics such as the late Falsafi, Rashid, Sha'rani, and others for this task, and ultimately, this effort achieved results in 1327 (ibid: 92-93).

### 1.3. Teaching and Education in New Schools

After the establishment of religious subjects in schools and the acceptance of the principle of utilizing qualified teachers for these subjects, the third step taken by the clergy to reform the conditions in new schools during the second Pahlavi period was their presence in schools and even efforts to secure employment in the education sector to teach religious subjects. Historically, teaching and education in School-house or the homes of the elites had also been the responsibility of students and clerics (Shamim, 1993 AD/1371 SH: 355; Mostofi, 1945 AD/1324 SH: 220 and 291). A report in the newspaper "Tarbiyat" mentions the teaching of clerics in new schools in the city of Yazd (Tarbiyat newspaper, 1940 AD/1319 SH).

Martyr Bahonar was among the clerics who joined the Ministry of Education in 1342. Although he initially faced opposition from SAVAK due to prior speeches against the regime and his arrest, after some individuals in the Ministry of Education lobbied on his behalf, SAVAK eventually agreed to reconsider his case in hopes of moderating his behavior (Historical Documents Research Center, September 8, 2021). He taught as a teacher in various schools. The Kamel High School was one of the institutions where he was actively involved (cf. Historical Documents Research Center, 2000 AD/1379 SH).

He played a significant role in teaching at Refah School. Alongside him, Martyr Rajai, who was also in the education sector and had considerable knowledge of the educational staff, selected teachers and later taught them the guidelines and directives through training sessions (Shafiqh, 2019 AD/1398 SH).

### 1.4. Compiling Textbooks for Schools

With the establishment of religious subjects and the presence of clerics to teach these subjects, the next step was the effort to compile new textbooks by the clergy. The religious textbook for the fifth and sixth grades of schools affiliated with the Islamic Education Society was authored by Allamah Tabatabai (cf. Tabatabai, n.d.). Additionally, the first experiences of Golzadeh Ghafouri and Bahonar included the compilation of a religious education textbook for the third grade of elementary school in 1345 (cf. Ghafouri and Bahonar, 1966 AD/1345 SH).

This book presented the life stories of the Prophet (PBUH) and the saints in simple and charming phrases appropriate to the interests of students, combining the worship of God with love and affection so that students would extend this love and affection to all beings (Karami Pur, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 25).

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Martyr Bahonar closely collaborated with the Research and Planning Office, where the religious education programs for different classes were developed under his supervision. He authored textbooks in the field of religious sciences for various educational levels, resulting in approximately 40 books and pamphlets. "Understanding Islam," "Lessons from the Quran," "Religious Education and Religious Teaching Methods," among others, were some of the books and articles authored by Martyr Bahonar during this period. In fact, the composition and reform of the educational system for religious education in schools was one of the most important actions taken by Martyr Bahonar alongside Martyr Beheshti and others, providing the foundation for a transformative shift in religious thought among youth (Historical Documents Research Center, September 8, 2021).

With careful and thorough planning, they sought to influence the education system of the Shah's regime and to establish new religious teachings. Martyr Bahonar took on this responsibility and became an advisor to the Director General of Education. Martyr Beheshti gave the book "Islamology" to Martyr Bahonar to condense its contents into a series of brief discussions to be included in the religious education textbooks—texts that tended to be heavy and tedious. These discussions introduced new ideas structured within the principles of Shiism, countering dangerous tendencies toward Sufism and other deviant sects.

To carry out this task, a religious youth was assigned to adopt a non-religious appearance, for which Mr. Borqai obtained a decree from the Minister of Education to appoint him as a director. This young man faced difficulties with his family and friends and had to behave in a way that concealed his religiosity even while attending prayer in the education sector.

All these operations were conducted under the supervision of Martyr Bahonar. The young man was under significant psychological pressure, and he decided several times not to proceed, but Martyr Bahonar encouraged him to continue with his mission. Eventually, the religious education textbook authored by these gentlemen was published (Badamchiyan, 2018 AD/1397 SH).

Of course, this process came to a halt in the years leading up to the fall of the regime in 1356-1355, as SAVAK became sensitive to the educational programs of religious education. Books were sent to SAVAK-affiliated centers for review, revision, and censorship, resulting in 60 percent of the content in the first and second guidance books being marked and removed, thereby opposing the reform efforts for religious textbooks (Historical Documents Research Center, September 8, 2021).

## **2. Establishment of Non-Governmental New Schools at Various Levels**

Alongside the aforementioned efforts to reform the religious and cultural situation in state schools, another fundamental initiative was launched by the clergy: The establishment of new non-governmental schools, which naturally had more freedom in curriculum planning. This section will highlight some examples of these efforts.

### **2.1. Shaykh Abbas Ali Islami (Islamic Schools)**

The late Haj Sheikh Abbas Ali Islami was a concerned cleric dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of Islamic beliefs and laws, especially for the younger generation. He believed that in the new schools, established in imitation of European institutions, there was no trace of faith-based knowledge or the foundations of human ethics. It seemed that the authors of the curricula assumed that merely acquiring modern experimental and classical sciences was sufficient for achieving a dignified and prosperous life.

Therefore, it was natural for religious sectors to view modern schools negatively and be skeptical of them. On the other hand, the faithful must acknowledge the reality that the contemporary world is science-oriented and that indifference to the growing technological advances is unacceptable. Based on this understanding, he set out to establish Islamic schools so that youth could become familiar with rich religious culture in conjunction with modern scientific principles (Islami, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 410).

#### **2.1.1. Establishment of Various Schools**

##### **2.1.1.1. Boarding School**

His educational activities for young people in Mashhad and his familiarity with the al-Wa'izin school in India during a trip there led him to conclude that teaching divine knowledge to youth was not fruitful without a classical program. Thus, he considered establishing a boarding school and organizing literacy classes in the mosque, which received widespread support. These classes initially began in a home and later expanded to several other homes and mosques (ibid: 326–330).

##### **2.1.1.2. Islamic Girls' School**

In the same sessions that the late Islami held for women, one of the participants sent a message that a play had been performed at the Iran girls' elementary and secondary school that mocked the issue of hijab, and poems were recited deriding and criticizing it.

This prompted him to address the issue of hijab in various meetings, which faced objections from certain newspapers and intellectual circles, and he was even officially threatened with harm and murder. However, his overall promotional activities led about 300 parents of girls from Iran

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High School to approach him, declaring that they would no longer allow their daughters to attend such a high school.

Therefore, he proceeded to establish the Islamic Girls' High School with the cooperation of the parents of the aforementioned girls. All employees at this school were female, and the entry of men into the school and the mixing of men and women were strictly prohibited. Students were also required to observe Islamic decorum, especially hijab, both inside and outside the school, and to refrain from any actions that would compromise this matter. Of course, at that time, the officials of the Ministry of Education continually obstructed efforts to achieve the objectives of this school. However, the late Islami and his colleagues resisted these obstacles and were familiar with their tactics. In fact, when a male education inspector came to inspect the school, he was not allowed entry since he was a man (ibid: 338–345).

### 2.1.1.3. Islamic Boys' Primary School (School of Reconciliation)

In the continuation of his cultural and educational activities, the late Islami established the first Islamic boys' primary school, named after Imam Ja'far Sadiq (AS). During the opening session of this school, the late Islami remarked:

"This school is a school of reconciliation, the reconciliation of knowledge and religion. Indeed, there has never been animosity and separation between knowledge and religion; these two are allies and supporters and complement each other. Unfortunately, however, the diabolical powers have separated the followers of divine teachings, especially the Muslim community, from knowledge and science in their quest for greater control over the world's resources and riches." (ibid: 361–362)

The schools established by the late Islami received attention and support from scholars and Shia references to the extent that the late Ayatollah Sayyid Abul Hasan Isfahani, through his representative, constantly inquired about the progress of the Islamic schools. In meetings that the late Islami had with him, he was treated with kindness and care.

The late Haj Abbas Ali Islami formed a financial board of trustees for the Islamic schools, including Mr. Mirza Ahmad Nader, Haj Eravani, Haj Reza Shahpouri, Haj Reza Jafari, Haj Mohammad Hosseinian, Haj Qaim al-Sabah, and Haj Abdollah Moghaddam (founder of Moghaddam Industries) (ibid: 404).

### 2.1.2. Promotion and Expansion of Schools

One of the important activities of the late Haj Abbas Ali Islami was promoting and creating motivation for the development of Islamic education and training. He discussed the problems of the educational



system in the country and the Western and anti-cultural content of the schools in various public gatherings and in the presence of scholars, emphasizing the necessity of Islamic education for the youth and adolescents.

This discourse attracted financial and moral support and led to the increasing development of schools and the establishment of similar institutions. He also distributed a poster during Nowruz, one side wishing a happy Nowruz and the other side outlining the goals and activities of the Islamic Educational Society.

This initiative of his prompted a positive reaction from Grand Ayatollah Milani. The first city to take the lead in establishing Islamic schools was Kermanshah, thanks to the efforts of the late Haj Mirza Ali Mohaddith, son of the late Shaykh Abbas Qomi. In his speeches in Kermanshah, he encouraged his audience to embrace Islamic education and to establish centers based on Islamic culture.

This led to a public interest in the matter, and substantial funding was gathered for the establishment of Islamic schools. Subsequently, with the invitation of Hujjat al-Islam Haj Sayyid Mohammad Meybodi, a pious scholar from Kermanshah, and in the presence of the late Islami and with the assistance of Ayatollah Haj Shaykh Hadi Jalili, this school was founded (ibid: 436-458).

After Kermanshah, an Islamic school was established in Qazvin through the efforts of Ayatollah Kashani, who was in exile there, with the presence of the late Islami. Additionally, in Borujerd, another branch of the Islamic schools was founded by a person named Mr. Hassan Nazemi. A further branch of these schools was established in Isfahan by Hujjat al-Islam Firoozian (Jafariyan, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 80); likewise, Hujjat al-Islam Karbasiyan, influenced by the late Islami, established Alavi School in Tehran. The collection of elementary and secondary Islamic schools set up by the Islamic Education Society in Iran reached 132 schools in 1329 in Tehran and its provinces. According to SAVAK reports, the number of these schools increased to 183 by 1356.

This abundance in that year underscored their significant role in nurturing the young generation of the revolution. The main characteristic of these schools was that they took religious education more seriously and familiarized children with the Quran and Hadith from a pedagogical perspective. This encouraged devout individuals to send their children to these schools for education.

### **2.1.3. High Academic Standards of Islamic Schools**

According to SAVAK reports, the Islamic schools had successfully educated their students with high academic quality and were considered

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among the successful schools in the country. The students from these schools were nationally recognized for their excellence:

"Given the generous financial support from market owners, merchants, and some former members of the National Front, along with religious elements, this society has been able to significantly raise the educational level of its schools by hiring experienced teachers, purchasing laboratory and workshop equipment, and applying strict measures. As a result, most students graduating from these schools gain admission to university-wide general education...

Despite specific regulations for registration and various obstructions in this regard, these schools have received a large positive response from the public due to their high educational standards and the extensive promotions conducted by religious elements in their favor. People from various classes, even intellectual circles, resort to every possible means to enroll in these schools." (Islami, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 476–478)

### 2.2. Ayatollah Javad Foomani Haeri

One of the scholars who made significant and effective efforts in the field of education during the Pahlavi era was the late Ayatollah Foomani Haeri, who established various girls' and boys' schools at different levels.

#### 2.2.1. Girls' School

One of the remarkable initiatives of the late Foomani (Ayatollah Javad Foomani Haeri, who passed away in 1964 AD/1343 SH) during the anti-religious climate of the tyrannical regime was the establishment of a girls' school, which was managed under the direct supervision of this great man with comprehensive religious programs.

This courageous action, taken in 1326, faced strong opposition from the government of that time, and some hypocritical elements also objected to him. However, the establishment of this girls' school, which was conducted with a precise religious curriculum and complete hijab (including the chador), along with teaching the Quran and "Mafatih al-Janan" and other religious programs in addition to the usual subjects, was widely welcomed by the religious community, especially scholars and dignitaries.

The toxic atmosphere of the ruling regime, along with various distortions and negative influences, had led many families to deprive their daughters of education, as there seemed to be no alternative. The late Foomani intervened directly in the education of Muslim girls to free them from the clutches of anti-religious programs and revived a spark of hope in the hearts of the Muslim community by establishing the girls' school (Historical Document Research Center, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 20).

The late Foomani tirelessly dedicated himself to strengthening the foundations of the girls' school and, with the help of his esteemed wife, who assumed responsibility for the school, was able to educate thousands of virtuous Muslim girls and mothers during his tenure. In a letter, he stated his goal for establishing the girls' school as follows:

"The root of all corruption is culture, and every crime and act of sabotage stems from this. There is no doubt that a low culture is a critical situation that can lead a country to misery, and it may also guide a society toward happiness and enlightenment. Therefore, I was compelled to establish a union, initiating the preparation and organization of mosques, and ultimately to work on imamate, sermons, speeches, and publications, all considered as a means to achieve this lofty goal, and I first set out to establish an elementary school for young women." (ibid.)

Shaykh Morteza Foomani Haeri comments on the programs of this school as follows:

"This school accommodated about 300 female students-from the first elementary level to the eighth grade at that time. The existence of this girls' school with full hijab on Khurasan Street led people to refer to this street as the Dar al-Mu'minin and the neighborhood as the Hijab neighborhood, and these names became well-known among the community. Daughters of many scholars and dignitaries studied at this school. The conditions for the registration of girls were as follows:

- 1) Wearing a full hijab (Pushiyah);
- 2) Female administrators must also wear full hijab;
- 3) Teaching regular academic subjects;
- 4) Instruction in the Quran, Mafatih, and religious laws. At the end, their diplomas and certificates were stamped and signed by the late Ayatollah's father, who himself supervised this school with great care and sensitivity, frequently visiting to address problems and deficiencies." (ibid.)

#### **2.2.2. Establishment of the First Religious Education Kindergarten**

In 1327, the late Ayatollah Foomani realized that some people in Tehran had established a kindergarten, but their instructors and educators were Jewish and Christian men and women, providing care and education for Muslim children. He decided to establish a kindergarten himself.

This decision was swiftly implemented with the diligent support of the members of the religious union, leading to the establishment of a well-equipped kindergarten with affordable tuition fees and a bus for transporting the children. This kindergarten was located next to the girls' elementary school and continued its activities for many years.

#### **2.2.3. Establishment of New Elementary School for Boys**

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Ayatollah Foomani, with the help of members of the religious union, established a boys' school at the end of Lorzadeh Street, where more than 300 students studied. In this school, educational programs were taught, and the education of Muslim children was managed under the supervision and guidance of trusted associates.

Ayatollah Foomani never obtained permission from the Ministry of Culture for the establishment of these schools and personally provided for all the needs of the schools. He even issued graduation certificates himself. The fact that the school was not under government supervision was regarded as an honor by the believers, and the late Ayatollah pointed this out by hanging a sign at the entrance of the school.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3. Ayatollah Haeri Tehrani

Ayatollah Shaykh Mahdi Haeri Tehrani is one of the scholars who has been involved in numerous cultural activities. His contributions include the construction and establishment of multiple mosques, husseiniyas (communal centers for mourning rituals), seminaries, libraries, and more. One of his activities relevant to this research is the establishment of public schools.

#### 2.3.1. Girls' Schools

Ayatollah Haeri had a significant sensitivity towards the education and well-being of female students. This concern led him to take various measures to create educational centers for girls. One of his initiatives was the establishment of a sample girls' school in Qom. Since he held a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Tehran, he was able to obtain permission to establish a girls' high school in Qom. This school provided free transportation and meals to its students. Many well-known clerics and religious personalities from Qom, as well as civil servants, enrolled their daughters in this school. Ayatollah Haeri wrote about the management of this school:

"The principal of this school was Mrs. Vafai, who was a religious lady. Mrs. Noor al-Hajiyah, the mother of Mr. Mohammadi Iraqi, also worked at this school along with several other women." (Nikbakht, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 176)

Ayatollah Haeri's daughter says that one of his goals in establishing this school was to enable the daughters of religious families to learn and become familiar with new contemporary subjects like physics, chemistry, and biology. He also established several other girls' schools, such as Tolu', Ayin-e Roshan, and Hoda in Tehran, and, in addition to

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1. Golshan Abrar Book, vol. 8, the article of "Mujahed Nastooh", pp. 272-273.

providing financial support, he served as the head of the board of trustees for all three schools (ibid).

### **2.3.2. Religion and Science Boys' High School**

The Religion and Science School is one of the valuable institutions of the ideological and cultural movement of the Islamic Revolution, founded in 1348 in Qom by the martyr Ayatollah Dr. Beheshti and the late Ayatollah Haeri Tehrani. This school has been considered one of the best schools in Qom, with most scholars enrolling their children there.

The establishment of this school represented the practical steps taken by the intellectual and cultural elites of the Islamic Revolution to bridge the gap between the seminaries and universities, aiming to implement this from high school age through well-planned programs. Ayatollah Haeri noted in this regard:

"We had prepared personal files for the students of the Religion and Science high school along with Martyr Beheshti, and based on those files, we provided them support. When they graduated, they received one hundred Tomans each. Later, when they went abroad for further studies and needed help, they would contact us for assistance.

A group of benefactors, one of whom is Mr. Kamalian, well-known in Tehran for his work in publication and printing, provided financial assistance that was sent to those students through us.

The management of this school was with Ayatollah Beheshti, and professors such as Dr. Mohammad Motahhari taught at this school. Among the activities at this school were lectures by various personalities, such as Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mesbah Yazdi, Rabbani Shirazi, Motahhari, Ibrahim Amini, Shahabadi, and Ayatollah Haeri Tehrani himself, which were held on Thursday nights, where students from other high schools also participated." (ibid: 173–174)

### **2.4. Ayatollah Mousavi Ardabili**

Ayatollah Mousavi Ardabili was a prominent figure during his stay in Tehran, contributing significantly to scientific, cultural, and social services, one of which was the establishment of the Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) Charity Institute. In 1348, he founded the Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) Charity Institute with a group of friends to coordinate cultural activities. This institute's activities included the establishment of three mosques, a cultural center, four middle and high schools, and Mofid University (A group of Researchers, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 44-46).

### **2.5. Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Mousavi Behbahani**

Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Mousavi Behbahani was a scholar from Khuzestan who, due to his religious concerns and extensive promotional and religious activities, took action to establish Islamic primary and

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secondary schools for girls in Ahvaz, considering the unsatisfactory cultural and religious conditions of schools during the Pahlavi era.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.6. Hojjatol Islam Ali Asghar Karbaschian

The late Karbaschian, in collaboration with Shaykh Hadi Moqaddas Tehrani (Nasiri, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 193), a prominent preacher and a trusted figure in the religious community of Tehran, served as a financial liaison with the markets and merchants.

Along with Sayyid Hossein Boroujerdi, representing the clerical community of Tehran, and in cooperation with Reza Roozbeh (Jawaher Kalam, 2005 AD/1424 AH: 726), representing the educated class familiar with the modern education system of Iran, he established the Alavi Cultural Institute. In 1335, he founded Alavi High School, with permission from the Ministry of Culture, named after Ali Naqi Faqihi, near the Sepahsalar Mosque and School, starting with just one seventh-grade class (Rabbani, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 33).

Mr. Kamal Kharrazi explains the goals and establishment process of this school as follows: "Mr. Allamah (Karbaschiyan) believed in a school that arose from the seminary and integrated both new and old teachings. One day, Mr. Allamah ran into Hajj Moqaddas Tehrani in my father's shop, where he found him accompanying him.

Despite being the regular Imam of the Bazaar Mosque, Hajj Moqaddas that day chose not to go to prayer, prioritizing the discussion and decision-making about the education and training of Muslim children over the merit of early prayer. In this meeting, they reached a historic decision to establish Alavi School." (cf. A group of writers, 2007 AD/1386 SH).

The late Karbaschiyan believed the primary goal of establishing the school was the same as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which were human development and the growth of morality and spirituality. Therefore, he maintained that the aim of the school was not merely to train doctors and engineers but to cultivate individuals with spirituality and ethics, which were also acquainted with modern sciences and could use their knowledge and expertise to serve society (cf. Razavi, 2006 AD/1385 SH).

Ayatollah Subhani believes that Karbaschiyan felt that most of the educated individuals in the country at political, cultural, and university levels lacked strong faith and action, and that the children of faithful families were sidelined from responsibilities across the country.

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2. Golshan Abrar, vol. 3, "Brave Pattern", p. 387.

Therefore, he decided to establish a high school to elevate this group to a higher status (Subhani, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 499).

He then established Alavi Elementary School and Nik Parvar Guidance School in 1342 (Nasiri, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 193), and in 1345, he founded Nikan School (Latifi Pakdeh, n.d.: 54). Together, these schools educated students from the first grade through to university. Initially, most subjects were taught by the founders themselves, and they even handled the school's cleaning; however, as the school expanded, other prominent instructors were invited to join (Nasiri, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 193).

He even sought the help of great scholars to ensure the content of the school's curriculum; for example, in response to his request, Allamah Tabatabai wrote the book "Teachings of Islam." (Tabatabai, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 19) Regarding the specific management of Ali Asghar Karbaschiyan and the religious atmosphere of the school, most traditional and devout families in Tehran made efforts to send their children to this educational center. The success of Karbaschiyan's schools led to the establishment of other schools by others or by his students, following a similar model (Nasiri, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 193).

Alavi School was founded at a time when evident dualities existed in Iranian society, particularly in Tehran, between religious and academic communities. Most devout people, clergy, and seminary institutions focused solely on religious knowledge and were unfamiliar with modern science. Meanwhile, the religious atmosphere in universities was stifled, with many university professors believing that a scientific mentality required a departure from religion. On the other hand, seminaries taught religious subjects in the same traditional manner, summarizing all concepts within religious sciences without incorporating new knowledge.

If anyone from the seminaries entered a university, they were often accused of abandoning the seminary and embracing modernity. Figures like Sayyid Mohammad Beheshti and Morteza Motahhari, who entered universities during that time, faced significant neglect from seminaries (cf. A group of writers, 2007 AD/1386 SH).

Ali Asghar Karbaschiyan, the founder of Alavi School, viewed education as a preventive process. He believed that exposing students to the allure of deviations was contrary to education. Therefore, students at this school were kept away from various forms of indulgent pleasures to avoid any kind of social corruption, with guidelines such as wearing appropriate clothing, keeping hair short, and raising awareness about friendships being implemented in line with these goals (cf. Karbaschiyan, 2012 AD/1391 SH).

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### 2.7. Martyrs Motahhari, Beheshti, and Bahonar

Martyr Bahonar was very influential in cultural activities, such as the establishment of the Refah School and the organization of Green Camps. The Green Camps were created with the efforts of Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti and the late Mr. Qadiriyan, and they included various educational programs, lectures, film screenings, and more.

Martyr Bahonar played a significant role in organizing these programs. It was during these camps that the idea of founding the Refah School for girls emerged as a way to prepare cadres for future activities. Martyr Rajai and several members of the Mo'talefeh party worked at this school, and besides collaborating with this school, Martyr Bahonar was seriously involved in establishing microcredit funds and planning cooperatives.

The late Habibollah Shafiq regarding the establishment of the Refah School states: "Together with the leaders of the revolution, including Martyr Motahhari, Martyr Beheshti, Martyr Bahonar, Martyr Rajai, Martyr Mohammad Sadegh Islami, Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mr. Rafighdoost, and several others, we ultimately concluded that in addition to revolutionary activities, we should pursue a cultural work; because the regime had become sensitive to political centers and circles, but within the framework of a cultural institution, it would be possible to continue activities with less risk.

Thus, in 1968, a location was prepared behind Shahid Motahhari School, on Mostajab Alley, and the school began with the enrollment of 25 students from religious and revolutionary families."

Sometime after the establishment of the school, with the help of those interested in activities of this kind, the school was rebuilt and a high school was added to it. Since the school principal had to be introduced by the Ministry of Education, the school's officials, familiar with educational matters, made every effort to introduce someone who would be compatible with the school's religious beliefs.

The school's activities were generally divided into two categories: one category was educational activities, and the second category was cultural activities, which were the responsibility of the members of the Mo'talefeh organization. The school also had programs for the parents of the students (Shafiq, 2019 AD/1398 SH)

The presence of clergy in schools increased the regime's sensitivity to these schools, their teachers, and graduates. Consequently, they took measures to tighten control over the curriculum, student dress codes (A group of writers, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 8, 20), and they arrested teachers and removed certain administrators, trying to shut down some of these



schools like Kamal, Refah, Alavi, and others. (cf. Center for Historical Document Review, 2000 AD/1379 SH)

**Table of Schools Stabishment**

Founder	Objectives	Types of Schools	Special Actions
Abbas Ali Islami	Reconciliation between science and religion Opportunity for religious girls to study Systematic religious education for the youth Problems of public schools	Girls' School Boys' School Boarding School	Expansion of schools (186 schools) Attracting financial support from the public Spiritual support from scholars High academic standards
Foomani Haeri	Religious education for adolescents Existence of non-Islamic kindergartens Opportunity for religious girls to study Importance of cultural work Problem of Public Schools	Islamic Kindergarten Girls' School Boys' Primary School	Complete hijab for students and teachers Teaching the Quran and Mafatih Free meals and transportation
Haeri Tehrani	Opportunity for religious girls to study new subjects Reducing the gap between religious seminaries and universities Setting the stage for training committed university students	Girls' High School Boys' High School	Increasing the number of girls' schools in Tehran and Qom Inviting prominent scholars for teaching and speaking
Mousavi Ardabili	Problems of public schools Religious education	Various levels of girls' and boys' schools	
Mousavi Behbahani	Problems of public schools Probability for Religious Girls Education	Girls' Primary and High School	
Karbaschiyan	Schools based on seminary principles Combining old and new sciences Training committed university students	Alavi Schools Nikan, Nikparvar	Training of intellectual and religious elites
Martyrs Motahhari, Beheshti, Bahonar	Cultural activities and training forces Covering Political Fate	Refah School	Cultural education for parents and teachers

From the study of the above table, the following analytical propositions can be derived:

- 1) The clergy's attention to global developments, especially transformations in science, the formation of new sciences, modern educational methods, new educational systems worldwide, and the discussion on the education of women and girls;
- 2) The clergy's focus on issues and doubts such as the conflict between science and religion, the difference between seminaries and universities, the disadvantages of the Western educational system, cultural problems existing in schools, and the role of religious minorities in schools and kindergartens;
- 3) The importance of cultural activities and discussions on education across different levels from kindergarten to high school and university, encompassing various demographics from girls and boys to parents and teachers, and training specialized and committed intellectuals and university graduates;
- 4) The clergy's refusal to retreat from their educational and training responsibilities despite the removal of old schools and traditional educational institutions from the formal education system, and their efforts to fulfill this role;

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- 5) Not merely settling for reforms and changes in public schools, which were limited and exhausting due to their governmental nature, but undertaking a fundamental and impactful movement by establishing new non-governmental schools for broader activities;
- 6) Efforts to connect old and new sciences, reconcile science and religion, systematically educate children and adolescents in religious matters, promote unity between seminaries and universities, present belief-related topics in a clear and engaging manner, and provide educational opportunities for the devout, especially for religious girls.

### Conclusion

Historical research indicates that despite the Pahlavi regime's efforts to diminish the clergy's influence in the educational system and to eliminate and undermine religious and spiritual subjects from formal education, the clergy capitalized on the relatively open political environment during the second period of Pahlavi rule. They took various actions to exert influence in the formal education sector and fulfill their primary mission of religiously educating society, particularly the younger generation. These actions occurred in two main areas:

- 1) Step-by-step reforms of new public schools;
- 2) Establishment of new non-governmental schools.

In the first initiative, clergy petitioned for the inclusion of religious courses in school curricula to initiate change and reform in the educational system and cultural conditions of schools. The next step involved requesting the selection of appropriate teachers for these courses and the removal of mixed-gender schools, as well as advocating against the prohibition of hijab. The third step involved efforts to penetrate the Ministry of Education and compile religious textbooks for schools, with clergy actively teaching religious subjects in schools as the fourth step.

In the second initiative, various clerics, including Mr. Islami, Haeri Tehrani, Foomani Haeri, Karbaschian, Motahhari, Beheshti, Bamonar, Ardabili, Mousavi, and others, worked to establish a range of boys' and girls' schools from kindergarten to high school. The motivations behind these efforts included addressing numerous religious and educational issues within public schools, creating opportunities for the children of religious families to study, utilizing the formal educational system for the religious and spiritual upbringing of children and adolescents, employing modern educational techniques for religious instruction, reconciling science and religion, developing committed university

specialists, and providing a cover for political activities and religious education for the parents and teachers of these schools.

Historical evidence shows that these collective actions increased the sensitivity of the Pahlavi regime, which responded with measures against many of these initiatives, such as changing the management of certain schools, closing down some schools, and exerting pressure on the dress codes and curricular and cultural programs of schools. Nevertheless, there is still room for further research in this area, including obtaining accurate statistics on the number of schools and their distribution, graduates of these schools, the number of active clergy in schools, as well as various detailed analyses related to this field. Additionally, given that the clergy's involvement in formal education expanded further after the Islamic Revolution, and that new school framework, such as mosque schools, emerged, there are ample opportunities for research on these schools and the role of the clergy in this domain during the Islamic Republic era.

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