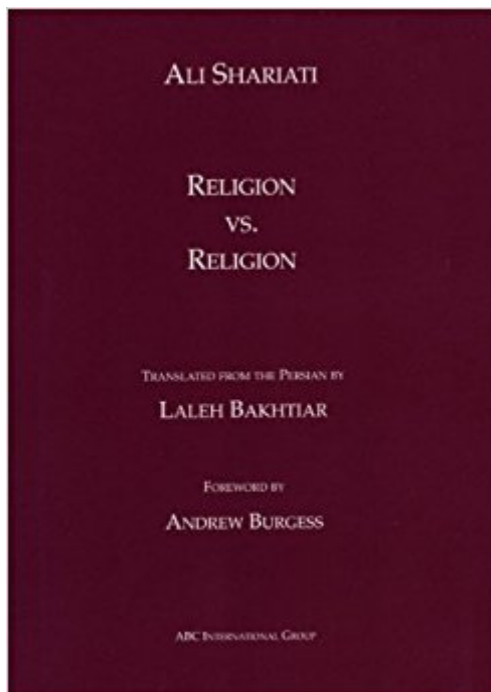


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# Religion Vs. Religion



## Synopsis

Religion vs Religion consists of two lectures Ali Shariati gave at the Husayniyah Center in Tehran on August 12 and 13, 1970. In them he puts forth a most remarkable thesis, that throughout history, religion has fought against religion and not a non-religion as we have come to believe. That is, monotheism, the religion of the belief that God is One, that religion brought by Prophet Abraham which is called *din al-hanif*, 'the rightful religion,' has continuously, throughout history, had to struggle against the religion of denying that there is One God or believing that there is no God (*kufr*, disbelief, infidelity, atheism) or against the religion of believing that there are multiple gods (*shirk*, polytheism, multitheism), the latter of which has branched into idolatry. Religion vs Religion, translated here for the first time in English, awakened religious and prophetic-like consciousness, bringing literally thousands of young people back to faith and belief in God. Shariati, in his inimitable way, clearly marks the lines and points out the signs that distinguish a divinely-imitative religion manifested throughout history in a 'priestly-function' of, right or wrong, celebrating a nation and a divinely-originated religion and its 'prophetic-function' of distinguishing between right and wrong and then calling a nation into action.

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## Customer Reviews

Reflecting on his experience as an engraver, William Blake once remarked that, in art as in life, the decisive factor is how you draw a line. "What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions? Leave out this line, and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the almighty must be drawn out upon it

before man or beast can exist." It is a long way from Blake, the eighteenth century English artist and poet to Ali Shariati, the twentieth century Iranian sociologist and Islamologist; yet not impossibly far. For, despite their differences, the two share a moral passion leading them to draw lines in their writings calling for religious and social reform. A reader may not like where or how a line cuts, but there it is, bold and uncompromising, leaving one no choice but to stand on one side or the other. The line Shariati draws in these two speeches is between two religions, a 'religion of revolution' and a 'religion of legitimation.' The difference between them is sharply drawn: the first is a religion working to overcome differences in class and economic status, while the second is a religion legitimating and perpetuating such differences. As opposed to some socialists who draw the line between religion, as supporter of class divisions, and non-religion, which overcomes these divisions, he places the dividing-line within religion itself. From his perspective, it is thus not religion itself that needs to be rejected as the 'opium of the people,' but only one type of religion, the 'religion of legitimation,' while true religion remains unscathed. The consequences of this impressive analysis are far-reaching. Not for nothing has he been called the ideological leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution. Since World War II the Muslim world has been shaken by two powerful forces, socialist ideology and, more recently, what is now called Islamic fundamentalism. The line Shariati draws binds these two movements together: true Islam, he says, is true socialism and true socialism is true Islam. It is the kind of slogan for which thousands of people have been prepared to die and for which thousands have already died. . . . In many respects, Shariati's nearest allies are to be found not among the secular European socialists, whom he frequently cites, but among the Latin American Christian liberation theologians, of whom he does not seem to be aware. Some of these liberation theologians, such as Camilo Torres (Columbia), Carlos Alberto (Frei Betto), Libanio Christo (Brazil), and Gustavo Gutierrez (Peru) were beginning to attract world notice by 1970, the year in which Shariati was giving important speeches. . . . Here is a man under severe political pressure, shortly to face years of prison, house arrest and death. His words, however, are not about himself, but about drawing a line between the false and the true, and for that line he is willing to pledge his life. --Andrew Burgess, Albuquerque, NM, November 3, 1988

Ali Shariati (1933-1977) is a man who continues the work of Iqbal Lahouri within the Islamic Movement and one of its most important contemporary ideologues.

This is definately one of the most interesting of Ali Shariati's works. More than any other work I have read this book shows the melding of Western philosophy with Islamic thought, even more than On

the Sociology of Islam: Lectures. I believe it shows a very sophisticated look at religion. The author explains the failings of religion, and explains why these failures continue to plague mankind and religion. The problem I have with this book is that he doesn't follow his own logical conclusions further down the path that could potentially produce more problematic questions, but I will discuss that later. The main theme is that human fallibility and corruptibility is the cause of regression or failure of religion. The fact that man and power is corruptible means that God's word becomes manipulated by men of power, and due to this prophets are necessary to show people the true path. This is the reason for the cyclical nature of religion in that a prophet appears and sets the followers on the true path, but in the absence of the prophet men begin to corrupt religion and use it to serve their secular purposes. What this does is create a duality in religion. There is a true religion delivered down by God and the prophets, and then there is the religion practiced by those in power who use religion to increase their own power and position. What this does is allow Shariati to emphasize the noble and charitable aspects of religion. He asserts that this is the true path of God. The regressive and repressive aspects of the religious establishment is thus seen as heresy or corruption. This is where the beauty of his philosophy lays. Islam, Christianity and Judaism (as well as other religions) have their positive aspects emphasized, and are in constant conflict with the negative aspects of human nature which corrupts the religious message. The problem with Shariati's ideas is that they fail to lead to logical conclusions or that they simply stop before more difficult questions arise. The ideas in this book have a decidedly Marxist bent, and the influence of Marxism and Western ideas are readily apparent, but the author pulls back before he has to answer the most difficult of questions. One such question is that Islam and the Prophet are supposed to be culmination and perfection of God's message. He is the last of the prophets, but Shariati's own idea, put forth here, assume this is not true. It also suggests the idea of a continual revolution in the cyclical nature of religion he describes. The problem is that if the Prophet's religion has been corrupted then doesn't that require another prophet to correct the message? In his theory it doesn't make sense that religion has been perfected and the end of the prophets has come. He doesn't tackle these problems though. In the end I like how the author emphasizes the beauty and humanity of religion, and I like he adds the revolutionary message of Marx to the humanity and positive aspects of religion. The religion of Shariati is a river that is continually being replenished, whereas those who apposed his view are like a pond that simply stagnates and never changes. Shariati is refreshing and fun to read. He emphasizes the positive and motivates the reader to challenge the negative. While I have problems with his refusal to follow his own logical path and tackle the difficult questions his Western philosophy and Islamic religion pose, but his positive message and his revolutionary

way of thinking is important without the deeper questions. This is an important thinker and an important person to read if you want to know Iran. I highly recommend this book.

Super short and to the point. What a wonderful author Ali Shariati was, and what a shame that he passed at such a young age. I recommend his books to everyone who likes to learn more about Islam and is curious about things that are beyond this world.

This is another great work by Shariati. In this work he analyzes the history of polytheism and monotheism. He recognizes the class distinctions/caste system that arises from polytheism. While at the same time recognizes the ideal classless society that should arise from the true practice of monotheism. He also shows that monotheism has always worked against the status quo. Overall, an insightful book.

The late Dr. Shariati was a teacher of love, peace and brotherhood. He was highly educated, knew Eastern and Western cultures well. He was trying to teach us living based on true Islamic beliefs. He did not accept the popular religion without sound thinking and proper probing. So his works are prominent among the Islamic writers. They are translated to different languages. The book presented here is highly suggested to those interested in Islamic issues and Iranian thinkers. A Teacher From Iran

One of the most profound books I have read. His thesis helps shape my view of the world.

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