

Quest for Divinity A Critical Examination of the Thought of Mahmud Muhammad Taha

### Quest for Divinity: A Critical Examination of the Thought of Mahmud Muhammad Taha (Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East)

By Mohamed Mahmoud



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A highly influential Sudanese reformist thinker, Mahmud Muhammad Taha is regarded as a product of a dual legacy rooted in mystical Islam on the one hand and in the tradition of modernity on the other. Publicly executed in 1985 folowing his conviction of apostasy, Taha offered distinctly original interpretations of the Qur'an and a radical theory of Islamic prayer. In Quest for Divinity, Mohamed Mahmoud presents an in-depth and balanced treatment of Taha's controversial yet significant thought. The author's ability to provide access to relevant literature in both Arabic and English offers readers a rare view of the considerable nuance in Taha's thought. With rich detail Mahmoud explores Taha's theories of human freedom and his social message, referred to as "the second message of Islam" with its emphasis on political, economic, and social equality. Taha's embrace of modernity is further assessed relative to his position on science, law, and art-areas that have always attracted Muslim modernists.

Quest for Divinity will attract attention to Taha's compelling but little-known intellectual contribution as a seminal modern reformer of Islam. Such recognition is long overdue and will enrich the current debates on Islam and modernity.

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#### Review

"Mohamed Mahmoud does an excellent job of explaining the ideas of a significant but little-known Muslim thinker. Taha's thought is an important alternative to the ideas of Muslim militants and Mahmoud's book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the full spectrum of contemporary Muslim thought." - John Voll, Associate Director, Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University"

#### About the Author

Mohamed A. Mahmoud is associate professor of religion at Tufts University. He has written numerous journal articles on Islamic studies and is the coeditor of Islam and Modernity.

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