



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

*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 following 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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