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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ RELIGION

Muhammad: An Evolution of God

Omar Mahmoud
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"Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of a meaning of our life."
—Paul Tillich

"The redemptive future shines already into the present…all that has happened in the past culminate(s) in the present, in the moment of perception."
—Franz Rosenzweig

"In the holy Quran, God completes His evolution in Muhammad: It gives us all that God permits us, or is essential for us to know about His attributes. It offers arguments and evidence. It addresses itself to the opposing schools and carries attacks with spiritual substantiation. It speaks to the rational mind and alerts the intelligence. It sets out the order in the universe, the principles and lively scrutiny of them, so the mind can be sure of the validity of its claims and message," writes Dr. Omar Mahmoud (co-author of *The Keys to Paradise*) in *Muhammad: An Evolution of God*. The ideas he presents can be favorably compared to the existential theological Christian works of Paul Tillich and to the theological Jewish works of mute theologian/philosopher, Franz Rosenzweig. The three authors, Tillich, Rosenzweig, and Mahmoud, obviously differ in their opinion of how to achieve salvation, but each takes his own personal leap of faith. From within their individual faith they make similar attempts to answer the questions that arise from an ontological examination of the human condition without separating the physical essence and intellect from the metaphysical. They allow empirical observation and belief in a Supreme Being to compliment and reinforce each other to bring forth a spiritual message.

Mahmoud strongly supports man's endeavor to explore his surroundings through science and technology, but he wants to disperse any doubt that the divine hand of Allah is the creator of the universe and Muhammad is his messenger. Mahmoud writes, "Some Islamic scholars stated that before the Almighty God created anything, He first created a block of light…He named the block of light—Muhammad. The block of light recited Subhannallahi (glory be to Allah) for seventy thousand years before heavens and earths were created: indeed, before anything was created."

Mahmoud cites the Quran and the Gospel of Barnabas (not to be confused with the Epistle of Barnabas) as his main sources. His book removes the barriers of incomprehension and media-induced xenophobia that most westerners seem to maintain about Muslims and Islam. Misconceptions, fallacies, and fear are defused by his non-threatening, succinct prose that exposes the differences and uncanny similarities between world religions. If the reader can overlook moments of awkward syntax, misspelled words, words used out of context, and grammatical errors, Mahmoud's book is an insightful and respectable abridgement of the life and teachings of Muhammad the Holy Prophet of Allah and founder of Islam.
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