



Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi: Islamic Reform and Arab Revival (Makers of the Muslim World)

Itzhak Weismann

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Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1855–1902) was one of the most articulate and original proponents of the reformist ideas underlying modern Islamic thought, as well as an early precursor of Arab nationalism. A journalist, political activist and author, he fiercely resisted arbitrary government, exploitation of the poor, and ulama and Sufis who supported the absolutist rule. Adhering to the reformist ideal of a return to the scriptures and the model of the ancestors (salaf) as a way to free Islam from the shackles of tradition and accommodate it to modernity, he suggested as remedy to these ills a democratic responsible government, the separation of religion and politics, and an Arab spiritual Caliphate.

This is the first full scale biography of Kawakibi in any European language based on the memoirs of family and colleagues, archival material and his writings. It combines a narrative of his life set against the political and social realities of late Ottoman Aleppo, with a fresh look at his articles and books which considers their literary form — the independent journal, an imaginary secret conference held in Mecca, and a scientific study of the nature of tyranny — as part of their message.

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