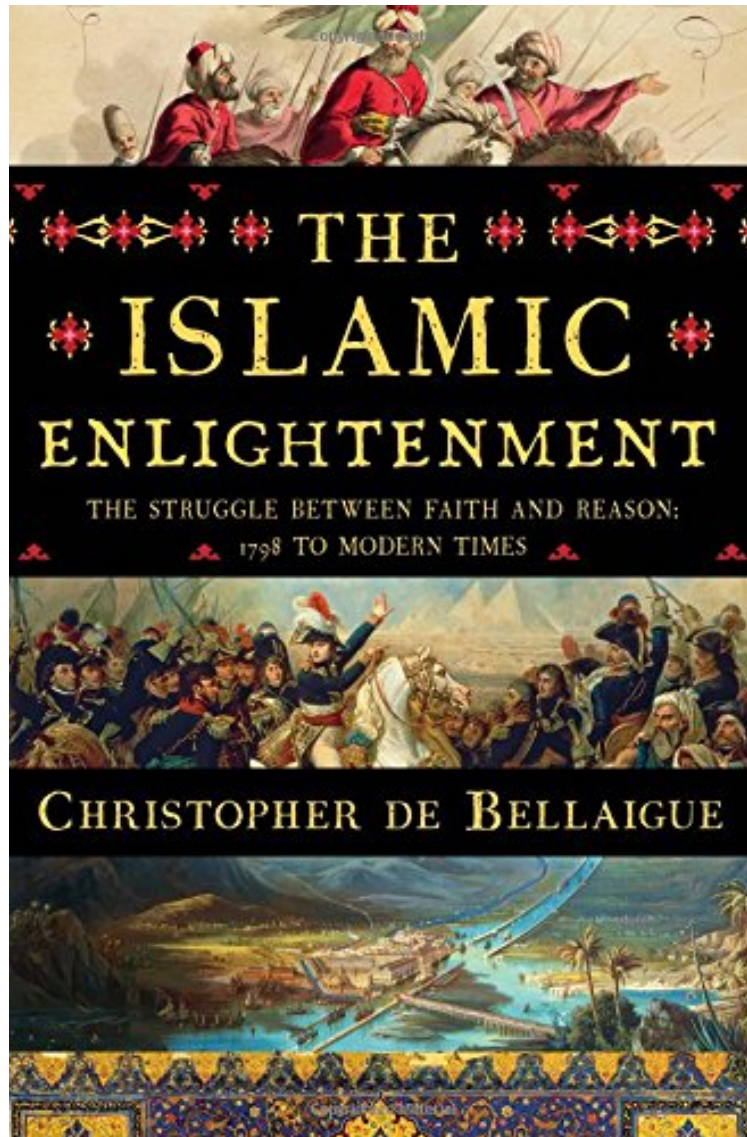


[FREE] The Islamic Enlightenment: The Struggle Between Faith and Reason, 1798 to Modern Times

# The Islamic Enlightenment: The Struggle Between Faith and Reason, 1798 to Modern Times

*Christopher de Bellaigue*

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#50531 in Books Ingramcontent 2017-04-04 2017-04-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.60 x 1.40 x 6.60l, .0 #File Name: 0871403730432 pagesThe Islamic Enlightenment The Struggle Between Faith and Reason 1798 to Modern Times | File size: 72.Mb

**Christopher de Bellaigue : The Islamic Enlightenment: The Struggle Between Faith and Reason, 1798 to Modern Times** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Islamic Enlightenment: The Struggle Between Faith and Reason, 1798 to Modern Times:

42 of 43 people found the following review helpful. With reservations, this is a very well written and instructive

bookBy Ralph BlumenauThe title refers, not to the Golden Age of Islam in Middle Ages, when Europe learnt from Islam, but to the period from the early 19th century onwards, when Islam learnt from Europe. The theologians had clamped down on the Golden Age, and from then until the beginning of the 19th century Islam indeed fell far behind the West; but then Islamic societies began to modernize. In a 25-page introduction the author writes that in this later period the West has consistently stressed the backwardness of Islamic countries and has underestimated or ignored the rapid modernization of technology, institutions and culture after the response to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. De Bellaigue concentrates on this aspect, but he does not ignore the backlash against it among the conservative forces in Islam or indeed the limited effectiveness of modernization throughout the period almost to the point of contradicting his contention that the achievements of those countries have generally been underestimated. But it is true that, on the whole, the conservatives were able only to slow down, but not altogether to stop the pace of modernization until the 1980s when this book ends.Modernization and enlightenment are not necessarily the same thing, and I have an issue with the book's title: it seems to imply that the word enlightenment refers not just to the cultural developments (mostly among the educated middle class and having little or no impact on the poor), but also to the military, economic, and technological ones. You can see these latter aspects being developed by governments, like those of the Pahlavi Shahs, which are otherwise thoroughly repressive and unenlightened.In all three countries modernization began in the military area because the rulers were being defeated by foreign countries. Economic, technological, medical and educational improvements followed. There was then pressures for political and religious reform also, and these enjoyed occasional and brief periods of success before being put down by the governments, with the backing of the army and of the conservative clergy.But this is a most instructive and well-written book. The story is very well told, and also has many vivid and richly anecdotal descriptions. Readers who are already interested in the subject will know something of the key figures in the story, but we are also introduced to a host of characters including feminists, novelists and journalists - who will be new to most readers. De Bellaigue devotes many pages to some of these, and we have to assume that they are important and representative.The book concentrates on the main centres of modernization: Egypt, Turkey and Iran. (De Bellaigue does not deal with the Muslim Enlightenment in India.) The first three chapters are each devoted to one of those centres; they end respectively in 1879, 1878 and 1852. After that, De Bellaigue argues, their respective experiences were so broadly similar they should no longer be treated separately in the remaining three chapters. That, however, makes those chapters harder to read, and I think it would have been better to continue to treat the three countries separately until the end of De Bellaigue's chosen period in the 1980s. Although there are references to events right up to the present, De Bellaigue argues that since the 1980s transnational forces like Al-Qaeda and ISIS have taken centre stage, and that is why it no longer made sense to him to follow the story of his chosen national centres. These extremists have become a formidable threat to everything that might be called Islamic Enlightenment. They have come to such prominence that the millions of Muslims who continue to believe in progress and peaceful coexistence tend to be forgotten.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Most Informative and Valuable!By A. WalrusThis is one of the most timely and informative books about Islam that I have ever read and one from which those who live in fear and ignorance of this important world religion would learn a lot. It really pains me to see how many Americans, even those who claim to be well-educated, continue to perpetuate the myths that Islam is out to conquer the world, that every practicing Muslim is at least a closet jihadist, and that the Koran advocates nothing but violence and cruelty. Without mentioning these myths specifically, de Bellaigue, in a well-researched and carefully written book, successfully portrays Islam as being just like every other major religion trying to face up to the unprecedented challenges of the twenty-first century and how to reconcile religious faith and cultural tradition with the past and present influences of Westernization, not all of which have been helpful to the Middle East. I was particularly impressed his use of three Middle Eastern capitals--Cairo, Istanbul and Tehran--to demonstrate the range of actions and reactions that were and are possible when the politicians, the businessmen and the soldiers from more advanced countries attempt to exert their own, often self-serving interests on this part of the world. I highly recommend this book to those who wish to take the time to educate themselves regarding the recent history of the Middle East so as not to be swayed by the superficial and often ignorant portrayal of Islam and the people who practice this faith that we see among so many of our political leaders and in today's media..0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Enlightening for those who wish to better understand the Middle EastBy David W. MorrisFor those who thought the Middle East was firmly stuck in the Middle Ages until their world came crashing down at the end of the Great War, this book will be a revelation. To those who knew about the Nahda, the Tanzimat and many of the other efforts at reform, it is still enlightening to know many of the people (beyond sultans and dictators) who spurred these social, political and economic efforts despite strong (and at times successful) opposition. The key word in the title is "struggle," and de Bellaigue makes that struggle clear. Very worthwhile.

A revelatory and game-changing narrative that rewrites everything we thought we knew about the modern history of the Islamic world.With majestic prose, Christopher de Bellaigue presents an absorbing account of the political and social reformations that transformed the lands of Islam in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Flying in the face of everything we thought we knew, The Islamic Enlightenment becomes an astonishing and revelatory history

that offers a game-changing assessment of the Middle East since the Napoleonic Wars. Beginning his account in 1798, de Bellaigue demonstrates how Middle Eastern heartlands have long welcomed modern ideals and practices, including the adoption of modern medicine, the emergence of women from seclusion, and the development of democracy. With trenchant political and historical insight, de Bellaigue further shows how the violence of an infinitesimally small minority is in fact the tragic blowback from these modernizing processes. Structuring his groundbreaking history around Istanbul, Cairo, and Tehran, the three main loci of Islamic culture, de Bellaigue directly challenges ossified perceptions of a supposedly benighted Muslim world through the forgotten, and inspiring, stories of philosophers, anti-clerics, journalists, and feminists who opened up their societies to political and intellectual emancipation. His sweeping and vivid account includes remarkable men and women from across the Muslim world, including Ibrahim Sinasi, who brought newspapers to Istanbul; Mirza Saleh Shirzi, whose Persian memoirs describe how the Turkish harems were finally shuttered; and Qurrat al-Ayn, an Iranian noble woman, who defied her husband to become a charismatic prophet. What makes *The Islamic Enlightenment* particularly germane is that non-Muslim pundits in the post-9/11 era have repeatedly called for Islam to subject itself to the transformations that the West has already achieved since the Enlightenment—the absurd implication being that if Muslims do not stop reading or following the tenets of the Quran and other holy books, they will never emerge from a benighted state of backwardness. *The Islamic Enlightenment*, with its revolutionary argument, completely refutes this view and, in the process, reveals the folly of Westerners demanding modernity from those whose lives are already drenched in it. 8 pages of color and 8 pages of black-and-white illustrations

Elegantly written *The Islamic Enlightenment* introduces us to a fascinating gallery of individuals who would grapple with reform and modernization in theory and practice. In tracking the sinews of enlightenment through the last two centuries of Islamic thinking, this brilliant and lively history deserves nothing but praise. - *New York Times Book Excellent* Mr. de Bellaigue, the finest Orientalist of his generation, does the world a great service by charting the attainments of the regions long 19th century. Focusing on Iran, Turkey and Egypt, the three intellectual and political centres of the Middle East, Mr. de Bellaigue tells a story that is at once new, fascinating and extraordinarily important. - *Bartle Bull, Wall Street Journal* A stylishly written, surprisingly moving chronicle of intellectual and political flourishing in Egypt, Turkey, and Iran the brain of Islam in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. - *Harper's* Deeply researched . . . . Beginning with Napoleons invasion of Egypt in 1798 and ending with the late 20th century, De Bellaigue shows how the cultural struggles between modernity and tradition unfolded in Istanbul, Cairo, and Tehran. . . . De Bellaigue is a knowledgeable guide through huge sweeps of cultural history - *Nick Romeo, Christian Science Monitor* The book reads at times like a thriller it is a tale of reform and reaction, innovation and betrayal, a struggle, as the author would put it, between faith and reason. . . . With such divisive views elevated to state policy, a book that examines the Islamic worlds liberalization process at least until the French and the English carved up the Middle East after 1918 is welcome. - *Francis Ghiles, Arab Weekly* A highly original and informative survey of the clashes between Islam and modernity in Istanbul, Cairo, and Tehran in the last two hundred years. Brilliant! - *Orhan Pamuk, author of My Name Is Red* An eye-opening, well-written and very timely book, which can help us understand better the complex relationship between the Muslim world and modernity. While both Islamic extremists and Western bigots find it convenient to stress the incompatibility of Islam and modernity, Christopher de Bellaigue shows that Islam is whatever Muslims make of it, and that at least some Muslims have made of it something very modern. - *Yuval Harari, author of Homo Deus* That there has been an Islamic Enlightenment at all will come as news to many. De Bellaigues account of the very broad church of Islam in the modern world is splendid and timely. - *Anthony Gottlieb, author of The Dream of Enlightenment* Christopher de Bellaigue has long been one of our most resourceful and stimulating interpreters of realities veiled by fear and prejudice. In *The Islamic Enlightenment*, he cuts through the complacent opposition of Islam-versus-modernity to reveal a fascinating world: one in which complex human beings constantly change, improvise, and adjust under the pressures of history. It is the best sort of book for our disordered days: timely, urgent, and illuminating. - *Pankaj Mishra, author of From the Ruins of Empire* A brilliantly learned and entertaining study of a topic that is of far more than merely antiquarian interest: the encounter between the Islamic world and the post-Enlightenment West. - *Tom Holland, author of In the Shadow of the Sword* In this expansive historical account and commentary, de Bellaigue recounts Islam's "painful encounter with modernity" through the history of Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. . . . This is a text that demands attention for its splendid prose, command of an entire treasury of history, and ability to undermine the misplaced patronization of Middle Eastern Muslim nations over the last 300 years. - *Publisher's Weekly* Timely, thoughtful, and provocative. - *Peter Frankopan, author of The Silk Roads* About the Author Christopher de Bellaigue has worked as a journalist in south Asia and the Middle East, writing for the *Economist*, the *Guardian*, and the *New York Times*. He is the award-winning author of four books, has made several BBC television and radio documentaries, and has been a visiting fellow at the universities of Harvard and Oxford. He lives in London.