

CHAPTER 21

21-1

Balfour defends the Palestinian Mandate.

A.J. Balfour (1848–1930), British Prime Minister from 1902–1905 and later Foreign Secretary, is best-known for his “Balfour Declaration,” which was a letter to Lord Rothschild of the British Zionist Federation expressing the British government’s advocacy of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Palestine was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire and, by the Peace of Versailles, was ceded to British administration as a League of Nations Mandate. In 1922, when challenged over the Mandate in Parliament by Lord Islington, Balfour defended the decision in these terms.

Source: Brian McArthur, *Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches* (London: Viking Penguin, 1992), pp. 88–90.

My noble friend told us in his speech, and I believe him absolutely, that he has no prejudice against the Jews. I think I may say that I have no prejudice in their favour. But their position and their history, their connection with world religion and with world politics is absolutely unique. There is no parallel to it, there is nothing approaching to a parallel to it, in any other branch of human history. Here you have a small race originally inhabiting a small country, I think of about the size of Wales or Belgium, at any rate of comparable size to those two, at no time in its history wielding anything that can be described as material power, sometimes crushed in between great Oriental monarchies, its inhabitants deported, then scattered, then driven out of the country altogether into every part of the world, and yet maintaining a continuity of religious and racial tradition of which we have no parallel elsewhere.

That itself, is sufficiently remarkable, but consider—it is not a pleasant consideration, but it is one that we cannot forget—how they have been treated during long centuries, during centuries which in some parts of the world extend to the minute and the hour in which I am speaking; consider how they have been subjected to tyranny and persecution; consider whether the whole culture of Europe, the whole religious organization of Europe, has not from time to time proved itself guilty of great crimes against this race. I quite understand that some members of this race may have given, doubtless did give, occasion for much ill-will, and I do not know how it could be otherwise, treated as they were; but, if you are going to lay stress on that, do not forget what part they have played in the intellectual, the artistic, the philosophic and scientific development of the world. I say nothing of the economic side of their energies, for on that Christian attention has always been concentrated.

I ask your Lordships to consider the other side of their activities. Nobody who knows what he is talking about will deny that they have at least—and I am putting it more moderately than I could do—rowed all

their weight in the boat of scientific, intellectual and artistic progress, and they are doing so to this day. You will find them in every University, in every centre of learning; and at the very moment when they were being persecuted, when some of them, at all events, were being persecuted by the Church, their philosophers were developing thoughts which the great doctors of the Church embodied in their religious system. As it was in the Middle Ages, as it was in earlier times, so it is now. And yet, is there anyone here who feels content with the position of the Jews? They have been able, by this extraordinary tenacity of their race, to maintain this continuity, and they have maintained it without having any Jewish Home.

What has been the result? The result has been that they have been described as parasites on every civilization in whose affairs they have mixed themselves—very useful parasites at times I venture to say. But however that may be, do not your Lordships think that if Christendom, not oblivious of all the wrong it has done, can give a chance, without injury to others, to this race of showing whether it can organize a culture in a Home where it will be secured from oppression, that it is not well to say, if we can do it, that we will do it. And, if we can do it, should we not be doing something material to wash out an ancient stain upon our own civilization if we absorb the Jewish race in friendly and effective fashion in these countries in which they are the citizens? We should then have given them what every other nation has, some place, some local habitation, where they can develop the culture and the traditions which are peculiarly their own.

I could defend—I have endeavoured, and I hope not unsuccessfully, to defend this scheme of the Palestine Mandate from the most material economic view, and from that point of view it is capable of defence. I have endeavoured to defend it from the point of view of the existing population, and I have shown—I hope with some effect, that their prosperity also is intimately bound up with the success of Zionism. But

having endeavoured to the best of my ability to maintain those two propositions, I should, indeed, give an inadequate view to your Lordships of my opinions if I sat down without insisting to the utmost of my ability that, beyond and above all this, there is this great ideal at which those who think with me are aiming, and which, I believe, it is within their power to reach.

It may fail. I do not deny that this is an adventure. Are we never to have adventures? Are we never to try new experiments? I hope your Lordships will never sink to that unimaginative depth, and that experiment and adventure will be justified if there is any case or cause for their justification. Surely, it is in order that we may send a message to every land where the Jewish race has been scattered, a message which will tell them

that Christendom is not oblivious of their faith, is not unmindful of the service they have rendered to the great religions of the world, and, most of all, to the religion that the majority of your Lordships' House profess, and that we desire to the best of our ability to give them that opportunity of developing, in peace and quietness under British rule, those great gifts which hitherto they have been compelled from the very nature of the case only to bring to fruition in countries which know not their language, and belong not to their race. That is the ideal which I desire to see accomplished, that is the aim which lay at the root of the policy I am trying to defend; and, though it be defensible indeed on every ground, that is the ground which chiefly moves me.

Questions

- (1) In what ways does Balfour consider the element of uniqueness in assessing the Jewish contribution to the world?
- (2) In what specific manner does Balfour employ moralistic arguments in support of the Mandate? What are the points that he wishes to make?
- (3) What, to Balfour's way of thinking, is the most telling argument in favor of the Mandate?)

21-2

Women in Islamic Society: the context of Iranian Fundamentalism.

The overthrow of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of Iran and the establishment of the Ayatollah Khomeini's Fundamentalist Islamic Republic in 1979 brought the role of women into sharp focus. It was felt that in certain ways Fundamentalist Islam had elevated its women from the comparatively less-valued position that the Shah's secular, more-Westernized regime had placed them into; opponents asserted that women had been inhibited and their role downplayed to a much greater degree with the coming of the revolution. Freda Hussain and Kamelia Radwan offer their perspective.

Source: Freda Hussain and Kamelia Radwan, "The Islamic Revolution and Women: Quest for the Quranic Model" in Freda Hussain, ed., *Muslim Women* (London; Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 44-51, 64-65.

The Islamic revolution in Iran was a unique event for both the Western and non-Western world. How could a traditional society erupt in a mass revolution? What ideologies had been instrumental in activating the Iranian middle classes and masses against the Pahlavi regime? The Muslim world in particular, wondered at the active role played by the Iranian women in this revolution. In a traditional Islamic society, where segregation of sexes was strictly practiced and women had hitherto been confined to their homes, emerging only when draped in a chador—the revolution saw them as part of the massive demonstrations in the streets alongside the men. Not only did they join in the public demonstrations, but were also involved in active struggle against the authorities through underground guerilla movements....

Although Iran has been used as an example, such behaviour is not restricted to Iranian women alone as it is relevant to Muslim women the world over. The latter part of the paper will therefore deal with lessons drawn from it in the wider context....

THE ULEMA'S VIEW OF MUSLIM WOMEN

In Iran, the Ulema have traditionally been the interpreters of Islam. Through a lifelong religious training in various madrassahs and other religious institutions, they gain an extensive knowledge of Islam and after achieving the status of Mujtahid their credibility for the interpretation of Islam is enhanced. Their views of the Islamic role of women have exercised a considerable influence on the minds of the masses. In this section we shall briefly outline some of the interpretations given by Mujtahids like Ayatollah Yahya Nuri.