

rid the world of such evils as racial prejudice and discrimination. Working closely with the significant Indian community there he was able to gain concessions, though certainly not a perfect arrangement, for Indians.

He returned to India as a well-known activist and joined with many others who were seeking freedom from British rule. Through the philosophy already developed in South Africa he was able, non-violently, to convince the British it was in their best interests to give the Indian subcontinent its freedom. His success, however, was severely marred by the “revolt” of the Muslims and the separation of the country into Pakistan and India. Pakistan became a Muslim state that eventually split into Pakistan and Bangladesh.

India adopted a democratic form of government that was meant to be “secular.” India’s population is largely Hindu, but Muslims still constitute about 12 percent of the population. Today India is the largest democracy in the world but there are pressures to make the government more “Hindu.” Strong anti-Muslim feelings persist in some areas. In Kashmir, which is heavily Muslim, strong anti-Hindu attitudes prevail.

The dispute over Ayodhya, the presumed ancient capital where Ram of the *Ramayana* ruled, may bode ill for the future. In 1992, a mob of Hindus tore down an Islamic mosque that had been erected on the site by Babur in the 16th century. Their plan was to build a Hindu temple to replace it but that has, for the moment, been stymied by India’s secular government. Nevertheless, the site, now empty, is a point of radical disagreement between Hindus and Muslims. The world must wait to see whether this will again erupt into bloody violence.

### The Near East

Although the Ottoman Empire lasted from 1299 until 1922, after 1828 it experienced gradual decline. Even before that, Napoleon had occupied Egypt in 1798. What really led to decline, however, were economic difficulties coupled with a failure to keep up with the West technologically. There was also a growing sense of nationalism in different parts of the empire that became more and more insistent. One by one, pieces of the great empire were torn

away. France occupied Algeria in 1830; Greece won its independence in 1832. Persistent conflict with Russia also weakened Ottoman military power.

In a way, it was the size and multiplicity of the Ottoman Empire that ultimately brought it down. Although most of the population was Muslim, there were great ethnic differences that could only lead to misunderstanding and conflict. Even within Anatolia itself there were Kurds and Armenians who were not happy subject to the Sultan. Little by little pieces of the empire gained their freedom.

Then, in 1914, the Ottomans entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers. When Germany and Austria lost, the Western European powers were quick to step in to divide the Ottoman Empire, leaving the Turks with only Turkey. Out of this carving up of the empire some forty nations were created, many under mandate control. Much of the Muslim world was put, at least provisionally, under Western aegis. France got some areas, England others. Italy took Libya in 1912.

In the meantime, Theodore Herzl (1860–1904), a Jewish writer and journalist living in Vienna, Austria who was really not profoundly religious, had, in the 19th century, already begun a movement to be named Zionism that called for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. On November 2, 1917 the British government issued the Balfour Declaration expressing support for the idea of such a homeland as long as it did not negatively affect residents there. This declaration eventually became part of the Sevres Peace Treaty with Turkey and the Mandate for Palestine. Under the British Mandate, Jews began to settle in Palestine in significant numbers.

The Ottoman Empire had, as already said, been very tolerant of minority religions and had allowed them much more freedom than in many other parts of the world. The Jews usually had been much more welcome in the Near East than in Europe. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between living in the same area as Muslims and taking over an area as your own. Palestinians were obviously not happy with the idea that Jews were to take over and rule their land. Resistance became intense and the British began to see the problems with the idea. Slowing Jewish emigration, however, was difficult, particularly because in Europe Jews were again beginning to undergo severe persecution. During World War

II, the British actually turned back ships carrying Jewish émigrés who sought shelter from the Nazi holocaust. Nevertheless, there was no stemming the tide. More and more Jewish settlers arrived.

In 1948 the British, throwing up their hands, gave up the mandate and called upon the United Nations to solve the problem. The newly formed body chose to create a separate Jewish state and Israel came into existence, to be recognized almost immediately by the United States. The Arabs fought back fiercely, but to no avail. The Israelis were well armed and determined. The Jewish state survived. Thousands of Palestinians were forced to flee and many of their families have lived in exile ever since. So, while many other states were shedding the old religious social glue for an ideology they considered more secular, a new nation came into being based upon a religion that had not served in this way for centuries.

Israel was and is tolerant of other religious groups. Muslims have continued to live in Israel, but it is a Jewish state that operates under Jewish law. For many Muslims this has been a *cause célèbre* ever since Israel's founding. In 1967 Arab States joined together to put an end to Israel. Instead, they lost the war and Israel occupied the rest of Palestine. Attempts to create a separate Palestinian State have generally failed. More than any other issue, the continuation of the state of Israel constitutes the major political and diplomatic problem for the whole region. For many Arabs it is the ultimate humiliation that cannot be tolerated.

Meanwhile, in the Turkish War of Independence in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk led Turkish forces to drive out the occupying Europeans. Then he set about reforming the country. Islam was disestablished and a secular form of democracy with a unicameral legislature and a prime minister was established. Women were given freedom; western dress was adopted; education was placed under secular control. Although Ataturk had to use somewhat dictatorial methods to achieve the results, Turkey became a western style democracy.

Today, the great majority of Turks are Sunni Muslims, but of them perhaps a third are Alevis (also Alawis) who are Muslim but do not believe in praying five times a day, or going on the Hajj, or even attending a mosque. They hold services in which believers face each other rather than Mecca. Other Muslims find this break

with tradition quite appalling; there is obvious dislike. Therefore the Alevis tend not to identify themselves and thus are difficult to count. Still, it is clear there is a very significant number of Muslims who have broken with long-standing tradition and have adopted a much more liberal view of Islam.

It would be much too complicated to survey what happened in each of the other countries after the break up of the empire. Some states, like Egypt, have rather natural boundaries and a common culture. Others, like Iraq and Kuwait, were somewhat artificial constructions by the Western powers. Kuwait probably would never have come into existence had Western powers not had a great thirst for oil. It is among the artificially created nations that the most problems exist.

Religiously, the whole region remains strongly Muslim. Indeed, the various Western incursions into the region have done little to strengthen Christianity in the Near East. On the contrary, because Christianity is now seen as directly connected to the West in the minds of many Arabs, and the West is associated with occupation and intrusion, Christians have felt less and less comfortable in Muslim countries and have either emigrated or have converted to Islam or have lost their lives in the struggle for survival. In all Near Eastern countries Christian communities have declined significantly in the last fifty years. Jews who used to live all over the Near East are now confined to Israel. There are virtually no Moroccan or Yemenite or Iraqi Jews left.

We must not leave the Near East without mention of one other significant event that happened first in Persia. In 1844 Siyyud Ali Muhammed (1819–50) declared himself the “Bab,” that is The Gate. He announced that he was sent by God to pave the way for a whole new era of religious unity and peace. Unfortunately for him the religious leaders in Persia found his message completely heretical. Twenty thousand of his followers were killed and he himself was executed in Tabriz in 1850.

Mirza Husayn (1817–1892), a well-to-do Persian, however, took up the cause and came to be called *Baha’ullah*, the Glory of God. Although exiled to the Ottoman Empire and then imprisoned for most of his life, he wrote extensively about the New Age that is dawning and the new covenant between God and humanity that emphasizes the end of war and the unification of the world’s reli-

gions. He was buried on Mt. Carmel in what is now Israel and his grave has become an international shrine.

Today more than five million people around the world count themselves as Bahais. The movement has no clergy. The leadership of the whole movement passes through the family of the Baha'ullah.

## Europe

The 19th Century in Europe was one of radical change and transformation, of idealistic dreams and dreadful nightmares. It began in the wake of the French Revolution and its chant of “liberty, equality and fraternity” which ended with a great bloodbath and the guillotine. Out of that carnage emerged Napoleon Bonaparte and his imperial ambitions that were soon to be squashed by the icy winter snows of Russia. For a few years the continent then sank into an uneasy peace that was shattered by the 1848 revolutions, the Crimean War, the Franco-Prussian War, and a host of other battles and revolts too numerous to mention. Shaking off the past was not easy, defining the future even harder.

While all these battles were going on—perhaps because these battles were going on—there was a radical surge in industrial development. As technology improved, so did forges and factories. The landscape became dotted and sometimes ruined by mills and millwheels and the black smoke of foundries. Inventions like the steamboat radically increased the speed of travel. The iron plow made farming more efficient. The cotton gin greatly improved the whole process of cloth manufacture. Societies that had been rural for centuries were transformed. Men, women, and children left those subsistence farms where their ancestors had labored to work very long hours under dreadful conditions to produce goods that made the factory owner a tidy profit. The era of unrestrained capitalism was under way. And not every one liked it.

After an age of satire and irony and sophisticated wit, intellectuals began to find new meaning in exactly what both war and industry were destroying, the world of nature. The Chinese, of course, had reveled in the natural landscape for centuries and had created great works of art to express the subtle values that nature can express. In Europe, on the other

hand, nature had not served as much more than a backdrop for human or divine activity.

Now, with a great burst of insight, poets, artists, and some philosophers turned to the natural world, not for iron ore or cotton cloth, but for spiritual inspiration. The artificial and the stilted were “out;” sublimity and the natural were “in.” The 18th century rationalist had difficulty trying to find God through rational argument. The romantics, however, found a communication from the divine in lofty mountains and flowing rivers.

This attitude also produced a new kind of scientist. Alexander Von Humboldt, for instance, traveled the world examining nature. Much of his time was spent in South America exploring the wonders of the natural landscape and studying the great variety of flora and fauna that this world has produced. Ultimately such explorations led to Charles Darwin, sailing on the Beagle around South America, to compile information that directly produced a dramatic break-through in our understanding of the world of flora and fauna. That, however, is a subject that we will return to later.

18th Century philosophy had ended with skepticism about knowing anything. The great thinker of the early part of the 19th century was G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) who, like the scientists of his age, persisted despite such skepticism to try to describe how the Spirit (*Geist*) operates in and through history. History does have a logic, but that logic is dialectical and not Aristotelian at all. One situation engenders its opposite and in their conflict a new stage in development is born. History moves forward through conflict and resolution to a final end. Now history, like nature, becomes a revelation of God. The logic of history is the logic of the divine.

At the time, one of Hegel’s most acute critics, Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), was little known, even in his own country, Denmark. For him “the System,” that is Hegel’s rational philosophy, indeed all rational philosophy, was anathema. Kierkegaard, exploring the Bible in an entirely new way and taking Abraham as his model, emphasized the absurdity of life and the necessity for a “leap of faith.” For him, the “knight of faith” is one who has made and makes motions of “infinite resignation.” Christendom, that depends upon custom and tradition and rational theology, has gotten it all wrong. Christianity is not just going to church and believing certain doc-