

gests to me that she wants to abandon belief in such things as a literal virgin birth and a literal resurrection of Christ. Her conclusion apparently is that the Church will continue to exist in two forms, one consisting of people who take the beliefs expressed in the creeds as literally true and one consisting of

people who are drawn to the teaching of Jesus but who have a variety of views about him.

Hilary Wakeman's book demonstrates what *not* to do in the face of declining numbers, that is, to water down or abandon entirely beliefs that are thought to be unpalatable today, although the doctrines she wants

to water down or abandon are mainly not those which we hold. Not only do we have the duty to uphold the Truth, whether it is popular or not, but the indications are that trying to give it more appeal by modifying it to suit the times we live in will not work anyway.

Tony Benson

The death of Mr Palestine

Nigel Bernard

IN JOEL 3 the gathering of nations to Armageddon is described: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land" (v. 2). In this context God addresses some peoples in particular: "Yea, and what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine?" (v. 4). The phrase "coasts of Palestine" refers to the area today known as the Gaza Strip. That this area today has such a distinct identity, an identity which can then be linked with prophecy, is in no small part due to the influence of Yasser Arafat, who died last month.

Arafat's career

In writing of his legacy, one writer stated: "He was commonly described as 'Mr Palestine', the iconic leader of the Palestinians, the symbol of Palestinian nationalism".¹ Shimon Peres, who won the Nobel Peace Prize with Arafat in 1994, wrote of him as follows: "He has done more than any other leader to forge a unique and separate Palestinian identity. He was the voice and symbol of the Palestinian cause. His tireless efforts brought the Palestinian cause to the forefront of the international agenda and kept it there for four decades".² Arafat helped the weak Palestinians to say, "I am strong" (Joel 3:10).

When Arafat appeared before the United Nations in 1974 he said: "I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand".³ These words sum up the paradox of the man.

He proclaimed, and fought, an armed struggle against Israel, a struggle which for him began in 1948 when he fought with Palestinian irregulars against Israel in the area around Gaza. In the late 1950s he helped form the underground Fatah guerrilla group, and by 1969 had become chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Yet, as a result of his role in the Oslo Agreement, incredibly this man was to win the Nobel Peace Prize!

Of course, this did not herald peace. As suicide bombings began as part of the violent reaction to the visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in 2000, the Israelis blamed Arafat and called him a terrorist. Arafat's life was a microcosm of what we can expect to happen on a greater scale in the future. Out of violence a cry of peace incredibly emerges, only to be followed by destruction: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Born in Jerusalem?

In his biography of Arafat written in the early 1970s, Thomas Kiernan wrote about the claim that Arafat was born in Jerusalem:

"It has become the conventional wisdom within the Arab world, and it has been

1. Cockburn, P. (2004), "The man they called Mr Palestine", *The Independent*, 12 Nov., p. 6.
2. Peres, S. (2004), "With the passing of their father, the Palestinians have a chance to emerge", *The Times*, 12 Nov., p. 16.
3. Quoted by Cockburn, *op. cit.*



Yasser Arafat meeting with Pope John Paul II

generally accepted without, that Arafat was born 'about 1930 in Jerusalem'. Indeed, all press and publicity dispatches emanating from 'authoritative' Palestinian sources since 1968 have emphasised Arafat's birthplace as Jerusalem. And to this day Arafat often states with sad, ironic pride that the house in which he was born was only a few houses away from the Jewish Wailing Wall".⁴

Kiernan believed that Arafat was probably born in Egypt, and today it is taken as proven that this is the case. Arafat wanted people to believe he was born in Jerusalem to help strengthen his claim to that city. Yet the key for Philistia, and all other peoples and nations, is

not to claim falsely that they are born in Jerusalem but rather to ensure their spiritual birthplace is Jerusalem:

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. *Selah*. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know Me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest Himself shall establish her" (Ps. 87: 3-5).

Arafat said of himself, "This . . . man was born in her", but his claim was false, from both a natural and a spiritual perspective.

Conclusion

What will happen in the power vacuum left by Arafat remains to be seen. The situation is made more complex because he in fact held three key positions: he was the leader of the Fatah group; he chaired the executive committee of the PLO; and he was the president of the Palestinian Authority. Whatever the outcome in relation to his succession, his role in establishing "the coasts of Palestine" in the latter days as a power to be reckoned with has great significance in relation to Bible prophecy.

4. Kiernan, T. (1976), *Yasir Arafat*, London, Abacus, p. 16.

Israel and Europe on a collision course?

As reported by Zalman Shoval in the *Jerusalem Post*, "A 'secret' Israeli Foreign Ministry report warns that Israel and Europe will find themselves on a collision course, causing serious economic and diplomatic damage to the Jewish state". According to the report, prepared by the ministry's Centre for Political Research, "we could be increasingly isolated if Europe becomes more influential, even to the point of threatening our legitimacy as a sovereign Jewish state". It warns: "The EU could sharpen its expectation that Israel will comply with international norms . . . and honour the authority of the United Nations and its agencies".

The article continues: "But is this to imply that when Israel exercises its legitimate right and duty to protect its citizens against terrorism, including the building of its security fence, that we are not complying with international norms? . . . As to the UN and its agencies, I suppose this refers primarily to UNRWA, the main culprits in perpetuating the Arab refugee problem for almost 56 years and whose top functionary recently admitted employing Hamas members in his organisation . . . Similarly, it is hardly a foregone conclusion that the expanded membership of the EU to the east would increase its anti-Israel tendencies; the democratic leaders of Europe should recognise that it is only a matter of time until this combination of old and new anti-Semitism not only threatens the Jews but jeopardises freedom and democracy everywhere".—*Joan Brooks*