

- reproduces official French government written confirmation of its support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine some six months prior to the issue of the Balfour Declaration
- reproduces formal advice provided to the British Cabinet when considering the Declaration that Arab residents of Palestine would be unsupportive and uncooperative were it to proceed
- shows that one of the primary reasons Britain issued the Declaration, in spite of the reservations of many of its own advisers, and even some ministers, was an erroneous perception that Germany was well advanced in courting the Zionist lobby with similar promises, in spite of the fact that it should have been clear that Germany's alliance with the Turks would make it impossible
- shows that Britain's key objective in issuing the Declaration (encouragement of Jews to support the allied war effort) was not achieved, largely because a week after the issue of the Declaration the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and withdrew from the war.

Of particular interest to students of prophecy, however, is the following extract, which is in harmony with the terms of the sixth vial (Revelation 16:12-16):

"He [Sir Mark Sykes] hated the Young Turks, however, whom he accused of diluting the

admirable ancient Ottoman conventions with a half-baked and half-understood Western ideology based upon the principles of the French Revolution" (p. 246).

Later, on page 306, the author notes that Zionism was likewise inspired by the struggle for national self-determination of peoples in Eastern Europe, who themselves were inspired by the French Revolution.

Thus it was that the frog-like spirits conspired to ensure that the Middle East became a centre of tension and instability at the time of the end. This book tells part of the story of how that instability and conflict was promoted.

As they read this book, students of prophecy will detect evidence of the angels of God manipulating the work of a host of diplomats and bureaucrats in London, Paris, Cairo, Constantinople, Moscow, Basle and other places. Frustrating or facilitating their efforts as necessary to ensure events developed in accordance with God's prophetic plan, these divine messengers had a busy time during World War I!

Captivating and intriguing, *The Balfour Declaration* rewards Bible students with rich insights into some of the origins of current tensions in the Middle East, which is, of course, at the centre of God's plan. It is commended as an excellent overview of the background to one of the most remarkable documents ever produced.

History

T. E. Lawrence and the ANZACs

Malcolm Edwards

An unusual insight into some of the events which paved the way for the establishment of the State of Israel. Hindsight allows us to see how God worked in the kingdom of men to achieve His declared purpose.

THE DEFEAT of the Turkish forces in Palestine in the autumn of 1918 was a key event in the opening of the Holy Land to the Jews in the fulfilment of Bible Prophecy. Thirty years later, because of the insoluble conflict caused by the Balfour Declaration to make Palestine a homeland

for the Jews and a conflicting promise made to the Arabs via T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) after World War I, Britain was forced to withdraw from Palestine. This brought about Israel's War of Independence, which

led to the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948.

An alliance of forces

The extent to which Arab forces in the Ottoman Empire participated in the victory over the Turks is highly questionable. Certainly, they were a

disruptive force behind the main battle zones, but the final victory was mostly due to British and ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) forces, plus two West Indian and even a couple of Jewish Regiments. After clearing the Sinai Peninsula, these forces advanced into Palestine, where a detachment of the Australian Light Horse distinguished itself in October 1917 in the capturing of Beer-sheba to gain its precious water supplies.

After the defeat of the Turks at Gaza, the main force advanced northward to capture Jerusalem. Then, due to a clever strategy on the part of Field Marshall Allenby, the Turks were rolled back to Samaria, with the swift-moving ANZAC mounted brigades constantly wreaking havoc behind their lines.

Damascus captured

Lawrence had always claimed that his forces were the first to capture Damascus. It was partly due to this that the British promise was made to the Arabs. In his book *Horsemen Pass By* (2003), however, Lindsay Baly, whose own father fought in that campaign, is adamant that the first to capture Damascus was a brigade of the Australian mounted division under Brigadier Wilson, and that the city was surrendered to a Major Olden under his command, who entered at 5 a.m. on 1 October 1918 and discovered that the occupying Turks had left during the night. He made for the town hall, where the awaiting emir surrendered the city to him, saying, "In the name of the civil population of Damascus, I welcome the British army."

According to Baly, the Australian forces then left at 7 a.m. in pursuit of the retreating Turks; Lawrence arrived two hours later. He writes: "Lawrence, dressed in gold and white robes and riding in a blue Rolls Royce, arrived in Damascus two hours after Wilson had gone, but he maintained all his life that he had got there first." Apparently a few Arabs had infiltrated the city during the night, but it seems clear that the city was surrendered to Olden, who later wrote: "People clung to the horses' necks, kissed our stirrups, showering confetti and rosewater over them, shouted, laughed, cried, sang, and clapped from windows."

It is unlikely that a military man would invent such a story; but, since the capture of Damascus



T. E. Lawrence along with Sir Herbert Samuel and Emir Abdullah (who became Abdullah I of Jordan) in Amman in 1921. Lawrence is dressed in a wool suit with turn-up trousers and a homburg hat.

was a major event in the Palestine war, it could have considerably influenced the British Government in making their promise to Lawrence, later placing them in an impossible situation that led, ultimately, to the establishment of the State of Israel and the stirring events that have since unfolded.

Postscript

It is interesting that two who served in that campaign, who marched through the hills, valleys and plains of the Holy Land, passing through many Biblical towns and places, were Scotsman Bill Smilley, late of Melbourne, Australia, and West Indian William Watson of Old Hope, Jamaica. Both became Christadelphians later in their lives. They never met in this mortal life, but they may yet meet in a glorified Holy Land of the future.