

THE FOUNDING OF PROPHECY TODAY

The printed magazine, *'Prophecy Today'*, was born in 1984, although the publication of the first issue was not until March 1985. The concept of a Christian publication that looked at current affairs in the world and particularly in Britain from a biblical prophetic standpoint, was the driving force behind its foundation.

1984 was a crowded year for world affairs. It saw the Los Angeles Olympics where Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean scored maximum points dancing on ice to Ravel's Bolero; President Reagan won a second term at the White House; Prince Harry was born to Princess Diana and Charles; the IRA bombed the Grand Hotel Brighton during the Conservative Party conference; China agreed a deal that when the territory reverted to China in 1997, they would guarantee its independence for 50 years! In March we published Part Two of the Video Nasties parliamentary enquiry, and in July our work was crowned with success when Parliament unanimously passed the Video Recordings Act 1984.

In our own ministry we made our first trip to Israel in April where we received a prophetic warning of an imminent attack upon Israel which we reported to Lance Lambert who took it to his neighbour, the Minister of Defence, who called up all the reserves. Lance mobilised Christian leaders for a day of prayer and God responded with the most powerful storm of the decade that made an attack across the Golan Heights impossible. The Minister later said, "Lance, the storm saved Israel." For us it confirmed that God does still speak to his people today – and that we were right in going ahead with plans to publish the new magazine, *Prophecy Today*.

Cliff had been working with a little group of Christians from different backgrounds who had a shared desire to explore the relevance of biblical prophecy for an understanding of the times in which we were living. They spent many hours studying Scripture and sharing with each other concepts that they believed contributed to our understanding of God's nature and purposes, and how those purposes might be being worked out today. It was from these discussions that the desire to share them with others in the churches was born.

None of us had any experience of publishing except Monica, who had been publishing the *Church Growth Digest* for the past five years. But this was a small A5 size quarterly digest in those early days of the British Church Growth Association¹. Cliff went to see Edward English who was an

¹ It did not become a full size A4 magazine until XXXX, the subject of competition for ownership from other publishers until xxxxx and being professionally set until xxxxx – see more on the Church Growth pages

experienced publisher, but his advice was discouraging, rather than helpful. We committed the whole venture to God in prayer, feeling sure that he would only open a way if it was within his will.

Michael Fenton-Jones was one of our little praying community at that time and through his professional work in London he had contact with a wide range of people in different lines of business. He was having lunch with the chairman of Marshalls, the publishers. During conversation over coffee the chairman referred to current trends in publishing. He said that his board wanted to broaden their publishing beyond books, and they would like to publish a magazine. They had set aside a sum of money to launch such a publication, but they could not agree on what subject it should cover or even how it would fit in to their existing structures. They had therefore decided that they were not ready to break into this market, so they would leave the money on hold until they had a clear sense of direction.

Michael responded immediately that we had a similar, but opposite problem. We had the vision and the passion for a printed publication, but no capital to cover the costs and no experience of how to go about the publication of a magazine. Both men immediately saw the connection between Marshalls and our fledgling ministry. They decided to explore the way forward by inviting Cliff to meet with some of the Marshall's staff. At that time, we were on the ministry team at St Mark's Kennington, so it was arranged for them to come to St Mark's and meet with Cliff and Monica where there was a ready response to the concept we outlined. The next step was for Cliff to go out to Basingstoke to meet with other members of Marshalls' team to discuss details of style, layout, production, and distribution.

The agreement was that Marshalls would take full responsibility for everything other than the editorial content, which would be entirely within our hands. They would place suitable advertisements in the magazine which would provide some income, and they would send out a free copy of the first issue to clergy and ministers of all the major church denominations. They would also make arrangements for copies of the magazine to be on sale in Christian bookshops throughout the UK.

This arrangement seemed incredibly generous to us and they said that they would cover the entire costs of the whole of the first year during which time we would become established so we could stand on our own feet. This seemed to us to be a blessing beyond anything that we could have imagined and we really praised God for opening such an amazing door to us.