

GETTING STARTED

In our first issue dated March/April 1985 we used the Editorial to publish a “Raison d’être for *Prophecy Today*”. The opening paragraphs of this were: –

“Why another Christian magazine? *Prophecy Today* is being launched as an international bimonthly journal available in Europe, North America, and Australia because it has a message and a purpose that the publishers believe to be of great significance in the world today.

“The message is essentially the word of God for our times. The purpose is to convey that word to the nations through the church. But why **prophecy**? Because we define prophecy as the forthtelling of the word of God. This was the task of the prophets in ancient Israel. It is the task of the church today. Essentially Christ wants his church to be a prophetic people proclaiming his word to his world. In essence this is a basic biblical task.

“But why prophecy **today**? Because we believe the nature of God is unchanging and that the God who communicated with his people in biblical times still communicates with his people today through the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the word of God that is set forth in Scripture. We believe that the Bible contains all that is necessary for our salvation and that it is the full and final revelation of God that can neither be added to nor taken away from.

“We believe the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the Scriptures. Without the Holy Spirit we are left with only our rational minds to interpret the written word. Through the Holy Spirit the written word of **yesterday** becomes the **living word for today**.”

This editorial set out the general ethos of the magazine and the direction we expected it to travel. In that first issue we published a powerful article on the state of the church in the Western nations. It was titled “Take Off The Graveclothes!” It contained the following paragraph:

“Right across Europe many of the traditional churches are sleeping peacefully, occasionally stirring to murmur, ‘As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be’, or are so caught up in the immediacy of institutional organisation and of social programs, that their spiritual eyes are blinded and their energies are diverted into unproductive cul-de-sacs.”

We said that the Western church had been invaded by the world and that Jesus was weeping over his church as he wept over the tomb of Lazarus. He had given new life to Lazarus, but he commanded the disciples to remove the graveclothes. We have to do the same today so that the life of the Holy Spirit can be released into the world.

Monica wrote a powerful article on the World Church Growth Scene alongside this looking at the different regions around the world and noting the significant growth of the gospel in the decade since the end of World War II. She ended her issue with the upbeat statement –

“There is clear evidence worldwide that God is doing a new thing in our generation. There is a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit among the nations that is giving a new confidence to Christians. God is rearming his church with the gifts and power of the Spirit. He is fulfilling his promise, *“I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.”*

There was an important biblical article “Isaiah Speaks Today” by Julian Ward, examining the message of Isaiah against the social and spiritual background of Isaiah’s day and showing how it relates to the present world situation in 1985. He noted that, “Isaiah lived in a society divided between the rich landowning class and the poor rural peasants.” He noted the injustice of the rich who exploited the poor, even reducing them to slavery. He related this to Britain, quoting a 1984 speech by Bishop David Sheppard in the Richard Dimbleby lecture where he noted the depredation suffered by many people in urban Britain today through unemployment, through rundown housing, through inadequate schooling and poor health and care facilities. In the article he said that just as the Lord entered into judgement against the elders and leaders of the people in his day, so too God is condemning the wealth of the Western nations with their vast stockpiles of food in a world that is stricken with 500 million people suffering from malnutrition or actually starving to death.

This article paved the way for a powerful review on ‘A World of Inequality’ looking at food production and distribution of wealth, the world health scene including infant mortality, education, economic poverty, and food distribution. The review contained the following statement.

“The rich nations use their muscle to protect their prosperity. They control world capital investment. They control the price of basic commodities on the world market such as grain, seeds, and fertilisers. They have a monopoly of technology which they deny to Third World countries, thus keeping them dependent and limiting competition. They control interest rates and thus ensure that any aid given to poor countries comes back to the rich nations, increased their overflowing abundance.”

This first issue of *Prophecy Today* ended with an article ‘God Speaks Through Tears’ which ended with the statement “God is breaking his heart over his world today. As the world moves closer to the Holocaust of destruction that will descend upon the nations unless we turn from our wicked ways and turn to him, God is pleading with his rebellious children, *“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is no other”* (Isaiah 45:22).

Prophecy Today in this first issue laid down a marker of its intention to deal with contemporary issues of injustice and set a standard of justice from the word of God. It would be a standard that looks fearlessly at what is happening in our world today against a background of the unchanging nature and purposes of the God of Creation who not only created the universe, but also created human beings in his own image. He established a covenant relationship with his people Israel through whom he would not only reveal his nature and purposes, but would also task them and the followers of Messiah Jesus, with the responsibility of both living and declaring the word of the Lord to each generation.

