

Wessex Auxiliary Report 2012

The year 2012, in which Her Majesty the Queen celebrated sixty years on the throne, was a busy year for the Auxiliary. During 2012, the Society produced a special Diamond Jubilee edition of the Authorised (King James) Version to mark the occasion, and the Auxiliary Committee felt that, with the Lord's help, this would be a major opportunity to distribute the Scriptures.

After prayerful discussion within the Auxiliary Committee it was agreed that our main focus for the year would be to distribute the Diamond Jubilee Bibles to schools and prisons. Much prayer was offered up to the Lord that He would open doors for us, both financially and into the schools and prisons concerned. We held our Annual General Meeting in January and spoke to supporters from churches scattered across the region, showing them the size of the task and seeking their help during this year of special opportunity. The undertaking seemed vast and, if one may speak for others, our faith was tried as to how we would be able to achieve very much at all given our limited resources. But as the hymn-writer John Newton declares in his hymn commemorating the ravens feeding Elijah in 2 Kings 17.6:

When the Lord's people have need,
His goodness will find out a way.

Within a few weeks we had offers of financial support from churches within the region, from other organisations with an interest in the distribution of the Word of God, and from private individuals who felt constrained to support us. Each member of the committee then began prayerfully to write to schools and prisons in their local areas, offering them copies of the Diamond Jubilee commemorative Bible. As the weeks passed, a gradual flow of responses began to come in:

- Eight copies for a school in Wiltshire
- Seventy-five copies for a prison

- Thirty copies for a school in the New Forest
- Two hundred and seven copies for a school near Trowbridge

As the numbers of requested copies increased, we were also contacted by a number of churches and private individuals offering financial support. One supporter, who is a retired pensioner, approached the primary school she attended as a child; there in 1952 she had been given a commemorative Coronation Bible. The school agreed to take twenty-four Bibles, and asked her to come to the leaver's service in the local church and present them to the pupils.

In another instance, a church approached a local school offering them Bibles. They took four hundred and fifty Bibles, enough for one for each pupil.

The pastor of a church in Bristol walked up to a prison gate and engaged a Muslim guard in conversation. The guard was very interested in the Bible and asked questions before offering to go and get the chaplain. When the chaplain arrived, he welcomed the opportunity and gratefully accepted five hundred Bibles, one for each prisoner!

One headmaster agreed to take two hundred and twenty-five copies of the Bible, one for every school leaver, and then asked for one for each member of staff: a further one hundred and eighty. He was also very supportive of the project, and gave a generous personal donation.

Another school agreed to offer one to each of their nine hundred pupils. The deputy head felt that they should offer them rather than give them, and that they would do this at the assembly for each year group. At the first assembly for Year 11 students there were one hundred and seventy pupils in attendance, and one hundred and fifty-five took a copy of the Word of God away with them.

One committee member told us about a school assembly he attended where over two hundred Bibles were given out. He recalled the joy of seeing every child in the school walking out of the hall with a copy of the Word of God in

their hand. It occurred to him that this might be the first time the Scriptures have ever been found in their homes.

Well, what had God wrought? In the short time that this endeavour took place, the Lord had seen fit to enable us to supply over four thousand five hundred Bibles to schools and prisons within the area. Truly, 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth' (Revelation 19.6).

We would say with Isaiah, 'To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? ... Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in' (Isaiah 40.18,21-22).

There is also a further lesson that I believe the Lord has taught us in recent months: there is still a real desire amongst hungry and thirsty souls for this beloved English Authorised Version of the Word of God that we hold so dear. On one occasion a meeting was held at a prison at which a number of Bibles were presented to prisoners at a Bible study. During the meeting there was a discussion about Bible versions, and some lively exchanges from various viewpoints about whether or not the Authorised Version was easy to understand. Two prisoners spoke up, and their comments were very encouraging.

The first one said, 'You need to understand something. What you will find with the Authorised Version is that things are not left out of it just because it is not politically correct to say them. This version is very direct about sin, hell and the justice of God'. One of the chaplains then made a number of points about people in other countries not understanding archaic English, especially when English wasn't their first language. It was at this point that an African prisoner in a wheelchair spoke up and said, 'I want to tell you something. If God speaks to you through His Word, He will speak to you in your own

language, whatever that language may be, because He will speak to your heart'. He accentuated this by beating his hand on his chest. The whole room went silent. There was nothing else for anyone to say.

It is the prayerful desire of the Wessex Committee that the copies of the Word of God which have been distributed throughout the region might be used to the eternal good of the souls who have received them, and that the Holy Spirit would work in their hearts to bring them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ—'such as should be saved' (Acts 2.47). It is also our prayer that the Lord would go on to bless His Word across our beloved country and in other nations of the world, that 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2.14).

'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen' (Ephesians 3.20-21).