



Above 30th year Annual Report 1952

The Bible Text Publicity Mission

About our History

Adolf Hitler did his best to make sure we could not tell you about the way the Lord started our ministry. Documents held by HM Charity Commission tell us - *The President, Mr. Charles Phillips reported with much regret the destruction, of the Offices 43, Newington Butts, through enemy action on May 10th 1941 which resulted in the loss of all records, reports, and accounts of the Mission, together with the lists of subscribers' names and addresses, Minute Book, correspondence files, etc.*

A meeting was convened at which Mr Phillips recounted the start of our work. Minutes were taken and the Charity Commission regard these minutes as our Governing Document. We highlight some of the story. The Mission was originally called "The GOSPEL SKY SIGN Mission.

The Gospel Sky Sign Mission was inaugurated February, 1823, to display the Gospel on revolving and other electric signs throughout the world, but the work originally commenced on October 9th, 1922, some four months before any organization was formed. These electric scintillating signs are owned by commercial companies, who flash out advertisements and items of late news, thus compelling a steady public interest.

It is the purpose of the Mission to [display] the Word of God interspersed between advertisements and news items, and as the texts revolve across the screen approximately once every three or four minutes from sunset until nearly midnight, each text is displayed nearly 153 times each evening.

Charles Phillips told the meeting how God called him to the work.

It was in July 1922, going to Walworth to an open-air Gospel campaign, I noticed an aeroplane writing "B.D.V." (a tobacco advertisement) in letters of smoke high in the sky. Never before had I any desire to fly, but I felt then that if I were up there, I would write, not "B.D.V." but "God is Love". Being asked to speak that evening, I at once addressed the large crowd by referring to the aeroplane, which all had seen, and told of the desire that had just come into my heart, that if I could I would write "God is Love" and other texts upon, the sky. I would, if it were possible, take up three coloured smokes, Black, Red, and White, and write "Though your sins" (in black) "be as scarlet" (in red) "they shall be as snow" (in white.)

That evening, or the next, returning home with Mr. Ralph Mitchells, the Evangelist, we saw at the Elephant & Castle a great crowd watching the results of a prize fight that was being held at the Royal Albert Hall, the reports of which were being, displayed on the scintillating sign. There and then the desire and determination were born within me to use for God's glory that which was being used for the purposes of evil. But it was not until the following October that this was carried into effect.

He then goes on to speak about the first contracts and displays.

Communicating with the Sign Company early in October 1922, as to terms for advertising Scripture Texts, and being informed that another prize fight was to take place at the Royal Albert Hall on

Thursday October 12th, that results of the fight as it - progressed would be recorded upon the sign at the Elephant & Castle as in July, I quickly decided to send along texts for the whole of that week, which were as follows:

"Be ye reconciled to God."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved"

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life"

"Fight the good fight of faith, resist the devil and he will flee from you."

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

"The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

The texts appear, one a night, from Monday to Saturday in the order shown. Our founder comments on the first night.

The interest aroused by these texts indicated that they should be continued, and the testimony on the Tuesday morning of a young woman, that both she and her fiancé had been converted by the text of the first night, seemed to be God's seal upon the work, so I appealed to various friends to carry on, individually, the display of texts week by week, which was done for considerable time, but, realising the impossibility of making the work permanent in that way, it was obvious that a society had to be formed if this were to be accomplished.

He continues "Representative men of various denominations were approached and

willingly joined the council, and thus the Gospel Sky Sign, Mission was inaugurated on February 5th 1923, four months after the work began”

The early years of the work describe some items that will seem strange to the modern mind. An example is the ‘Handwriting on the Wall’ which appears to have been a portable ‘magic lantern’ which projected passages of Scripture on walls displaying about 800 words over 15 minutes. Another feature was the Gospel Roadside Pulpit, which appear to have been back-illuminated posters outside churches and in public places. This ministry began in 1927 and ended in 1939 with the ‘black out.’

During this pre-war period, texts were displayed overseas in Palmpol - Brittany, Paris, Bombay, Warsaw and Serbia.

Since the second world war a number of people have served the Mission. These include Rev Cyril H Chilvers, Rev Howard Kensit, Dr H. H. Rowden (of the London Bible College), Rev Arthur Coffey, Miss Eileen Luffman, Mr Ken Winsor and Mr Trevor Argent. The latter saved the work from closure when Miss Luffman died leaving most of our records in her locked bungalow in Chadwell Heath. Mention must be made of Peter Grant, who served as Treasurer for many years, being called home in May 2006. Ken Winsor continues to serve as Life President. This list is not all-inclusive.

The Mission is currently run by a Council which consists of Jean Campart - Chair, Lawrence Wright - Vice-chair, Rev Bill Turner - Administrator, Mrs Rose Caplin (Treasurer), Rev Dr John Hall, Dick Crane (Railway Mission), Martin Lawrence (LCM) and Jeff Potter (LCM). It is ac-

knowledged by all concerned that Mrs Caplin has brought order and stability to the Mission’s funding, enabling more to be done. The Credit Crunch has kept rental prices down and enabled the Mission to hire more panels on railway stations than would have been possible in a more normal business environment..

In 2004 the Mission relocated to Romford in Essex. All Bible Text staff are unpaid volunteers. Designs for posters have been supplied by Richard Caplin and Simon Petherick (VIZ a VIZ). Typography and scanning is increasingly being done in-house to reduce pre-press costs. In 2009 the Mission held its first joint venture with MEMO (Message on the Move). This proved very successful in terms of take-up of our help line services. A further joint campaign has been arranged for the Birmingham area in the Autumn of 2010.

As long as the Lord enables us to do so we will display God’s Word in Public Places.

Bill Turner - September 2007 - revised February 2010
Material in italics are direct quotations from the words of Charles Phillips.



Railway poster 1947

THE BIBLE TEXT PUBLICITY MISSION

founded 1923, displays the Word of God on over 300 Railway Stations. Is there a text on your station? If not, and should you desire one, please communicate with Mr. Charles Phillips, F.R.G.S., Founder and President, 13, Vowler Street, London, S.E.17.

ANNUAL MEETING—SPURGEON'S TABERNACLE, JUNE 20 at 7.30 p.m.

Above Christian Press Advert 1946
The Poster below is from our South African Counterpart

**The Bible Text
Publicity Mission**
PO Box 2677
ROMFORD RM7 8XF

www.btpm.org.uk
email
billturner@tiscali.co.uk
Phone 01708 733293