

March 13th

Memory verse

There is no God like thee, in heaven above or on earth beneath. I Kings 8:23

These are the words of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived,¹ and they are worth learning. Very small children can learn the words in bold and understand that “thee” is like the word “you” but only means one person, never more than one.

Something to listen to

If you did the lesson for January 25th you will have already had a taste of Mendelssohn's beautiful music. His violin concerto in E minor op.² 64 was first performed in Leipzig on **March 13th** 1845.



A violin concerto is a piece of music for violin and orchestra in which the violin is accompanied by, and dialogues with, the orchestra.

Mendelssohn played the violin and the piano from a very young age. He also wrote music while still a child. His first violin concerto was written when he was just a lad of thirteen. Although it is a delightful piece of music, it is overshadowed by the 1845 E minor concerto which is so famous that it is known simply as “*the* Mendelssohn violin concerto” as though the earlier one did not exist. Although it is difficult to play, the E minor concerto is part of every concert violinists repertoire. Its beautiful melodies make it outstandingly popular with audiences everywhere.

Mendelssohn wrote this concerto with his friend the violinist, Ferdinand David, in mind. In 1838, he wrote to David: “I should like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor runs through my head, the beginning of which gives me no peace.” He consulted David for advice while writing the concerto which took six years to complete.

Find a recording of this concerto and listen to it.³ It begins with a violin tune – the one that Mendelssohn said “gave him no peace”. There are three parts or movements in this concerto but there are no breaks between them. You can doodle quietly on paper if this helps you concentrate on listening.

More to come from Mendelssohn in the lesson for 14th May.

Something to think about

On **March 13th** 1961 black and white Bank of England five pound notes like this ceased to be legal tender. That means they could no longer be used as money.



1 Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, of course.

2 Publishers give each of a composer's pieces a number by which they can be identified. This is called the “opus number” or “op.” for short.

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I03Hs6dwj7E> for instance.

I don't suppose you have ever seen a bank note that looks like the one in the picture above. Nowadays they are quite valuable – worth between about five and ten times their face value, depending on their age and condition. If someone in your family does own one they have quite a treasure in their possession.

“White Fivers” such as the one in the picture above were first issued in 1793. War with France was the reason. It caused a depletion of the Bank of England's gold reserves and so the bank issued paper money. The bank notes measured 95 x 120mm and apart for some slight changes in size they remained more or less the same in appearance until 1945.

Shopkeepers often required the purchaser to write their name and address on the reverse of these large white bank notes when paying for their purchases. This provided some security against forgery and theft. My parents remembered doing this when purchasing furniture in the 1950s.

During the Second World War these black and white notes were subject to an attempted mass faking. Reich Minister of Propaganda of Nazi Germany, Joseph Goebbels, had millions of fake British bank notes made to be fed into use across Europe. Economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) commented that the Communist leader Lenin⁴ had noted that, “[t]here is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debauch the currency. The process engages all the hidden forces of economic law that come down on the side of destruction and does so in a manner that not one man in a million is able to diagnose.”⁵ Goebbels also understood this and tried to undermine the British currency to make the finances of the country collapse. He concentrated on the fivers because they were in common use and of high value. The secrecy of the German operation was breached, however, and in 1940 the Bank of England suspended production of new fivers and warned the public about the danger of the counterfeits.

But why would the introduction of a mass of fake notes have an averse affect on the country's economy? And, come to think of it, why does the purchasing power of currency seem to continually decline? One of those white fivers was enough for a major item of furniture such as a bed or table when my parents were setting up home in the 1950s. Five pounds will hardly pay for a family meal today much less the table to put it on! The reason for this is called inflation.

Inflation happens when governments print more bank notes. The introduction of more currency by governments has a similar effect to the introduction of forged notes. The difference is that the new notes are spent by the government not the forger. If a government faces an unexpected expense it is tempted to simply print the money needed to cover it. This is what happened in Britain in 2020-22.

At this time the government decided many people should stay at home rather than going to work in order to stop the spread of a virus. These people were no longer earning money. The government paid their wages out of the public purse. The government also paid for a huge testing and vaccination programme in the same way and encouraged those who could to work from home, which is generally an inefficient method of working.

Governments do not have any money of their own. They only have the money they collect from their taxpayers. To pay for these extra costs, the government would have had to introduce a stupendous increase in taxes. Rather than do such an unpopular thing, the government printed the money to cover the costs. In this way the taxpayer still foots the bill but he pays by having the value of all his earnings and savings reduced rather than by paying more tax. As a result, as I write this in 2022, Britain is facing large scale inflation as the government seeks to erode the massive debt that it built up by this colossal waste of public money.

4 For more on Lenin see the lesson for 11th January.

5 John Maynard Keynes *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Nov. 1919).

John Maynard Keynes further explained that, “by a continuing process of inflation, governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens.” In other words, inflation is robbery by the government.

Inflation hurts the poor and middle income parts of society more than the rich. Those, such as pensioners, who rely on savings suffer badly. The rich suffer less because they can buy rising stocks or land and property which hold their value by rising in price. Those in debt can benefit because the value of the debt shrinks as prices and wages rise. Powerful trade unions force employers to raise wages to keep up with inflation but people who own their own businesses or work for small firms see the value of their wages decline. Inequalities in society tend to increase with the poor getting poorer and the rich richer. None of this is good for society as it introduces instability, inequity and distrust.

Something to make

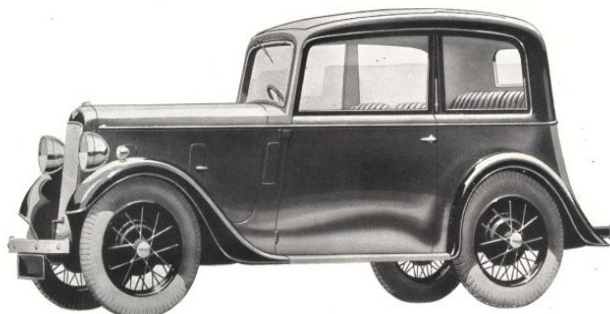
Home made “toy” money is huge fun especially for younger children. However, those who are young enough to enjoy playing “shop” with it can find it tricky to make. Older children can help here by having fun making some money for younger ones to play with. Bank notes can be made from paper. You can copy the ones we use now, old ones like the “black and white fiver” or make up your own. Coins can be made from stiff cardboard. If you use corrugated card cut from packing material they can be as thick as real coins and the corrugations even give a bit of a feeling of a milled edge. Gold and silver paint will help but are not essential. Craft a full set and you will have a lovely gift for a younger friend. You need not fear that you will be contributing to inflation as *you* will not be allowed to introduce your home-made money into circulation!

Some maths and something to think about

According to a popular on-line inflation calculator,⁶ £5 in 1961 is worth about £120 in modern money. Because of their antique status, old white £5 notes now fetch between 5 and 10 times their face value. Assuming the lower figure (for notes that are not in perfect condition), if someone had kept one when they were withdrawn from circulation on **March 13th** 1961, would it have been a good investment? You will need to think hard about this question as it is not just a matter of arithmetic!

Something to do

On **13th March** 1935 driving tests were introduced in Britain, although they were not compulsory until June of the same year. Before then, anyone could have a driving licence (as my grandfather did – the car he and his brother-in-law shared between them looked like the one in the picture) without taking *any kind* of test. To pass your driving test nowadays you have to have a good knowledge of the *Highway Code*. This book, published by the His Majesty's Stationary Office is not only for drivers. It has sections covering all road users, pedestrians, users of mobility scooters, cyclists and even animals. It is a good idea to learn what the pedestrian section contains when you are young. Find the pedestrian section of the Highway Code and test yourself – do you know the rules?



⁶ <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1961?amount=5>

Accidents can be prevented by knowing the right way to cross a road and what to wear in order to be seen when out and about.⁷

A missionary story to read

16 Sore, Kami wa sono
umi tamaeru Hitorigo wo
tamau hodo ni yo no hito
wo ai shi tamaeri: kowa
subete kare wo shinzuru
mono ni horoburu koto
naku shite, kagiri naki
inochi wo ukeshimen ga
tame nari.

Can you guess what language the text on the left is written in? It is John 3:16 of course! This is a bit of a trick question because the language concerned is not normally written in the way you see it on the left.

Medical missionary James Curtis Hepburn (1815-1911), pictured below, was born in Milton, Pennsylvania on **March 13**. It was as a student that he came to know the Saviour. He later wrote:

My first serious impressions about personal religion were in the winter of 1831-32 while at Princeton College. There was a revival in the college, and I then began first to think seriously of my relations to God. However, I did not obey the call of the Spirit and give myself to Christ until in the winter of 1834, while attending medical lectures in Philadelphia.

James Hepburn and his wife began their work as missionaries in China. However in 1845 after five years of service they returned to America because of problems with James's health. In New York in 1845 James set up in medical practice. It was here in New York that personal tragedy struck. All three of the Hepburn's children died of scarlet fever and dysentery, aged 5, 2 and 1. This great sadness reawakened James's desire to serve on the mission field and he returned to the far east, this time to Japan.

Japan isolated itself from the West at this time and foreigners were feared and disliked by the local people. The Hepburns and their companions reached Kanagawa (Present-day Yokohama) and began learning the Japanese language. They were allowed to rent a dilapidated old temple to live in. Dr Hepburn wrote:

Did we ever get homesick? Not very badly. Everything about us was so new and so strange, and so interesting and we were so much occupied, that we had not much time to grieve over those we had left behind. More than all, we had the presence of our heavenly Father and the joy of fellowship with him, and were of good courage and hopeful.

Despite the hostility the doctor opened a clinic in 1861, introducing western medicine to Japan and treating thousands of Japanese patients.

The government of Japan wished to confine Christianity to the coastal treaty ports where foreigners were allowed and they warned the missionaries not to venture into the interior of Japan, putting up notices warning the Japanese people against them.

...at every ferry and market place, along the high-roads, at the village entrances, and in the cities stood the stone platforms containing, inscribed on boards, the government edicts. These denounced

⁷ You can read the relevant section here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-pedestrians-1-to-35> if you do not have a copy of the book.

the “corrupt religion of Jesus Christ,” with the offer of government gold to all who would inform on followers of the accursed sect, or its teachers.

Dr Hepburn supervised the first complete translation (1888) of the Bible into Japanese, working alongside Samuel Robbins Brown (1810 –1880) and others, including two Japanese Christians.⁸ The Japanese government's hostility to Christianity made it difficult to get Japanese people to help with language learning, translation and printing. This slowed progress at first but in 1872 the official anti-Christian edicts were removed.

As a newcomer, Dr. Hepburn was obliged to attack the language single-handed, for no phrase-books, grammars or dictionaries existed. Pantomime, gesture, pointing to objects to obtain their names and to build up a working vocabulary, were the first methods. In time, a future tense was discovered. How to modify assertions was a problem. To find an equivalent for “but,” “nevertheless,” “notwithstanding” or “however,” and for other dubitatives was a problem.⁹



Dr Hepburn also compiled the first Japanese-English dictionary and introduced what is still known as the Hepburn system of Romanization. Romanization is the writing of languages such as Japanese which use logograms (symbols that represent words) in Roman letters such as are used to write English. It is this system which you see used to show John 3:16 in Japanese in the box above.

In order to introduce the Bible in Japan Dr and Mrs Hepburn started a school teaching English to young Japanese. Gradually they became able to do more and a church was established at Yokohama as a result of their work. They returned to America in 1892, beloved by the Japanese people. In the end Dr Hepburn received the Order of the Rising Sun – a high honour – from the Mikado, the ruler of Japan. Best of all he left a Japanese church well established behind him.

There is an interesting story about Dr Hepburn in today's Optional Resources files.

⁸ See lesson for 10th July (yet to come) for the story of Okuno Masatusuna.

⁹ William Elliot Griffiths, *Hepburn of Japan and His Wife and Helpmates: A Life Story of Toil for Christ* (Philadelphia 1913) p.92.