

May 30th

Memory verse



I do set my bow in the cloud,
and it shall be for a token of a covenant between
me and the earth.

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud
over the earth,
that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:
and I will remember my covenant,
which *is* between me and you and every living
creature of all flesh;
and the waters shall no more become a flood to
destroy all flesh.

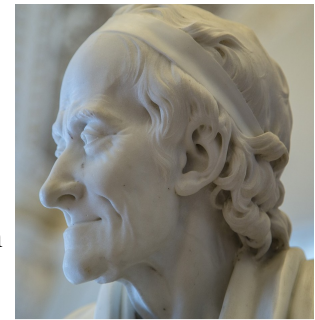
Genesis 9:13-15

More about this memory verse in tomorrow's lesson.

Some philosophy¹

Today, **30th May**, is the anniversary of the death of French philosopher, Voltaire (real name F. M. Arouet) (1694-1778). What exactly is a philosopher and what is philosophy?

The word Philosophy comes from two Greek words: Philo “love” and Sophy “wisdom”. So philosophy is the love of wisdom. The Bible tells us in Colossians. 2:3 “...in whom [Christ] are hid **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...” (as you will know if you learned last week's memory verse) therefore only Christians can have a *correct* philosophy.



Who does philosophy then? Everyone! Everyone has some sort of world-view. It may not be well thought out or coherent. It may be contradictory: not everyone does philosophy *well*. But everyone has a philosophy whether they realise it or not. Here is an example that will help you understand.

We all agree that a philosophy professor or philosophy student does philosophy. What about someone who might scoff at the very idea of philosophy. Someone who says, “I don't care about all that philosophy, that thinking stuff! I just do my best to enjoy myself because you only get one life and when it's gone it's gone...” this person is also doing philosophy! He is claiming to know that: there is no after-life (a big claim since you can't experience it until you are dead) and that the best thing to do in this life is to get the most pleasure.

When we think about such things (as you have just been doing) we are doing philosophy more formally. But you cannot live your life without *any* philosophy.

Studying philosophy formally sharpens our mental tools so we can do philosophy better.

In Genesis 1 v.26 we read that God gave man dominion over all the works of his hands. God equipped man for the task by making him a curious being. Curiosity is part of the image of God in us. We want to gain control over our environment and knowledge (the ability to do things) is power. To succeed we have to get beyond mere disorganised curiosity. This is where education comes in. Education disciplines curiosity.

¹ Information from Greg Bahnsen, *History of Philosophy in a Flash* available from <https://store.cmfnow.com>

If we consider science we can see that it is *systematic*. Science takes specified aspects of our human experience and tries to find general laws which show the regularities of our experience and by which we can explain or predict behaviour and events. Gravity is a good example. We study what happens when things are unsupported and we notice that they fall – always.

Philosophy is not a science. Unlike individual sciences: biology, chemistry, agriculture.... it deals with experience *as a whole* and the *pre-conditions* of having experiences. Philosophy asks questions such as:

How do we know what we know?

What is law-like behaviour?

What do we mean by regularity?

How can we know that our tools are accurate? ...that our memory is reliable?

Philosophy deals with the extent of science: if science was done completely and we wrote down all the general laws that could be known in human experience would we have written down everything that there is to know?

These are not *scientific* questions. They are *philosophical* questions. They are at a higher level of abstraction than science.

Philosophy is that level of intellectual inquiry that goes beyond the discipline of science to ask more fundamental questions about the nature of reality, how we know what we know and how we should live.

So what was Voltaire's philosophy? Voltaire believed in God. He thought we could deduce God's existence from the order that we see around us in nature. However, he pointed to evils in the world, especially things like the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, and deduced that since a good God would obviously not allow such terrible events, God was not all-powerful. He must be finite. This idea led him to oppose religious institutions, especially the Catholic church which dominated the religious life of France in his time. Voltaire considered that everything that happened in the world was a result of natural causes. Each event in the world was caused by some previous event and was in turn the cause of another event. If we take this view, even our very thoughts are the results of a chain of events, the chemistry of our brain and so on.

In political matters Voltaire thought citizens should have certain rights but he did not believe in democracy. He considered democracy to be rule by an “ignorant rabble.” He thought there should be a king but that the king should recognise the rights of citizens.

If we examine Voltaire's philosophy we come up against a problem. Voltaire's philosophy is *naturalistic*. If everything about us, what we do and what we think is the product of a chain of natural events, how can we be responsible for our actions? We cannot be. Yet in another part of his philosophy Voltaire claims that kings “should” recognise the rights of citizens. How can we say “you should” to someone whose thoughts and actions are the product of natural forces?

Look back through Voltaire's reasoning. Can you see where he has gone wrong? Remember Colossians. 2:3. Voltaire was correct in deducing from the design in nature that God exists. However, he was not able to account for the evil in the world. The Fall, as recorded in Genesis, explains the origin of evil, death and suffering in this world and enables us to correctly place the blame on ourselves. Human beings are responsible for their behaviour. We can say that some things are evil and others good on the basis of God's revelation to us in His Word. This gives us a basis for determining what “should” be done.

Something to read from history²



We tend to think that terrorist attacks are a new invention. However, on **30th May** 1884 three terrorist bombs exploded in London. One was at the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Metropolitan Police Service's Special Irish Branch at Scotland Yard. You can see the damage from this in the picture on the left. Another was in the basement of the Carlton Club, a gentlemen's club for members of the Conservative Party. The third bomb was outside the home of Conservative MP Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn.³ A fourth bomb was planted at the foot of Nelson's Column but this one failed to explode.

In all, ten people were injured and there was considerable damage to buildings. The Police Headquarters was so badly damaged that it was replaced by a new building on the Embankment which opened in 1890: New Scotland Yard. It was this new building that was familiar to the famous fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. But who bombed Scotland Yard and the other targets in 1884 and why?

Dynamite, a strong explosive that was also safely manageable, was invented by Alfred Nobel in 1867. It was first used in warfare in the Franco Prussian War (1870-71) and by 1884 it was being used by an Irish terrorist organisation called the Fenians. Between 1881 and 1885 they conducted a campaign of terror aimed at forcing Britain to grant independence or “Home Rule” to Ireland. The history of Ireland is very complicated⁴ but the main problem with granting independence to Ireland was that it would leave the strongly Protestant population of part of Ireland, Ulster, as a minority under a Catholic majority. This the Ulster people did not want. “Home Rule is Rome Rule” they said, “Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right”.

British politics at this period was a two party system, Liberal and Conservative. If you look at the list of targets for terrorist bombs in the first paragraph above you will see at once which of the two parties was most staunchly opposed to Home Rule for Ireland!

The Fenians were funded by Irish Americans and many were men who had returned from America where they had learned military skills in the American Civil War. A new kind of policeman was needed to combat the threat of terrorism. The previous year the Special Irish Branch had been formed to deal with this new problem. It was exactly this force that was attacked in the **30th May** bomb attack.

When the Metropolitan Police Force was first formed in 1829 it did not include detectives because the older Bow Street Runners provided this service. Detectives were only introduced into the Metropolitan Police Force in 1842 when the runners were abolished. The Special Irish Branch had just four detectives and eight uniformed officers. It eventually became what we know today simply as the Special Branch. It was a great innovation because as a BBC production sneeringly puts it,

...there was no tradition of detective work within British policing. This in turn was partly because the liberal political culture of the era in Britain was antithetical [opposed] to secret or political policing, which were regarded as dangerously immoral, intrusive and unambiguously continental,

² Image from www.historybytheyard.co.uk by kind permission.

³ This was the 6th Baronet, descendant of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, 3rd Baronet see Lesson for 26th September. (Yet to come)

⁴ See The Mothers' Companion Vol. 9 for a complete history of Ireland. Available from <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>

best left to the French or Russians.⁵

The Special Irish Branch acted within what was to become the British tradition of policing. First, suspects who were a threat society were identified. Plain clothes policemen would keep a watch on these suspects. They did not try to encourage any of the suspects to inform on others. Nor did they pretend to be Fenian plotters themselves and suggest ideas that would lead to crimes for which the plotters could then be arrested. Instead, the suspects' movements were carefully monitored for a short time. Then those that the officers believed were what was called “dynamitards” were arrested and questioned. If there was solid evidence and the suspect could produce no alibi, he was charged. Sadly, those responsible for the bombing of Scotland Yard were never identified.

Something to think about

Look again at the quote from the BBC highlighted in purple. It is interesting to examine the bias in this statement. It implies that there was nothing really to be feared from “secret or political policing” and hints that British opposition to it in Victorian times was part of a rather silly disparagement of foreigners. However, we should look at the facts of the situation. Is it true that there are dangers in “secret or political policing”? Was it true that at the time such policing was routine in France and Russia? In those countries was this a benefit to the population? We should be careful to evaluate the tone of what we read.

A game to play: Detective

This is a game for indoors or outdoors. It needs some preparation by an adult or an older child but it is great fun. Something special is hidden in the house or garden and a chain of clues is set up to find it. Choose something to hide that has sentimental (not monetary) value or a treat that can be eaten. The clues can be items or they can be written clues with a riddle or message. Some dressing up things would make the game extra special; do you have a police uniform in the dressing up box?

Whoever is setting up the game has to set up the mystery. The selected item has been stolen or is missing. Weave it into a bit of a story to make it more fun for younger children. The clues must be selected (or written) while the intended participants are busy in another room. Maybe you could set it up while they are doing their maths for instance!

The clues must link one to another. They must not be hidden where they can be found by mistake. The person setting up the game starts it off when all the clues are hidden by saying, for instance, “The CID have just had a message from the zoo that a valuable [toy] parrot has been stolen. He must be found quickly. Aha! We have a clue!” You hold up, for instance, a pencil. This is the signal for the detectives to look in pencil cases or the art box. In one of these locations they find a Lego brick. They look in the Lego tub and find a pair of socks. They look in the sock drawer and find a dinner plate... and so on. The clues should be arranged in a chain like this and help should be given if needed. The length of the game can be adjusted by the number of clues hidden. One clue could be a message torn in pieces. When the pieces are put together they tell where to look. The game ends with the toy parrot (or whatever) located – and a suitable reward for the detectives!