

November 20th

Memory verse

O Lord, how great are thy works!

and thy thoughts are very deep. Psalm 92:5

Younger children can learn the words in bold.

Something you may have missed

The Nuremberg Trials opened on **20th November** 1945 and lasted until October the following year. We covered this topic in the lesson for 8th August. If you missed that lesson because you were on holiday, today would be a good day for older children to look at the part of the August lesson that deals with the trials, what they were and their significance.

Something to think about

On **20th November** 1984 the SETI Institute was incorporated in the USA. SETI stands for “Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence” and the institute runs programmes to look for evidence of life out in space. Why do they do this and what success have they had?



Those who believe in evolution can generally see no reason why, if it happened on earth, evolution should not happen, perhaps even frequently, elsewhere in the universe. The problem is just that we have never seen any evidence of it. As physicist Enrico Fermi put it, “But where is everybody?”

In 1961 American Astrophysicist, Frank Drake, formulated an equation which could be used to calculate the possibility of the existence of life elsewhere in the Milky Way. The equation involved the use of so many assumptions that any answer it gave was of little use but that did not stop the idea that the universe must be “teeming with life” from gaining popularity.

So why weren't we seeing all this life? Perhaps we were just not looking hard enough. That is where the SETI institute comes in. The Institute was established to carry out and promote the search. Its Carl Sagan Centre is devoted to the study of **life in the universe**; its Centre for Education is focused on astronomy, **astrobiology** and space science for students and educators; and its Centre for Public Outreach produces radio programmes and podcasts. A cynic might ask how **life in the universe** and **astrobiology** can be subjects of study since (apart from that found on earth) no life or biology has yet been discovered.

But the Institute was not the only organisation looking either. The University of California Berkeley ran a project for 20 years called SETI@home which harnessed the efforts of 5.2 million volunteer home computer owners to use their computers to analyse radio telescope data. No positive results have yet appeared.¹

What are Christians to make of all this? Does the Bible say that human beings are the only intelligent creatures in the universe?

¹ <https://creation.com/seti-at-home>

No it does not! In fact the Bible says the opposite. Angels, (fallen and unfallen) are intelligent creatures that go about their tasks in this universe and on this earth! *But* the Bible seems to leave no room for other physical creatures like ourselves somewhere in the universe.²

It is not surprising then, that however hard people look, SETI never seems to come up with the evidence of life they are searching for. Perhaps there is a good reason why the SETI Institute is desperate to find a different answer to the one that keeps coming back. Perhaps it is not just because they want to find out whether or not there is “anyone out there.” Consider that if evolution is true there should be plenty of life out in space. We do not find any other life out in space (at least we have not *yet* done so) – which is exactly what we would expect if evolution were not true.

A SETI Institute official let the cat out of the bag when he said, “We are trying to understand why we even exist.”³ Think about today's memory verse again. Where should we look for the answer to that question? Scanning the heavens will never reveal the reason for human existence. We need to scan God's written Word to understand his works and to know why human beings exist!

Something to read from history

Thomas Coram (1668-1751) was a sea captain. He came from quite a poor background, had gone to sea when he was young and had worked his way up the ranks. Now he was quite a rich man. However despite his wealth he was not from the upper classes and his voice gave this away as soon as he opened his mouth. However, Captain Coram had decided to make good use of his money and to carry out his plan he needed a lot of help from other rich people. He was determined to get that help whether he was snubbed by his social superiors or not. So, at the age of 70 he went round London calling at all the grand houses where rich people lived asking for funds for his grand idea, walking up to 12 miles a day in pursuit of his objectives.



And what was his idea? He wanted to start a home for foundlings – children who had been left on the streets to die as babies. In eighteenth century London there were many cases of this terrible abandonment, due to poverty, the press-ganging of men to be sailors that could leave their wives destitute and to immoral behaviour.

At first it was hard to get people to give any money. But Captian Coram did not give up. Then kind Queen Caroline⁴ took an interest and so therefore did her ladies. Then the literary Duchess of Somerset gave some money and Captain Coram's project suddenly began to be fashionable.

Captain Coram followed this with a Royal Petition backed by noblemen, judges, landed gentlemen, and merchants and the King signed a royal charter for the “Education and Maintenance of Exposed and Deserted Young Children.” Captain Coram's idea of a Foundling Hospital was going to be realised.

One hundred and seventy men were chosen to be governors of the Foundling Hospital. The Duke of Bedford was the president. A grand opening meeting of the board of governors was held at Somerset house on 20th November 1739.

It took time to organise the building and staff and the first children were not admitted until the following year.

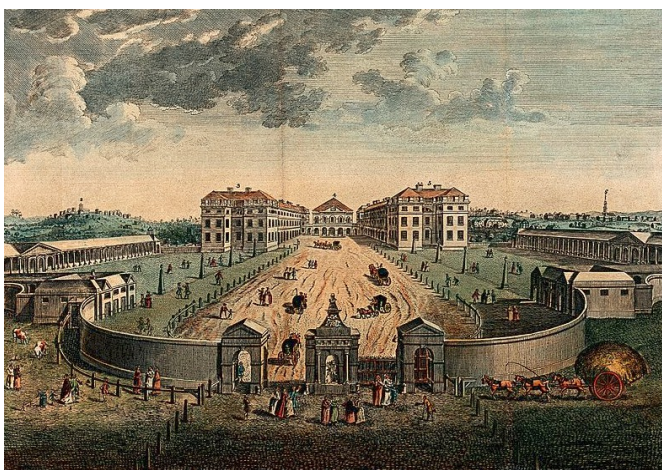
² See <https://creation.com/does-intelligent-extraterrestrial-life-exist> for the arguments.

³ <https://www.seti.org/> introductory video.

⁴ We learned about her earlier this month in the lesson for 3rd November.

The desperate mothers who brought their infants often pinned a tiny keepsake such as a button or ribbon to the baby's clothes in the hope that, should their circumstances change, they could indentify and reclaim the child. Some of these sad mementoes are still to be seen in the Foundling Museum today.

The babies were sent to live in the country at first with foster mothers to take care of them. Inspectors were appointed to ensure that the children were well treated in the homes to which they were sent. When they were old enough (usually four or five) they came back to the Foundling Hospital for their education. The girls were trained to go into service (become servants) when they were old enough. The boys were apprenticed to a trade following their education at the Hospital.



Handel⁵ was a supporter of the Foundling Hospital and gave benefit performances of his Oratorio *Messiah*⁶ in aid of the hospital.

Hogarth⁷ the artist designed headed notepaper for appeals for funds and donated paintings and money.

Captain Coram spent all his fortune on the project and died quite a poor man. You can see the hospital's original buildings in the picture on the left.

What's in a word?

Are you surprised to find the word “hospital” used for what we would call a “children's home”? The word came into English from Latin via old French. The Latin word is *hospes*. This means a stranger or foreigner and so also a guest. Another Latin noun coming from *hospes* is *hospitium* meaning hospitality and by extension a guest room or a shelter. This is the root word for the English words “hospitality”, “hostel” and “hotel”. By the early fifteenth century the word in English could mean “charitable institution to house and maintain the needy” and in the following century we begin to find it used also for an “institution for sick or wounded people”. This is only a short step to the meaning we generally give the word today.

All this brings to mind the final words of Isaac Watt's beautiful paraphrase of Psalm 23. One of Watt's chief aims in his Psalm paraphrases was to bring out the significance of the words in the light of the New Testament. Watts expands on the words “dwell in the house of the Lord forever,” in the light of John 1:12, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the **sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name.” On earth Christians are **strangers** and pilgrims (Hebrews 11:13)⁸ but when we arrive in Heaven we will be “at home”.

My shepherd will supply my need:
Jehovah is His name;
In pastures fresh He makes me feed,
Beside the living stream.

⁵ We enjoyed some of his music in the lessons for 23rd March and 10th October.

⁶ See the Lesson for March 23rd.

⁷ See the lesson for October 26th.

⁸ See the lesson for 29th November for more on this.

He brings my wandering spirit back
When I forsake His ways,
And leads me, for His mercy's sake,
In paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death
Thy presence is my stay;
One word of Thy supporting breath
Drives all my fears away.

Thy hand in sight of all my foes,
Doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows,
Thine oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God
Attend me all my days;
O may Thy house be mine abode,
And all my work be praise!

There would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, nor a guest,
But like a child at home.



Some parents may wish to take this opportunity to discuss with older children the evils of prostitution which was one of the main causes of the abandonment of such a huge number of babies in the eighteenth century London. No doubt the upper class women who supported the Foundling Hospital were genuine in their motives but I wonder if many of the men were trying to salve their consciences.