

May 31

Memory Verse

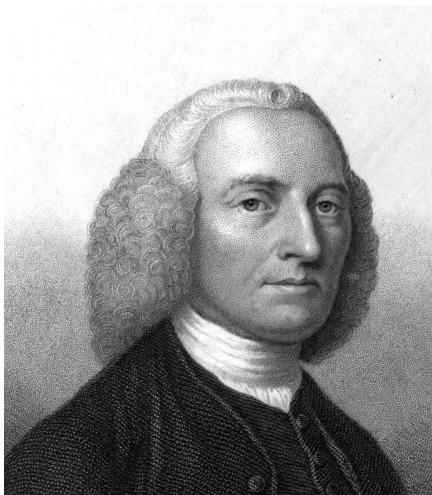


I do set my bow in the cloud,
and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.
And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth,
that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:
and I will remember my covenant,
which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh;
and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.
Genesis 9:13-15

God is speaking in these verses to Noah. The “bow” is the rainbow which we sometimes see in the sky. If three whole verses are too much to learn you could just learn the words highlighted in yellow. Younger children can learn the words in bold and understand that “I” in this verse is God who made the rainbow to teach us something important.

Something to read from History: Cruden's Concordance of the Bible

Has anyone ever complimented you for being “enthusiastic”? This is a word that has certainly changed its meaning. Three hundred years ago it was a negative term used to describe people like the open air preachers Wesley and Whitefield who, it was thought, “took religion too seriously”. We could do with more enthusiasm of this kind now! Today's story is about someone whose “enthusiasm” helped to keep them locked up in what was no better than a prison. Look out for “enthusiasm” in the story that follows.



One of the greatest Christian scholars Britain has ever produced was born on 31st May 1699. Because of some terrible things that happened to him, he has not been given the recognition he deserved and the persistent falsehood that he was “mad” endures even today.¹ Yet Alexander Cruden (1699-1770) was a brilliant, painstaking, accurate and clear thinking Christian scholar whose work is still a blessing to us. He was also a humane man, ahead of his time in his attitude to prisons and asylums, whose work anticipated that of Elizabeth Fry and John Howard in the following century.

There is no doubt that Alexander Cruden had a slightly eccentric personality, that he was driven by the task he had set himself and

¹ See Keay, Julia *Alexander the Corrector* (London, 2004) – suitable for parental reading only.

that he sometimes unwittingly gave offence to those around him. But insane he definitely was not. Why then, did the compiler of the first complete English concordance of the Bible end up, not once but *three times*, in the hands of inhumane eighteenth century lunatic asylum keepers?

It is a long and delicate story but before we start we need to understand his great achievement. You may well have a copy of Cruden's masterpiece, his Concordance, in your home. If you do, get it out and look at it now.² A concordance is a dictionary of the Bible that enables you to find the reference of any text by looking up the key word in the text. Or as Cruden himself explained in the preface to his concordance:

A CONCORDANCE is a Dictionary, or an Index to the Bible, wherein all the words used through the inspired writings are ranged alphabetically, and the various places where they occur are referred to, to assist us in finding our passages, and comparing the several significations of the same word. A work of this kind, which tends so much to render the study of the holy Scriptures more easy to all Christians, must be acknowledged to be very useful; for if a good Index to any other book is to be valued, much more ought one to the Bible, which is a revelation from God, given as the only rule of our faith and practice, and to discover to us the way to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cruden completed this monumental index without the aid of a computer or even a type writer, by hand, alone and while at the same time working as a publishers' proof-reader³ to earn his living. Even the idea of a card index, which would surely have helped him, was not yet thought of.⁴ Not only that but the comments he makes along the way about various Bible topics have such rich and useful contents that one modern author quotes at length from his articles on topics such as *The Word and Armageddon*, calling him “The too much neglected Alexander Cruden.”⁵ “Be sure you buy a genuine unabridged Cruden, and none of the modern substitutes,” said Charles Haddon Spurgeon to his students. His book is a truly rich Bible study tool. One might suspect that such a vast and painstaking achievement as Cruden's might indeed drive one mad. But he remained perfectly sane.

Alexander Cruden was a small man; he had always been small for his age and was bullied at school. He was very neat, tidy, quiet and studious. He was born and studied for the ministry in Aberdeen and, although I have no information about when he was converted, it was while he was in that city. Before he finished his studies he fell in love with Elizabeth, daughter of a very powerful man in Aberdeen, Rev. Dr. Thomas Blackwell, head of the college where he was studying. Sadly for Cruden there was a terrible scandal going on in Thomas Blackwell's family involving Elizabeth, which would have ruined Dr Blackwell if it had got out. He ruthlessly and successfully kept it quiet and in order that his young student Alexander Cruden should not find out – or if he knew to prevent him talking – Blackwell used his position as head of the college to have him declared insane and locked up in the Aberdeen Tolbooth. The Tolbooth was the city's combined madhouse and prison.

Blackwell told Cruden's parents he had become deranged and had been locked up for his own safety. They believed him. Poor Cruden! A sensitive young man with a brilliant mind and prodigious memory was now confined in a filthy prison. The walls were damp, the floor covered with slimy straw and (it was winter) the windows, though they had bars, had no glass. Not only was it cold but the prisoners and sufferers were packed in any old how “like salmon in a barrel”.⁶

2 You can see it on line here: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015020730258&view=1up&seq=14>

3 A proof reader has the job of reading through a sample first copy of a book looking for errors made by the printer. It requires much patience, neat handwriting and a very thorough cast of mind.

4 Card indexes were invented by Carl Linaeus, the botanist, in the 1760s long after Cruden's Concordance was published.

5 Charles D Alexander, *Revelation Spiritually Understood* (Trelawnydd, 2001) p.364.

6 Aberdeen Magistrate quoted in Keay, Julia *Alexander the Corrector* (London, 2004) p.19.

The horrors Cruden experienced in the Tolbooth affected him for the rest of his life, although (surprisingly) they did not send him insane. Blackwell, anxious to get him out of Aberdeen and as far away as possible, found him a job near London as a tutor and had him released and sent off by ship. Forever debarred from being a minister of the church now that he had been in the Tolbooth, he discharged his teaching responsibilities very well, endearing himself to the family. Later he became a publishers' proof-reader or "corrector of the press" and, in cramped and humble lodgings in London, began his great project. He could not now serve God by preaching as he had wanted to do. Very well then, he would serve God by providing other preachers with a greatly needed tool.

It is not known exactly how Cruden worked. How did he keep track of his references if he did not use a card index? He probably worked on long strips of paper on which he prepared lists of words. Certainly he was constantly afraid of his room catching fire, something that must have been a real possibility with so many long strips of paper all over a small room in the days of open fires. Imagine him, patiently reading his Bible word by word and for each word (he did not index *a*, *the* or *and*) hunting up the correct strip of paper and entering the word on it in the correct place in the alphabetical sequence, or if the word had already occurred, adding the chapter and verse reference to the existing entry. All this was after working all day to support himself by checking publishers' proofs.

As the work progressed he took over a bookshop in order to be able to publish his book himself (booksellers were publishers too in those days) and got himself appointed *Bookseller to Queen Caroline* (the wife of King George II). In a staggeringly short time the concordance was finished. He scraped together enough money with the aid of some subscribers⁷ and in 1737 Cruden's *Complete Concordance to the Holy Scripture* was published with a dedication to Queen Caroline, his patron. He was able to present a copy to the queen herself who was delighted with it and promised Cruden a payment of £100, a sum worth over £22,000 in today's money. This was good news as Cruden had spent every penny he had on publishing the book and had nothing left at all. Alas, Queen Caroline was dead within a few weeks and had left no record of her promise: Cruden got nothing.



Cruden's church was the meeting house at New Broad Street, London where the minister was John Guyse (1680-1761). When Cruden decided he needed to get over the disappointment he had suffered with Elizabeth Blackwell and find a wife, he naturally considered the unmarried ladies in the congregation. One of these ladies was the widow of a gentleman who had been a friend of Cruden's and he paid his (rather clumsy) addresses to her, thinking she would make a good wife. The lady would have none of it, however, and what was worse she had another suitor, a rascal who was only after her money. This unscrupulous fellow feared that a godly rival like Cruden might in the end be preferred to him. He found out that Cruden had once been confined in the Tolbooth of his native town because he was insane. He tricked Cruden and carried him off to a private madhouse, saying that Cruden's "old problem" had returned and he was dangerous.

This sounds very strange to us now but in Cruden's day it was surprisingly easy to get someone locked up as a madman. Anyone could declare that a friend or relative was insane and cart them off to a privately run madhouse and have them retained there – so long as the madhouse-keeper's fees were paid, of course. Doctors were very ignorant of the causes and symptoms of mental illness but that did not stop them prescribing inhumane treatments. These involved tying the patient up to prevent escape, in a "strait waistcoat", beating them, chaining them to the bed and giving them "physick" (usually opium based medicines to keep them quiet) and various "cures" to make them vomit. If the patient insisted they were perfectly sane this was taken as proof of their insanity. Cruden was a warm-hearted Christian and this made matters worse. The doctor who attended him

⁷ People who pay for a copy of a book before it is published.

considered all his patient resignation to God under his suffering and his attempts to tell the gospel to fellow inmates as proof that he was “enthusiastic” which he considered a form of derangement.

All Cruden's attempts to prove his sanity proved fruitless as his friends were prevented from seeing him by the mad-house keeper who said visits disturbed the patient. He eventually escaped by sawing through the leg of his bed a little at a time with a dinner knife secretly and so slipping the chain off the bedstead. Then he got away by jumping out of a window – chain and all.

Having gained his freedom Cruden was able with the aid of his friends to convince a court presided over by the Lord Mayor of London that he was perfectly sane. He was unable, however, to get those who had treated him so inhumanely convicted of wrong-doing.

In an effort to alert those in power to the injustices happening in the private mad-houses, he published his diary (secretly kept during his imprisonment) and agitated for prison and asylum reform. He wrote to everyone he could think of including the king but he was totally unsuccessful. Meanwhile he supported himself doing more teaching and was commissioned to prepare an index to Milton's great poem *Paradise Lost*. During this time too his concordance began to become popular as people, especially ministers, began to find just how very useful it was. But the stigma was still attached to him. Twice now he had been locked away as mad. Some people wondered if he might in fact really be not quite right in the head. One of those who wondered was his frivolous younger sister Isabella. When she came down from Aberdeen and parked herself on him in order to enjoy London social life they grated on one another. She spent her time chattering to Cruden's landlady and trying to find a husband. Cruden does not seem to have had much peace until she got married.

Coming home one afternoon Cruden came upon some soldiers fighting. He tried to separate them but quickly found himself involved in the conflict. The soldiers were punching and swearing and one of them had a shovel which he was using as a weapon. Cruden grabbed the shovel and began to lay into the soldiers with it accompanying each blow with the words, “You must not swear!” like a schoolmaster wielding a cane. No doubt the soldiers were not much more than boys. The rumpus went on for a long time but eventually it died down and Cruden walked home. He had been spotted, however, by someone who thought his behaviour was evidence that he was indeed off his head and hurried off to tell his landlady that her lodger had gone mad again. The landlady and his sister between them decided that “since he was a meek peaceable man, he would not have fought had he not been beside himself”⁸ and had him carted off to another private madhouse.

This time, however, the madhouse-keeper's wife recognised that Cruden was not insane and the doctor that treated him allowed him to be released after just over two weeks of humiliating and barbarous treatment.

On his release Cruden prepared a second edition of his concordance. George III had now succeeded his grandfather George II as king and Cruden was able to present his concordance to the king himself. The King was very kind to Cruden and spent quite some time talking to him. He was a good king and loved the Bible himself. He awarded Cruden £100 and this time the money was paid. Like Cruden, this poor king in the last years of his reign was treated as mad, although he was not, and subjected to most inhuman treatments.



Cruden now had financial security. He spent his time campaigning for the improvement of public morals: specifically in the area of Sabbath-breaking and swearing which he particularly detested. He had a circle of good friends including a lawyer who mentioned to him the plight of a young sailor,

8 Cruden quoted in Keay, *Julia Alexander the Corrector* p. 192.

Richard Potter. Potter had been tricked into a small crime by one of his fellows and was sentenced to be hung. The lawyer was uneasy and disturbed. He had been responsible for proving the sailor guilty but was horrified that he was to be hung for so small an offence. Cruden set to work. He wrote to everyone he could and he traipsed round London from one office to another and eventually got a stay of execution. He kept up his campaign and in the meantime visited the poor young man in prison, nursed and fed him when he was ill (at considerable risk from infection himself) and preached the gospel to him. He handed out tracts and did what he could to help the other prisoners too. Potter was eventually reprieved (an almost unheard of thing in those days) and sent to Australia for 14 years instead of being hung.

What he had seen in the prison when helping Potter horrified Cruden and he devoted the remainder of his life to campaigning and working for better conditions in prisons.

Sadly, successive biographers not only believed that Cruden was “mad” but exaggerated and embellished the story. If you have a copy of his concordance look to see if there is a short biography of Cruden included in it. If there is it will almost certainly repeat this false claim. It is not until recent times that anyone has taken the trouble to find out the truth about Cruden's life.

Something to do

How well can you use a concordance? It is such a useful thing that some Bibles have an abridged (shortened) concordance included at the back. Try these exercises using your concordance:

Find five verses that mention each of the following:

1. heaven
2. salvation
3. wisdom
4. praise

With a concordance such a task is very easy.

Now here are some famous Bible verses and parts of verses – without their references. Pick out a key word in each example and use it to find the reference using your concordance.

1. casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you
2. for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal
3. great *is* thy faithfulness
4. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
5. Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Answers are on the next page.

Answers:

1. casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you 1 Peter 5:7

2. for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal 2 Corinthians 4:16b

3. great *is* thy faithfulness Lamentations 3:22

4. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

5. Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Deuteronomy 31:6

I'm sure you can see what a wonderful book the concordance was – and still is. Nowadays we can use online resources to find a Bible verse if we have forgotten the reference but online concordances have only become available quite recently. If we take the year 2000 as a rough guess for the first readily available computer concordances, for how many years was a concordance like Cruden's *the only* way to find a forgotten reference?

Look at the quotation above from the introduction Cruden wrote to his concordance.

Some words that are not used in quite the same way as we would use them now are highlighted in purple. Can you explain them?

Because of his experiences Cruden campaigned for improvements in prisons and asylums. Look at your own encyclopaedias or reference books to find out who was responsible for such improvements. How long after Cruden's death did they take place?