

On Grundtvig and his use of bible references

Musings of a software developer

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig is one of the most influential persons in Danish history. He was a polymath and very prolific writer, “a pastor, author, poet, philosopher, historian, teacher and politician”, as [Wikipedia \(2003\)](#) describes him. In this paper I present some data analyses on his use of the bible in his writing.

His use of different locations in the scripture varied a lot over time. I found that, Grundtvig referred to 1 Kor 13,12¹ in more works than any other bible reference, but he did so mostly before 1820. Intrigued by this observation I checked other references and found that he quoted 1 Mos 1,27² (i.e., *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*) mostly from 1855 to 1859. I discovered this when developing and testing the *find bible references* feature for the Center for Grundtvigforskning’s and Det Kgl. Bibliotek’s (2020) [Grundtvigs Værker](#), which is a part of the Royal Danish Library’s Text Collections.

A bible reference is typically a string such as 1 Kor 13,13 (or 1 chorinthians 13:13). There is an ambiguity in the usage, since we use it both to denote the reference to the scripture, and the actual text it refers to. Namely: *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*³ I will try to use the term *bible reference* when discussing how Grundtvig is using it, whereas use *bible location* when talking on the scripture.

¹ https://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-12.htm (English)
https://www.bibelselskabet.dk/brugbibelen/bibelenonline/1_Kor/13 (Danish)

² <https://biblehub.com/genesis/1-27.htm> (English)
https://www.bibelselskabet.dk/brugbibelen/bibelenonline/1_Mos/1

³ https://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-13.htm (English)
https://www.bibelselskabet.dk/brugbibelen/bibelenonline/1_Kor/13 (Danish)

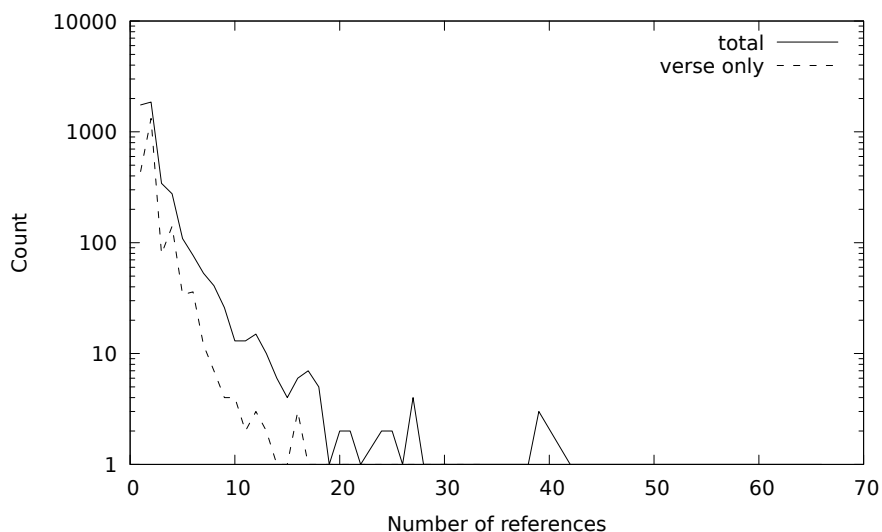
Grundtvig referred to 1 Kor 13,12 41 times, but he liked verse before that one even more, since he referred to 1 Kor 13,12 (as mentioned above) 54 times. The number of times a given bible location is referred to as presented in this paper depends on two factors, where the number of times he actually used is just one. The other one is the philologists effort to identify the references, and their ability to identify a reference which is perhaps only vaguely hinting to the bible.

What you find below is an outline of my analysis of of his bible references from a technical point of view.

The Grundtvig data for the portal comes from the Århus university's (2009) [Center for Grundtvigforskning](#), the publisher of [Grundtvigs Værker](#). (I refer to the scientific edition of Grundtvig's works as GV in the following.)

Analyses

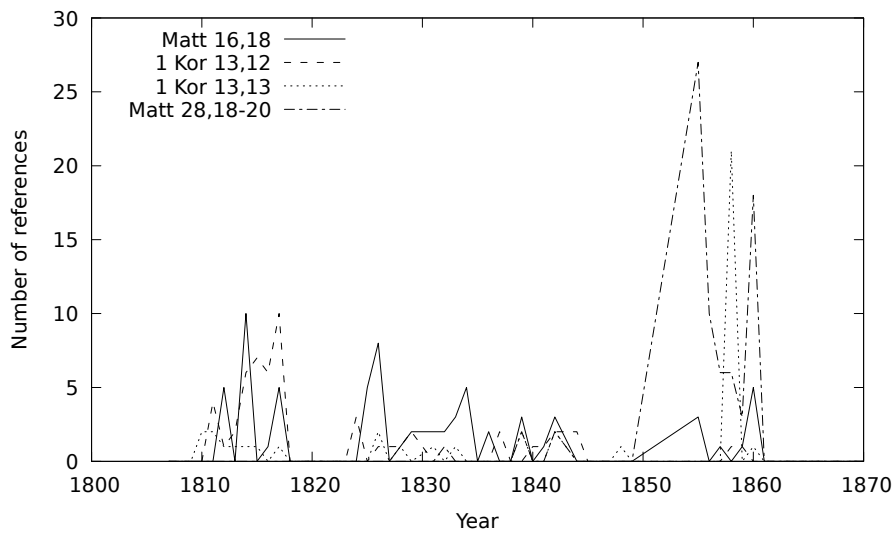
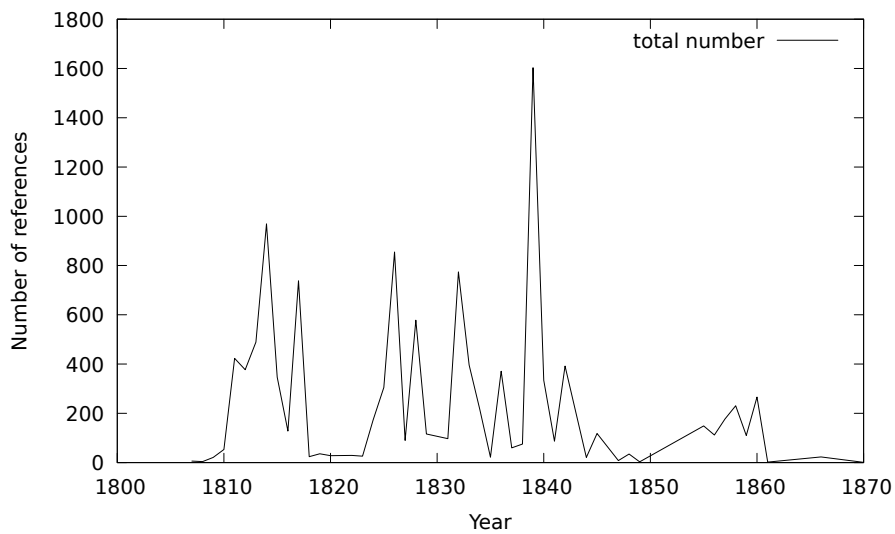
I use the counts of individual bible references to compare all the years of Grundtvig's professional life. The philologists at the Grundtig centre has identified 11499 references to the bible in the GV. They refer to 4637 different locations in the bible, i.e., he uses each location 2.5 times on the average. In reality there are large number of bible locations that just appear once in a reference, whereas there are a number of favourites which is cited 50-60 in the corpus.



Discussion

References

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