

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 13,12 : “*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*”¹ 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 1,27 (or 1 genesis 1:27)² (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*

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)

when discussing how Grundtvig is using it, whereas use *bible location* when talking on the scripture.

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 in a text which is only vaguely hinting to the location. Hence there are some possible systematic errors hidden here: Not all works are equal and philologists might invest more in some important ones than others. Also, I can imagine that bible references could be more difficult to identify in poetry and fiction where the intellectual practice does not force an author to make clear references. Finally, the goal of an edition project is not to provide data for text mining and quantitative analyses.

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.) What you find below is an outline of my analysis of of his bible references.

Analyses

The philologists at the Grundtvig centre has identified 11499 bible references in the GV. They refer to 4637 bible locations, i.e., Grundtvig used each location bible 2.5 times on the average. In reality there are large number of bible locations that just appear once in a reference, whereas he had a number of favourites which is cited 60 to 70 times in the corpus ([Figure 1](#)).

I use the counts of individual bible references to compare all the years of Grundtvig's professional life.

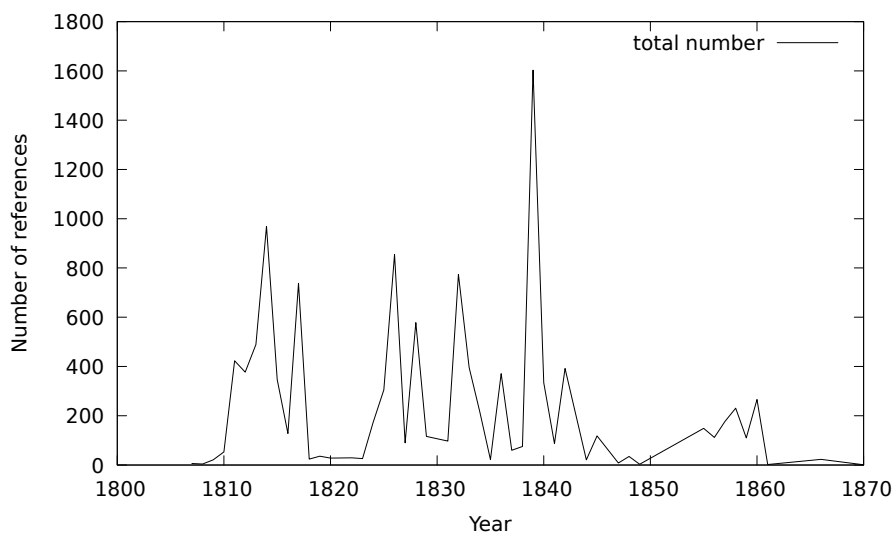


Figure 2.

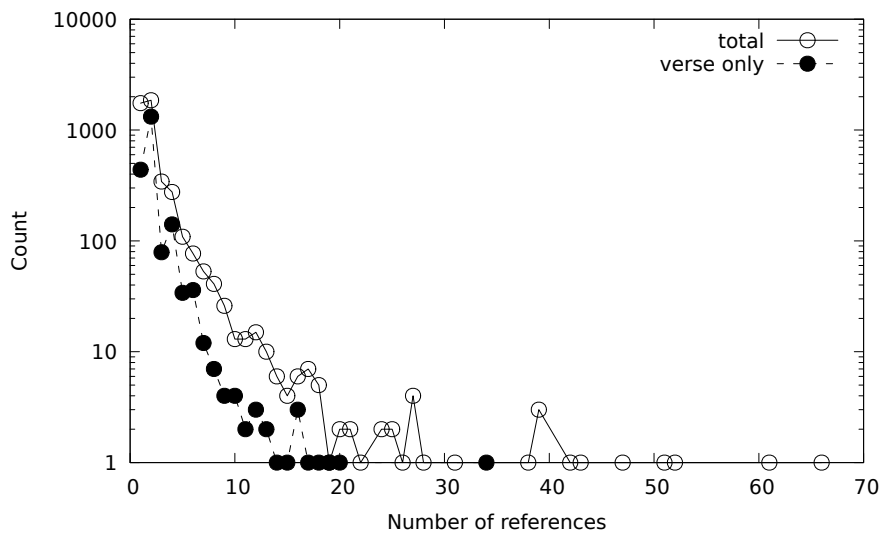


Figure 1. The distributions showing the bible location counts for different numbers of references, for all references (solid curve) and references occurring i verse (dashed curves). Note the logarithmic scale on the y-axis. For the former distribution, there are some 3605 locations that are referenced once or twice and 805 more locations used 3 to 6 times. At the other end, only one location Matt 16,18 is referenced 66 times. There are 227 bible locations that are referenced 7 and more times. The main difference between the two distributions is that the one related to verse has much lower proportion of bible locations that are referenced at the low end. Note that the dashed curve starts lower and actually increases towards a peak.

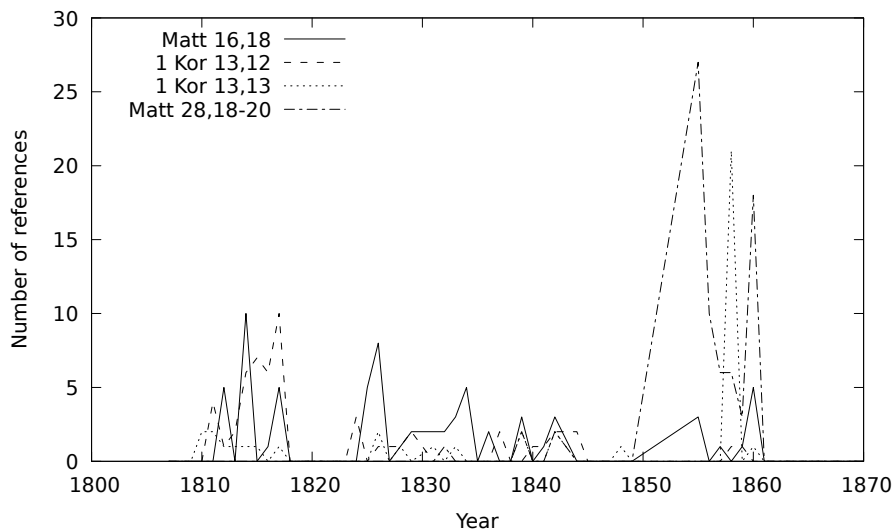


Figure 3.

Discussion

References

Center for Grundtvigforskning, and Det Kgl. Bibliotek, 2020. Grundtvigs Værker. In: *Det Kgl. Biblioteks tekstportal*

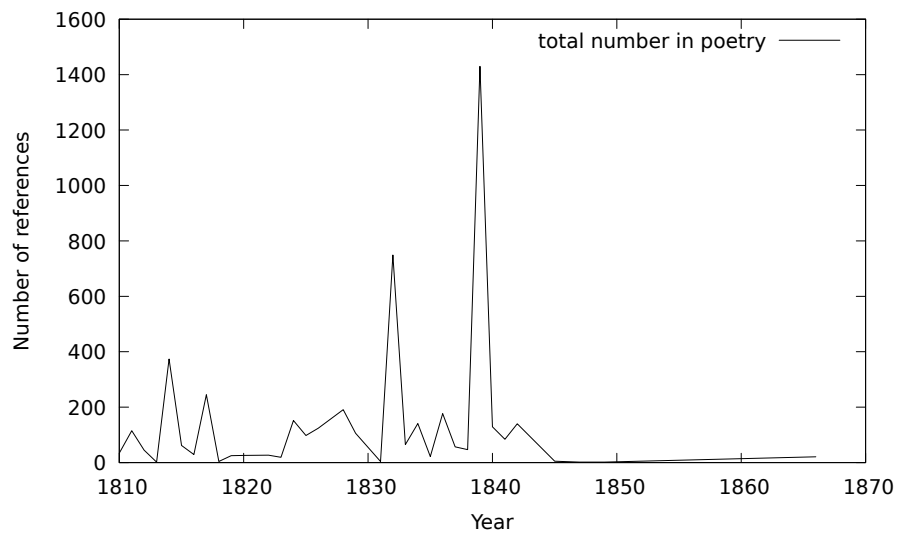


Figure 4.

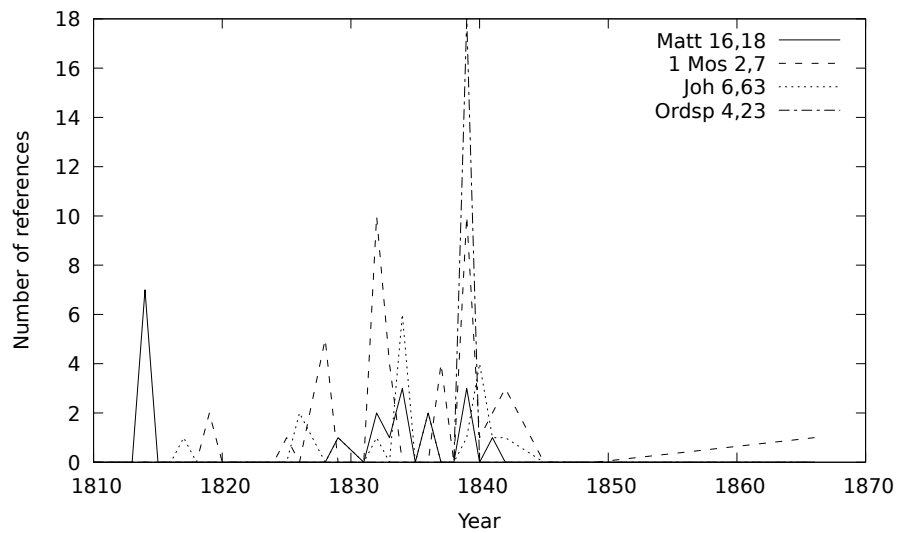


Figure 5.

<https://tekster.kb.dk/gv>

Center for Grundtvigforskning, 2010. *Grundtvigs Værker*

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N._F._S._Grundtvig

Århus university, 2010. *Center for Grundtvigforskning*

<https://grundtvigcenteret.au.dk/>

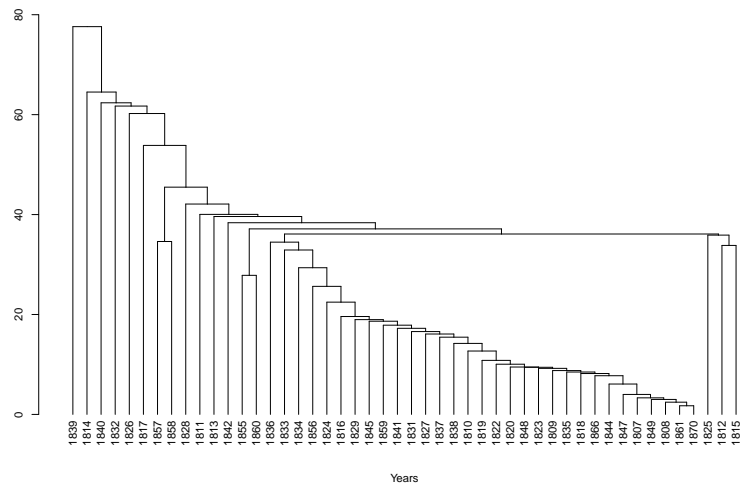


Figure 6.