



In a previous issue of RCECRⁱ I have argued that a concordance may get in the way of the actual document. Only proper use of such an instrument will serve the understanding of the text. The person who prepared the concordance runs the same risk. However he or she has some advantages over later users.

Benefits of preparing a concordance for an ancient document

In my previous article I pointed out a first advantage already, perhaps the most important one: making a concordance entails conscientiously thinking through all the textual elements in their context. It is not the finished product, but the process that reveals the secrets of a text. At a wedding the photographer is often the most attentive and the most efficient observer. He or she has a better overall picture of the wedding, even before the photos are developed. In much the same way making a concordance takes the scholar through the text time and again, highlighting ever new elements in an ever more familiar texture. In this article I will point out three more advantages for the one who prepares a concordance. Each advantage is at the same time a motive for going through the exercise while researching an ancient writing. As the ideas in these short articles came up while I was developing a concordance for the Odes of Solomon, my examples are taken from that writing.

Clusters of terms and semantic domains

Going through the document line by line collecting terms, the

researcher will step on synonyms and all-but-synonyms, either in the immediate contextⁱⁱ or in another contextⁱⁱⁱ. Even more often a pair of antonyms^{iv} is to be taken into account as a lexical datum on its own rather than as two separate ones. In fact a lexical study of a document should include tracing recurring clusters of terms,^v especially of those belonging to the same or similar semantic domains.^{vi}

In this respect the traditional alphabetical organization of a concordance is concealing much of the meaning in the text. An organization according to semantic domains would probably chart meaning more adequately. For that reason there is much to say for the arrangement according to roots in a concordance of a document in a Semitic language, rather than a strictly alphabetical representation.

Relation of terms and concepts

When a concept plays a significant role in a document, it is seldom represented by just one term. A good example in the Odes is liberation. The single term which probably expresses the notion best is the noun **purqānā** (salvation, liberation). It occurs 15 times in the Odes.^{vii} However, the one Ode which has 'liberation' as its main theme, the final Ode 42, doesn't use the term at all. This may be due to the tendency to describe and circumscribe rather than mention a key concept in a passage. In Ode 42 we do find the verb **praq** ('save', 'liberate'), though only once (vs. 18), and the noun **pāroqā** ('savior', 'liberator'), again just once (vs 18). We find a vibrant scenery with Sheol being depressed, and Death spitting out the ones held by it, chains of darkness taken off and prison doors open. It is pictures rather

than terms that represent concepts and themes. On the other hand not all the passages elsewhere in the Odes with liberation terminology contribute substantially to the development of the theme. A scholar must always research the relationship between terms and themes, and never take them for granted.

Distribution of terms (and themes) over the document

The person preparing a concordance will observe how the references next to an entry grow steadily or not, whether occurrences of a term are isolated and well spread over the document or are found only in certain sections. It is true that the user of the concordance can notice these things too, but even if he or she looks up and reads all of the passages listed, the impression will be less organic and less nuanced than for the maker of the concordance, who took each occurrence of a term from its literary environment.

It is ironic that the greatest benefits for the maker of a concordance are hardly or never recorded in the finished product, the concordance. The user will have to go through similar thought processes as the maker to get beyond the mechanical and sterile representation of the document in the lists of words and references. This may discourage a scholar to publish a concordance – but not to prepare it. No ancient document has ever revealed itself to modern readers except through meticulous analysis. Studying the use of terms and expressions in that document is probably the best way to start.

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John Chrysostom (c. 349-407) on the Fall.

Resurgence of the dialogue between Eastern and Western Christianity reveals differing opinions regarding the content of the Fall.

Oversimplified one could say that they represent respectively an optimistic and a pessimistic view over the transgression of Adam and Eve. Eastern Christianity does not speak of a lost condition but of an interruption of humanity's journey on which they failed. Western Christianity speaks of a drastic fall, a radical rupture in human history, which put humanity in a different condition.¹

In this short article I would like to deal with John Chrysostom's view on the Fall from his homilies on Genesis 1-3. These involve two series of sermons on Genesis, referred to as the *Sermones* (8 sermons, covering Genesis 1-3 [SG]) and the *Homiliae in Genesim* (first 18 homilies of sixty-seven cover Genesis 1-3 [HG]).²

This question about the Fall is particularly pertinent to John Chrysostom's view on salvation history. Hanneke Reuling recently argued³ that "John Chrysostom's sermons on the Eden narrative by and large reflect the same historical notion of salvation as that found in Theodore [of Mopsuestia]'s work." (122) Theodore distinguished, *unlike* most other patristic writers, "between two ages or *katastaseis*, i.e. a present condition and an eschatological one, without referring to a paradisiacal state." (121-122) "In this two-stage model, the loss of Paradise represents no radical rupture in human history, but rather the beginning of a damaged variety of the same sort of human existence." (137) Underlying this view of salvation history would be an understanding of redemption as a process of personal and collective *growth*. (137)

Although it is not possible within

the scope of this article to dialogue with Reuling in detail, I would like to present here my first observations of Chrysostom's writings on the Eden narrative, which in some aspects differ substantially from hers.

Chrysostom clearly speaks about a perfect original created condition. The first human being was created incorruptible and immortal (HG 15.14; 18.7) and lived on earth like an angel, as if he were in heaven (HG 1.6; 13.4; 15.4; 16.2; 18.1). His honoured position is described as: "like a king adorned with sceptre and crown and wearing his purple robe, he revelled in this life of freedom and great affluence in the garden" (HG 13.14). He was "clad in that glory from above" (HG 15.14; cf. 16.2) and bestowed with countless benefits, goods and deeds of kindness (HG 13.12; 15.15; 16.19; 18.1). This dignity of kingship is not a reward on the basis of virtue, but "is conferred before life, the crown before creation; even before being made they are conducted to the royal throne." (SG 4) It is based upon God's act of breathing (Gen. 2:7): "its total make-up and its succession to such great esteem all stems from the action of breathing made upon it by God." (HG 12.16)⁴ The relation between God and man in paradise is depicted in very personal terms. Chrysostom often makes the comparison to the relation between a loving father and his child. (HG 14.10; 17.14) "[T]ake the case of a kindly father with a son of his own who was brought up with every care, who enjoyed every indulgence, had the run of a fine house, was clad in a silken tunic, and had free access to his father's substance and wealth." (HG 18.3) It was an honour that God gave Adam the commandment personally (SG 8). They spoke "as one friend to another" [φίλος φίλω] (HG 14.11). The technical term used by Chrysostom and other patristic writers characteristic of this

relationship is *παρρησία*, "they enjoyed familiarity with God" (SG 3).⁵ Chrysostom also clearly speaks about a real fall. Sin, indifference caused a changed state for humanity: A "loss both of esteem and of authority" (HG 9.10) It "stripped them of all that glory and the enjoyment they were partakers of before suffering that terrible fall" (HG 18.3, cf. 17.6), "and of the life that was scarcely inferior to the angels" (HG 18.1). After the transgression, God asked Adam 'where are you?', on which Chrysostom comments: "In other words, it is as if he hinted to him in these words, What has happened? I left you in one condition, whereas now I find you in another; I left you clad in glory, whereas now I find you in nakedness. (...) Who has brought you to this changed condition? (...) What is this sudden transformation?"⁶

It is however true that in his presentation of the Fall Chrysostom puts the accent on healing rather than the wound, so that the Fall could well be typified as a blessing, *felix culpa*.⁷ Every consequence of the transgression is described by Chrysostom in terms of God's providential care and His *φιλανθρωπία*, as instruments of divine *παιδεία*. The consequences were "an admonition rather than a punishment" (HG 17.26). "[T]heir being made liable to death was a mark of great depths of loving kindness" (HG 17.43). "[T]he human being did not sin to the extent that God gave grace, the loss was not as great as the gain, the shipwreck was not as great as the commerce – instead, the good things outweighed the bad." (SG 7)

Even the personal relation between God and man is continued to a certain extent. As an expression of great pity and mercy on human's fall, God's provisional care shows him still like a father dealing with his disobedient son. (HG 17.2; 18.3; 17.14) Discontinuity lies in the intimacy of the relationship according to Chrysostom: "At the beginning, then, God communicates

directly with human beings ... at long last He sent us letters as though we were absent for a long time and He intended to re-establish the former friendship through an epistle.” (SG 1) The former friendship was described in terms of *παρορησία*, which Chrysostom however attributes to the patriarchs after the Fall as well.⁸ From this it seems easy to argue that the Fall wasn’t a radical rupture in human history according to Chrysostom. Reuling confirms this by placing Chrysostom within the Antiochene tradition, which according to her speaks of a continuous human existence, as opposed to the Alexandrian fall from paradise (139). The implication of this would be that salvation should not be explained as a restoration to the original condition because there is no ‘paradise lost’. This view is often sustained by quotations from other church fathers who describe Adam as a work in progress,⁹ which would prove that the fall was only an interruption of a process of growth. Chrysostom however doesn’t have any of these ideas present in the writings under discussion and presents clearly a perfect paradisiacal state.

We should add one other observation from reading Chrysostom’s writings on the Eden narrative which explains his view further. John Behr stresses the importance of discerning from which hermeneutical perspective the church fathers wrote. Chrysostom indeed does not seem to “think in linear, historical terms, beginning with God having brought creation into being, followed by the first human beings, Adam and Eve, using their God-given freedom against their creator and so plunging the world into sin and mortality, a condition in which it languished while the work of salvation was gradually being prepared, culminating in the Incarnation of Christ.”¹⁰ Chrysostom speaks of the fall in the light of

Christ. Looking backwards from this perspective it results in a view on the fall as *felix culpa*, without however diminishing the reality of it. That is why he is also able to say that God created us in order to “save us, free us from error and rewards us with the enjoyment of the kingdom.” (HG 3.15; cf. 14.9) If we speak of the fall in chronological terms as “an accidental alteration in the life of creation”, such a “statement, that we were brought into being in order to be saved, strikes us as confused and confusing.”¹¹ Because Chrysostom speaks of the Fall in the light of Christ, his hearers can identify themselves with Adam and Eve: “After all, they realized, Adam and Eve both, the degree and significance of the good things they had deprived themselves of through transgression of the command given them, stripped as they were of that ineffable glory and of the life that was scarcely inferior to the angels’. *We* saw the Lord’s longsuffering, *we* learnt the gravity of indifference and how it renders *us* bereft of goods already in *our* possession and leaves *us* desolate, covering *us* in deep confusion.” (HG 18.1) The miracle immediately there from the beginning is that God revealed himself precisely in and through the very mess of the fall, culminating in His revelation through Christ on the cross. When human’s eyes are opened to see this, they will respond. “[I]n his ineffable love he shows considerateness for us, and for the sake of our salvation he allows these things to happen so that knowledge of the Lord may be for the human race a school of virtue.” (HG 18.16) Chrysostom’s focus on striving after virtue in all his writings have led to his being known as a moralist. We shouldn’t however be too rash in concluding on his soteriology that he therefore understands redemption as a process of personal growth. The latter quotation shows that the basis for Chrysostom’s attention

on virtue lies in humanity knowing God’s considerateness and loving kindness. Chrysostom says that God drove Adam out of paradise and placed him opposite, nearby the garden, so that it might be a constant reminder for him “from what heights he had fallen” and “the constant sight proved to be an encouragement for this grieving man to carefulness in the future lest he fall into the same sin again.” (HG 18.10) It was rather God than humanity who stayed the same, “stirred to the depths of his being as a father, yet, far from ceasing to care for him, he displays further concern for him in his desire to extricate him gradually from his abasement and return him to his previous position of dignity.” (HG 17.2)

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iNotes with “Benefits of preparing a concordance for an ancient document”.

- i “Preparing a concordance for the Odes of Solomon”, RCECR 19, April 2009.
- ii A puzzling example is the use of **’aḥeb** (3,2.5) and **rḥem** (3,3.3.4.5.7.7) in Ode 3. Both could be translated ‘to love’, but may have been used in the Odes with slightly different meanings.
- iii E.g. **ḥatmā** (4,7; 23,8.9) and **ṭubbā’ā** (24,7), both meaning ‘seal’.
- iv E.g. **lbeš** (‘put on clothes’) and **šlah** (‘take off clothes’), both in 15,8 and 21,3. As a matter of fact both passages refer to ‘changing cloths’.
- v E.g. **qaysā** (‘beam’, ‘cross’) 27,3; 39,10; 42,2; **ātā** (‘sign’) 27,2 (in codex Harris); 39,7.7; 42,1; and **pšaṭ** (‘stretch out [one’s hands]’) 27,1; 42,1. Another example: **’urḥā** (‘way’, ‘path’) 11,3; 12,6; 15,6; 17,9; 23,15; 24,13; 38,7; 39,7.13; 41,1; and **šrārā** (‘truth’) 11,3; 12,1.2.12.13; 15,4; 17,5.8; 23,18; 24,10.12; 38,7; 39,10; 41,1.
- vi E.g. **’abā** (‘father’) 7,7.11; 14,1; 19,2.4; 23,18.22; 31,5; 41,9.13; and **brā** (‘son’, ‘child’) 7,15; 14,1; 19,2.8; 23,18.22; 31,4; 41,2.13.
- vii Namely 5,11; 7,16; 11,3; 15,6; 17,2; 18,7; 19,11; 21,2; 25,2; 28,11; 31,13; 34,6; 35,2; 38,3; 40,5.

Notes with “John Chrysostom (c. 349-407) on the Fall”.

- 1 See Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 73-77 and John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ. Life in Death*. (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 77ff.
- 2 All quotations come from the English translation by Robert C. Hill: St. John Chrysostom, *Eight Sermons on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: Holy Orthodox Press, 2004) and St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17 and 18-45*. The Fathers of the Church vol. 74 and 82 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1986/1990).
- 3 Hanneke Reuling, *After Eden. Church Fathers and Rabbi’s on Genesis 3:16-21*. Jewish and Christian Perspectives 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
- 4 Cf. Chrysostom’s *De laudibus sancti Pauli* 5.3: “He [Paul] had both sets of qualities abundantly, the things of God breathed into him, and those he possessed from his own free will.” Translation by Margaret M. Mitchell in: *The Heavenly Trumpet. John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). English translation of *de laudibus sancti Pauli* 1-7 on page 442-499.
- 5 See also G.J.M. Bartelink, “Die *Parrhesia* des Menschen vor Gott bei Johannes Chrysostomus.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997): 261-272. “Wie mehrere christliche Schriftsteller vor ihm betont Chrysostomus, dass die *Parrhesia* (die freimütige Zuversicht) gegenüber Gott ein Vorrecht der Christen ist, die durch die Taufe die Gunst bekommen haben, wie Söhne Gott ihren Vater nennen zu dürfen.” (262)
- 6 Ἐτέρωθί σε κατέλιπον, καὶ ἑτέρωθι νῦν εὐρίσκω ἑτέρα δόξη ἡμφιεσμένον καταλιπών, νῦν εὖρον ἐν γυμνότητι. (...)Τίς σε εἰς τοσαύτην ἤγαγε μεταβολήν; (...)Τίς ἢ ἄθροα αὕτη μεταβολή;
- 7 “The phrase *felix culpa* is from the hymn “*Exsultet*,” traditionally ascribed to St Augustine but now generally ascribed to St Ambrose, and used at the lighting of the Paschal candle in the Latin tradition: “O truly necessary sin of Adam, which was blotted out by the death of Christ. / O happy guilt, which was meet to have such and so great a redeemer”. Quoted by Behr, *Mystery*, 113 from Brittain, *The Penguin Book of Latin Verse* (1962), 94.
- 8 See Bartelink, “Die *Parrhesia* des Menschen.”
- 9 Cf. my review of Bouteneff in the RCEC report of April 2009.
- 10 Behr, *The Mystery*, 77.
- 11 Behr, *The Mystery*, 78; where this is said about a very similar way of speaking by Irenaeus.