

The Distinction between an Index and a Concordance

by Harry McMullan

(Excerpt from a letter written on the occasion of publishing the Index)

The distinction between indexes and concordances eludes many people. Both, of course, are tools that enable people to find specific things in a given text. A concordance is an alphabetized list of individual words from a text, sorted exactly as they occur, together with the location of each occurrence. The alphabetized word is usually printed in bold, along with the several words immediately preceding and following it.

An index, on the other hand, is an alphabetized list of subjects or topics in which different words referring to the same thing, or close to the same thing, are consolidated and cross-referenced. Indexes pay attention to ideas, concordances to exact words. Concordances, by their very nature, are not subject to consolidation – every occurrence of a given word is separately listed one to a line. For example, in a concordance for *The Urantia Book* the 10 occurrences of “the Most Highs rule in the kingdoms of men” are listed 10 times for each word in the phrase (i.e., leaving out the minor words the, in, and of, 10 times each for Most, Highs, rule, kingdoms, and men, for a total of 50 line entries), while in an index all that information is consolidated onto a one line reference which shows the addresses of each of the 10 locations, thus immensely reducing its bulk relative to a concordance (50:1 in this example) while retaining all of the needed information.

In an index, consolidation is further accomplished by means of *See* and *See also* references. See references are themselves empty except that they point to the heading under which the references can be found. (E.g., entries for Creative Daughter, Universe Mother, and Creative Spirit contain no information except to send the reader to local universe Mother Spirit, the most prevalent name by which she is referred.) The assembly of all information on a particular topic in one and only one place facilitates research as well as further reduces comparative bulk by more than an order of magnitude compared to a concordance. See also references inform the reader of associated subject. (E.g., in addition to direct references, the entry **salvation** says *See also* eternal life; gospel; kingdom of heaven; spiritual rebirth; and survival)...

The Concordance

The Concordance is a computer-generated alphabetized list of words from *The Urantia Book* listed in the order in which they occur in the book with two or three words on either side of the word to help identify context. The Concordance works well enough if one is researching, say, Sikhism, which occurs only three times, but is cumbersome to the point of uselessness if one must wade through 266 Simons (or 140 Bethanys) to find Simon of Bethany. Since the Concordance only indexes single words, one interested in finding all the references for Supreme Mind would find it necessary to look through 1,370 entries under Supreme – or even worse, 1,744 entries under mind. Moreover, the Concordance does not consolidate forms of words (such as plural or possessive endings, or verb tenses), so each permutation must be examined if one wishes to conduct a comprehensive search.

The Concordance is essentially a primitive Folio Views; no one would think of using the Concordance if a computer with Folio Views were available.

Folio Views

Folio Views ... is the ultimate concordance. It is a marvelous tool which in the previous example, would enable one to narrow the search by looking for Simon of Bethany, which occurs 15 times. Of those 15 entries, five have to do with some other Simon in connection with Bethany (One might think to further restrict the search by adding logical operators NOT Peter NOT Zelotes, etc., but to do so would require misplaced confidence to assume that neither Simon Peter nor Simon Zelotes were mentioned the paragraphs sought regarding Simon of Bethany, as the procedure would throw out any paragraph in which Peter or Zelotes occurred, even if Simon of Bethany might also be present). We are left with 10 Simon of Bethany entries after the foregoing five are eliminated by inspection. However, I gave you a trick example, because there are in fact two Simons of Bethany – Simon the father of Lazarus (4 references), and the Simon of Bethany on whose Gethsemane land Jesus and the apostles pitched their tents (6 entries). Folio Views faithfully returns what is asked of it, but it cannot make the further distinction between the two separate Simons of Bethany, and the researcher must read more of the context to determine which is which – or be confused by the incorrect assumption that they are the same individual. In contrast, an index makes such distinctions as a matter of course.

A species of this limitation of Folio Views arises from *The Urantia Book*'s frequent use of different names for the same person, thing, or concept. The revelators seemed never to use the same word twice if an acceptable substitute were available. For example, if one were interested in the difficult topic absoluta, Folio Views would not be able to generate entries in which that reality is referred to as cosmic force, force charge of space, or space potency. The searcher would first need to know, and then to remember to look up, these additional names – no small chore. In an index, no matter which of the above words he or she chose, the searcher would be directed by a See reference to the most common designation (absoluta in this case) where all information relevant to the subject is consolidated. (Even if the searcher could only remember that absoluta is a form of energy, he could nevertheless get to the reference by looking up energy.)

Folio Views can only return addresses for known words. However, it is often the case that important references in *The Urantia Book* do not include any likely word under which most people might mentally file it. Few references regarding atonement doctrine, for example, contain the word atonement:

- “It is wrong to think of God as being coaxed into loving his children because of the sacrifices of his Son or the intercession of his subordinate creatures.. ..” (25.2)
- “It is an affront to God to believe, hold, or teach that innocent blood must be shed in order to win his favor or to divert the fictitious divine wrath.” (45.4)
- “On Urantia there is a widespread belief that the purpose of a Son’s bestowal is, in some manner, to influence the attitude of the Universal Father. But your enlightenment should indicate that this is not true.” (205.2)
- “A bestowal Son must encounter death, must pass through the whole of the actual experience of mortals of the realms, but it is not a requirement of the divine plan that this death be either violent or unusual .” (20:6.6)