

UGA Libraries Undergraduate Research Award 2013***An Essay by Joanna Caffrey***

The best ideas arise at the most unexpected moments, and the most intriguing questions emerge from the most ordinary experiences. Mine came in a desk. I was sitting in a class on the Gospel of John at the University of Georgia as my peers discussed the interpretive issues of the so-called temple cleansing in John 2 with my professor, Dr. Wayne Coppins. Just as I was coming to terms with the fact that this passage is simply too difficult to interpret decisively, something caught my eye. *I think I have seen that word before.* I flipped through the pages of the Fourth Gospel searching for another occurrence of the phrase “drive out.” I found it. Just as I expected, the themes and motifs between the two passages line up. I raised my hand and asked, “Is it possible that this passage can be interpreted in light of John 6 and the alleged excommunication from the synagogue of early Jewish Christians since it shares common motifs the terminology of ‘driving out?’” Dr. Coppins paused, looked, contemplated, and said: “I’m not sure if anyone has made that claim. You should look into that. You might really have something there.” So that is exactly what I did.

My first step was to examine the primary text. Having taken several classes in ancient Greek, I was able to confirm that the two occurrences of the word “drive out” that I discovered in class that day are the same word in the original Greek text. This discovery was exciting new motivation to further investigate the possible connection between these two seemingly unrelated passages. I utilized Strong’s Concordance to locate the other occurrences of the Greek word ἐκβάλλω (ekballo) in the Gospel of John. There are six total. I read and reread each passage, taking note of themes, motifs, and other key words. I became increasingly aware that the

unexpected hypothesis I formed sitting in my desk had the potential to yield groundbreaking results.

Having gained a preliminary understanding of the texts in which the word in question occurs, both through my experience as a student in the class on the Fourth Gospel and my own personal study, I conferred with my professor and now CURO mentor concerning the best way to proceed. Dr. Coppins provided me with the titles and authors of several major works to aid me in the beginning phases of my research. After I had located the texts through the GIL Catalog, I pored over the pages of Martyn, Lincoln, Bauckham, Klink, Kimelmann, and Reinhartz, becoming acquainted with the scholarship on the alleged excommunication from the synagogue mentioned in John 6 and elsewhere, and most explicitly in John 9. At this point in my research process I was not only gaining confidence in my original thesis and understanding of the texts, but furthermore I was developing my argument in relation to the previous literature in the topic.

I implemented the texts recommended to me by my CURO mentor as a starting point to launch into more extensive research. By taking advantage of the footnotes and in-text references to other related works, I was able to access a vast network of scholarship dedicated to this particular area of Johannine studies. On the occasion that a scholar mentioned a counter argument made by another scholar, or works that provide supporting evidence for his or her own claim, I made note of the referenced book or article and read it, repeating the same process in each new piece of literature. My understanding of the plethora of views on the “driving out” in the gospel of John became increasingly more expansive as I immersed myself in the lively dialogue on the excommunication from the synagogue in the Gospel of John.

By this point I had gained a substantial understanding of the discussion on the driving out, but I had not come across any publications that made the claim of my hypothesis. In an

attempt to determine whether or not my idea was original, I utilized the ATLA Religion database through the University of Georgia Library, as well as Google Scholar. I searched using key words on my topic such as “excommunication,” “temple cleansing,” and “drive out.” I also used specific passages as search terms, such as “John 2” and “John 9.” Again, I found no scholars who argued that the “ἐκβάλλω” in John 2 is a reference to the alleged excommunication from the synagogue of early Jewish Christians. I took the advice of Sandra Riggs, the Librarian with whom I met concerning my research tactics. She suggested the use of a Boolean search to yield more specific results. I utilized this tool within the UGA Library multi-search, including multiple search terms and excluding others. I discovered a new set of publications that I had not encountered by means of a simple single-term search, none of which argued a connection between the use of “ἐκβάλλω” in John 2 and its use in the rest of the Gospel of John.

As I reviewed the information I had gathered from many books and articles, my original hypothesis began to seem even stronger than before. The lack of scholarship making the claim I wished to develop did not discredit my theory, but rather confirmed that my research may very well provide original and new insight into the conversation on both the excommunication and the so-called temple cleansing in the Gospel of John. My findings showed that scholars recognized every other use of the six occurrences of “ἐκβάλλω” in the Gospel of John as either a direct or indirect reference to the excommunication described in John 9. I was able to combine this and other information from published scholars with my own findings, including motifs that run through all six passages and the frequency with which the Gospel Writer utilizes other loaded words and phrases to signal another event or theme, to conclude that the driving out in the temple in John 2 is an indirect reference to the excommunication and therefore should be interpreted in light of the expulsion from the synagogue.

As I developed my argument and explained my research in the form of a paper, I became increasingly more convinced of my own proposition. What began as an unexpected thought sparked by a classroom discussion has developed into an exciting contribution to the field of New Testament studies on which I am proud to place my name. I continue to seek out new sources of material that might enhance or challenge my argument, taking advantage of the various search tools available at the UGA Library, suggestions from scholars in the field to whom I have access, and various other resources to locate relevant works and access the vast networks of scholarship that they provide.

CURO Abstract Joanna Caffrey*The Excommunication of Early Jewish Christians and Its Interpretive Value for the So-called Temple Cleansing in the Gospel of John*

The alleged excommunication from the synagogue of early Jewish Christians and the mention of such a phenomenon in John 9 most notably, as well as in other passages in the Gospel of John, has long been and continues to be an extensively debated topic in Johannine studies. Each occurrence of such a reference contains key words that are consistently connected either directly or indirectly to this expulsion when they occur in the Fourth Gospel, with the previously assumed exception of the use of the word “*ekballo*” in chapter two of the Gospel of John. This paper proposes that the presence of “*ekballo*” in chapter two should not be seen as an exception, but rather as a purposeful reference to the subsequently mentioned excommunication, and therefore as an interpretive tool for the literary understanding of the so-called temple cleansing. The presence of the excommunication reference in John 2 provides new insight concerning the manner in which the author of the Gospel of John responded to conflicts between early Jewish Christians and Jews outside of the Christian movement as well as a helpful commentary of the significance of Jesus’ symbolic action in the temple.

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