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Accepted Manuscript (AM) Citation: Reynolds, Benjamin E. "Jewish and Gentile Refugees in the Second Temple Period: A Response to Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Cynthia Long Westfall." In *Rejection: God's Refugees in Biblical and Contemporary Perspective*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, Pages 1-16. (McMaster New Testament Studies). Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

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Version of Record (VOR) Citation: Reynolds, Benjamin E. "Jewish and Gentile Refugees in the Second Temple Period: A Response to Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Cynthia Long Westfall." In *Rejection: God's Refugees in Biblical and Contemporary Perspective*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, Pages 113-124. (McMaster New Testament Studies). Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

Jewish and Gentile Refugees in the Second Temple Period: A Response to Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Cynthia Long Westfall*

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Introduction

Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Cynthia Long Westfall’s papers offer two separate perspectives on the question of alienation and refuge in the Second Temple period. Both authors strive to come to terms with the way in which the Jewish people connected to the wider Hellenistic world with its cultural, political, and socioeconomic pressures. Did they feel rejected, and, if so, how did they address their rejection? If Gentiles were attracted to Judaism, how were they to be incorporated into the Jewish communities and what did it mean that they wanted to be included? The answers are varied.

A Response to Stuckenbruck

Introduction

Professor Stuckenbruck has presented us with a look at four Jewish texts from the Second Temple period that offer insights into four ways in which Second Temple Jews faced and addressed rejection and oppression by political powers (Tobit, cf. *4 Ezra*), cultural and religious pressure (Book of Watchers), or religious and economic alienation by other Jews (Epistle of Enoch). He rightly notes the way in which crises may have been the driving force behind

* The published version of this essay is “Jewish and Gentile Refugees in the Second Temple Period: A Response to Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Cynthia Long Westfall.” In *Rejection: God’s Refugees in Biblical and Contemporary Perspective*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, 113–23. McMaster New Testament Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

numerous Jewish writings during the Second Temple period.¹ These various crises alienated Jewish communities, and recent studies of Second Temple Jewish literature, particularly Jewish apocalyptic literature, have begun considering more seriously the sociological contexts of this literature.² Professor Stuckenbruck's paper is a contribution to this examination of sociological contexts.

Of the four texts that Stuckenbruck engages, the Book of Watchers is most likely the oldest. He notes that the authors of this text are likely to have been part of a priestly or scribal community located in northern Galilee that felt alienation from the growing Hellenistic influence following Alexander the Great's conquest of the East and the subsequent rise of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires after the dissolution of Alexander's empire. The strategy of the Book of Watchers is to describe the enemies as rejected by God and to expect a reordering of the world that will take place in a future along the lines of God's destruction of the world in the Noahic flood. Tobit, on the other hand, presents an expectation that Jerusalem will be rebuilt and the exiles can return, but this does not involve an eschatological reordering. The faithful are to pray, give alms, and remain faithful to the land. In a sense, they are to embrace their status as refugees and endure the exile. The temple may be destroyed and Jerusalem distant, but those who are faithful can rightfully worship through the present heavenly Jerusalem. The Epistle of Enoch addressed alienation not by imperial powers but by fellow Jews who had a differing opinion of the law. Stuckenbruck argues that the Epistle presents a future that is discontinuous with the present order, one that requires eschatological resolution and not merely a reordering of the present reality. In *4 Ezra*, which was written later than these previous three texts, God is

¹ Collins, "Early Christian Apocalypses," 6–7; Hellholm, "Problem of Apocalyptic Genre," 27; Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 62–64.

² See Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, for an excellent study.

implicated in the rejection of his people and Jerusalem. Ezra's critique is directed to God, yet Ezra's questions are never directly answered (cf. Job 38–40). Stuckenbruck argues that the strategy for addressing rejection in *4 Ezra* is to honestly lament the loss and sin and to console others in their lamentation.

Apocalyptic and non-Apocalyptic Literature

What I would like to offer in response to Stuckenbruck's paper are some insights and features that his probing of these alienated Second Temple Jewish groups brings to light. First, Stuckenbruck's comparison of three Jewish apocalypses—Book of Watchers, the Epistle of Enoch, and *4 Ezra*—and the book of Tobit highlights a striking difference in the way apocalyptic writers tend to look toward the resolution of time for vindication. As Stuckenbruck argues, this resolution may take place through continuity (Book of Watchers) or discontinuity (Epistle) with the created order. The Jewish apocalyptic perspective can draw attention to the revelation of resolved time through a revealed cosmology. As Stuckenbruck notes, the Book of Watchers describes the heavenly temple where God's glorious presence and power dwell.³ *4 Ezra* contains not so much a revealed cosmology as a revealed wisdom in tandem or synonymous with the law, which indicates the resolving of time.⁴ The Jewish apocalypses present a cosmological and eschatological hope, although their manner of doing so differs.

In contrast, Stuckenbruck notes that Tobit lacks the cosmological perspective or future hope for a resolved time. Instead, the challenge for the readers and hearers of Tobit is to remain faithful, pray, give alms, and come to terms with their rejection and alienation (cf. Daniel 1–6). Even though they are in exile and separated from the land, God is present with the people and answers their prayers. The heavenly Jerusalem exists in the present and allows worship of God to

³ See Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 9–28.

⁴ Cf. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 33–35.

take place now, even with their alienation from the land. Stuckenbruck states: "...those who embrace piety can engage authentically in the worship of God by focusing on Jerusalem in its heavenly dimension."⁵ Unlike the Jewish apocalypses, Tobit presents no clear expectation of a future resolution of time where the Jewish people's enemies are held to account by God.

Variety of Alienation

Secondly, the four texts Stuckenbruck examines also indicate that alienation that may derive from different sectors. Tobit provides an example of socio-political alienation. The imperially forced exile creates distance from the homeland and proper Torah-directed worship in the temple. Location is not a choice but one imposed by outside forces, and thus, it functions as both physical and psychological alienation. Similarly, *4 Ezra* portrays a socio-political alienation in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (cf. *2 Baruch*). However, as Stuckenbruck notes, the rejection in *4 Ezra* is presented as rejection by God and not as rejection by outside political forces (e.g. the Babylonians/Romans). Sinners have been allowed to conquer God's chosen people.

On the other hand, the Book of Watchers and the Epistle of Enoch depict alienation and rejection on a less international scale. Stuckenbruck argues that within the Book of Watchers we find a scribal community alienated by cultural shifts toward Hellenization and a related "socio-religious accommodation." The alienation may be caused by imperial forces in the resulting cultural shift toward Hellenization, but the alienation is not so much socio-political as it is cultural and religious. Similarly, in the Epistle of Enoch the alienation is also socio-religious; however, in this case it is an intra-Jewish alienation. It appears that a group of those who declare themselves "righteous" view present earthly blessing as a sign of faithfulness (cf. Job and his

⁵ Stuckenbruck, in this volume. (Fourth paragraph of Tobit section in the version I have.)

friends), suggesting that socio-economic alienation occurs simultaneously with the socio-religious alienation. The rich view the poor (the true “righteous”) as transgressing the law because they are poor, and thus, the rich reject the poor from participation in their shared socio-religious and socio-economic context.⁶

Stuckenbruck’s analysis of these four texts indicates that different types of rejection and alienation existed in Second Temple Judaism. Is it therefore any surprise that these Second Temple Jewish texts present different strategies of coping with their respective crises?

How Many Strategies?

Considering that an examination of four Second Temple Jewish texts has brought to light various ways of addressing rejection and different sources of that rejection of God’s people, it does beg the question how many strategies for addressing rejection and alienation we would find if we explored more Second Temple texts. For instance, the Apocalypse of Weeks which can be placed in the context of the Seleucid oppression under Antiochus IV Epiphanes is another example of a socio-political alienation of God’s people. However, connected to this socio-political alienation is also a socio-religious rejection in the form the Seleucid dynasty’s repression of Jewish religious practice. The Apocalypse of Weeks looks to an eschatological redemption by God beginning in the seventh of ten weeks. Like the Epistle of Enoch, this redemption is discontinuous with the present created order. In contrast to the Jewish apocalypses that look to a resolution of time, the Apocalypse of Weeks, as Anthea Portier-Young argues, is resistance literature which commissions the righteous to take up the sword in the eighth week against those who are oppressing them (*1 En.* 91:11–12). She states: “God equips them, but the task of transforming the present world order is theirs to carry out.”⁷ Unlike the Book of Watchers and

⁶ See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 425–29.

⁷ Anthea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 315.

the Epistle of Enoch where the reordering of creation takes place through God's hand, it is the righteous resisting their alienators and oppressors that brings about the resolution. An examination of the Apocalypse of Weeks, we could argue, presents violent uprising as a fifth strategy for Second Temple Jews to address their rejection and alienation.

But what about the *Apocalypse of Abraham* or other Second Temple Jewish texts? If we probe more broadly, will we end up with numerous strategies or have we already addressed the breadth of options? If so, then how many strategies are there and could they be placed in a certain set of categories? Stuckenbruck's study is helpful but some questions remain.

Summary

Stuckenbruck has drawn attention to four strategies of addressing the crises facing Second Temple Jewish communities in Palestine and in the Diaspora. The Book of Watchers, Tobit, the Epistle of Enoch, and *4 Ezra* all show the variety of rejection faced by the Jewish people in this period, the different origins of this rejection, and also the ways in which they faced alienation. What is consistent across the strategies, as Stuckenbruck concludes, is the way in which the relationship between God and his people is central to facing rejection.

A Response to Westfall

Introduction

Cynthia Long Westfall has addressed the topic of Gentile inclusion in early Christianity and how this inclusion was connected with the incorporation or conversion of Gentiles within Diaspora Judaism. The scholarly discussion on this topic is wide-ranging and fraught with many unknowns and shifting paradigms concerning what is meant by "Jewish Christianity."⁸ Westfall

⁸ For example, see Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, esp. 1–24; Skarsaune, "Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity—Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources," 3–21; James Carleton Paget, "*Jewish Christian* and *Jewish Christianity*," 22–52; Jackson-McCabe, "What's in a Name?"; and Reed and Becker, "Traditional Models," 1–33.

must be applauded for tackling this topic and for particularly highlighting the way in which our understanding of the so-called “parting of the ways” has shaped present day Christian understandings of the Jewish people in relation to Christianity. The world has shifted from a time in which all believers in Jesus were Jews to a time where it unfortunately seems odd to have “Jewish Christians” and “Jews for Jesus.”

The central argument of Westfall’s paper is that “Jewish Christians in the Diaspora converted Gentiles and incorporated them into believing Jewish communities and culture consistent with philosophies and practices in the Second Temple Diaspora, in contrast with Paul who established indigenous churches within the Gentile culture, through the influence of other trajectories in the Second Temple Diaspora” (3–4). Westfall’s thesis raises a few questions which, in my opinion, could use some further clarification.

“Cities of Refuge”?

First, Westfall argues that in the same way Gentiles were attracted and became adherents, God-fearers, or converts to Judaism throughout the Jewish Diaspora, so Gentiles were attracted to Jesus-believing Jewish communities.⁹ The Jewish communities drew the Gentiles in through attraction and centripetal force and not outright evangelization.¹⁰ Since Jewish communities did not actively recruit Gentiles, Jesus-believing Jews did not either.

Westfall contends that Jesus-believing Jews who remained halakhically-observant and continued in the synagogue welcomed the Gentiles who were attracted to Jesus, but they required these Gentiles to be circumcised and to observe other halakhic requirements (e.g., food, Sabbath, and festivals) in order to be fully incorporated into these Jewish Christian communities. In this

⁹ This argument has close similarity with Michael Bird’s argument in *Crossing Over Sea and Land*.

¹⁰ On non-Jesus-believing Judaism, see the argument of Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*; Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, esp. his conclusion.

light, three of Terrence Donaldson’s four categories of Gentile relationship with Judaism during the Second Temple Period—sympathizer, ethical monotheists, and participants in eschatological redemption—were not sufficient for Gentiles to be included into Jesus-believing Jewish communities.¹¹ Instead, Gentiles had to become full converts to Judaism in order to become part of the Jewish Christian communities (cf. Galatians 1–2; Acts 11:19).

Westfall describes these Jewish communities that included Gentiles as “cities of refuge.” The phrase is part of her title and used on three other occasions.¹² Whether or not these “cities of refuge” functioned in the way that she argues, the terminology appears problematic for a number of reasons. First, the Old Testament referent for the “cities of refuge” is entirely different. In Numb 35:9–15 (also Deut 4:41–43; Josh 20:1–6), the Lord directs Israel to establish six cities as cities of refuge for those people who unintentionally kill another person. Deut 19:5–6 states: “...when someone goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live, lest the avenger of blood in hot anger pursue the manslayer and overtake him...” (ESV). In these cities of refuge, the “manslayers” can await their trial without fear of revenge being carried out against them (cf. Exod 21:12–13). Thus, in the Old Testament, the phrase “cities of refuge” indicates refuge, but it is refuge for those who have transgressed the commandment not to kill. Further, this refuge only lasts until the accused is brought to trial. There is no guaranteed long-term salvific sense or the connotation of citizenship transfer to the phrase “cities of refuge” in the Pentateuch.

Secondly, Westfall’s view that the Jewish communities provided “cities of refuge” for Gentiles seems to derive from Philo’s discussion of Gentile proselytes in *On Special Laws* 1.51–

¹¹ Donaldson, *Judaism and Gentiles*, 471–505.

¹² Westfall, 16, 22, 26 (of the version I have).

52 and also from Terrence Donaldson's interaction with Philo's discussion. Philo states that Gentiles who "make the passage to piety" should be considered equals with those who were born Jewish. The reason for treating these proselyte Gentiles equally is that these Gentiles

have left...their country, their kinsfolk and their friends for the sake of virtue and religion. Let them not be denied another citizenship or other ties of family and friendship, and let them find places of shelter standing ready for refugees to the camp of piety.¹³

In this quotation, we see the idea that conversion to Judaism may imply the denial of a Gentile's original "citizenship or other ties of family and friendship" and that the Jewish community may provide such a convert a "place of shelter" or a "place of refuge" (1.52). Before this citation, Philo describes the Gentiles proselytes as those who have left (ἀπολελοιπότες) their country, families, and friends. They join with the Jewish community in piety or reverence to God. Philo says that what binds the Jews and proselyte Gentiles together is honor of God.¹⁴

Donaldson argues that what Philo is talking about "involves a very real social dislocation" for these Gentiles and that "they have been incorporated into a distinct social entity."¹⁵ Thus, Jewish Diaspora communities may have provided actual refuge for Gentile proselytes who became dislocated from their own family and friends, but in reality Gentile proselytes may have been considered lesser members of these "cities of refuge." Donaldson notes that Philo's exhortation to his readers to treat these Gentile proselytes equally suggests that the "refuge" may not always have included a warm welcome or equality.¹⁶

By way of contrast, earlier in her essay, Westfall argues that Gentiles who became benefactors of Jewish communities imparted "benefits and protection [for the Jews in the Diaspora] virtually without risk. These were relationships that one could draw on when Jews or

¹³ Philo, *On Special Laws*, 1.51–52 (Colson, LCL).

¹⁴ Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 238.

¹⁵ Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 237.

¹⁶ Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 237–38.

Israel were under attack.”¹⁷ If Gentile benefactors could provide this kind of protection, what sort of refuge were the Jewish communities offering to these and other Gentiles? Who was actually providing refuge for whom?

Jewish communities may have provided cities of refuge, welcoming those Gentiles who chose to become part of the Jewish community; however, it should be kept in mind that this portrait of the situation is drawn primarily from Philo and does not seem to take into account the scholarly consensus that Philo’s views of Gentile conversion have two strands.¹⁸ In addition, what about the views of Josephus, the Qumran community, and other Jews during this time? There were various perspectives on the place of Gentiles in the Jewish community. Considering what we know and do not know, care needs to be taken when generalizing the way in which Jewish communities functioned in relation to Gentile proselytes. Was there a difference between Jewish cities of refuge and “Jewish *Christian* cities of refuge”?¹⁹ Were all Diaspora Jews part of the same communities, welcoming Gentiles in similar ways, but some of them believed Jesus was the Messiah? Can we assume that the incorporation of Gentile-Jesus-believers occurred in the same way Gentile proselytes had been incorporated into Judaism earlier?

We may be able to assume so, but there is much that is not clear. We can only piece the various aspects together as best we can. Westfall has made a good effort in this direction. There may have been something akin to what Westfall has called “cities of refuge” for some Gentiles, but whether this was widespread in the Diaspora and whether this terminology is the best description for what took place, it is difficult to say for sure.²⁰

¹⁷ Westfall, 13.

¹⁸ Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 103–9.

¹⁹ Cf. Westfall, 16.

²⁰ See Donaldson’s citation of sources for and against Judaism as a missionary religion, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 5–6; also Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 8–13.

Paul: Innovator or just another Second Temple Jew

A second concern is the way in which Westfall seems to draw a sharp distinction between Jewish Christianity and Paul's Gentile mission. She states that the difference between Paul and Peter's roles as apostles was that "Paul aggressively²¹ advocated indigenous churches that were embedded in the Gentile culture rather than an export of Jewish culture" (19). She states later that Paul's practice of "creating indigenous communities of righteous Gentiles... was innovative, disturbing, and completely deconstructive of the nature of the people of God in application" (23).

The phrase "indigenous churches embedded in Gentile culture" seems to imply that it was possible for Jewish Christian "churches" not to be embedded in Gentile culture. Martin Hengel contends, "From the middle of the third century BC *all Judaism* must really be designated '*Hellenistic Judaism*' in the strict sense...."²² If Jewish believers in Jesus created "cities of refuge" for Gentile converts, these "cities" existed within Hellenistic culture, with its language, education, and customs. If they did exist, is it possible to demarcate lines between "Jewish," "Christian," "Gentile," etc., and if so, how do we do so? Did they differentiate along the lines scholarship has tended to so? Did their differentiation depend on who you asked?

Further, Donaldson lays out four categories of Jewish integration of Gentiles: conversion, sympathizer, ethical monotheist, and eschatological redemption. Paul clearly does not fit Donaldson's conversion category because he did not require circumcision for Gentiles believers in Jesus to become full members of the Jesus-believing community. However, Paul does fit into two of the three other categories: sympathizer and eschatological redemption,²³ which suggests

²¹ I think her presentation version changed this to "deliberately" rather than "aggressively."

²² Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1.104 (emphasis original).

²³ Westfall says that Paul is "not inconsistent" with ethical monotheism, but it would seem that a philosophical and moral perspective consistent with Moses and the law might not be sufficient for Paul (cf. Romans 1).

that Paul may not be completely at odds with certain strands of Diaspora Judaism.²⁴ If he was not, can we say that he was that innovative and deconstructive?

In Acts, Paul is portrayed as almost always entering a synagogue whenever he comes to a city (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:2; 18:4; cf. 16:13). In Thessalonica, “Paul went in [to the synagogue], *as was his custom*, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures...” (17:1–2). In Corinth, Paul “reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks” (18:4). As Westfall notes, Paul complies when James asks him to purify himself and pay the expenses of some men purifying themselves in accordance with a vow in order to address the rumors that he teaches “the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses” (21:20–26). Not to mention, the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 explicitly states that Gentile observance of the law was not necessary for full conversion.

John Barclay refers to Paul as an “anomalous Diaspora Jew.”²⁵ By this reference, he means that Paul does seem to forsake Moses by appearing to shrug off various requirements of the law and to indicate that the law is irrelevant. Paul in some sense almost severs ties with Judaism such that the rumors floating around Jerusalem in Acts 21 could be considered accurate. Paul seems to reject Judaism more than Philo, Josephus, and others were willing to, but, at the same time, Barclay draws attention to the way Paul often speaks negatively of Gentiles. The Gentile believers are not part of something new, but they are part of Israel. They are grafted into the olive tree (Romans 11). The Gentiles can become the righteous children of God, the descendants of Abraham, and the recipients of God’s promise to Abraham.

Considering the variation and breadth within Second Temple Judaism and the variety within Paul’s writings and how little we actually know, I am hesitant to say that Paul was that

²⁴ Cf. Josephus’ account of the conversion of Izates (*Ant.* 20.34–48).

²⁵ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 381. For the following paragraph, see 381–95.

innovative or deconstructive. The often cited example from Josephus of Ananias and Eleazer in the conversion of Izates to Judaism indicates that there were strict views of what it meant to become Jewish and less strict understandings among Second Temple Jews.²⁶ Paul and the men from James easily fit within this diversity. What is not to be doubted is that Gentile association with the people of Israel was possible. In agreement with Westfall's overall argument and that of Michael Bird, Diaspora Jewish approaches to Gentile inclusion reflect the broader way in which Gentiles were incorporated into Jesus-believing Judaism, but there is an obvious place for Paul in that diversity.

Summary

Westfall argues that the early Jewish Jesus-believers followed previous patterns of Gentile inclusion into Judaism as they incorporated Gentiles into their communities of belief. Whether this inclusion functioned specifically as “cities of refuge” in the way Westfall contends is not entirely clear. However, in her conclusion, Westfall helpfully points out how Paul's arguments took an anti-Semitic turn in later Christian contexts. She states: “All Jews became the opposition.”²⁷ Eventually, Jews had to become Gentiles in order to become Christians rather than the reverse. This reality poses a challenge for contemporary Christianity to reconsider its Jewish roots and what it means to be a follower of Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile.

Conclusion

Both Stuckenbruck and Westfall have expanded our perspective on rejection and alienation within the Second Temple period. Second Temple Jews faced various kinds of

²⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.34–48.

²⁷ Westfall, 25.

alienation and they addressed it with different strategies. When it came to the incorporation of Gentiles into Jesus-believing Jewish communities, it makes sense that this took place in a similar fashion to the incorporation of Gentile proselytes to Judaism. What is noteworthy from this entire discussion is the way in which our knowledge is almost entirely dependent on extant texts. We are left to speculate scenarios for which we really know very little, and we do so through the lenses of previous interpretation and understanding. We should push ahead and attempt to formulate ideas and answer our continuing questions, but we should also remember that we face limitations in this search.

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