

REVIEW

Terence L. Donaldson

Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 BCE)

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Canadian New Testament scholar Terence Donaldson has in a sense been writing his new book, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, for decades. I imagine that Donaldson, during years of study of ancient Judaism and Christianity, kept a running list of passages on this enormous topic as he prepared his other, more detailed studies. In those works, he focused on subsets of this material, especially when Jewish views illuminate early Christian missionary activity. His *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Fortress, 1997), for example, contains a very helpful chapter on Jewish attitudes to the Gentiles contemporary with Paul, in order to better understand Paul's own "convictional world." Other writings have focused on texts relevant to understanding Jews' ideas about the eschatological fate of the Gentiles.

In this new sourcebook, these Jewish texts occupy center stage. He no longer focuses on selected texts that are relevant to a specific argument, but gathers "all the primary texts" from the second century BCE through 135 CE that reveal Jewish "patterns of universalism." By this phrase, he refers to discussions of the "religious status" of non-Jews (ix). Already in the Bible, some Jews naturally began to think about this topic, for while insisting on their own special covenant with God they also affirmed that their God was the supreme deity, creator, and judge of the entire world. Because the nations of the world lived under Israel's God, many Jews asked, for example, whether non-Jews too could find God's favor, or what their ultimate fate was. Donaldson only briefly refers to the biblical sources, and begins chronologically with Daniel and the Hellenistic era. This omission is understandable, if the book was to be kept to a manageable size, though his occasional references to biblical texts seem scattershot. However, Second Temple texts are his primary focus, and in this period such concerns became more prominent, especially as large numbers of Jews moved to the Diaspora.

Donaldson's collection is extensive. It most closely resembles Menachem Stern's, whose translations he sometimes uses and for which this study will serve as an essential complement; see Menachem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 volumes (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974). Donaldson includes 222 literary and inscriptional texts, organized by source in Part 1: Daniel, Septuagint, and Apocrypha; Pseudepigrapha; Qumran; Philo; Josephus; Greco-Roman Literature; Early Christian Literature; and Inscriptions. For each text he begins with a translation of relevant sections (though he also refers to sections that he does not include). He then provides information about dating, authorship, provenance, and earlier scholarship. Donaldson situates the selection within its context, both in the overall text from which it is taken and in its social and religious milieu. He also provides excellent introductions to the most important writers. For example, his sections on Philo and Josephus are insightful, succinct summaries of those aspects of their lives and writings relevant to the topic. On the other hand, Donaldson's comments are sometimes too extensive and detailed for this type of work. Some information he provides is easily accessible in other works one naturally would rely upon if one was studying a text, or not directly relevant to the topic (e.g., 47-51; 415-34).

In general, in these texts, we find that authors' opinions vary widely, from harsh denials that any Gentile can ever be spared God's wrath, to optimistic hopes that upright or monotheistic Gentiles can revere God and be spared at the end of days. Donaldson briefly mentions some of the least favorable texts about the Gentiles, such as Jubilees, but these are treated only in passing (e.g., 4, 510). He is largely interested in the more positive texts. His collection is therefore less than completely comprehensive. This positive emphasis reveals his underlying interest in material relevant to the study of Christianity and especially Christian proselytism, for which he has in earlier works shown the relevance of positive Jewish views.

A key feature of this work is his labeling of each text according to one of four patterns of universalism: sympathization (e.g., joining Jews in worship); conversion (e.g., observance of Mosaic law; joining the Jewish community); ethical monotheism (e.g., implicit recognition of the God of Israel; virtuous behavior); and eschatological salvation (e.g., sharing in God's blessings to the Jews at the end of days). This categorization helps to organize a diverse, even unwieldy collection, and aids in comparisons between different texts. However, there is ambiguity in the categorization. In some texts we can learn about authors' attitudes toward Gentiles, while others simply report what Gentiles may be doing without revealing authors' opinions. Also, Donaldson recognizes that these category distinctions are imprecise, especially because the authors do not employ uniform terminology. I found that Donaldson's judgments were generally sound except where he claims that authors display an interest in conversion. Sometimes, such judgments, even when nuanced, are questionable. For example, Qumran texts, though perhaps mentioning proselytes or converts (the Hebrew is complex), probably tell us little about either actual reality or, when mentioning converts to the sect's opposition, the views of the sect's members. Philo's praise for biblical heroes as model converts reveals little about his views of Gentiles *per se* and yields sparse data about whether contemporary Jews really expected Gentiles to forsake idolatry and join a new religious community. Furthermore, Donaldson confusingly labels some texts "Conversion" despite little evidence that writers expected Gentiles to observe the biblical commandments (186-89; 253-57, 261-63).

Part 2 of the book is a synthesis of his views of the texts, organized according to the four categories. Donaldson details the many variables that make generalizations difficult, such as authorship (Jew or Gentile); genre; purposes for writing; and historical reliability. In light of this diversity, it is doubtful whether one can make any generalizations at all, and his are quite modest. For example, in the case of Gentile sympathizers, Donaldson's conclusion that "it is enough to be able to say...that [they] existed" (475) is, while true, not especially satisfying, and a reminder of the limits of our knowledge. To his credit, Donaldson recognizes that some of the authors may provide little useful information about Jews' views of Gentiles because they felt no compelling need to address the topic. It would have been helpful to explore more the significance of this observation, for the lack of interest is itself significant. When one compares the intensity some Christians brought to proselytism, the differences are striking (e.g., 1 Cor 9:16).

This is an impressive and learned work. It is a major contribution to our understanding of a key feature of Jewish identity—attitudes toward outsiders—and relevant for studies of both other periods in Jewish history as well as early Christianity, for which these views were influential. Furthermore, Donaldson's nuanced reading of Jewish sources is a signal advance over earlier studies that bluntly deprecated Judaism for its supposed particularism. He shows definitively that Jewish views were far more complex and diverse than many have previously thought.