UNITY OF THE BOOK

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The Book of Jubilees has been regarded by most who have studied it as a literary unity. The first scholar to publish a translation, analysis, and text of the book, August Dillmann, said nothing about subsequent editions of the composition.¹ R. H. Charles, in his translation and commentary of 1902, entitled the relevant section in his introduction “Jubilees from one author, but based on earlier books and traditions.”² This is a remarkable circumstance for such experts who were also biblical scholars, when one considers how frequently commentators have found evidence of redactions in scriptural and other works from antiquity.

Over the last several decades the issue of literary unity has not been a major topic of research, but there have been a few proposals to the effect that the present text of Jubilees is the result of one or more editorial revisions to an original base. For example, Michel Testuz, in his book Les idées religieuses du Livre des Jubilés,³ found three interpolated passages: 1:7–25, 28; 23:11–32; and 24:28b–30. Although he devoted most of the book to setting forth the principal teachings in Jubilees, he prefaced to it a section in which he treated some standard introductory subjects. He thought the author was a priestly Essene who was an advocate of the Hasmonean dynasty and who wrote Jubilees in ca. 110 B.C.E. The last section of the introduction he entitled “Remarques sur trois passages,” (pp. 39–42) and here he presents the reasons why he believed the three sections are later than the rest of the book.

On his view, the three call special attention to themselves “par leur style, leurs tendances, et l’intérêt qu’elles portent à d’autres objets que le contexte….”⁴ The first passage allows one to see clearly the suture

² The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis (Oxford, 1902), xlv–xlvii.
⁴ Les idées religieuses du Livre des Jubilés, 39.
points, as nearly the same words appear at the beginning and end of it (vv. 7 and 26). The third section (24:28b–30) presents a similar situation. Testuz thinks that v. 28, rather than referring to “the Philistines” (plural), originally mentioned “the Philistine” and that v. 31 directly follows, revealing that vv. 28b–30 are an addition. In this instance he was forced to revise the text to make his case.

Stylistically, he thought the passages were distinctive in that they showed “une prédilection pour les termes accumulés et presque synonymes dans une même phrase....” The tone in the added sections is more oratorical and passionate. They evince a great hatred for gentiles, whereas in the remainder of the book non-Israelites are held in contempt and ignored more than they are loathed. They belong far away in time and in space, but in the three passages highlighted by Testuz they are very much present as they make war on Israel—successfully, it seems. Perhaps sensing a weakness at this juncture, Testuz allows that there are strong statements about gentiles elsewhere in the book (e.g. chap. 30) but he insists there is still a difference: such statements, though markedly negative, have a rhetorical quality about them in most of the book, but in the three texts there is pure hatred caused by recent events. Also in the three passages the gods of other peoples are named as present realities, as equals dangerous to the God of Israel. This stands in contrast to chap. 12, for instance where the gods are simply called dumb statues, works of human hands. The leader of the demons is usually called Mastema in Jubilees, but in 1:20 the name is Beliar.

Testuz thought the three passages were added at some time between ca. 65 and 38 by a scribe who belonged to the same tradition as the author and who was a member of the Qumran community where the book was preserved.

Testuz’s proposals have received some support but not very much. In fairness to him, we should note that his book appeared before most of the copies of Jubilees from Qumran were available. Now that they have been published, the weakness of his arguments is even more apparent than before. He isolated three eschatological passages and was correct in pointing to their unusual character in that Jubilees is mostly concerned with retelling stories about the past, not with predicting. But to say that

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5 For the point to be valid, he has to say that v. 28 must be read directly after v. 25 (Les idées religieuses du Livre des Jubilés, 39).
6 Les idées religieuses du Livre des Jubilés, 40.