

Lee Nicholson Hall
OT645: Song of Solomon
Lesson 1
Article Abstract: Quick

Laura Quick summarizes recent literature regarding the formation of the Hebrew Bible. She begins with the work of Lemaire who postulated a well-developed school system during the time of the monarchy in Judah. Quick considers his work to exhibit a “lack of caution” in that he considers epigraphic evidence of written material to indicate extensive literacy during this period of time. Quick, however, suggests that the command in Deuteronomy 6 to write the commandments of God on one’s house and gate to be used as a talisman against evil, indicating her own “lack of caution” in her analysis. Golka objected to Carr’s using the Egyptian model of instruction being given at home because he considers Egypt to be much older than Israel and, mistakenly according to Quick, assumes that all nations developed at the rate of speed. Jameison-Drake then wrote relying solely on epigraphic evidence coming to the conclusion that writing was used primarily in the presence of a large administrative system that required record-keeping, and less so as a means for instruction. Davies work which postulates elite scribes and their schools does so on his contention that ancient Israel was created by later writings during the Hasmonean and Perisan periods, and that the writings were not, themselves, contemporaneous. Davies relies on the scribal practices in Mesopotamia for some of his conclusions which Quick finds “largely untenable.” She next considers a work by Schniedewind in which he contends that Davies errs when he suggests post-exilic authorship of the Hebrew canon and instead dates it within the Judaic monarchy. He contends that the exilic period was a time of collecting in written form what had formerly been maintained through oral tradition. He counters current scholarship which finds that oral and literary modes of text developed at the same time by suggesting a move from orality to textuality. Schniedewind further breaks the mold of contemporary scholarship by suggesting that 7th century Judah was very literate throughout society. Carr writes disagreeing with Schniedewind and resuming the idea that orality preceded textuality and that the oral traditions betrayed “intellectual limitations” which had to be corrected with more artistic literary transmissions. Carr continues by looking for evidence of oral tradition found within the written texts which he attributes to scribes rewriting them to accord with their more advanced literary skills. Van der Toorn then finds a scribal culture underlying the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Distinctive to van der Toorn is his finding parallels between Mesopotamian scribes and projecting these onto

later Judaic scribes. Quick objects to his contention that scribes were educated in temple schools contending that he does not recognize the importance of the royal administration likely had in the investment in the education of scribes. Quick points out the inadequacy of some of van der Toorn's arguments that there were four revisions of Deuteronomy which took place every 40 years when the papyrus on which it was written deteriorated and the manuscript had to be re-written with various modifications. Sanders then relied on epigraphic remains in his work which focused on the Israelite scribes being the result of socio-political moves which Quick finds both "unproven and unprovable." Rollston's relies on the same data as Sanders, but finds that there were elite groups which were given scribal training. Quick gives a more thorough analysis of a 2011 work by Carr who provides a comprehensive reconstruction of pre-exilic literature. Carr contends that works were originally transmitted through memorization which resulted in "memory variants." He finds these memory variants to be discernible in comparing texts from Proverbs and Chronicle, Samuel, and Kings. Carr thus argues against dating different works based upon the writing forms since these merely reflect the language usage at the time oral tradition was converted to text. Quick takes exception to his idea of "memory variants" being the best of possible explanations of intertextual similarities. She says that Carr fails to consider theological overtones that the author of Chronicles may have inferred upon a text rather than being confused with memory variants. She also contends that Carr fails to consider the literary artistry that is evident in the writings, especially in Proverbs, nor the various works that the author of Chronicles refers to and from which he draws his final product. Quick goes so far as to say that Carr "merely appropriates biblical materials in an *a peioei* attempt to legitimate his foregone conclusions." Quick then concludes with her suggestions for further scholarly study.

In reviewing this work, I find that the article failed to address the issue of education in ancient Israel and focused, instead, on the various recent theories regarding the composition and transmission of the works of the Hebrew Bible. Problematic was her caution against viewing the Bible as a monolithic work, but her comments for further study do not evidence this concern. While Quick, probably correctly, critiques van der Toorn for asserting that "scribal education took place in temple schools," her primary reason is that 36 of 126 libraries that have been discovered were found in temples with the other 126 found in administrative buildings. She does not clarify the number of temples or the number of administrative buildings surveyed to give a true representation of the weight of the evidence. Or the size of the comparative buildings which might have facilitated their discovery. Even given the scant information she relays, still

almost 30% of the libraries and/or archives have been found in temples. Also of concern is the constant reference and use of scribal practices as assumed in Mesopotamia throughout the works Quick surveys. Since the epigraphic evidence of cuneiform in Israel is very sparse, it is difficult to think that the cultures overlapped that much. Finally, I do not think sufficient time was taken to examine the practices of the oral transmission of literature, especially in light of the thousands of years that the works of Homer were maintained solely through the spoken word.

Of 127 archives found in official buildings, 36 were in temples, 91 were in palaces p 19