

of certain architectural forms in the landscape, but very little about the knowledge and skill base of the ancient builders and engineers responsible for the structures. Nor do we know very much about the social organisation of building project teams and the ways building and design expertise were made available and transmitted. These matters are not peripheral to our assessment of ancient societies with the capacity to design and construct monumental structures.

Each chapter has its own bibliography and there is a comprehensive index. Referencing is inconsistently formatted and there is an incomplete list of abbreviations in the text volume. These matters are trivial when considered against the grandeur of these monumental volumes. The *Ancient Building Technology* series by Mick Wright will be the baseline for the study of ancient architecture for many years to come.

Paul Lawrence, *The Books of Moses Revisited*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011, 172 pp + xv, ISBN 978 1 61 097417 2, US\$ 22.

Reviewed by Christopher J. Davey

Paul Lawrence has worked for some time with Professor Kenneth Kitchen on a multi-volume work entitled *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, which contains the original texts and translations of every known ancient treaty, ninety-seven in all, together with an analysis of them. This book is a harbinger of that larger work which is now in the hands of a publisher; it foreshadows some of the conclusions and it references the texts from the forthcoming volumes.

In addition to the material relating to ancient treaties Lawrence argues that the Pentateuch should be considered in the light of other late second millennium BC features such as Egyptian loan words and legal framework. He also discusses the epic poems about Sinuhe and Gilgamesh, and Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*. Lawrence's argument is basically that the Documentary Hypothesis as an explanation for the formation of the Pentateuch is no longer tenable in the light of the large amount of evidence that has come to light since it was proposed by Julius Wellhausen between 1876 and 1883.

Lawrence's first chapter introduces the Documentary Hypothesis and what we know about Moses from the biblical story. A racy history of the second millennium BC is provided in the second chapter. Genesis is then discussed, proposing a structure based on the phrase translated as 'These are the generations of...', and noting the contextual data for the treaty structure in the four reported treaties, the Egyptian loan words in the story of Joseph and the appropriateness of the slave price mentioned in relation to Joseph.

The meat of the book is found in the following four chapters where Exodus 20 to the end of Leviticus and

Deuteronomy are analysed as treaties and their structure, terminology and content are considered in relation to possible contemporary treaty documents. It is concluded that it is the treaty material from the second millennium BC, rather than the first millennium, that is relevant. Pentateuch book divisions are seen as a result of later scroll lengths.

The penultimate chapter deals with the epics of Sinuhe, Gilgamesh and Homer and attempts to show that in transmission and in some respects, content, the Pentateuch as a second millennium BC document is not unique. This subject area is vast involving second and third millennium BC Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greek literary texts and their transmission. The treatment of the subject here, while reasonable, clearly does not have the same comprehensive and rigorous analysis underpinning it as do the preceding four chapters.

The conclusion states that 'there is no compelling reason to reject the traditional view, that Moses was the 'author' of the Pentateuch or substantial portions of it..' (p 123). Indeed if Moses did not write the Pentateuch, someone like him must have done so. Egyptian education, Semitic background, a knowledge of second millennium BC international treaties and politics and experience with early alphabets are all evident in the text.

Many biblical scholars will no doubt be dismissive about the Pentateuch in a second millennium BC context. What is at stake here is not so much its authenticity, but rather its context and meaning. Unfortunately, the number of scholars who can effectively engage in this discussion is small. The linguistic prerequisites preclude all but a handful, and the situation is not likely to improve as the educational establishments teaching Akkadian, Sumerian and Hittite diminish.

There are also a couple of methodological issues militating against contextual studies such as this. Many colleges see the Bible as 'authoritative' studying it in isolation and in so doing they lose much of its meaning. Others adopt a modernist approach seeking to be scientific. However in this post-modernist, post-processual, world there is a realisation that empirical certainty is an illusion and that all evidence should be considered. Following this methodology much of the ancient Near Eastern data discussed by Lawrence are in fact source material, while the biblical text is an artefact that we seek to understand.

Paul Lawrence's book itself is meant for the general reader as it does not assume prior knowledge of the history of the debate and the ancient world or the documents themselves. It has tables of chronology, lists of treaties, maps, indexes and a useful bibliography. Although the text appears disjointed with many quotes, tables and footnotes, there are regular introductory and summary paragraphs enabling the reader to stay abreast of the argument. Unlike detailed earlier works such as Ken Kitchen's *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, this book is a manageable length and is priced for the non-specialist.