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MICHAEL D. COOGAN

# The Old Testament

A HISTORICAL AND LITERARY  
INTRODUCTION TO THE  
HEBREW SCRIPTURES

THIRD EDITION



OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



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# What Is the Old Testament?



For more than two thousand years, the Old Testament has been sacred scripture for Jews and Christians and has had a profound impact on their beliefs, practices, art, and literature. In its pages, we meet familiar figures such as Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, David and Solomon, and many other memorable kings and queens, prophets, and heroes. The Old Testament is also, even preeminently, the biblical writers' account of how God interacted with the world and particularly with his people Israel.

But the Old Testament as a whole is not a continuous narrative. Rather, it is an anthology, a collection of writings produced and assembled in stages over more than a thousand years. The anthology consists of what are called books, and those books are further subdivided into chapters and verses (see Box 1.1).

Like every anthology, the Old Testament is a selection. The ancient Israelites produced many other writings, some of which are mentioned in the Bible but have not survived, such as "the Book of the Wars of the LORD" (Num 21.14). Unlike anthologies of other literatures, however, the Old Testament is arranged not according to when the books were written but by several other systems, the first of which is a narrative chronology. Thus, the first dozen or so books recount events from the creation of the world to the early sixth century BCE; this does not mean, however, that this is the order in which they were written. As we will see,

the opening chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, was written much later than many of the chapters and books that follow it.

The rest of the anthology that is the Old Testament is organized more or less thematically. Different religious communities, however, differ in how they arrange its books and about which books to include. The technical term for the official list of books comprising the Bible by a religious community is a **canon**. The Greek word *kanōn* means a rod, often used for measuring, like a ruler or yardstick, and thus has the extended meaning of something fixed, by rule as it were. In biblical studies, "canon" has the specialized meaning of a closed list of writings that are considered sacred scripture and hence authoritative. The religious communities for whom the Bible is authoritative do not entirely agree about which books they include in their respective canons, the form of those books, or the order in which those books occur; this is because the processes that led to the formation of the various canons of the Bible were complex and extended over many centuries.

## The Jewish Canon

In Jewish tradition, the Bible has three parts—the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings; from the first letters of the Hebrew words for these parts (*Torah*, *Neviim*,

## BOX 1.1 CHAPTER AND VERSE

Since ancient times, the Bible has been separated into books. In the late Middle Ages, each book was divided for easy reference into larger units, or chapters, and a few centuries later the chapters were further divided into smaller units, or verses. Modern printing convention usually puts a period or colon between the numbers designating the chapters and the verses, so that Genesis 1.2 (or 1:2) means the book of Genesis, the first chapter, the second verse. That is the system used in all Bibles and the one we will use in this book.

The divisions do not always correspond either to the natural divisions of the text or to modern understandings of it. For example, the opening chapters of Genesis actually consist of two separate accounts of creation. The first continues from the first chapter into the first few verses of the second, and the second begins in the middle of the fourth verse of the second chapter. Thus, in shorthand notation, the first account is found in Genesis 1.1–2.4a and the second in Genesis 2.4b–3.24.

Different print editions also have some variation in numbering. The system used in this book is that of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which follows the tradition of the ancient translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Hebrew manuscripts sometimes have different numbering. For example, in Genesis, Hebrew manuscripts start chapter 32 after 31.54, while in Greek manuscripts, followed by the NRSV, chapter 32 ends with verse 55; there is thus a one-verse discrepancy between the two systems so that NRSV 32.1 = Hebrew 32.2. Similar discrepancies are found throughout the Bible and are noted in the textual notes to the NRSV.

and *Ketuvim*, respectively) comes the frequently used acronym **Tanakh**. For Jews, Tanakh is simply the Bible; scholars often refer to it as the **Hebrew Bible**, in preference to the explicitly Christian term **Old Testament**, which is a different canon in terms of both content and order of the books (see pages 6–7).

### THE TORAH

The first part of the Bible to be considered authoritative or canonical was its opening five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—known as the **Torah**. These books are linked by a continuous narrative chronology, from creation at the beginning of Genesis to the death of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy. The Hebrew word *torah* means “teaching” or “law.” Until modern times these five books were considered the “teaching of Moses,” and Moses was be-

lieved to be their author; few scholars today still accept that in its literal sense (see further pages 49–50).

### THE PROPHETS

The second part of the canon in Jewish tradition is the **Prophets**, which has two divisions. The **Former Prophets** consist of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, which continue the narrative chronology of the Torah. They begin immediately after the death of Moses, with the divine appointment of Joshua as his successor, and recount the history of the Israelites in the Promised Land, from their entry into it under Joshua’s leadership to their loss of it to the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The **Latter Prophets** are the books named after individual prophets; these are sometimes divided into the **Major Prophets**—the longer books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—and the **Mi-**

**nor Prophets**—the twelve shorter books from Hosea through Malachi.

This canonical arrangement links historical narratives with prophecy, thus understanding those narratives as more than a straightforward account. Rather, they include interpretation, specifically from a divine perspective, implicitly revealed to divinely informed interpreters or prophets.

## ✂ THE WRITINGS

The third division of the Jewish canon, the **Writings**, contains a variety of books in different genres. There is historical narrative: The books of Chronicles cover the same chronological span as the Torah and Former Prophets and conclude with the return from exile in Babylon in the second half of the sixth century BCE; the books of Ezra and Nehemiah continue this narrative, relating the history of the Jews in the late sixth and fifth centuries. The Writings also include what modern scholars identify as historical fiction, in the books of Ruth, Esther, and Daniel; the poetical books of Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations; and reflections on the human condition in the books of Job, also mostly in poetry, and Ecclesiastes.

## ✂ THE PROCESS OF CANONIZATION

Because of their association with Moses, the five books of the Torah had a special authority, and they were the first to be given canonical status; this may have occurred as early as the fifth century BCE, as suggested by the description of Ezra as “a scribe skilled in the law (*torah*) of Moses that the LORD the God of Israel had given” (Ezra 7.6). Because of their narrative chronology, the order of the books of the Torah never varies.

By the second century BCE, the Prophets also had canonical status; an early second-century BCE work refers to “the Law” and “the Prophets” (Sirach, prologue), and we also find that terminology in Jewish works of the first century BCE as well as in the New Testament. The traditional order of the Major Prophets is chronological—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—but

this varies; in some manuscripts, Isaiah comes either after Jeremiah or after Ezekiel. The order of the twelve Minor Prophets varies even more in different manuscripts.

The Writings were the last part of the Jewish canon to be collected and designated as authoritative, although this process apparently was not complete until at least the second century CE. After the “Law and the Prophets,” the prologue to Sirach mentions “other books,” without specifying their content; similarly, Luke 24.44 refers to “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.” As these fairly vague designations of the third part of the Jewish canon imply, its contents were somewhat fluid, as was the order of the books in it.

Several overlapping criteria were used in including a work in the canon. One criterion was date: For a book to be included, it should have been written before the fourth century BCE or attributed to an author who had lived before then. Another criterion was language: For a book to be included, it should have been written in Hebrew; however, although some parts of Ezra and Daniel were written in Aramaic (see Box 25.2 on page 420), they were largely in Hebrew, and so this did not count against them. A third criterion was extent of use. The last criterion also could affect the order of books; thus, the books of Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, collectively known as the five *megillot*, or “scrolls,” frequently (although not always) occur in that order because of their being read on a specific holy day in the liturgical cycle: Song of Solomon at Passover, Ruth at Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), Lamentations at Tisha B’Av (the ninth day of the month of Av, when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed), Ecclesiastes at Sukkot (Booths), and Esther at Purim.

Jewish writers of the Hellenistic and Roman periods produced a large variety of writings in many genres. In some communities, some of these books had the status of scripture. But in the aftermath of the revolts against the Romans that ended in 70 and 135 CE, most of these books were excluded from the developing canon. Similarly, although different forms of scriptural books were in circulation in different Jewish communities, eventually this textual diversity also was stabilized, as one form, eventually to be called the Masoretic Text, became standard.

## The Christian Canons

As a religious movement that began within Judaism, early Christianity naturally adopted the Jewish scriptures as sacred texts. Almost every book of the New Testament contains many quotations from and allusions to the Jewish scriptures, which illustrates their authoritative status.

### ✿ CONTENTS

The Christian canon of what in the late second century CE came to be called the Old Testament included all of the books of the Jewish canon. It also included about a dozen books that were not part of the Jewish canon as it had developed. Many of these authentic Jewish religious writings of the third century BCE to the first century CE had originally been written in Greek; others were excluded because of their relatively late date. Nevertheless, some Jewish communities did consider them authoritative scripture.

These books were included by the early Christians in their canon of scripture, in part because they were preserved in manuscripts of the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek known as the **Septuagint**, which was widely used among Greek-speaking Jews of the eastern Mediterranean world; most early Christians were also Greek-speaking, and thus the Septuagint became their primary Bible. Moreover, several of these books were included to in the developing canon of the New Testament and thus seemed to have a kind of scriptural warrant.

These additional books are in several different genres, including

- Historical narratives, in the books of Maccabees and 1 Esdras
- Historical fiction, in the books of Tobit and Judith
- Additions to and revisions of the books of Daniel and Esther
- Longer poetical works, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach (also called Sirach or Ben Sira, and Ecclesiasticus)
- Other works, such as the book of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah

Also included in many modern study Bibles are 2 Esdras (also known as 3 Esdras and 4 Esdras), the Prayer of Manasseh, and Psalm 151.

Eventually these books and different versions of books were designated “Deuterocanonical”—that is, belonging to a second canon—because they were not included in the Jewish canon; they have also often been called **Apocrypha**, a misleading term that means “hidden (books),” although there was never anything hidden about them.

Another category of Jewish writings of the Hellenistic and Roman periods is known as the Pseudepigrapha because most of them, although written in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, are attributed to earlier biblical characters, such as Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, and Job. None of the Pseudepigrapha are canonical, although many were widely known among both Jews and Christians in antiquity; they provide further evidence of the rich diversity of Jewish and in some cases Christian literary activity based on the Bible.

### ✿ ORDER

Christians also rearranged the order of the books of the developing Jewish canon into three divisions. The Torah and the Former Prophets formed the first major division, and because of their narrative chronology, they are in the same order as in the Jewish canon, although the book of Ruth was moved from the Writings to after the book of Judges because it is set “in the days that the judges judged” (Ruth 1.1). Also added to the Former Prophets were other books found in the third part of the Jewish canon, the Writings, books that were viewed as historical: 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. To them were added other apparently historical works: Tobit, Judith, and 1 and 2 (and sometimes 3) Maccabees.

This grouping of historical writings was then followed by a second division, often called the poetical and wisdom books, in which were placed other works taken from the Writings: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon; to them were added Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach.

The third division of the developing Christian canon was the Latter Prophets of the Jewish canon. Added to the Latter Prophets was the book of Daniel;

although it belongs to the Writings in the Tanakh, Daniel himself was considered one of the prophets (see Mt 24.15), and the book that has his name was placed according to its narrative chronology after the book of Ezekiel. Also moved from the Writings to this third division was the book of Lamentations, traditionally thought to have been written by the prophet Jeremiah and therefore placed after the book of Jeremiah, as were also the books of Baruch and Letter of Jeremiah.

The result in the Christian canon is an arrangement of books with their own distinct rationale. First come the historical books, those dealing with the past. These are followed by books that may be understood as dealing with the present. Finally come the books interpreted as dealing with the future. The result is that the prophetic books come immediately before the New Testament, the events of which they are traditionally interpreted as predicting.

### FURTHER REVISION

These changes resulted by the fifth century CE in the Christian canon, which then remained relatively stable for more than a thousand years. In the sixteenth century, however, another significant change occurred. Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers argued that only those books written in Hebrew be considered authoritative, and so the Apocrypha, the books of Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, along with the Additions to Daniel and Esther, were no longer considered canonical and so were not included in Protestant Bibles. As a result, the Jewish Tanakh and the Protestant Old Testament have the same contents but in a different order.

In response, the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546 decreed that all forty-six books of the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha, were canonical and equally authoritative. Thus we find a division among Christians concerning the contents of the canon of the Old Testament. All the books of the Jewish canon are accepted as canonical by all Christian communities, although in a different order from that in the Tanakh. Protestants consider only the books of the Jewish canon to be canonical, whereas Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians also consider the Apocrypha to be

canonical. Christians agree, however, on the order in which the books that they include occur.

In modern Roman Catholic Bibles, the Deuterocanonical or Apocryphal books are inserted among the books of the Jewish canon. Modern Protestant Bibles, especially study Bibles, frequently include the Apocrypha in a separate section between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The result of all of these processes is a complicated list, as Box 1.2 shows.

## The Study of the Bible

### TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Before the printing of the first book—the Bible—by Johannes Gutenberg in the sixteenth century, all books were written and reproduced by hand. These hand copies are called “manuscripts” (from the Latin words for “hand” and “writing”). We have no original manuscripts for any of the books of the Bible. The earliest New Testament manuscripts date to the second century CE, at least several decades after the books were presumably written. For the Old Testament, our earliest, mostly fragmentary copies are from the Dead Sea Scrolls (see Figure 1.1 on page 10); they date from the third century BCE to the first century CE, in most cases centuries after the books were written.

Even though the scribes who copied the manuscripts intended to copy exactly what was in front of them and usually did so, they could make mistakes, as we all do when copying. Sometimes words were misspelled, sometimes numbers were confused, sometimes a line or even a paragraph was inadvertently skipped. Sometimes, too, scribes made deliberate changes, correcting what they thought were earlier errors, adding material familiar to them from other manuscripts, and even changing what in their view was factually or theologically incorrect.

A necessary first stage in the study of the Bible is to determine what its actual text is. This is immensely difficult, because thousands of manuscripts need to be compared. Moreover, even before the Jewish canon was established, many of the books that eventually ended up in it were being translated into other languages, so that those who no longer understood Hebrew could

## BOX 1.2 THE CANONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT

JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY		
<i>Hebrew Bible (Tanakh)</i>	<i>Old Testament</i>		
	PROTESTANT	ROMAN CATHOLIC	EASTERN ORTHODOX
<b>Torah</b>	<b>[Pentateuch]</b>		
Genesis	Genesis	Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus	Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus	Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers	Numbers	Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
<b>Prophets (Neviim)</b>			
<i>Former Prophets</i>	<b>[Historical Books]</b>		
Joshua	Joshua	Joshua	Joshua
Judges	Judges	Judges	Judges
1 & 2 Samuel	Ruth	Ruth	Ruth
1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Samuel	1 & 2 Samuel	1 & 2 Samuel
<i>Latter Prophets</i>	1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Kings
Isaiah	1 & 2 Chronicles	1 & 2 Chronicles	1 & 2 Chronicles
Jeremiah	Ezra	Ezra	Ezra
Ezekiel	Nehemiah	Nehemiah	1 Esdras
<i>The Twelve</i>	Esther	Tobit	2 Esdras
Hosea		Judith	Nehemiah
Joel		Esther	Tobit
Amos		1 Maccabees	Judith
Obadiah		2 Maccabees	Esther
Jonah			1 Maccabees
Micah			2 Maccabees
Nahum			3 Maccabees
Habakkuk	<b>[Poetical Books]</b>		
Zephaniah	Job	Job	Job
Haggai	Psalms	Psalms	Psalms
Zechariah			Psalm 151
Malachi			Prayer of Manasseh
<b>Writings (Ketuvim)</b>	Proverbs	Proverbs	Proverbs
Psalms	Ecclesiastes	Ecclesiastes	Ecclesiastes
Proverbs	Song of Solomon	Song of Solomon	Song of Solomon
Job		Wisdom of Solomon	Wisdom of Solomon
		Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)

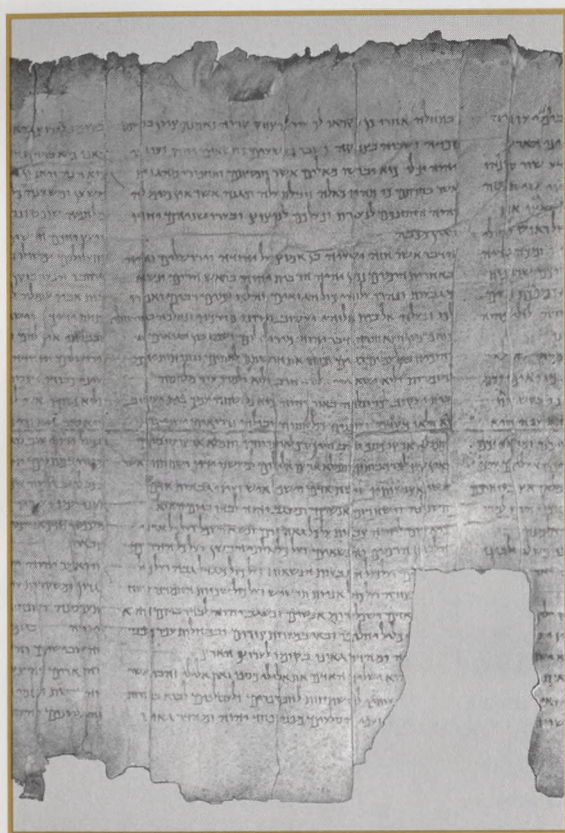
<i>Five Scrolls</i>			
Song of Solomon	[Prophets]		
Ruth	Isaiah	Isaiah	Isaiah
Lamentations	Jeremiah	Jeremiah	Jeremiah
Ecclesiastes	Lamentations	Lamentations	Lamentations
Esther		Baruch	Baruch
Daniel			Letter of Jeremiah
Ezra-Nehemiah	Ezekiel	Ezekiel	Ezekiel
1 & 2 Chronicles	Daniel	Daniel	Daniel
		Additions to Daniel	Additions to Daniel
	Hosea	Hosea	Hosea
	Joel	Joel	Joel
	Amos	Amos	Amos
	Obadiah	Obadiah	Obadiah
	Jonah	Jonah	Jonah
	Micah	Micah	Micah
	Nahum	Nahum	Nahum
	Habakkuk	Habakkuk	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah	Zephaniah	Zephaniah
	Haggai	Haggai	Haggai
	Zechariah	Zechariah	Zechariah
	Malachi	Malachi	Malachi
			(4 Maccabees)

still read the sacred texts. The earliest of these ancient translations is in Greek and is known as the Septuagint, from the word for “seventy,” because according to legend some seventy translators of the Torah independently produced identical translations, thereby proving that the translation was as inspired as the original. We should assume that, like the scribes who copied Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint translators wanted to be as faithful as possible to the text in front of them. So studying ancient translations like the Septuagint is another path to the original. Again, however, we no longer have the first Septuagint manuscript but only copies, so these too must be compared, both with each other and with Hebrew manuscripts. Besides, translation involves interpretation, not just copying,

and Hebrew and Greek words often have different nuances, so it is often uncertain what the Hebrew behind the Greek was. All this is also true of translations into other ancient languages, such as Aramaic and Latin. The scholarly method for figuring out on the basis of all the evidence what a text originally may have been is called **textual criticism**.

## 🌿 ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Since antiquity, translations have enabled readers who do not know those languages to read it. Translators have to know the original languages, and they also must use textual criticism in deciding exactly



**FIGURE 1.1** Part of a scroll containing the book of Isaiah. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, it is the oldest manuscript of a complete book of the Bible, dating to the second century BCE. The scroll has fifty-four columns, each about 10 in (25 cm) high; the one shown contains Isaiah 1.26–2.21.

what to translate. Throughout history, some individuals have undertaken the monumental task of translating the entire Bible by themselves; notable examples are Jerome's translation into Latin in the late fourth and early fifth centuries CE and Martin Luther's translation into German in the sixteenth century. More frequently, however, translation has been carried out by committees or groups of scholars.

That is the case for the most important translation of the Bible into English, the **King James Version** (also called the Authorized Version), published in 1611 under the patronage of King James I of England. Drawing on earlier translations but correcting them against the original languages, several dozen scholars

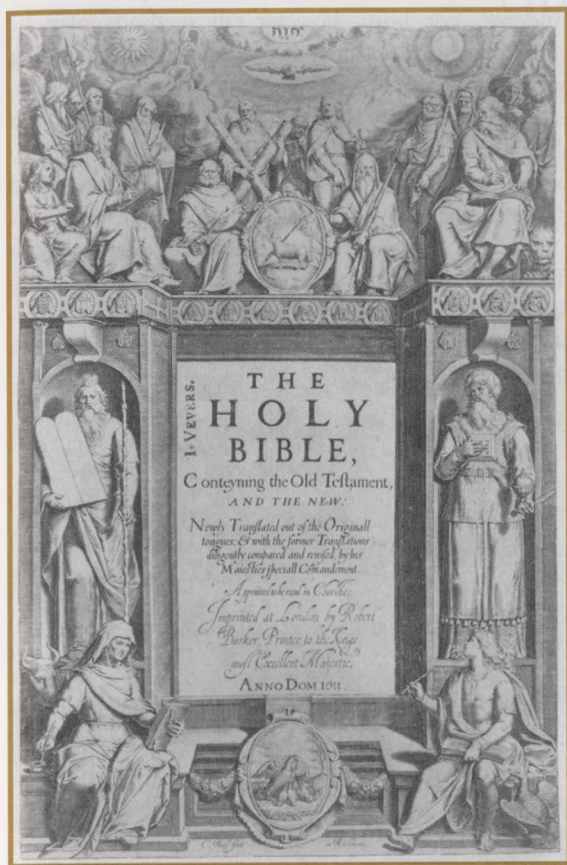
worked for seven years to produce it (Fig. 1.2). Because of its superb style as well as its accuracy, it became the most widely used English translation of the Bible.

As the English language changed, however, and as scholars' expertise in biblical languages and in textual criticism increased, it was eventually thought important to revise the venerable King James Version. The first revision, the Revised Version, completed in England in 1885, was followed by the American Standard Version of 1901, the Revised Standard Version of 1952, and the New Revised Standard Version of 1989. All of these used the King James Version as their basis but modernized the English and corrected its translation when new data required it. In some Protestant circles, these revisions were considered too liberal, and other more theologically conservative versions also were produced, including the New King James Version (1982) and the New International Version (1978; 1984) and its most recent revision, Today's New International Version (2005). Other important modern English translations of the Bible include the Jewish Publication Society's Tanakh (1985) and The New American Bible (revised edition, 2011).

Readers of the Bible who do not know Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek can often gain insight into the original meanings of the text by comparing translations, especially when studying a passage in detail.

## ✂ REDACTION CRITICISM

Although some ancient and most modern authors have produced single works that remain essentially unchanged, that was not the case with many books of the Bible. They often went through several editions over the course of several centuries—editions that sometimes included major revisions, expansions, and rearrangement. The book of Jeremiah tells us that the prophet originally dictated his prophecies or “oracles” to his scribe Baruch, who wrote them down (Jer 36:1–4, 32). So in theory, at least, there was an original. But that original was expanded by stories about the prophet, told in the third person and therefore not by the prophet himself, and by much other material; these expansions may have taken place in different ways at different times and places. When we compare manuscripts of the book of Jeremiah, whatever its original



**FIGURE 1.2** The title page of the first edition of the King James Version.

may have been, we find very different versions. The traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text is roughly 15 percent longer than that found in the Septuagint and in some manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the order of some of the chapters also differs. Similar editorial processes are evident in many other books of the Old Testament, and the study of these processes is called **redaction criticism**.

## BEFORE THE BOOKS THEMSELVES

Before the books of the Bible took shape, many works were already in circulation, both orally and in writing, and the authors and editors of the Bible often incorporated this earlier material into their compositions. Two overlapping methods focus on these earlier

stages. One, **form criticism**, attempts to identify smaller units that were eventually incorporated into the larger works. Another, called **source criticism** (or sometimes **literary criticism**), deals with larger chunks of material in a similar way. A third, **tradition history**, attempts to understand how writers and editors incorporated these smaller and larger units into their works. We will look at the specifics of these methods in the chapters that follow. It will be important to keep in mind that each of the longer books of the Bible has a complicated history.

As we proceed through the Bible in this book, we will especially be using historical data, much of it brought to light by archaeologists since the mid-nineteenth century. In the next chapter we will look at this in more detail.

## CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

The strategies just sketched were developed by biblical scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were enhanced by cross-fertilization from other academic disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, linguistics, folkloristics, and literary criticism. Since the later twentieth century, the number of approaches has increased dramatically, especially types of what is called **ideological criticism**. These include feminist and other gender-related approaches, ethnic (e.g., African American, Asian American, and Hispanic), postcolonialist, and the like. Interest has also increased in the history of interpretation of the Bible over the ages by scholars and theologians and in what is called **reception history**—how creative artists such as writers, painters, sculptors, choreographers, and composers have incorporated biblical characters and themes into their works.

## A Look Back and Ahead

Although the word “Bible” originally meant “book,” it is not one book but a collection of many books, written by many authors over many centuries. Jews and Christians have their own versions of the collection and different names for it as well. Jews and Protestants agree on the contents of what they call the **Tanakh** (the Hebrew Bible, or simply the Bible) and the Old

Testament, respectively, but those contents are arranged differently. Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians include in their Old Testament additional ancient Jewish books interspersed among the others. This diversity has more than a superficial significance, for it indicates that the Bible was not sent down from heaven as a complete unit but resulted from decisions also made over many centuries by the leaders of the different religious groups.

For many reasons, including its complicated history, interpreting the Bible is challenging, involving a seemingly endless array of interpretive strategies, often as bewildering to biblical scholars as to beginning

students. For both, however, all methods may be viewed as means to an end: the greater understanding and appreciation of one of the most important books ever produced. Any approach that helps us understand the Bible better should be cultivated, and the place to begin is with the Bible itself. As the child's voice said to Augustine in the garden, "Pick up and read!"

We will start our study of the Old Testament with the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis. Before doing so, however, in the next chapter we will survey the geographical and historical contexts in which the books of the Old Testament were written.

## Important Names and Terms

Each name or term is defined briefly in the Glossary. Its first significant occurrence in this chapter appears in **boldface** type.

Apocrypha

canon

Former Prophets

Hebrew Bible

King James Version

Latter Prophets

Major Prophets

Minor Prophets

Old Testament

Prophets

redaction criticism

Septuagint

Tanakh

textual criticism

Torah

Writings

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