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## PREFACE

THIS book has been in the making for some years. The plan for it developed when one of us taught Old Testament survey courses at the collegiate level and was frustrated by the lack of an adequate text. Though teachers of Scripture have been blessed amply with specialized works like histories, theologies, and introductions, no one volume was available that combined those elements in a framework whose theological and scholarly approaches we found congenial. For more than fifteen years now the three of us have taught together as a team at Fuller Theological Seminary, sharing the Old Testament core courses and testing these chapters with hundreds of students along the way. Their suggestions and criticisms we have tried to incorporate into the various drafts, and their fingerprints are on every page.

We have approached our materials with both college and seminary students in mind. Our aim has been to pitch the text at a level that most college students can handle and then to meet some of the more technical needs of seminary instruction with the footnotes and bibliographies. (Works cited in the annotated chapter bibliographies—labeled “For Further Reading”—are representative studies chosen to supplement those cited in the chapter notes. For more comprehensive works see the General Bibliography.) Though each of us has drafted certain chapters, we have all read, reviewed, and revised each other’s work so thoroughly that the book is a joint effort in every sense.

Our purpose is straightforward: to introduce the reader to the background, content, literary quality, and message of the Old Testament as a whole and of its various books. To do this we have not followed a rigid outline for each biblical book but have sought to let the contents and style of each book dictate the way we have studied it. The basic sequence of the later prophets has been altered to fit our understanding of their approximate chronological order. In no way is our design to substitute for the Bible. What book can? Our hope is that it will be read as a guide and supplement to the biblical text itself and that, as such, it will enhance the devotion and obedience of its readers to Scripture and to Scripture’s Lord.