

The Dead Sea Scrolls And The Bible

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Ten years ago the earliest known manuscript of any sizable portion of the Old Testament came from the tenth century A.D. When it was written, nearly thirteen hundred years had passed since the latest portion of the Old Testament had been composed. Is it any wonder that there were scholars who questioned whether our Old Testament was reliable? It is impossible to copy a whole book by hand without making mistakes. These books had been copied and recopied many times during the years between their original writing and the copying of the earliest manuscript that we possessed. Most ancient writings that have come down to us in this way contain many scribal errors. Could we depend upon our Hebrew Old Testament as being at all close to the text of its books as originally written, when the very earliest copy we possessed had been made as late as 900 A.D.?

Five years ago there appeared in the United States of America a new translation of the Old Testament, which called itself "The Revised Standard Version". It was prepared by representatives of the National Council of Churches, which is the American affiliate of the World Council of Churches. It was distributed with great fanfare and publicity. It was declared to be an "authorized translation" and alleged to be the true and dependable translation which ought to be accepted as standard. Yet there are about one thousand places in the Old Testament in the Revised Standard Version where a footnote states that what the text contains is not a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, but is taken from another source. In a large number of cases no other source exists, and what is given represents merely a conjecture, or guess, on the part of the translators. This shows how little confidence these translators were willing to place in the text of the Hebrew Old Testament, as it has been transmitted to us! Time and again the footnote simply says, Heb. so and so, indicating that what the translation contains is not taken from the original Hebrew at all. It soon becomes apparent that the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament gives us a translation into English, not of what the Hebrew actually says, but of what the translators think it ought to have said. Personally I am not greatly interested in learning what the