

photographed, and the copies were made available to Biblical scholars. To their amazement they found that it contained a text almost identical with the text known to us from manuscripts of a thousand years later. It showed that the task of copying and recopying had been carried on with such remarkable accuracy as to be practically unparalleled. It gave proof that far exceeded all expectation, that our Hebrew text of the Old Testament is dependable.

Further searches in the many caves in the hill country west of the Dead Sea led to the discovery of fragments of hundreds of other manuscripts. Portions of practically every book of the Old Testament have been found, and the close relationship that they sustain to the text as known to us from manuscripts that were made a thousand years later is most remarkable.

It could not be expected that evidence carrying the text of the Old Testament back a thousand years would be accepted without strong opposition being aroused. In fact it is far better that it be so. We do not desire evidence that is shaky or ill-founded. God's Word can stand every test to which it may be subjected by honest men.

While a few outstanding students of archaeology at once accepted the genuineness of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the bulk of scholars began immediately to oppose them. Some declared them to be forgeries. Others said that they came from the Middle Ages. Every conceivable argument against their genuineness was advanced. At one large meeting of American Orientalists, there was hardly a man present who would say a word in defense of the Scrolls, which were roundly denounced and condemned. However, the tide soon began to turn. If we had another hour it would be interesting to look at some of the evidences that turned up to prove their genuineness. Even atomic energy played its part in the investigations. So much evidence of various types came to light that today nearly all scholars are convinced that the Scrolls were written, treasured, and eventually hidden for safe-keeping by a colony of Jews that lived from the second century B.C. into the first century A.D. in the barren hills west of the Dead Sea.

The actual headquarters of the colony was found near a village called Qumran. There was a large communal dining room, and a special room for copying manuscripts, equipped with table and inkwells.