earlier than that of the M urabba'at texts. They thus give additional proof
of the great antiquity of the Qumran texts, and show that the original estimate
of the age of the first Isaiah scroll was approximately correct. In addition,
they provide us with our second oldest group of Old Testament manuscripts, a
group which is itself hundreds of years earlier than almost any Hebrew
manuscript previously known to us.

T he study of the manuscripts from the various caves is bound to be
of great value in giving new insights at many points of Biblical interpretation
and in fixing the exact text of the Old Testament in many places. In general,
they agree very well with our later manuscripts and show how very excellently
the text has been preserved. The non-Biblical texts are also of great interest as
they reveal the life and views of the sectarian groups of Jews who wrote these
manuscripts.

It is to be hoped that the great mass of the manuscripts will be
pieced together and published in the very near future. Scholars will be
occupied for many years to come with the study of these texts and the investi-
gation of the many new ideas which they will suggest. Many novel suggestions
will be made. Some of these will be of great value . Others, though seeming at
first sight to be true, will prove on close examination to be completely ground-
less. Knowledge moves forward by trial and error. Any hypothesis, no matter
how wild, may be the cause of suggesting an idea that will eventually lead to a
great advance in scientific understanding   At the present stage, it would be
well to advise caution. While many solid results are already known, and more
will come, we should go slow in forming conclusions on novel matters. It is
better to wait until all the evidence has been examined by experts of differing
views. This much can already be said with certainty. Our confidence in the
dependability of our Old Testament text will not be lessened in any way, by
these discoveries. On the contrary it can be said to be more strongly buttressed
as a result of what is already known.