

representatives of the National Council of Churches think that the Bible ought to say, but I am tremendously interested in learning what God's Word actually does say. If it could be proven that our manuscripts of the Old Testament really are filled with mistakes, there might be some excuse for all these changes that have been made in the text.

Ten years ago there were many of us who believed that God had providentially protected the transmission of the text of the Old Testament, so that we possessed substantially the text as it originally came from the hands of Moses, of Samuel, or David, and of the other inspired writers. We felt that there were various lines of proof, including a number of extremely interesting archaeological discoveries, which gave us strong supporting evidence that this was the case. If an extra hour were now available, I would be glad to describe these interesting and vital evidences. Yet it was a circumstantial type of evidence. The actual manuscripts, as we possessed them, were of quite a late date. How could we prove conclusively that this text is reliable, and worthy of being accepted as the very Word of God?

Here is where the great marvel of the Dead Sea Scrolls comes in. The detailed story of their finding has often been told and I will not repeat it now. The Bedouin shepherds who discovered them carried some of the scrolls to Jerusalem and tried to sell them, but were greeted with scepticism and incredulity. A scholar who was lecturing at one of the leading scientific institutions in Jerusalem identified one of the scrolls as a copy of the Book of Isaiah in Hebrew, apparently of astonishingly early date, but when he reported what he had seen to his associates, a scholar of outstanding authority told him that it was preposterous to suppose that Hebrew manuscripts of such antiquity could exist, and that the scrolls he had seen must be fakes. So he dismissed the matter from his mind. It was nearly a year before the manuscripts came into the hands of men who were both able to identify them for what they were, and also willing to accept as true, evidence of something that seemed to be too much to hope for. Then a group of American scholars declared that the manuscripts were genuine, and that one of them was actually an almost complete copy of the Hebrew of the Book of Isaiah, written a thousand years earlier than any previously known copy. This manuscript was carefully