

Shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem it became evident that the Roman army was about to seize these hills. The people wrapped the Isaiah manuscript and other portions of their precious library in pieces of cloth, put them in jars made especially for the purpose, and hid them in caves. The Romans came too fast to permit proper preparation of all the manuscripts, so that many of them had to be hastily hidden without much protection around them. Soon the Roman soldiers burned the little village. The members of the colony doubtless hoped soon to return and recover their precious library. Evidently this proved impossible, for the scrolls have lain where they were placed, until their discovery within the last decade.

Today most scholars admit the genuineness of the scrolls. It is preposterous to believe anything else. One scholar stands by his original position, and gives frequent lectures in Philadelphia and New York attacking the genuineness of the discoveries. But he is now hopelessly outnumbered. The scholarly world has passed him by.

While the overwhelming mass of the manuscripts agree almost exactly with our later copies of the Hebrew Bible, there are some which indicate the development of other families of text tradition. One of these families is like the text from which the Old Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, was made. Another is like the Samaritan Pentateuch. But the differences between these and the so-called Massoretic Text, which our Hebrew Bible contains, are comparatively small, and do not affect any doctrine.

From among these families of texts the Jews at about 100 A.D. seem to have selected one, and all their copies from that time on were made from it. The one they selected is clearly the best of the three, though there are individual places where one of the others may preserve the true original text. All our Hebrew manuscripts, from 900 A.D. and later, agree closely with one another, and it is remarkable to see how nearly they agree with these manuscripts from a thousand years earlier. Surely today there is evidence to strengthen our faith in the reliability and dependability of our Old Testament, far beyond anything that was available even a few years ago.

The evidence of the Scrolls shows that God's Word has been preserved to us with care far exceeding that given to any other ancient writing. We