Upon my arrival at the Catholic University Leuven I started a research project, supported by a grant from the K.U. Leuven Research Fund (BOF) and by a grant from the Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders (FWO-V), intended to explore in detail the relationship between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament.¹

The topic was by no means new, on the contrary. The books and articles dedicated to ascertaining the relationship between these two literary corpora could fill a whole library.² But I was convinced that, in spite of these considerable efforts, the research had still not been able to find an acceptable explanation for the common points or for the differences and that a new way to look at the relationship between the two corpora was needed.

One of the main reasons the public has been fascinated by the Dead Sea Scrolls since their discovery in 1947 is precisely in the expectation that the new materials could illuminate the dark regions in our knowledge of the origins and development of early Christianity in the second half of the first century.

This hope was well founded. Both entities (the group or groups that copied and preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls and the group or groups that produced the New Testament) shared the same general chronological time frame and certainly co-existed until the year 68 of the first century, when the settlement of Qumran was destroyed; they were geographically close: Christianity developed in Jerusalem, about 15 miles from the shore of the Dead Sea, where the settlement was located; both developed in the same Palestinian society in a crisis situation. The New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls are the product of two similar Jewish reform movements, both guided by a strong charismatic leader, both interpreting

¹ Respectively IOT/03.01 of the BOF and G.0119.04 of the FWO-V.
the Scripture in an actualizing way, applying its prophecies to their present situation, both with very strong eschatological expectations, whose members shared the conviction that they were the chosen remnant of the true Israel, the New Covenant at the end of days. The hope thus that the manuscripts found in caves between 1947 and 1956 could illuminate the origins of early Christianity and the New Testament’s formation were logical and well founded indeed.

But the results have been disappointing and, in spite of the thousands of books written on the matter during the fifties and sixties, no real consensus among scholars was reached. The quest has been practically abandoned, and the relationship between the two corpora is only sporadically treated.3

The reasons for this lack of success are not difficult to fathom, since the research until the nineties suffered from three fundamental shortcomings:—it was based only upon a small fraction of the manuscripts found at Qumran (basically the manuscripts from Cave 1 and some preliminary publications of manuscripts from Cave 4);—it considered all these manuscripts as the product of the Essenes, who were identical with the people of Qumran;—and it assumed that there were direct connections between the two literary corpora, the Scrolls and the New Testament, or between the Essenes and the early Christians.

Now, the situation is completely different.4 Since 1992 we are no longer dependent exclusively on the manuscripts from Cave 1, but thanks to the complete publication of all the scrolls we can assess the collection as a whole.5 The availability of all the scrolls has given rise

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5 The two latest volumes of the DJD Series (Hartmut Stegemann and Eileen Schuller, *Qumran Cave 1.III: 1QHodayot*: *With Incorporation of 4QHodayot* and *1QHodayot* (DJD 40) and Emile Puech, *Qumran Grotte 4.XVII: (4Q550–4Q583) Textes en Araméens, deuxième partie* (DJD 37) appeared last November at the Clarendon.