Foreword

As I write this foreword in the last days of June 2009, the news media in southern Ontario is full of articles and sound bites about the opening of an exhibit of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. More than sixty years after they were first discovered, these ancient manuscripts are still able to excite, attract crowds, raise questions, and generate controversy.

Of the sixteen scrolls that are on display at the ROM, about one half were purchased originally by the Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem from the Bedouin with money that was given for this purpose by McGill University in Montreal, Canada. The $15,500 supplied by McGill in 1954 (and supplemented by $4,200 in 1955) was key to keeping together the thousands of small pieces of leather in a single collection so that they could be studied and published, rather than being sold at random in the markets and on the streets of the Old City in Jerusalem.

The full story of McGill’s involvement in the 1950s and early 1960s and the significance of what the initiative of McGill professor R.B.Y. Scott meant for preservation and publication has remained largely unknown up until the present. Most standard textbooks and histories of scrolls scholarship devote a sentence or two to all the institutions that raised money to purchase scrolls in the early years (McGill University, Manchester, the Vatican, McCormick Theological Seminary, the University of Heidelberg, All Souls Church in New York). Jason Kalman and Jaqueline du Toit have now uncovered the full extent and significance of the story of how McGill University came to be involved and was the first foreign institution to react so quickly and incisively at a critical moment. Kalman and du Toit found rich primary data in the archives of McGill University, along with other significant letters and documents that are now held by the
Israel Antiquities Authority and other institutions, particularly the École Biblique et Archéologique Française, Jerusalem.

In 1988, at the time of the fortieth anniversary of the discovery of the scrolls, for a presentation to the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, I made a first attempt to search out what could be discovered about the involvement of Canadian scholars in the early years of scrolls research. I was able to find a few sources, including a very interesting short article (with an addendum by McGill Professor Donna Runnalls) that R.B.Y. Scott had written for \textit{ARC}, the journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill in 1981. I had neither the time nor the resources to pursue the topic further, and so was delighted when I heard a decade later that two McGill graduate students were taking up the topic. Kalman and du Toit have produced a fascinating narrative of the decade between 1953 and 1963. They have supplemented the story itself by including in the book over one hundred primary documents, especially letters of R.B.Y. Scott, G. Lankester Harding, and Roland de Vaux, most of which are made accessible here for the first time. Also of prime importance are details supplied from their personal conversations with many of the key figures of these early years, a number of whom have now died.

Although in one sense the McGill purchase may be “only a footnote in the history” of the Dead Sea Scrolls saga, it is an important footnote. Kalman and du Toit have situated this specific series of events within the larger picture of the development of Canadian universities and scholarship in the postwar era. Through their intensive and careful research of this small piece, they have been able to shed light on broader issues, such as the composition and formation of the so-called “International Team” of scholars who played such a crucial role in the task of publishing this huge mass of fragments. Their careful treatment of the political complexities of the Near East in the 1950–1960s provides background to help understand some of the ongoing controversies and claims about the ownership of the scrolls.

In 1954 McGill was not able to follow up on Harding’s invitation to send a scholar to be part of the International Team, nor was the university able to take up Archbishop Samuel’s offer in early June 1954 to sell them his four intact scrolls from Cave 1; none of the scrolls of the “McGill purchase” ever left Jordan. But in the following decades, a number of Canadian scholars were invited to publish the \textit{editio princeps} of specific manuscripts in the official \textit{Discoveries in the Judaean Desert} series, and today there are professors and graduate students across Canada actively involved in scrolls research and publication (especially at Trinity Western University, University of Toronto, McMaster University, and the Université de Montréal). The
Dead Sea Scrolls eventually did make their way to Canada, though only for short-term exhibitions (in 1965, 2003-04, and 2009-10). At the current ROM exhibit, a few tiny fragments that R.B.Y. Scott had purchased on the streets of Jerusalem and subsequently donated to McGill University are on public display for the first time. A transcription of the small traces of lettering on these fragments is currently in publication by the editor of *Revue de Qumran*, Florentino García Martínez, in collaboration with Kalman and du Toit, and with the permission of the McGill Redpath Museum.

Everyone interested in the history of Canadian biblical scholarship and fascinated by the saga of Dead Sea Scrolls research owes a real debt of gratitude to Jason Kalman and Jaqueline du Toit for recovering for us the story of “Canada’s Big Biblical Bargain.”

Eileen Schuller  
Professor, Department of Religious Studies  
McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario