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## THE PALESTINIAN CULTURAL CONTEXT OF EARLIEST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF GOODS

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### Summary

*Luke's account of the community of goods of the earliest community in Jerusalem is clearly idealised with popular philosophical catchphrases. However, instances of formal community of property were a feature of Palestinian Jewish culture, and had persisted for approaching two centuries amongst the sect of the Essenes prior to the events which Luke purports to describe. Features of Luke's account suggest linguistic usages and organisational forms employed in the legislation for Essene community of goods revealed in the Rule of the Community discovered in Qumran cave 1. Other elements of Luke's account are illuminated by the practicalities of Essene property-sharing arrangements revealed in the accounts of the Essenes given by Philo and Josephus. These clues point to the probable Palestinian origins of the tradition and suggest that a group within the earliest Jerusalem Church practised formal property-sharing. Luke's portrayal of earliest Christian community of goods can be taken seriously as an historical account.*

## Introduction

Luke claims at Acts 2:44 and 4:32 that the earliest church in Jerusalem had 'all things common'. This 'community of goods' involved the sale of property and the surrender of the money thus raised to the apostles (2:44-45; 4:32-5:11), daily meal-fellowship in homes (2:46), and a process of 'daily distribution' (6:1) by which the material needs of the underprivileged such as widows in the community (6:1-6) and indeed of all (2:45; 4:35) seem to have been met. The critical consensus is almost universally against seeing any historical phenomenon of actual, organised property-sharing behind Luke's account.<sup>1</sup> This negative historical judgement of the Acts account persists despite awareness that community of goods was widely practised in first century Palestine, in those Essene communities which fully shared their property. The following are the principal arguments raised against the claim of Acts that the earliest Christian community had 'all things common'.

i) Acts 2:44 and 4:32 reflect the language of Greek philosophising about the ideal society. The usage 'all things common', *pavnta* (or *a{panta*) *koinav* [*panta koina*](cf. 2:44, *eilcon pavnta koinav*, [*eichon panta koina*, 'they had all things common'], cf. 4:32, *h\ n aujtoi" a{panta koinav*[*en autois hapanta koina*, 'there were to them all things common']) is found in Plato's *Republic*, a Utopian scheme<sup>2</sup>, and in other literature which emphasises the philosophical ideal; it is found, for example, in praise of the tribal economy of the primitive Scythians or in connection with the renunciation of the ideal philosopher.<sup>3</sup> D. L.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. del Verme, *Comunione e condivisione dei beni. Chiesa primitiva e giudaismo esseno-qumranico a confronto*. (Morcelliana: Brescia 1977); L. T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) 1-12, 162-163, 183-190, and *Sharing Possessions. Mandate and Symbol of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 21-23; B. H. Mönning, *Die Darstellung des urchristlichen Kommunismus nach der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (PhD dissertation Göttingen, 1978); L. Schottroff and W. Stegemann, 'Die konkrete Sozialutopie des Lukas', *Jesus von Nazareth: Hoffnung der Armen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978) 149-153; D. P. Secombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz, 1982) 199-214; M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (London: SCM, 1974) 31-34; H. J. Klauck, 'Gütergemeinschaft in der klassischen Antike, in Qumran und im neuen Testament', *RQ* 11 (1982-85) 47-79; J. A. Fitzmyer, 'Jewish Christianity in Acts in Light of the Qumran Scrolls', in L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (eds.), *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Nashville, 1966) 230-257.

<sup>2</sup> D. L. Mealand, 'Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV' *JTS* 28(1977) 96-97.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Plato, *Crit.* §110D; *Resp.* 3.22 §416D; 5.10 §462C (also §463B-C, E); *Legg.* 5 §737C, *Resp.* 5 §464D; Philo, *Hyp.* 11.4 on the property-sharing Essenes;

Mealand notes that the phrase 'no one called anything... his own' at Acts 4:32 (ουjde; ει| ti ... e[legen i[dion ei\nnai) [*oude heis ti... elegen idion einai*, 'no one said anything was his own/private to him'] recalls the usage 'to call nothing one's own', frequently found in Plato's *Republic* and other writings in conjunction with the 'all things common' *topos*.<sup>4</sup> A Greek proverb about friendship, 'friends have all things in common' (koina; ta; (tw'n) fiwlwn)[*koina ta (ton) philon*, 'the things of friends are common'], is preserved from antiquity with extraordinary frequency.<sup>5</sup> It is found in conjunction with another proverb, 'friends are one soul' (miva yuchv ) [*mia psyche*, 'one soul'] in a line of Aristotle's *Nicomachian Ethics*.<sup>6</sup> The combination of the phrases 'all things common' and 'one heart and soul' at Acts 4:32 is remarkably similar. Luke seems intent to suggest that the life of the earliest community in Jerusalem realised the vaunted Greek ideal of friendship.<sup>7</sup>

It is therefore clear that Luke presents the early Christians in Jerusalem in the dress of Greek thinking about ideal political organisation, or a state of detachment from possessions realised by the ideally pious. This is often taken as an indication that Luke is *idealising*

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Arrian, *Epict.* 3.24 §68; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 18 §30, 30 §167; Aristophanes, *Ekk.* §§590–595; Aelius Aristides, *Pan. in Cyz.* 24, Lucian, *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses* §§19–20.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, 97. Mealand cites Plato *Crit.* §110D; *Resp.* 3.22 §416D, 5 §464D, 8 §543B; *Tim.* §18B. Also Euripides, *And.* 376; Euhemerus in Diod. Sic. 5.45.5; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 30 §168.

<sup>5</sup> Euripides *And.* 377, *Ph.* 244, *Or.* 735; Plato, *Phaedr.* 279C, *Lys.* 207C, *Resp.* 424A, 449C, *Legg.* 5.739C; Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.2.1263A, *Eth. Eum.* 1237B, 1238A, *Eth. Nic.* 8.9.1159B, 9.8.1168B; Diogenes Laertius 4.53, 6.37, 6.72, 8:10, 10:11; Libanius, *Ep.* 327.3.2, 1209.4.4, 1236.3.4, 1504.1.6, 1537.5.2; Iamblichus *Vit. Pyth.* 6. §32, 19 §92; Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 33; Lucian, *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses*, §§24–25; Aelius Aristides, *Pan. in Cyz.* 24; Menander, in *Menandri Sententiae*, ed. S. Jaekel (Leipzig, 1964), 534, in *Menandri quae supersunt*, ed. A. Koerte and A. Thierfelder (Leipzig, 1959) 10.1; Terence, *Adelph.* 803–804; Plutarch, *De frat. am.* 20.490E; Philo, *De Abr.* 235; Seneca, *Ep.* 6.2–3; Martial, *Ep.* 2.43.1, 16; Dio Chrysostom 3.111, 37.7; Plutarch, *Flatt.* 65A, *Quaest. Conv.* 644C, 743E, *Amatores* 767D; *Praec. geren. rep.* 807B, *Non posse suav. viv. sec. Epic.* 1102F; Appian, *Bella Civilia* 5.3.19; Sextus, *Sentences* (ed. H. Chadwick) Nr. 228; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 1.14.10(=1.8A); Eustathius, *Comm.* II. 2.184.12, 2.817.13, 3.456.17, 3.465.29, 3.473.8, 3.566.14; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.* 12.122.3; Cicero *De off.* 1.16.51, *Laws* 1.12.34; Schol. to Plato *Phaedr.* 297C; Photius *Lexicon*, koinovw; Plutarch, *Non posse suav. viv. sec. Epic.* 1102F; Seneca, *De benef.* 7.4.1; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.156–159, cf. *Sobr.* 56–57; Dio Chrysostom, 3.104ff.

<sup>6</sup> 9.8.2 §1116B.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A. C. Mitchell, 'The Social Function of Friendship in Acts 2:44–47 and 4:32–37', *JBL* 111 (1992) 255–272.

events of lesser magnitude into a formal sharing of property, and that the historical reality was only some occasional events of charitable generosity.

ii) Peter's challenge to Ananias and Sapphira, who have failed to hand in the full price obtained from the sale of their property, at Acts 5:4, includes the rhetorical questions 'While it remained (unsold) did it not remain yours, and after it was sold, did it not remain in your power?' This is taken to indicate that their donation of property was voluntarily undertaken. It is argued that since they were under no compulsion to make the sale, there can have been no formally organised community of property. That Acts remembers only one other example of major property-surrender, that of Barnabas (4:36-37) is thought to indicate that such events were rare. The rare occurrence of large-scale donations of property to the community is taken to weigh against the existence of formal property-sharing arrangements.

iii) In Acts 6:1-6 care for widows was at issue. This underprivileged group remained identifiable and permanently dependent upon the community, in need as it were of a perpetual 'dole'. Hence, it is argued, there was no common ownership of property, merely a structure which provided care for the indigent. The widows of the 'Hellenists' complain that they are being 'overlooked' (6:1). This is sometimes taken to imply that organisation of the community was rudimentary, suggesting that no well-organised community of property existed, but only badly-run charity.

iv) Property-sharing on a determined model such as Acts seeks to imply does not recur in the New Testament period, and does not reappear until the birth of monasticism (late 3rd century AD). Hence it is unlikely that it was ever a feature of earliest Christianity.

An argument occasionally raised *in favour* of finding an important kernel of historical truth in Luke's claim that the early church in Jerusalem had 'all things common' is the testimony of the Fourth Gospel that Jesus' party of travelling disciples lived from a common purse, administered by Judas.<sup>8</sup> Might not they simply have preserved this mode of life, and opened it to those who desired to join them, in Jerusalem? It is possible that property-sharing was from the day of Pentecost effectively limited to an 'inner group' within the community, the disciples and those who joined them in their common purse, or that over time it became limited to this inner group although at the beginning there was a serious attempt to include all believers. The Galilean travelling party's

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<sup>8</sup> Jn. 12:6; 13:29.

habit of living from a common purse may even have been opened to those converted on the day of Pentecost without carefully laid plans about what should follow.

An argument in favour of Luke's account rarely given the weight it deserves derives simply from the existence of community of goods as an established feature of first century Palestinian culture, amongst those Essene communities which shared their property communally. Scholarly comparisons of Essene practice and the Acts account of Christian community of goods have almost universally found the phenomena vastly different and quite unrelated. The net result is to grant one set of sources credence, but to throw the other (the claims of Acts) largely to the wind. This outcome has a certain historical implausibility. Since two sets of sources seem to attribute the same practice to two Jewish sects which existed at the same time, in the same small country of Palestine, the balance of probability is in favour of some kind of connection between them. Otherwise we must attribute to mere coincidence that Luke portrays the earliest Christians in Jerusalem operating a practice common in their environment. It is well known that there is also a high degree of idealisation of the Essenes in Philo and Josephus. If Essene community of goods survives this aspect of the sources, but Christian community of property does not, are the sources being treated even-handedly? Although we have no knowledge of the actual practice of community of goods in this period anywhere else in this ancient world, despite much philosophical lauding of the ideal, we have *two* claimed instances of it in our sources for early first century Palestine. Can the the consensus be correct to hold them quite apart?

### **Community of Goods as a feature of Palestinian Culture**

As is well-known, Philo, Pliny the Elder and Josephus all attribute a communal lifestyle to the sect of the Essenes.<sup>9</sup> Our information about this practice was substantially augmented by the discovery of the *Rule of the Community* (1QS) from cave 1 at Qumran, which contains the legislation which governed the practice of community of goods. Amongst the Dead Sea scrolls were also discovered fragments<sup>10</sup> of the *Damascus Document* (CD), already known since its discovery in 1896 in

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<sup>9</sup> Philo, *That every good man is free* 75-91; *Hypothetica* 1-18. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 5.17.4 §73. Josephus, *War* 2.8.1-13 §§119-161; *Antiquities* 18.1.5 §§18-22.

<sup>10</sup> From cave 4 (4Q266-273), cave 5 (5Q12), and cave 6 (6Q15).

the Cairo Geniza, which legislates a looser form of social organisation. Despite recent objections to the 'Essene' character of the Dead Sea Scrolls, this treatment will allow the designation 'Essene' to the *Rule*, while conceding that the term may have denoted a broad movement containing a complexity of groupings rather than a monolithic entity.<sup>11</sup>

The legislation governing community of property in the *Rule of the Community* consists of a description of a complex entry procedure, 1QS VI:13-23<sup>12</sup> and a rule concerning lies in regard to matters of property which follows in lines 24-25. The entrance procedure was phased; an initial examination was followed by a period of testing (possibly a year, 1QS VI:13-15), after which a second examination took place followed by a further year of testing (VI:15-17). During the period of testing up to this point, which might be termed the 'postulancy', the candidate for entry did not surrender his property to the community. On successful completion the candidate was allowed to eat the pure food of the community but not to touch the community's drink. The candidate was also allowed to surrender his property on a provisional basis, and to enter a final year of testing, which could be termed the 'novitiate', :

...the many shall enquire about his affairs according to his intelligence and deeds in the Law, and if the lot go forth for him to approach the company of the community on the authority of the men of their covenant, they shall commit both his property and his income into the hand of the man who is acting as Overseer. He shall enter it to the man's credit in the account with the possessions of the Many but he must not spend it on the Many. (1QS VI:18-20)

The candidate's surrender of property was therefore always made on a provisional basis at first. The candidate proceeds to full membership and full participation in the common purse — 'mixing' his property — on successful completion of the novitiate year:

...if it be his destiny, according to the judgement of the Congregation, to enter the Community, then shall he be inscribed among his brethren in the order of his rank for

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<sup>11</sup> L. H. Schiffman's identification of the authors of the scrolls as Sadducees, 'The Sadducean Origins of the Dead Sea Scroll Sect' in H. Shanks (ed.) *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Random House, 1992) 35-49, is considered one-sided by J. C. Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 71-98 and O. Betz & R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican* (London: SCM, 1994) 36-49. Betz and Riesner expose the weaknesses in the views of R. Eisenman (69-82) and B. Thiering (99-113); cf. also E. M. Cook, *Solving the Mysteries of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994) 82-151.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.8.7 §§137-142.

the Law, and for justice, and for the pure Meal; his property shall be mixed and he shall offer his counsel and judgement to the Community. (1QS VI:21-23)

The provisional surrender of property is to be explained as a social necessity if community of property is to be successfully established. It enables the candidate to experience what life in community of goods means in practice with a minimum of risk. Should the candidate find himself unable to carry out his intent to live without property in practice, he can simply receive back his property and leave. Were he to make full surrender of property immediately on seeking to enter the community, his first misgivings would precipitate a process of increasing anxiety, since he has already fully committed himself to the community. The community would have greater difficulty, even if it so desired, in returning his property, since it had already entered the communal economy. How much should be returned? The provisional surrender procedure offers maximum protection to both the candidate and the community, thereby in fact giving the greatest chance of the candidate's easy progress into full membership.

The procedure of provisional surrender of property is also found in the Hellenistic accounts of the reputed community of goods of the Pythagorean community, at Croton in Magna Graecia, in the sixth century BC. Specific mention is made of the return of the candidate's funds, should he not proceed to full membership.<sup>13</sup> On this point the

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<sup>13</sup> Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 17 §72: 'After this, he ordered those who came to him to observe a quinquennial silence... During this (probationary) time, however, the property of each was disposed of in common, and was committed to the care of those appointed for this purpose... And with respect to these (probationers), those who appeared worthy to participate of his dogmas, from the judgment he had formed of them from their life and the modesty of their behaviour, after the quinquennial silence, then became 'esoterics'... But if they were rejected, they received back the double of the wealth which they brought, and a tomb was raised for them as if they were dead...' Iamblichus in another passage says that the candidate received his property back 'and more'(kai; pleivona, 30 §168), and again that the disciples 'drove him out of the auditory, loading him with a great quantity of gold and silver' (17 §74). Cf. Hippolytus, *Ref. omn. haer.* 1.2: 'on being released, he was permitted to associate with the rest, and remained as a disciple, and took his meals along with them; if otherwise, however, he received back his property, and was rejected.' The likelihood of an historical community of goods amongst the original disciples of Pythagoras is not great, cf. J. A. Philip, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Toronto, 1966) 25ff, 185ff. Neopythagoreanism was influenced in its portrayal of Pythagoras' school at Croton by the Platonic ideal state, cf. R. von Pöhlmann, *Geschichte der sozialen Frage und des Sozialismus in der antiken Welt* (München, 1912) II, 611. However,

Pythagorean sources illuminate the Essene procedure. The question of 'Pythagorean influence' upon the Essenes has often been posed, but similarities between the Essenes and the Pythagoreans<sup>14</sup> are insufficient to justify the assertion that the Jewish sect consciously modelled itself upon this Greek philosophy.<sup>15</sup> The similar entrance procedure probably evolved independently as the only practical means of achieving integration of new candidates into a property-sharing community. In fact, such procedures are usually found wherever elective human communities attempt to construct communality of property without coercion. Close parallels, probably also developed independently out of the same social necessities, are found in Christian monasticism<sup>16</sup> and in at least one Anabaptist property-sharing group.<sup>17</sup>

While the additional information which the *Rule of the Community* provides will be essential to the case here presented, we must avoid an unhelpful tendency which its discovery has introduced into the debate concerning possible similarity between the practice of community of goods in Essenism and earliest Christianity. The discovery of this document amongst others in the caves by the site of the Essene settlement at Qumran has sometimes led commentators to assume that Essene community of goods was limited to the Qumran site, and always had a monastic, completely isolated ethos. As is readily apparent from both Philo and Josephus, Essene communities which practised full property-sharing were distributed amongst the towns and villages of Palestine.<sup>18</sup> The *Rule of the Community* itself assumes that it legislates for small communities.<sup>19</sup> Focus on the desert site at Qumran alone in the

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the process of provisional surrender implies actual experience of community of property, probably in Neopythagoreanism.

<sup>14</sup> Demonstrable are only community of goods, reverence for the sun, white garments, and emphasis on ritual purity.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 21973) 448–453.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *The Code of Canon Law in English Translation* (Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1983) 116–117.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. R. Friedmann (ed.), *Andreas Ehrenpreis. An Epistle on Brotherly Community* (New York: Plough, 1978) 59–62.

<sup>18</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.13 §124; Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.1. At *Every good man is free* 12 §76 Philo has the Essenes living in villages but avoiding the towns (=cities), but he is here imposing the literary topos of flight from cities as evil places, cf. Plato, *Laws* 677B, no cities in the primeval age; Dio Chrysostom 7.7, 59; Tibullus, *Elegies* 1.51ff. Cf. Philo *De vit. cont.* 19; *De Abr.* 23; *De decal.* 2; *De prov.* in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 8.14.12.

<sup>19</sup> 1QS VI.3–4 enjoins 'And in every place where there are ten men of the Council of the Community there shall not lack a priest among them.' Regulations for entry into

portrayal of Essene community of property gives an incorrect impression of its ethos. At the desert site, Essene community of property undoubtedly involved a high degree of social isolation and may even have involved a sophisticated system of common production on land owned and irrigated by the community. Concerning the Essene community of Qumran, scholars may be right to speak of Essene 'exile', and to employ, as they often do, the terms 'monks', 'monastery' and 'monastic'. However, at most two hundred souls could live at Qumran,<sup>20</sup> although as we know the Essene movement numbered some four thousand.<sup>21</sup> Life at the desert site, therefore, although the most striking manifestation of Essene community of goods,<sup>22</sup> involved a physical isolation from the surrounding populace which the Essene life in community of property did not always involve.

A revealing passage in one of Philo's accounts actually shows how property-sharing Essenes in the settlements distributed throughout Palestine had daily contact with outsiders through their daily work, which typically took them *outside* their communities. They recreated their common life each day by a process of sharing their wages in the evening, at their return from work, for the common meal. After explaining that the Essenes hold property in common, and what kinds of work they undertake each day, such as farming, shepherding, bee-keeping and crafts (*Hypothetica* 11:4–9), Philo describes their evening gathering:

Each member, when he has received the wages of these so different occupations, gives it to one person who has been appointed as treasurer. He takes it and at once buys what is necessary and provides food in abundance and anything else which human life requires. Thus having each day a common life and a common table they are content with the same conditions, lovers of frugality who shun expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul. (*Hypothetica*

11:10–11)<sup>23</sup>

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the community with full surrender of property begin at VI.13-14 'Every man from Israel who volunteers to join the Council of the Community...' Hence those who had made full surrender of their goods to the community could live in communities of males numbering as little as ten.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London, 1973) 86.

<sup>21</sup> Philo, *That every good man is free*, 75; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.20.

<sup>22</sup> Hence Pliny the Elder limits not merely Essene community of goods but the whole Essene movement to the site by the Dead Sea.

<sup>23</sup> Translation F. H. Colson, *Philo* IX (Loeb Classical Library, 1941), 441, but reading at the beginning of this passage εἰκαστο" as 'each member' rather than 'each branch', a deduction of common production which the text does not support. G.



and widows.<sup>27</sup> This looser social form was apparently more suited to married communities. The discovery of this document in the Qumran caves probably alone indicates that the communities for which it legislates were an accepted part of the movement which included the celibate male communities for which 1QS legislates. The combination of marrying and celibate communities within the Essene movement is confirmed by Josephus, who notes a 'second order' of marrying Essenes,<sup>28</sup> of which the *Damascus Document* clearly gives us an internal view. It is worth noting that Josephus, as an outside observer, does not note any difference between the property arrangements of the two types of Essene community. When he states that this order 'while at one with the rest in its mode of life, customs, and regulations, differs from them in its views of marriage,'<sup>29</sup> he appears to think that the difference of view on marriage was the only actual difference between the social forms of the two types of Essene community. This may suggest that the social pattern of the *Damascus Document* married communities often approached in character aspects of the life of the 1QS communities, for example with frequent communal meals for adults, and a willingness for mutual support to extend if necessary beyond the regulated tax for the support of widows and orphans.

Commentators who contrast a 'monastic' settlement at Qumran with 'married' Essene communities throughout Palestine oversimplify the reality of Essene community of goods. The Essene movement knew, distributed throughout Palestine, both celibate, fully property-sharing communities, and married communities with more limited formal mutual support. Particular towns and villages will have known linked communities of both types.<sup>30</sup> This gives us a very important insight into the ethos of the Palestinian practice of community of goods. It was not promoted as the only valid lifestyle by those who lived after the fashion of the *Rule of the Community*. Rather, it was a form of life appropriate only to a section of the Essene movement, the 'Council of the Community.'<sup>31</sup> Community of goods was therefore conventionally

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<sup>27</sup> CD XIV.13

<sup>28</sup> *War* 2.8.13 §§160–161.

<sup>29</sup> *War* 2.8.13 §161.

<sup>30</sup> In social terms those undergoing the complex and lengthy entrance procedure into 1QS-type communities may have stood somewhere in between.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. above, note 19. The twelve men and three priests who comprise the 'Council of the Community' in 1QS VIII were probably the original founding group whose life in community of property was extended to others as the group was later expanded, cf.

practised in Palestine on the understanding that it was a way of life appropriate to a part, in particular the superior part, of a religious movement, but not to all.<sup>32</sup>

The foundation at Qumran can be dated to around 150–135 BC,<sup>33</sup> a date supported by the probable identification of the 'Teacher of Righteousness' as the Zadokite high priest who presided from 159 to 152 BC, when he was ejected by Jonathan Maccabaeus.<sup>34</sup> Community of goods had therefore been a feature of Palestinian culture, progressively becoming more and more widespread amongst the sect of the Essenes, for almost two centuries at the time of the events of property-sharing in the early church of Jerusalem which Luke describes in Acts. It is possible that other conventicle-type groups existed with similar practices apart from those known to us as Essenes; did the disciples of John the Baptist, for example, keep a common purse, as had Jesus' party of travelling disciples?<sup>35</sup>

The long establishment of Essene community of goods and its widespread distribution amongst the towns and villages of Palestine mean that its processes of administration must have been commonly understood. It could hardly be otherwise with an impressive and distinctive social form which must have frequently attracted attention and discussion. Any religious group within Palestine with a mind to try, any group which thought the exercise meaningful, could have reasonably easily imitated Essene community of property.<sup>36</sup> Both Philo

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E. F. Sutcliffe, 'The First Fifteen Members of the Qumran Community', *JSS* 4(1959) 134-138.

<sup>32</sup> It may be that older Essene males from *Damascus Document* communities passed over, after raising families, to the celibate lifestyle of the IQS communities.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 116-117; G. Vermes *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Qumran in Perspective*, 151.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. H. Stegemann, *Die Entstehung der Qumrangemeinde* (Bonn, 1971) 224. The 'intersacerdotium' (159–152 BC) of Josephus *Ant.* 20.10.3 §237 is probably a fiction, since it is inconceivable that the Day of Atonement, at which a high priest had to officiate, had not been celebrated in this period. The name of the Teacher was excised from the records. Other plausible views of the identification of the Teacher of Righteousness would not affect the argument here, cf. G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls. Qumran in Perspective*, 147–156 and 161; J. H. Charlesworth, 'The Origin and Subsequent History of the Authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls', *RQ* 10(1980) 213–233.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. above, note 8.

<sup>36</sup> While the Essenes may have been secretive about their doctrines, those who failed the entrance procedure in IQS at least would have made its character known. There was no advantage to the Essenes in obscuring the fairness with which they would treat potential recruits to their property-sharing communities.

and Josephus present the Essenes as the supreme examples of Jewish piety; their currency was surely high in Palestine. Since the issue of wealth and poverty was a theme of Jesus' teaching, his disciples must have discussed and weighed the Essene lifestyle. Did they attempt to imitate it in Jerusalem? Such is certainly possible, if only as an attempt to prolong the common purse which Jesus' travelling disciples had kept with him prior to the crucifixion. We must be prepared to follow seriously any hints in the account of Acts 2-6 that earliest Christian community of goods employed analogous procedures to Essene community of goods. In the following it will be argued that there are, in fact, a sufficient number of close terminological and administrative parallels between the Acts account and our sources on Essene community of goods to suggest that the property-sharing which took place in the earliest Christian community was substantially similar to Essene community of goods, and was probably modelled upon Essene practice.

### **The 'Summary' Statements of Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32, 34**

Walter Bauer's immense familiarity with the nuances of Greek literature led him to argue in his 1924 article on the Essenes in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Enzyklopädie* that, since the descriptions of Essene community of goods in Philo and Josephus draw heavily upon Greek Utopian *topoi*, that no Essene communities ever actually practiced community of property.<sup>37</sup> Since the publication of the *Rule of the Community* from Qumran, which gives from an internal view, as we have seen, the legislation which governed Essene property-sharing, his argument has not been re-employed.<sup>38</sup> The method of attempting to discern historical reality simply by removing Greek commonplaces and seeing what remains has proved too crude in the case of Essene community of goods. However, as we have seen above, it is still applied to the case of the early Christian community of goods recounted in Acts. The method proves inadequate because community of goods, though rare in actual

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<sup>37</sup> W. Pauly et al. (eds.) *Real-Enzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft. Neue Bearbeitung* (Stuttgart, 1893ff), *Supplement IV* (1924) 386-430, reprinted in his *Gesammelte Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften* (ed. G. Strecker, Tübingen, 1967) 1-59.

<sup>38</sup> Only S. Segert, 'Die Gütergemeinschaft der Essener', *A. Salac̄ oblata* (Prague: 1955) 66-73, discussed Bauer's position, which he found untenable in the light of 1QS.

practice, was so lauded an ideal in the ancient world.<sup>39</sup> Any writer who sought to commend to his audience a group who had actually instituted formal property-sharing arrangements would naturally have included in his account the rhetorical elements associated with the theme.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, a phrase in Acts 2:44 suggests that there was ancient, originally semitic source-material behind the assertion that the early believers 'had all things common'. The verse begins 'All those who believed *were together* (h\san ejpi; to; aujto; [*esan epi to auto*, 'they were together']) and had all things in common (kai; eilcon panta koinav [*kai eichon panta koina*, 'and they had all things common']). The Dead Sea Scrolls employ the Hebrew adverb 'together' (*yachad*, djy) as a substantive to indicate 'the community'. Max Wilcox observed that h\san ejpi; to; aujto; [*esan epi to auto*, 'they were together'] at Acts 2:44 reflects the semitic idiom 'to be to the together' (*lihyôth layachad*, djyl twyhl) found in the *Rule of the Community* from Qumran.<sup>41</sup> The 'together' was for the Essenes a technical term designating the Essene *community*. It therefore appears that the Greek phrase 'all things common' was supplied (possibly prior to Luke's receipt of the tradition) as an epexegetis to explain a phrase (h\san ejpi; to; aujto;) [*esan epi to auto*, 'they were together'] which could not carry in Greek the technical significance which it had earlier had in a semitic source — that all who believed belonged to a *yachad*, a social grouping which included within its organisation formal community of goods arrangements. In this regard it is important to observe that John Chrysostom found the Greek phrase h\san ejpi; to; aujto; [*esan epi to auto*, 'they were together'] at Acts 2:44 awkward, which shows that it was not natural Greek, and deduced that it must refer on to the following phrase about community of goods.<sup>42</sup> B. W. W. Dombrowski has demonstrated that the designation *yachad* at Qumran probably began as an attempt to render into Hebrew the Greek term to; koinovn [*to koinon*, a neuter singular form of the adjective

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. above and M. Wacht, art. 'Gütergemeinschaft' in T. Klauser et al. (eds.) *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XIII (Stuttgart, 1982-84) 1-59.

<sup>40</sup> This merely reveals rhetorical training. Libanius, John Chrysostom's teacher, supplied rhetorical exercises on the theme of denunciation of wealth, *Or.* 6-8, cf. *Progymn.* 9.5.

<sup>41</sup> M. Wilcox, *The Semitisms of Acts* (Oxford, 1965) 93-100.

<sup>42</sup> 'And they speedily came, ejpi; to; aujto; , to the same thing in common, even to the imparting to all.', *John Chrysostom. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, translated J. Walker and R. Sheppard, revised with notes on the text by H. Browne, Library of the Fathers (Oxford, 1851), Homily VII on Acts 2:44, cf. Homily XI on Acts 4:32, pp. 101-102 and 155-156.

*koinos*, meaning 'the commonality', a term used in Greek legislation as a term for a club or association as a common body in matters of law, property, etc.]<sup>43</sup> Hence in Acts 2:44 the idiom has almost come full circle, being explained with a phrase which included the adjective *koinov*" [*koinos*, used in the plural in the above-noted phrases *panta koina* etc., 'all things common'].

Wilcox also showed that the idiom 'to add together' which at Acts 2:47 designates the process of expansion of the community (*prosetivqei ... eji; to; aujto;v*) [*prostithe... epi to auto*, 'he (the Lord) added together'] reflects the Qumran idiom *lehosiph layachad* (*djyl p̄yswhl*) ['to add to *the* together']. Matthew Black approved Wilcox's deduction.<sup>44</sup> The appearance of this obviously Semitic material, related elsewhere to the property-sharing Essenes, in a context in Acts related to community of goods strongly suggests the antiquity and historicity of the tradition of Acts 2:44 that the earliest church in Jerusalem practised community of goods.

These semitic idioms do not reappear in the second notice on community of goods in Acts 4:32 and 34, where 'idealising' in terms of the Greek commonplaces is stronger. H. J. Cadbury deduced from a comparison of 'summary' material in Luke's Gospel with its probable sources in Mark that Luke has a tendency to use summary-type material from his sources more than once, in order to give a more flowing narrative. Cadbury observed that when Luke does this, the first use of the material is closer to its original wording, but its second use, while varying wording for stylistic reasons, gives the original position in Luke's source.<sup>45</sup> That Acts 2:44 and 47 give instances of more semitic language, but Acts 4:32 and 34 a more stylised version of events, suggests that Luke has employed the same working method with his sources on the community of goods in Acts. From this we may deduce that the essential content of Acts 2:44-45, a statement about the *yachad* and a note that many believers sold their possessions, are closest to the pre-Lucan tradition behind Acts 4:32 and 34 and probably originated 'in that position' with either the story of Barnabas' property-donation, or that of Ananias Sapphira, since these follow at 4:36-5:11.

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<sup>43</sup> 'djyh in 1QS and to; koinovn. An instance of Early Greek and Jewish Synthesis', HTR 59(1966) 293-307; further M. Weinfeld, *The Organisational Pattern and the Penal Code of the Qumran Sect* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) 13-14.

<sup>44</sup> M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford, 1967) 10.

<sup>45</sup> H. J. Cadbury, 'The summaries in Acts', in F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (London, 1933) V, 392-402.

### **Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira: Acts 4:36-5:11**

If Acts 5:4 indicates that the donation of property by Ananias and Sapphira was seen by Peter as voluntary, this may not actually contradict the existence of formal community of property within the earliest church in Jerusalem. Community of property can be both voluntary and formally organised, as in, for example, Christian monasticism. This verse may suggest that there existed within the community of believers an inner group which practised community of property, but that the practice did not extend to all. Ananias and Sapphira were under no compulsion to enter this inner group, but if they wanted to to, they had to obey its rules, which they signally failed to do by withholding some of their property.<sup>46</sup>

However, we have to ask more closely after the precise intent of Peter's question. As we have found a technical idiom involving the *yachad* terminology, elsewhere found in the *Rule of the Community*, in the note on community of goods at Acts 2:44, we must ask whether the procedures which appear in that document are not relevant for understanding this technical-sounding assertion of Peter about the status of Ananias' and Sapphira's property. As we have seen, joining an Essene property-sharing community involved a complex entry procedure in the course of which property was only surrendered on a provisional basis at first. This mechanism, designed to ensure the smooth running of the common purse, would have been fully explained to candidates for entry before they decided to hand their property over to the community. It would have been explained to them that, after handing in their property, it remained theirs for a year until their decision and permission to fully join the community. It passed into the keeping (physical control) of the community, but not into the community's possession (ownership).

The Essene novice, therefore, who secreted away some of his property expressed a grave distrust of the community and went through an acted lie as he surrendered his property, since all understood him to be surrendering the full amount. *Culturally, the meaning of a property-surrender ritual in first-century Palestine was that the candidate handed*

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<sup>46</sup> J. Schmitt, 'Contribution à l'étude de la discipline pénitentielle dans l'église primitive', in A. Dupont-Sommer (ed.), *Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte. Colloque de Strasbourg 1955* (Paris, 1957), 93-109, and E. Trocmé, *Le 'Livre des Actes' et l'histoire* (Paris, 1957) 196ff, both suggested that an 'inner group' structure helped understand the problems of the Ananias and Sapphira story. Cf. C. Grappe, *D'un Temple à l'autre* (Paris, 1992) 58-59. Schmitt, Grappe and Trocmé suggest that the 'young men' of Acts 5:6 and 10 may be *novices*.

*in all assets, and was known by all to be doing this, although the property remained fully his until a later date. The holy trust of the moment, the essence of the ritual, revolved around the fact that although he was handing his property over, it still remained his, and would be returned to him at his request if he decided that the life in community of goods was not for him. If an Essene novice was found to have withheld some of his property, the rhetorical challenge to him would stress the point that was uppermost in the minds of all those present, that his property was still regarded as entirely his own by the community, so there was absolutely no need for him to have retained a part of it for his own security. His security was ensured by the community, who would exercise the holy trust of holding his property in his name alone until he finally joined the community completely, or departed. The rhetorical challenge to him could be formulated so as to stress that at the ritual of handing in his property, no change in its ownership occurred. It was as much his after handing it in as it had been before.*

At Acts 5:4 Peter says that Ananias' property was 'his' before it was sold, and after sale 'in his power'. This may reflect exactly the same complex process as was employed in the Essene property-sharing community. The first phrase, 'When it remained, did it not remain yours...?' (oujci; mevnon soi; e[menen) [*ouchi menon soi emenen*, lit. is it not the case that the remaining thing remained to you'] may refer to the period of initial training, the postulancy, during which the candidate's property remained fully in his control, outside the community's control, was probably not liquidated. When Peter proceeds to ask '...and after it was sold, did it not remain in your power?' (kai; praqe;n ejn th'/ sh'/ ejxousiva/ uJph'rcen...) [*kai prathen en te se exousia hyperchen*, 'and sold (did it not) remain in your power'] he may be referring to the unchanged status of Ananias' property in the 'novitiate' phase. He emphasises that, although Ananias had now liquidated his property and handed in over to the community, it remains as much his own, although no longer physically in his control. He must trust the community to keep it for him. The overall point of the two rhetorical questions is to say that nothing has changed; the property still belongs to Ananias.

In support of this reading Acts of 5:4, it may be pointed out that in both of the other claimed instances of actual community of goods in the ancient world, amongst the Essenes and in the accounts of Pythagoras, we find a phased entrance procedure involving only provisional initial surrender of property. The use of this progressive procedure is probably

the only way to implement community of goods without a high degree of coercion and anxiety, since divesting oneself of one's property is so large and life-changing an act. Where we find the operation of community of goods, as Acts claims for the early Jerusalem community, we should *expect* to find this complex entrance procedure. Essene organisation was known throughout Palestine and available to serve as a model. At Acts 2:44 and 47 technical idioms using the *yachad* term, which designates precisely the community form which employed a phased entrance procedure, may be deduced behind Luke's Greek. The balance of probabilities is therefore on the side of assuming that such a procedure may have existed in the early Christian community. The texts become more intelligible on this assumption, which is thereby proved correct.<sup>47</sup> A regulation governing lies in matters of property follows immediately after the description of the Essene process at 1QS VI:24-25:

If one of them has lied deliberately, he shall be excluded from the pure Meal of the Congregation for one year and shall do penance with respect to one quarter of his food.

Though the fate of the lying Essene novice was not so disastrous as that of Ananias and Sapphira, Peter calls Ananias' action a lie against the Holy Spirit and to God (5:4). The similarity between the two texts again shows that 1QS VI illuminates the legal and cultural context of Acts 5:4.

It is argued that since the only other account of property-surrender which Acts relates is that of Barnabas (4:36-37), such events were rare. This may be correct, but does not necessarily speak against the existence of community of goods. Those who sought to join the property-sharing arrangements will still have required accommodation, and will have retained their own premises, but made them available for the community's use; at Acts 2:46 we see the community 'breaking bread from house to house'. To accommodate such meetings the community needed to retain its usable accommodation rather than dispose of it. It is most likely that major events of the sale and surrender of real estate would only occur when a member had property which could not be usefully employed. This would apply to those who had property surplus to their needs which could not serve the community in any way. If only

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<sup>47</sup> For further discussion cf. B. J. Capper, 'The Interpretation of Acts 5.4', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 19 (1983) 117-131; 'In der Hand des Ananias. Erwägungen zu 1QS VI.20 und der urchristlichen Gütergemeinschaft' RQ 12(1986) 223-236.

those who had surplus property sold up and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet, only a limited number of these property-donations will have occurred. When Luke writes that 'as many as were owners of *houses and lands* sold them' (4:34) he seems to have wealthier members of the community in view. Poorer converts will not have been expected to sell their land and livelihood, but rather to work it and put the proceeds at the service of the community.

Barnabas is said to have been from Cyprus (4:36). The 'field' (4:37) of which he disposed may have been located there. Or, it may be that as someone entering upon special service for the community he had no further use for agricultural land. He soon appears in the important roles of introducing Paul to the Jerusalem apostles (9:27) and as the community's delegate to investigate the conversion of gentiles at Antioch (11:22). These events may suggest that at the time of his property donation he was being seconded to the leading class of the community.

Luke only had need, from a literary point of view, of one positive example to set against the negative of Ananias and Sapphira. The presence of only one other example does not imply that Luke could not have named more. He may have had literary reasons for choosing Barnabas as his example. He has a *penchant* for giving an introduction to some of his characters before they arrive on stage in their major roles. Philip and Stephen are introduced in the election of the Seven (6:5) before Stephen's long speech and martyrdom (6:8-8:1) and Philip's evangelistic activity (8:4-40). Paul is introduced as the young man at whose feet the coats of Stephen's murderers were laid (7:58; 8:1) before his persecution of the church, conversion, and subsequent preaching (9:1-30). Similarly, the reader learns something of Barnabas in the present notice before his appearance in the important rôle of introducing Paul to the apostles at 9:27. Barnabas is singled out as Luke's example because of the later significant role that he would play, rather than because he achieved a reputation merely through selling his field.

### **Influence from an 'Essene Quarter' on Mount Zion?**

How is it that technical processes and terminology known to us from 1QS seem to illuminate the Acts account of earliest Christian community of goods? Did the early Christians merely imitate Essene processes, or was there actually a conduit of direct Essene influence on the nascent Christian church? Some evidence does suggest that a group formerly linked with the Qumran Essenes may have lived in closest proximity to

the first community of Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem and entered the community in significant numbers. Bargil Pixner has since 1976 argued that in New Testament times there was an 'Essene Quarter' in Jerusalem, on the southwest hill, known since the first century AD as 'Zion'.<sup>48</sup> The site which he delineates for the Essene settlement is immediately adjacent to the Cenacle church, the traditional site of the 'upper room', where the events of Pentecost and the community of goods which immediately followed apparently took place.

As we have seen, both Josephus and Philo imply that the Essenes had settlements in every significant centre of population in Palestine. The sanctity of the holy city certainly suggests that, were the Essenes ever able to overcome their tension with the Jerusalem Temple-establishment we might expect to find Essenes there. The *Damascus Document* prescribes chastity for the male Essene while in the city<sup>49</sup> Josephus refers to a 'gate of the Essenes' in Jerusalem, in the southwestern corner of the city wall on the southwest hill.<sup>50</sup> Rainer Riesner has noted that both J. B. Lightfoot<sup>51</sup> and Emil Schürer<sup>52</sup> thought the name of the 'Gate of the Essenes' indicated an Essene settlement within the city behind it.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup> B. Pixner, *An Essene Quarter on Mount Zion? Studia Hierosolymitana I, Collectio Major* 22, (Jerusalem, 1976) 245–284, also reprinted separately; 'The History of the "Essene Gate" Area, ZDPV 105(1989) 96-104; *Wege des Messias und Stätten der Urkirche*, (ed. R. Riesner, Gießen/Basel: Brunnen, 21994) 180–207, 327–334. Dr. Riesner has kindly allowed the author to read his own 'Das Jerusalemer Essenerquartier und die Urgemeinde', forthcoming in ANRW II, 26.2.

<sup>49</sup> CD XII.1, cf. R. Riesner, 'Essener und Urkirche in Jerusalem' *Bibel und Kirche* 40 (1985) 73.

<sup>50</sup> *War* 5.4.2 §145.

<sup>51</sup> *Colossians and Philemon* (London, 1875) 94.

<sup>52</sup> *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1901) II.2, 215 note 16.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *Bibel und Kirche* 40 (1985) 70 and 'Das Jerusalemer Essenerviertel. Antwort auf einige Einwände', *Intertestamental Essays in honour of Józef Tadeusz Milik*, ed. Zdzisław J. Kapera (Kraków: Enigma Press, 1992) 179-186, 179, and 180-182 against other explanations of the gate's name. The naming of the gates of Jerusalem after groups which live in the immediate vicinity of the gate within the wall is attested in other periods of the city's history. Until 1967 the nearby gate into the old city was known since the nineteenth century as *Bab el Maghreb* because of a settlement of Muslims from the Maghreb in North Africa, who established themselves just inside the wall, cf. B. Meistermann, *New Guide to the Holy Land* (London, 1923), 213. At the time of the crusades, David's Gate (i.e. the Zion Gate) in the south-west corner of the city became known as the 'Pisans' Gate, named after the twelfth century crusaders from Pisa who later established their settlement behind it, cf. the woodcut of Jerusalem in 1492 reproduced in M. Avi-Yonah, *A History of the Holy Land* (London, c. 1969) 231.

line of the first century southern wall of Jerusalem was traced by F. J. Bliss in 1894. In the section of the wall which ran northwest—southeast across the southwest extremity of the hill, as the wall turned the corner of the city, Bliss uncovered the successively-laid thresholds of an ancient gate.<sup>54</sup> The location corresponds to Josephus' description. B. Pixner, D. Chen, and S. Margalit have uncovered afresh these thresholds. A variety of dating techniques show that they are a later addition to a Hasmonean wall, and date from the early Herodian period.<sup>55</sup>

Confirmation that the Essene Gate was related to a community of Jerusalem Essenes comes from Josephus' information that, starting from Herod's tower Hippicus to the north, the wall first ran south, and 'descended through the place called *Bethso* (Bhqswv ) to the gate of the Essenes', before turning east. B. Pixner points out that J. Schwartz long ago deduced that Bhqswv reflects the Aramaic hawx tb, [*beth tsô'ah*, *lit.* 'house of goings forth'] indicating a sanitary facility,<sup>56</sup> an interpretation followed by G. Dalman.<sup>57</sup> As B. Pixner points out, the interpretation of Schwartz is strongly supported by a passage of the Temple Scroll from Qumran. Y. Yadin has argued for a connection with a prescription relating to the plan for the ideal organisation of the

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. F. J. Bliss and A. C. Dickie *Excavations at Jerusalem 1894–1897* (London, 1897) 16-20, 26-28.

<sup>55</sup> On the dating of the remains of the Essene gate see Bargil Pixner, Doron Chen and Shlomo Margalit, 'Mount Zion: The "Gate of the Essenes" Re-excavated' ZDPV 105 (1989) 85-95; metrological researches are helpful in dating the lowermost threshold; it measures 2.66 metres wide, nine standard Roman feet (of 0.2957 metres), or six standard Roman cubits, showing that the gate cannot have been an original part of the Hasmonean wall (87); pottery below the paving slabs within the gate is 'first century', Herodian in character, not later than 70 A.D. (87). Bargil Pixner, 'The History of the Essene Gate Area' ZDPV 105 (1989) 96-104, notes that Professor B. Mazar observed that the excellent workmanship of limestone slabs which line a channel which passes below the gate points to the workmen of Herod the Great (97). Pixner also points out (98) that the pottery below the paving slabs may be later than the gate itself, since Agrippa II undertook street paving operations to employ the workmen left jobless by completion of work on the Temple, Josephus *Ant.* 20 §22. On the identification of Josephus' "Essene Gate" with the recently reexcavated gate see Rainer Riesner, 'Josephus' "Gate of the Essenes" in Modern Discussion' ZDPV 105 (1989) 105-109.

<sup>56</sup> B. Pixner, *An Essene Quarter on Mount Zion*, 256; J. Schwartz, *Crops of the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1900) 335. R. Riesner, *Bibel und Kirche* 40, 2 (1985) 71, points also to J. Schwartz *Das Heilige Land nach seiner ehemaligen und jetzigen geographischen Beschaffenheit*, ed. I. Schwartz (Frankfurt am Main, 1852) 206, Hebrew original text, *T'ebu 'ot ha-'Arets* (Jerusalem, 1845) 334.

<sup>57</sup> G. Dalman, *Jerusalem und Sein Gelände* (Gütersloh, 1930) 307.

Temple and Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup> The passage prescribes the construction of a 'place of the hand outside the city' consisting of 'buildings (*bothîm*, מִטְבּ) ['houses']' for the disposal of waste (*tsô'ah*, חַוָּץ, 11QTemple 46:13–16)<sup>59</sup>. Josephus' phrase. evokes a picture of an Essene community intensely concerned for the sanctity of the Holy City, who dwell within the walls but attend to sanitary requirements outside the boundary of the city. We are reminded of Josephus' description of the Essenes' scrupulous sanitary procedures.<sup>60</sup> A terrace lies outside the wall, a little back along the wall to the northwest from the gate, below the scarp on which the wall rests at this point. In 1875 C. Conder took various cuttings in the rock of the scarp above the terrace to indicate a roofed construction outside the wall, built on the terrace.<sup>61</sup> He suggested that the construction had been a stable. This roofed establishment can now be seen to have been the *Bethso*. Pixner notes a number of cisterns and ritual baths hewn in the rock within the wall, which he suggests define the perimeter of the area of the Essene Quarter.<sup>62</sup>

Excavations at Qumran show that the site of the monastic 'headquarter' of Essenism there was uninhabited from roundabout 40–37 BC to somewhere between 4 BC and AD 6.<sup>63</sup> The presence of (rare) coins of Antigonus (40–37 BC) demonstrate that the previous phase of occupation persisted into Antigonus' reign. The timing of the abandonment of the Qumran site closely coincides with the archaeological evidence dating the construction of the Essene Gate to the early Herodian period. This strongly suggests that during their absence from the desert site, the Essenes of Qumran moved to Jerusalem and established their quarter on the southwest hill.

The period of abandonment of the Qumran site corresponds with the reigns of Herod the Great (36–4 BC) and his son Archelaus (4 BC – AD 6). The reason for the reoccupation of the site seems to have been the arrival of direct Roman rule in AD 6, after which, as the *War Scroll*

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<sup>58</sup> Y. Yadin, 'The Gate of the Essenes and the Temple Scroll', in his *Jerusalem Revealed. Archaeology in the Holy City 1968–1974* (Jerusalem, 1976) 90–91.

<sup>59</sup> On the interpretation of this passage see section II.3 of R. Riesner, 'Das Jerusalemer Essenerquartier und die Urgemeinde', forthcoming in ANRW, II, 26. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.8.9 §§147–149.

<sup>61</sup> C. Conder, 'The Rock Scarp of Zion', *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statements* (1875) 81–89, see 84, cf. R. Riesner, *Bibel und Kirche* 40, 2 (1985) 72.

<sup>62</sup> B. Pixner, 'Unravelling the Copper Scroll Code. A Study of the Topography of 3Q15' RQ 11(1983–86) 323–367.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. R. De Vaux, *Archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls* 21–34.

shows, Essenism tends in a Zealot direction.<sup>64</sup> The wily Herod appears to have exploited inner-Jewish rivalries to his own advantage. He had to assert himself against the Hasmonean dynasty, which he had deposed. The reason for the establishment at the Qumran site had been the Maccabean seizure of the high priesthood from the Teacher of Righteousness. Herod therefore seems to have turned to the prestigious Essenes of Qumran as a bulwark against popular support for the Hasmoneans. In doing this he placed his finger on the Hasmonean's point of weakness, their illegitimacy, as non-Zadokites, as high priests. According to Josephus, Herod 'held the Essenes in great honour, and thought higher of them than their mortal nature required'. The reason was supposedly the prophecy, by an Essene prophet called Menahem, of Herod's future rise to power, while the king was yet a boy. When Herod was 'at the height of his power' he called Menahem for an audience to thank him, and 'held, from that time on, the Essenes in high esteem'.<sup>65</sup> The Essenes were a group whose longstanding opposition to the Hasmoneans gave them common cause with Herod against the Hasmoneans.<sup>66</sup> We can also surmise, on the basis of the Temple Scroll from Qumran, that the possibility of gaining influence in Herod's marvellous reconstruction of the Temple would prove extremely attractive to Essenes formerly grouped around Qumran. Some Essenes may have considered it the Temple hoped for in the *Temple Scroll*.<sup>67</sup> The alliance of the Essenes with Herod's house seems to have broken down under his son Archelaus. According to Josephus, the Essene prophet Simon interpreted a dream of Archelaus as pointing to his limited reign and final downfall.<sup>68</sup> The story points to the passing of Essene favour from the Herodian dynasty,<sup>69</sup> and is consistent with the archaeological evidence for the resettlement of the Qumran site during Archelaus' reign.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (London, 1959) 94-98.

<sup>65</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.10.4-5 §§372-379.

<sup>66</sup> E. Bammel, 'Sadduzäer und Sadokiden', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 55(1979) 107-115.

<sup>67</sup> R. Riesner, 'Das Jerusalemer Essenerviertel. Antwort auf einige Einwände', *Intertestamental Essays in honour of Józef Tadeusz Milik*, ed. Zdzislaw J. Kapera (Kraków: Enigma Press, 1992) 179-186, points to the theory of M. Delcor ('Is the Temple Scroll Source of the Herodian Temple?', in G. J. Brooke, *Temple Scroll Studies* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 67-90) that the Temple Scroll influenced the design of the Herodian Temple.

<sup>68</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.7.3 §113; *Ant.* 17.8.3 §§345-348.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Otto Betz, *Offenbarung und Schrifterforschung in der Qumransekte* (Tübingen, 1960) 99-109.

It is hardly surprising that the Essenes did not succeed in sustaining an alliance with Archelaus, the most brutal and unloved of the Herods.<sup>70</sup>

The so-called 'David's Tomb, the oldest part of the Cenacle church, traditional site of the 'upper room' (Mk 14:15; Acts 1:13; 2:1 *υπερωρον* [*hyperoon*, 'upper room']; Lk 22:12 *ajnavgaion mevga* [*anagaion mega*, 'large upper room']), lies about one hundred and seventy five metres to the north from the Essene gate, and has been thought to represent part of a pre-AD 70 Jewish-Christian synagogue.<sup>71</sup> It is, however, more likely to represent a corner-fragment of the 'Church of Holy Zion' (*Hagia Zion*), constructed around AD 340.<sup>72</sup> This Church extended eastward from 'David's Tomb' some one hundred metres, into the area which B. Pixner suggests was occupied by the Essene Quarter. The centre of *Hagia Zion* lies roughly on the perimeter of this area. William Sanday<sup>73</sup> judged the patristic tradition of the site very positively:

...I believe that of all the most sacred sites it is the one that has the strongest evidence in its favour. Indeed, the evidence for it appears to me so strong that, for my own part, I think that I should be prepared to give in an unqualified adhesion.

The most important patristic testimony to the site comes from Epiphanius of Salamis, who came from Palestine, and who wrote (c. AD 392) that Hadrian found a small Jewish-Christian church on the site on his tour of the East in AD 130:<sup>74</sup>

'He found the whole city razed to the ground and the Temple of God trodden under foot, with the exception of a few buildings and of the little church of God, on the site where the disciples returning after the ascension of the Saviour from Olivet, had gone up to the upper room, for there it had been built, that is to say in the quarter of Zion...'

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.13.2 §342; *War* 2.7.3 §111.

<sup>71</sup> J. W. Hirschberg, 'The Remains of an Ancient Synagogue on Mount Zion' in Y. Yadin (ed.) *Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1976) 116–117.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. J. Wilkerson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It* (London, 1978) 170–171.

<sup>73</sup> W. Sanday *Sacred Sites of The Gospels* (Oxford, 1903) 77–78.

<sup>74</sup> Epiphanius, *De mens. et pond.* 14. The Bordeaux Pilgrim gives a picture of the southwest hill in A. D. 333, prior to the construction of *Hagia Zion*, largely confirming Epiphanius, though he identifies the sole building as one of the seven synagogues which tradition has it once existed on the site, a tradition which Epiphanius also mentions in this context. Cf. e.g. H. Donner, *Pilgerfahrt ins Heilige Land* (Stuttgart, 1979) 57–58.

Epiphanius' reference to the church is incidental to the context, which speaks for its authenticity; the purpose of the passage is to introduce Aquila as a translator of the scriptures. Hadrian undertook a the tour of the East as a result of illness, which led to the foundation of Aelia Capitolina, with which Aquila was involved, on the razed site Jerusalem, Any writer who sought to give an account of Aquila would have to turn to ancient tradition, and Epiphanius' long and rambling account, typical of his style, appears to excerpt an earlier work which is recognisably a church-historical chronicle. The source appears to have centred on events in Jerusalem, so it is most likely a Palestinian chronicle. Epiphanius is known to cite elsewhere Hegesippus.<sup>75</sup> Hegesippus' anti-heretical chronicle represented virtually the standard work on the Jerusalem church, as can be seen from Eusebius' frequent dependence on him for information about Jerusalem Christianity.<sup>76</sup>

Hegesippus had dedicated his life to the refutation of heresy by an investigation of the traditions of the church in each of its major centres, as preserved by the established episcopate in each place,<sup>77</sup> compiling a succession list of bishops for Rome,<sup>78</sup> and certainly making the succession in Jerusalem clear in his history of the Jerusalem church, a record which Epiphanius uses.<sup>79</sup> Epiphanius' portrayal of Aquila in the present passage seems to echo his approach. The discipline of the church is the guiding principle. Aquila, an apostate from the Jerusalem community, went astray because of a perverse interest in astrology. Though the 'teachers' rebuked him for his error, eventually he had to be expelled.<sup>80</sup> This approach is certainly not unique to Hegesippus, but the account of Hadrian's arrival in Jerusalem most likely stems from his work, the *vade mecum* on heresy and the Jerusalem church. Hegesippus lived c. AD 115–185, and was a youth in Palestine at the time of Hadrian's visit.<sup>81</sup> After his travels he maintained intimate contact with

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<sup>75</sup> Th. Zahn *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Leipzig, 1900) VI, 258, 261–262.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.4–19; 3.11–12; 3.20.1–2; 3.32; 4.22.

<sup>77</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22 1–3.

<sup>78</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.3. Epiphanius found his Roman bishop-list in 'certain memoirs' (*Haer.* 27.6) which are certainly those of Hegessipus, cf. J. B. Lightfoot *Apostolic Fathers* I, S. Clement of Rome I (London 1890) 328–332, and Zahn, *Forschungen*, VI, 258–261.

<sup>79</sup> Epiphanius, *Haer.* 66.20, cf. Zahn, *Forschungen*, VI, 290.

<sup>80</sup> Epiphanius, *De mens. et pond.* 15.

<sup>81</sup> He had experienced the catastrophe of the Bar-Cochba revolt personally, cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4 . 8 .1–4 and Zahn, *Forschungen* , VI, 250–254.

the Jerusalem Church,<sup>82</sup> collecting the local tradition,<sup>83</sup> and even using Jewish oral tradition.<sup>84</sup> Hegesippus would be a reliable witness for local tradition concerning the site of the upper room around AD 130.

The annalist Eutychius, patriarch of Alexandria in the tenth century, claims that Jewish Christians returned to Jerusalem in the fourth year of Vespasian (AD 72–73) following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Rainer Riesner points out that the date of this apparent return makes some sense, suggesting as it does normalisation of relations after the last resistance of the Zealots, at Masada, was put down in this year.<sup>85</sup> Eutychius associates the return with the building of a church, and the election of Simon bar-Clophas.<sup>86</sup> Eutychius at least gives a plausible explanation of the origin of the church that was to be found on the site in AD 130. J. E. Taylor has recently objected that the early Christians, in her view of low social level, are unlikely to have had a centre on the southwest hill, adjacent to the 'Belgravia' of the prestigious high priestly houses.<sup>87</sup> However, the Fourth Gospel witnesses that the unnamed 'disciple whom Jesus loved', probably the host at the last supper,<sup>88</sup> and therefore probably the individual in whose house the 'Upper Room' was located, was 'known (gnwstov)" to the high priest' (18:15, 16); gnwstov" has occasionally been taken to imply that the disciple was a kinsman of the high priest, a meaning which the adjective can definitely carry.<sup>89</sup> B. Pixner has pointed out in objection to Taylor that as well as a region of grand housing, there is an area of poorer dwellings on the

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<sup>82</sup> He refers to it as *the church*, Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.4–5.

<sup>83</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.8.

<sup>84</sup> Hegesippus brought the name of Panther — unwittingly, from Jewish polemic against the virgin birth — into association with the family of Jesus, thus becoming an undesirable author, cf. Zahn, *Forschungen*, VI, 262, further 266–269. Epiphanius may intentionally avoid naming his source.

<sup>85</sup> R. Riesner, *Bibel und Kirche* 40(1985) 68.

<sup>86</sup> 'Then the Christians, fleeing from the Jews, crossed the Jordan, and there established their seat. When they heard that Titus had destroyed the rebellious Jews, they returned to Jerusalem, building there a church for themselves and nominating their second bishop Simon bar-Clophas. Clophas was the brother of Joseph who brought up our Lord Jesus Christ. This happened in the fourth year of Vespasian', Eutychius, *Annales* 343.

<sup>87</sup> J. E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 208, 218, 219.

<sup>88</sup> D. E. H. Whiteley, 'Was John written by a Sadducee?' ANRW II, 25.3, 2481–2505, see 2494. The argument of Whiteley's whole piece suggests that this Jerusalem disciple had close connections with the high priestly aristocracy.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1978), 526.

southwest hill.<sup>90</sup> All evidence combined suggests that the Jerusalem Christians, only some of whom were drawn from the wealthier classes in Jerusalem, nevertheless gained a foothold on the hill (and indeed survived in the city generally) through the support of some wealthier patrons. The patristic tradition of the site is remarkably consistent with the New testament and archaeological evidence.

The early Christian historians assume that from Simon's time onwards until the founding of Aelia Capitolina there was a Jewish-Christian presence in Jerusalem. Eusebius says that it was recorded 'that there was a very important Christian church in Jerusalem, administered by Jews, which existed until the siege of the city under Hadrian'.<sup>91</sup> Elsewhere he appears to know of the resettlement of Jews in Jerusalem by the time of Bar-Cochba.<sup>92</sup> Adolf Schlatter argued the case for a resettlement of Jerusalem between the two wars with Rome, though his evidence, mainly Rabbinic, is not always convincing.<sup>93</sup> B. Lifshitz assumes with older opinion that Jerusalem lay in ruins till the foundation of Aelia Capitolina.<sup>94</sup> However, there are a number of quite believable Rabbinic references to pilgrim-visits of scholars to Jerusalem, to mourn the Temple, during the period.<sup>95</sup> The environs of the city also remained a treasured final resting place for Jews.<sup>96</sup> For the reliability of local memory we need not think of wholesale resettlement, merely of an ongoing attachment to the Holy City amongst Jewish Christians, which led to continuous contact with the city area, the erection of makeshift shelters, and some commemorative salvage of important sites. This is very much the picture which Epiphanius gives us, and makes his notice

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<sup>90</sup> B. Pixner, *Wege des Messias und Stätten der Urkirche* (ed. R. Riesner, Gießen/Basel: Brunnen, 21994) 402-407.

<sup>91</sup> Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 3.5 §124d. He probably has writers like Hegesippus and Julius Africanus in mind.

<sup>92</sup> Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 6.18 §§285-296.

<sup>93</sup> A. Schlatter, *Synagoge und Kirche bis zum BarKochba-Aufstand* (Stuttgart, 1966) 69-86.

<sup>94</sup> B. Lifshitz, 'Jérusalem sous la Domination Romaine' ANRW II, 8, 444-489.

<sup>95</sup> Talmud bMakk. 24b; Berak. 3a; jHag. 2.77b(59), cf. Koh. Rabbah 7.8. Further Schlatter, *op. cit.*, 73-78. Commenting on the phrase "deeds of loving-kindness" in Aboth 1.2, the saying of Rabbi Nathan (Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, version A chapter 4) says: 'Woe to us!' Rabbi Joshua cried, "that this, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!" "My son, Rabban Yohanan said to him, "be not grieved; we have another atonement as effective at this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, For I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

<sup>96</sup> Semah 10, cf. A. Büchler, *The Economic Conditions of Judaea after the Destruction of the Second Temple* (London, 1912) 17.

that the site of the Upper Room was remembered credible. As the probable site of the central premises of the Christian community in Jerusalem throughout the period c. AD 33–67, the Upper Room is the most likely pre-AD 70 Christian site of all to have been remembered. Jewish Christians, mourning the destruction of the city with their fellow-Jews, probably preserved the knowledge of the former site of their own centre, replete as it must have been with important memories.

Thus the major Essene community of Qumran relocated itself until about AD 6 to a site in the immediate vicinity of that probably used later on by the early church in Jerusalem from c. AD 30. In all probability some kind of Essene presence continued to that time on the site of the Jerusalem Essene Quarter, probably a group which chose to remain because it preferred to hold on to a connection won with the Temple and the high priestly establishment. This group may have represented a quietist strand unwilling to return to the desert and the sharpening opposition of Qumran to the Jerusalem establishment. While Qumran Essenism now headed in the direction of the Zealots,<sup>97</sup> this group took a more independent course. It is entirely possible that this group of Essenes responded first to the preaching of John the Baptist, then to that of Jesus and his disciples, and passed into the Christian church.<sup>98</sup> If this happened, it will have provided a direct conduit for the transmission of the language and regulations of IQS into the first church of Jerusalem.

### **The 'Daily Ministry' of Acts 6:1-6**

At Acts 6:1 a dispute over economic arrangements arises between the 'Hellenists' (ὍΕλληισταῖν [*Hellenistai*]) and the 'Hebrews' (ὍΕβραῖοι [*Hebraioi*]) within the growing community. The widows of the 'Hellenists' were being 'neglected' or 'overlooked' (παρεβλεπόμεναι [*paretheorounto*, 'were being overlooked']) in the 'daily distribution' (διακονία καθημερινή [*diakonia kathemerine*]). As may be deduced

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. above, note 64.

<sup>98</sup> Jesus' disciples were directed to find the room where they were to prepare the Last Supper by meeting and following a man carrying water who would approach them (Mk. 14:13; Lk. 22:11). Carrying water was normally the work of the women-folk of the household. The man may have carried water because as a celibate he belonged to a community without women. It may have been a feature of Jerusalem life that if men were spotted carrying water, they were associated with the ascetic conventicle on the south-west hill. If this was not Jesus' reason, we must assume that a man walked in the direction of the disciples carrying a jar of water in order to be recognised by them, a rather contrived signal.

from the responsibilities of the financial officers visible in 1QS and, for example, the process of collection and distribution described by Philo at *Hypothetica* 11:4-11, community of goods in its Palestinian cultural context did not mean that all had direct access to funds and resources, but rather that resources were controlled by a limited number of officers. Hence mention of an 'underprivileged group' does not contradict organised community of goods. Elderly widows will have been a distinct group in, say, the community of the 'Hebrews' because they had right to receive resources without bringing any daily financial contribution from work outside the community.

Commentators frequently cite certain instances of organised care for the poor attested in Rabbinic literature<sup>99</sup> as analogous to the process of 'daily distribution' mentioned amongst the early Christians at Acts 6:1. The Rabbinic system was based on the synagogue, whose 'receivers of alms' (hqdx yabg) administered a 'weekly money-chest' (*qûppah*, hpwq, lit. 'basket'), from which the local resident poor received money for the purchase of a week's meals (fourteen) each Friday, when the alms-collectors made their rounds to the houses of the district to collect money. A daily collection of food was also taken, in the 'tray' (*tamchûy*, ywjmt), for distribution to those poor in immediate need. Poor travelling through could receive food from the 'tray', but money from the 'basket' was restricted to the better-known resident poor.

This system is hardly close to Luke's description in Acts. The continual neglect of the Hellenistic widows (*pareqewrou'nto*, [*paretheorounto*, 'were being overlooked'] 6:1, imperfect), suggests that *resident* poor seek to avoid being neglected in a *daily* distribution. In the Rabbinic system they would receive a weekly dole, not daily food. The information given in two phrases, the 'daily ministry' (6:1) and the apostles' refusal to 'serve at tables' (6:2) shows that the widows are provided for in the context of *daily meal fellowship*. (cf. Acts 2:46). This is a fundamental difference between the Rabbinic and Christian systems, suggesting that the Rabbinic system has little to tell us about the ethos of the 'daily distribution' of Acts 6:1. Care for the poor of the community

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<sup>99</sup> On the system cf. S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie* III (Leipzig, 1912), 66–74; G. F. Moore, *Judaism* II (Cambridge Mass., 1927), 174–178; H. L. Strack & P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* I (München, 1922) 387–391. Cf. K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, IV (London, 1933) 64; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 261–262; C. S. C. Williams *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Black, 1957) 96; G. Schille, *Apostelgeschichte* (Berlin, 21984) 168; A. Strobel, "'Armenpfleger um des Friedens willen', ZNW 63(1972) 271–276.

was always associated with table-fellowship in early Christianity,<sup>100</sup> a continuation of Jesus' characteristic meal-fellowship with 'tax-collectors and sinners'.

Jeremias<sup>101</sup> argues that the Rabbinic 'basket' and 'tray', which are well-attested only for the second century, operated in pre- AD 70 Jerusalem. G. F. Moore is cautious about an early dating of the Rabbinic system, noting that there are only 'scanty intimations' of it before the Hadrianic war, and nothing from the first century.<sup>102</sup> D. Seccombe has shown that Jeremias' evidence for the early dating carries no weight,<sup>103</sup> and lists some evidence against. Accounts of the relief organised in two pre- AD 70 famines make no mention of such a system.<sup>104</sup> Begging poor are frequent in the Gospels,<sup>105</sup> where the attitude towards begging is much more positive than in later times, when the system of poor-care made begging suspect.<sup>106</sup> The origins of the Rabbinic system are later, in the troubled times following the destruction of AD 70.

The Essene system of daily meal-fellowship with collection of wages and distribution noted above (Philo *Hypothetica* 11:4-11) is much closer to the 'daily ministry.' of Acts 6:1 than the usually cited Rabbinic system. The early Jerusalem Christians broke bread and took food with each other on a *daily* basis (καϱΔ ηJμεvran ... κlw'ntev" te katΔ οiλkon a[rton, metelavmbanon trofh", [*kath' hemeran... klontes te kat' oikon arton, metelambanon trophes*, 'daily breaking bread from house to house, taking food'], Acts 2:46). On this occasion distribution is made so that all believers receive 'according as any had *need*' (καϱovti a[n ti" creivan eicen, [*kathoti an tis chreian eichen*, 'according as any had

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. I Cor. 11.17–34; *Epistle to Diognetus* 5; Justin *Apol.* 1.13 and 67.

<sup>101</sup> *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus*, (London, 1969) 131–134.

<sup>102</sup> *Judaism* II, 175.

<sup>103</sup> 'Was there organised charity in Jerusalem before the Christians?' JTS 29(1978) 140–143. Mishnah Ketuboth 13.1–2 is about a claim on the estate of a woman's deceased husband, not on the community. Provision of a Passover meal for the poor from the 'tray' in Mishnah Pesahim 10.1 is probably not pre-AD 70, since it is written as a prescription (imperatives), whereas Pesahim 5.1(ff), describing the proceedings of the Passover at the Temple, is written in the perfect tense. The 'Chamber of secrets' in the Temple, Mishnah Shekalim 5.6, where the pious left alms for the poor, is a charitable institution of some kind, but is not similar to the 'basket' or 'tray'. G. F. Moore, *Judaism* II, 174, thought that the earliest notices date to just prior to the Hadrianic war.

<sup>104</sup> The grain-distributions of Herod and Helena, Josephus *Ant.* 15.9.1–15.10.3 §§299–316, 20.2.5 §§51–53.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Lk. 18:35; Acts 3:2–10.

<sup>106</sup> The beggar is despised in Rabbinic teaching, Baba Bathra 9a.

need'], 2:45; 4:35). Acts 6: 2 mentions *tables* (*diakonei'n trapevzai'* [*diakonein trapezais*, 'serving tables']) in regard to these meals. Each of these elements appears in Philo's description of the daily Essene process:

'He (the treasurer) takes these (wages) and at once buys *what is necessary* (*tajpithvdeia* = *ta*; *ejpithvdeia*) and provides food in abundance and anything else which human life *requires* (*oJ ajnqrwpo" bivo" creiwvdh"*). Thus having *each day* (*kaqΔ eJkavsthñ hJmeran*) a common life and a common *table* (*oJmotravdezoi*, cf. 11:12 *travpeza*) they are content with the same conditions, lovers of frugality who shun expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul. (*Hypothetica* 11:10–11)

It might be objected that Luke connects distribution only with the sale and surrender of property (2:45, 4:34–35), and does not mention any collection of wages. However, the association of selling and distribution is formulaic, already laid down in Jesus' command to the rich man to 'sell all and give to the poor'.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Luke has based his summary material on the dramatic events of the sale and surrender of property which tradition recorded, and may not have heard of the less noticeable process of daily collection. The Church Father Hippolytus, when describing *Essene* community of goods, makes the same, incorrectly exclusive association of sale of property with the distributive process, though the Essenes did not simply live off their capital:

No one amongst them, however, enjoys a greater amount of riches than another. For a regulation with them is, that an individual coming forward (to join) the sect must sell his possessions, and present (the price of them) to the community. And on receiving (the money) the head (of the order) distributes it to all according to their necessities. Thus there is no one among them in distress. (*Ref. haer.* 9:14)<sup>108</sup>

Before we can understand the relation of the dispute of Acts 6:1–6 to the community of goods, we must first gain a picture of the social relations between the 'Hellenists' and 'Hebrews'. The distinction between these two groups was probably linguistic in the first instance. All Jews in Palestine in the New Testament period would know at least some Greek, the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean since Alexander's conquests. The 'Hellenists' were probably those Jews who knew *only*

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<sup>107</sup> Mk. 10.17–31 and parallels; Lk. 12.33.

<sup>108</sup> Translation by J. H. MacMahon, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (Edinburgh, 1870) I, 353.

Greek, but no Aramaic or Hebrew.<sup>109</sup> These Greek-speaking Jews appear to have been a part of the synagogue communities with clear links with the diaspora which appear at 6:9. We may therefore assume also a degree of cultural divergence from the community of the 'Hebrews', also this point should not be unduly stressed in view of the increasing appreciation of the penetration of Greek culture in Palestinian Judaism.<sup>110</sup> The 'Hellenists' probably found participation in the (Aramaic) worship of the original disciple-group difficult, and started to develop as a more independent community, based in their own synagogues. Hence they rapidly came into conflict with those in the Greek-speaking synagogues who did not share their views, and a persecution resulted (6:9-8:3) which scattered them from Jerusalem (8:4). The apostles and by implication the community of 'Hebrews', Aramaic-speaking Christians, were able to remain in Jerusalem (8:1).

The solution to the dispute over care for the Hellenists' widows was the appointment of seven officers (6:5). All the Seven have Greek names and appear to be drawn from the Hellenist community alone.<sup>111</sup> This implies that the solution to the dispute was *not* the integration of the 'Hellenist' widows *into* the 'daily distribution' of the 'Hebrew' congregation, but rather the establishment of officers to organised care within the Hellenist community itself, which clearly had no arrangements of any kind for the care of its poor. They probably instituted a looser form of care based on charitable giving alone. With this move community of goods was left behind as something sometimes found within Palestinian Christianity, but not found in the wider church to which most of the New Testament writings bear witness.

The churches of the Pauline mission attest an interest in mutual support, without formal community of goods. Paul's mission was based on Antioch; we have no evidence that community of goods arrangements were ever instituted in Antioch as they had been in Jerusalem. The founding of the church at Antioch was the work of believers driven out from Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-21). Acts specifically states that these preachers were originally from Cyprus and Cyrene; they were probably Hellenists driven out of the Greek-speaking synagogues such as those of Acts 6:9 (cf. the naming of Cyrene and Alexandria). Thus the social form

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM, 1983) 1-29, 133-156; C. F. D. Moule, 'Once More, who were the Hellenists' ExpT 70(1958-59) 100-102.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. especially M. Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians* (London: SCM, 1980).

<sup>111</sup> One of their number, Nicolaus, is called a 'proselyte of Antioch', Nicolaus (6.7)

instituted by the Hellenists in response to the difficulties of Acts 6:1-6 is probably that observable at Antioch and in the Pauline mission. The 'Hellenists' had probably never themselves been a part of the community of goods arrangements of the Hebrew group; they had been grown separately from the start in the Greek-speaking synagogues. They faced the issue of caring for their poor with the looser structure based on charitable giving which became the pattern for later Christianity. The dispute over economic arrangements in Acts 6:1-6 is thus a record of the point at which community of goods was programmed out of the social form of the developing wider church.

While traditionally the model for the deacons of later Christianity, it appears that the Seven were really leaders for the separately developing community of Hellenist believers. One of their number, Stephen, 'did great signs and wonders' (6:8) and encountered opposition over his public teaching (6:10-14). Clearly, his duties were not limited to the administration of care for the poor. Similarly, another of their number, Philip, when the Hellenist Christians were scattered from Jerusalem, evangelised amongst the Samaritans (8:4-24). The Seven, therefore, were leaders of the Hellenist community with responsibility both for teaching and poor care. In this combination of roles they appear very close to the 'Guardian' or *Mebaqqer* figure of the *Damascus Document*, who combines in himself teaching responsibilities with the duty to care for widows and orphans, including the raising of a tax for their support.<sup>112</sup>

As we have noted above, the ethos of community of goods in its Palestinian cultural context was as a practice appropriate for the leading section of a community of common belief, but not for all. Full property-sharing communities regulated by the *Rule of the Community* were linked with the partially property-sharing communities of the *Damascus Document*. The Christian community appears to have developed an analogous two-level structure. In creating a looser social form, the Hellenists probably had a Palestinian model, and acted with the full approval of the Jerusalem apostles. The secondary communities which they created were the Christian counterpart to the Essene *Damascus Document* communities, in which the overseer ensured that the poor received succour, but in which community of goods was not practised. We here of no regulated tax in the communities of the Hellenists, but the two-level structure in the different sects gives the analogy point. The Hellenist communities probably organised charitable care for the poor as

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<sup>112</sup> CD XIII.7–XIV.2, cf. W. Staerk, *Die jüdische Gemeinde des Neuen Bundes in Damaskus* (Gütersloh, 1922) 32.

it is found in later Christianity. They also probably began the practice of occasional, rather than daily, fellowship meals, also the pattern of later Christianity. This looser social form could not sustain community of goods, which as we have seen depended on the *daily* gathering and sharing of all members of the community. In Jerusalem, community of goods extended over a section of the community of the 'Hebrews'. It was not binding on the whole group, and was probably not reproduced amongst the Hellenists while in Jerusalem, and certainly not in the Hellenist community at Antioch and beyond in the Pauline mission.

### Conclusions

The Christian church considered for centuries that Luke's evocative picture of community of goods was realised in the 'angelic life' of monasticism.<sup>113</sup> Some Anabaptist groups at the Reformation and since have taken it as a realisable ideal for all Christians.<sup>114</sup> The very negative consensus of present-day scholarship against the historicity of the community of goods of Acts 2-6 arose partly in opposition to the sharpest Anabaptist positions, but principally as a reaction to the Christian precedent which socialist thinkers over the last hundred and fifty years have found in these passages for their views on the organisation of the state.<sup>115</sup> The pervasive effects of this reaction have combined with the frequent negative assessment of Acts as an historical source to deny the key new evidence made available through the publication of the *Rule of the Community* from Qumran the illuminating role which it deserves.

The Essene *yachad* terminology of the *Rule of the Community* provides close linguistic parallels to the difficult phrases employing *ejpi; to; aujto;v* [*epi to auto*, 'together'] at Acts 2:44 and 2:47. It is possible to understand Peter's challenge to the incomplete property surrender of Ananias and Sapphira at Acts 5:4 against the background of the Essene procedure of the provisional surrender of property (1QS VI:20), which is

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Luke T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) 1 and note 3.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Hans-Dieter Plümper, *Die Gütergemeinschaft bei den Täufern des 16. Jh* (Göppingen, 1972); R. Friedmann, 'The Christian Communism of the Hutterite Brethren', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 46 (1955) 196–209; Victor Peters, *All Things Common. The Hutterian Way of Life* (Minneapolis, 1965).

<sup>115</sup> Beginning with Wilhelm Weitling (1808–1871), *Das Evangelium des armen Sünders*, (Hamburg, 1971, reprint of 21846); cf. L. Wm. Countryman, *The Rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire* (New York: Edward Mellen, 1980) 1-2.

linked to a similar-sounding rule governing lies in matters of property (1QS VI:24-25). Patristic tradition and archaeological evidence combine with evidence from Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls to suggest that the early community in Jerusalem grew in the immediate vicinity of an Essene group occupying a site which some twenty-five years earlier had housed the Essene community of Qumran itself. This community may have provided converts to the early church who were themselves the conduit into Jerusalem Christianity of Essene language and procedures.<sup>116</sup> The 'daily distribution' of Acts 6:1 is much closer to the Essene process found in Philo, *Hypothetica* 11:4-11, and hinted at in the *Rule of the Community*, than to the Rabbinic analogy usually cited. Thus a cumulative case, building from a wide variety of sources and types of evidence, suggests that earliest Christian community of goods in Acts 2-6 is a historically verifiable aspect of the life of the earliest Jerusalem community, close in form to the widespread Essene practice of community of goods. Acts emerges as a source which reveals good knowledge of Palestinian cultural features of the earliest community, despite Luke's evident desire to stylise his material in a manner which appealed to those readers who shared the esteem for community of goods in Greek popular philosophy.

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<sup>116</sup> Wholesale conversion of the community is possible, but not demonstrable.