

Zeitschrift: Theologische Zeitschrift
Herausgeber: Theologische Fakultät der Universität Basel
Band: 31 (1975)
Heft: 3

Artikel: Community of Goods at Qumran
Autor: Mealand, David L.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-878667>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 22.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Community of Goods at Qumran

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it has often been argued that the Qumran sect practised community of goods¹, and that the sect is to be identified with the Essenes. These two views offer each other mutual support, but it is possible that either could be true without the other. There are, indeed, scholars who have rejected both views². Though there are impressive similarities between the Qumran Sect and the ancient accounts of the Essenes, there are also differences, and some scholars may have identified the two rather too readily. On the other hand, whether or not the Qumran sect and the Essenes are identified, there is good reason for holding that *some form of community of goods* was practised at Qumran, at least in the early years of the life of the sect. As this view has been rejected by Rabin, the evidence must be examined afresh, especially in view of the fact that some of Rabin's objections have been accepted by others³.

¹ H. Braun, Umkehr in spätjüdisch-häretischer und in frühchristlicher Sicht: Zs. Theol. u. Ki. 50 (1953), pp. 255ff.; A. Dupont-Sommer, The Jewish Sect of Qumran and the Essenes (1954), pp. 65ff.; S. Segert, Die Gütergemeinschaft der Essäer: Studia Antiqua A. Salac oblata (Prague, 1955), pp. 66–73; W. R. Farmer, The Economic Basis of the Qumran Community: Theol. Zeitschr. 11 (1955), pp. 295–308; 12 (1956), pp. 56–8; G. Vermes, Discovery in the Judaean Desert (1956), pp. 40ff.; H. Braun, Spätjüdisch-häretischer und frühchristlicher Radikalismus, 1 (1957), pp. 35–37; H. J. Kandler, Die Bedeutung der Armut im Schrifttum von Chirbet Qumran: Judaica 13 (1957), pp. 193–209; S. E. Johnson, The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline and the Jerusalem Church of Acts: The Scrolls and the N.T., ed. K. Stendahl (1958), pp. 131–3 (reprinted from Zs. at. Wiss. 66, 1954); F. M. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran (1958), pp. 61ff., 179f.; M. Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (1958), pp. 81f., 116, 383; J. T. Milik, Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea (1959), pp. 89f., 102, 119f.; E. Bammel, Theol. Dict. N.T., 6, pp. 896–9; I. Hahn, Die Eigentumsverhältnisse der Qumran-Sekte: Wiss. Zeits. (1963), pp. 263ff.; G. W. Buchanan, The Role of Purity in the Structure of the Essene Sect: Rev. de Qumran 4 (1963–4), pp. 397ff.; B. Gärtner, The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the N.T. (1965), p. 10; G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (rev. ed. 1965), pp. 29f.; H. J. Degenhardt, Lukas, Evangelist der Armen (1965), pp. 188ff.; H. Braun, Qumran und das N. T., 1 (1966), pp. 143ff.; 2 (1966), pp. 155ff. (with references to yet more literature); A. R. C. Leaney, The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning (1966), pp. 122f., 164, 196; E. J. Pryke, Beliefs and Practices of the Qumran Community: Church Quart. Rev. 168 (1967), pp. 319ff.; J. A. Fitzmeyer, Jewish Christianity in Acts in the light of the Qumran Scrolls: Studies in Luke-Acts ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martin (1968), pp. 242–4; Z. Kapera, review of W. Tyloch, Aspekty społeczne gminy z Qumran: Rev. de Qumran 7 (1969–71), pp. 593–601; A. Steiner, Warum lebten die Essener asketisch? : Bibl. Zeitschr. 15 (1971), pp. 1–28.

² C. Roth and H. E. Del Medico according to Burrows (n. 1), p. 383. So also C. Rabin, Qumran Studies (1957), pp. 22–36; G. R. Driver, The Judaean Scrolls (1965), pp. 113–116. Rabin argued at some length that there was private property at Qumran, and that the sect organized itself in a manner comparable to a Pharisaic *haburah*. Driver concluded that the Essenes practised communism; the Covenanters only had a “system of common ownership of members' possessions” (p. 164). M. Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins (1961), pp. 33–38, judiciously observes that “Rabin has convincingly shown that the situation with regard to property in 1QS is much more complicated”. See also P. Wernberg-Møller, The Nature of the *Yahad* according to the Manual of Discipline and Related Documents: Ann. of Leeds Univ. or. Soc. 6 (1966–8), pp. 56–81.

³ See note 2 above.

It is clear that the *Zadokite Documents* (Z.D.) presuppose the possession of *private property* by members of the Sect⁴. The *Manual of Discipline* (1QS), on the other hand, seems, at least at first sight, to assume *community of goods* to be the practice of those for whom it legislates. It rules that new members are to bring all their wealth into the community⁵. The procedure is relatively complex⁶. An applicant must wait for one year. If he is admitted, then his property is handed over to the treasurer, and placed in a blocked account⁷. At the end of a second year, if he is admitted to membership, his property is added to the common funds⁸. A false declaration is punished⁹.

The rules in the Manual also mention “the property of the community”, and prescribe a penalty for conduct which results in its loss¹⁰. This common property is under the control of the priests¹¹. The property of the community is to be kept separate from that of other men¹². Men who do not amend their lives cannot enter the community, nor can their property be accepted into the community¹³. That privilege is only granted after a process of scrutiny.

1.

Those who have argued that there was private property at Qumran have raised the following *objections*¹⁴, which we must now consider. a) The Zadokite Documents presuppose private property. b) One passage in the Manual assumes that members of the community have the ability to replace lost or stolen property. c) There are passages which impose fines on members. d) Those who were expelled from the community must have had property, as members were forbidden to do business with them. e) Rules which forbade trade with outsiders presupposed private property, and tell against the view that property was pooled in the community.

a) It is true that the second Zadokite Document assumes that there is private property in the community for which it legislates. There are in fact many similarities, and also a number of differences between this work and the Manual. Both are reasonably regarded as products of the one Zadokite sect. They may, however, belong to different branches of the sect¹⁵, one of which had private property, the other of which practised community of goods. On the other hand, fragments of several copies of the Zadokite Document have been found at Qumran¹⁶. A more likely explanation is, therefore, that this code should be assigned to a later period in the life of the Qumran sect than the Manual¹⁷.

⁴ Z.D. 9.11ff., 12.9ff., 13.15, 14.13, cf. Rabin (n. 2) p. 23.

⁵ 1QS 1.12.

⁶ 1QS 6.13ff.; cf. Braun (n. 1), *Radikalismus*, 1, pp. 35f.; Bammel (n. 1), p. 898.

⁷ 1QS 6.20.

⁸ 1QS 6.22.

⁹ 1QS 6.25.

¹⁰ 1QS 7.6.

¹¹ 1QS 9.7: “Only the sons of Aaron shall have control over judgement and property.”

¹² 1QS 9.8: “The property of the men of holiness, who walk in integrity, their property must not be mixed with the property of the men of deceit.”

¹³ 1QS 3.2.

¹⁴ Presented most fully by Rabin (n. 2), pp. 22ff. See also note 2 above.

¹⁵ Milik (n. 1), pp. 90f.; cf. Vermes (n. 1), *Scrolls*, pp. 29f.

¹⁶ Milik (n. 1), pp. 38f.; cf. also p. 96.

¹⁷ Braun (n. 1), *Radikalismus*, 1, pp. 90n.1, 111n.1 (end); Hahn (n. 1), p. 268ff.; cf. Milik (n. 1), pp. 87ff., who holds that a group settled near Damascus.

The Manual mentions the property of the community, and requires the inclusion of all the goods belonging to a new member¹⁸. It makes no further provision for maintenance of community funds. The Zadokite Document does not require total pooling of property, and does have to provide for the maintenance of the common fund by requiring that a proportion of each member's income should be paid in¹⁹. Presumably the second arrangement superseded the first²⁰.

b) A much contested passage in the Manual is probably to be rendered in this way, 1QS 7.6a:

"If it is against his neighbour that he acts deceitfully²¹ he shall be punished for three months, (b) but if it is with the property of the community that he behaves deceitfully²¹ so as to cause its loss, then he shall restore it (7) in full (8) and if he is not able to restore it, he shall be punished for sixty days²²."

Rabin argued that it is strange that the crime against the individual was punished more heavily than that against (the property of) the community, he proposed a slight amendment of the text²³: and rendered it:

"If he *keeps silent* concerning his neighbour . . ." and "if he *keeps silent* about (a crime against) the property of the community . . ."

He argued that the crime against an individual might be a capital one, and that this accounts for the longer punishment. But if that were so one might expect an even more severe punishment. Further the text is clear and unambiguous²⁴ and makes good sense. The manuscript had not been copied for generations, but was a text in current use. Rabin cites Z.D. 9.6. as a parallel, but there a different Hebrew word is used for "to keep silent". In any case even if Rabin's proposal were accepted, the passage would still not imply private property, but only that a man who concealed the loss of community property, either had to find it and replace it, or suffer punishment.

If the text of 1QS 7.6 is allowed to stand, as seems best, then there is no need to think that it presupposes private property. Rabin argued that the culprit was expected to pay, if he had caused the loss of community property. But this is not what the text says. The text simply requires either that the missing object shall be found and replaced²⁵, or that a penalty shall be imposed for two months. If a man had acted fraudulently or negligently, then he might well be able to restore the missing item. The alternative punishment is not for those "unable to pay", but for those unable to reinstate what had disappeared.

¹⁸ 1QS 6.22.

¹⁹ Z.D.14.13; also Z.D.7.6a-9 envisages marriage, as does the Messianic Rule. A few women and children were buried on the fringe of the main cemetery at Qumran. This also suggests later development away from strict celibacy and community of goods. See note 88 below.

²⁰ Further discussion follows below. On the relative order of the Manual and Z.D. see O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das A.T.* (1964³), p. 884: the two works are both composite; it is usually held that the Manual is the earlier. See also J. Murphy O'Connor, *A Literary Analysis of Damascus Document XIX.33–XX.34: Rev. bibl.* 79 (1972), pp. 544–564.

²¹ Ytrmh: "defraud" (Leaney), "failed to care for" (Vermes), "behave fraudently" (Wernberg-Møller).

²² 1QS 7.6ff.

²³ Op.cit., p. 24 suggesting ytdmh "keep silent".

²⁴ As may be seen from the photographic plates. The first time the word occurs it is written above the line. P. Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline* (1957), p. 115, points out that this is due to a change in word order, so that the two clauses in 7.6 might match.

²⁵ Lšlmw means "to restore it", not "to pay for it", so Leaney (n. 1), p. 198; Vermes (n. 1), *Scrolls*, p. 83.

It might be argued that 7.6a “if he behaves deceitfully with his neighbour” envisages the possibility of a member being defrauded, and therefore being the owner of property which could be stolen. It should be noted however the first offence is one of deceit or neglect of a man’s *neighbour*²⁶; whereas the second is against the *property* of the community. If 7.6a envisaged theft, then restoration would be ordered, as it is in 7.6b. The rule neither states nor implies that individual members had private property.

c) We must now consider the passages which, Rabin alleges, refer to fines. It is true that penalties are mentioned in connection with a whole series of offences²⁷. The punishment is most closely defined in the first of these passages. Here the Manual rules, 1QS 6.25:

“They shall set him apart from the Purity of the Many for one year, and he shall be fined one fourth of his bread²⁸. ”

Certainly this penalty is milder than that which Josephus says was meted out to those Essenes who were expelled and starved²⁹. On the other hand there is no need to accept Rabin’s argument that the Manual here speaks of a fine of a quarter of a man’s income. It is true that the Zadokite Document orders a tax for the poor of two days wages each month³⁰, but there is no mention of wages here. In this passage Rabin identifies the “Purity of the Many” with the pure food of the community, and then urges that the word bread³¹ must refer to wages. This is contrary to the natural sense of the word used, and no parallel has been given to justify this interpretation, nor has any parallel been found for the idea of fines related to earnings or payable in instalments, which Rabin detects here.

Even if the obscure phrase “Purity of the Many” does refer to the pure food of the community, it is still possible that exclusion from this is a ban on the offender preparing or eating meals in company with the rest of the community. The first part of the penalty is exclusion from the common table. The second is a reduction in rations. The offender is given a reduced food ration, which he has to eat apart from the rest of the community, perhaps with the postulants. This interpretation has the merit of taking the word “bread” in its natural sense, and need not involve the assumption that the sect provided “special unclean meals for those undergoing punishment”.

If this interpretation is correct, the other references to fines would all involve the reduction of the offender’s rations, the first use of the word having made this clear. As the members had surrendered their property when they were admitted, this was the only means of fining them.

d) There are two places where the Manual seems to assume that those who had been expelled from the community owned goods³², 1QS 7.24–25, 8.23. The passages in question forbid members of the sect to mingle with the property of those who have been expelled. The Essenes are said to have owned nothing if they left their community, and

²⁶ Perhaps the neglect of some service towards him, or a trick depriving him of food or of some privilege.

²⁷ 1QS 6.25–7.19, 9.1, cf. Rabin (n. 2), p. 26.

²⁸ Leaney (n. 1), pp. 197, 201.

²⁹ Jos. Bell. 2.8.8 (143). Josephus may be describing a different situation, or exaggerating.

³⁰ Z.D. 14.12f.

³¹ Lhm.

³² Rabin (n. 2), p. 25.

Rabin is right to point to the difference here between the Manual and the accounts of the Essenes. These passages do not, however, tell us about the custom inside the community, only that after expulsion former members owned goods.

It is arguable that a man who was expelled either had his property returned to him, or else acquired property after leaving. Perhaps he might then try to persuade other members of the sect to join him, or meet with him; or else he might return and try to gain re-entry. The passages in question forbid members to “mingle with his property”³³. This means that they are not to have a share of his goods, or accept anything from him, or readmit him, or associate with him on his return. Neither of these passages need imply that any member had private resources while still within the community.

e) The two passages just discussed, and a number of other passages, raise the further question of the meaning of the phrase “*to mix with his property*”. The verb in question³⁴ appears in the *hithpa’el* four times in the Manual³⁵. It has been translated “mix” or “intermingle”, and was taken by some scholars to refer directly to the pooling of property in the community. The mere use of the word does not justify such a claim, and Rabin is correct to question such an inference³⁶. He goes further, however, and argues that the word should not be translated “mix” or “intermingle”, but means “have dealings with”. This is a point of some importance, because Rabin’s translation would imply the existence of trade amongst members of the community, and therefore the possession of private property. If, on the other hand, “mix” or “intermingle” is the correct translation, then the passages in question do not imply community of goods by mere use of the verb, but do imply it by their general sense. We must, therefore, look at the meaning of this word generally, and also its use in the Manual.

In the Mishnah the word does mean “mix”³⁷. In the Old Testament the *hithpa’el* of this verb is used a number of times. In one passage³⁸ the word cannot mean “mix”, and does seem to mean “make a bargain with”. But it is certainly not true that the word never means “mix” in the Old Testament. In the Proverbs the word can either mean “associate with” or “mix”³⁹. On the other hand in two other passages⁴⁰ the verb must surely mean “be mingled with”. It was not because the holy people were “doing business with” the heathen, or in contact with them, that Ezra was angry, but because they had “mingled themselves” with them by intermarriage. Finally, in the Aramaic portion of Daniel, there is a clear example where the *hithpa’el* of this verb cannot mean anything other than “mix”⁴¹. This passage says that iron and clay do not mix. One could hardly say they do not associate, let alone translate the verse “iron and clay have no business dealings with

³³ “If one of the men of the community mixes with him in his purity or in his property . . .” (1QS 7.24). “None of the men of holiness must mix with his property or with his counsel concerning any matter” (8.23).

³⁴ “rb “to mix”, *hithp. imperf. yt’rb* “to have fellowship with”, “to be mingled with”, “share in”; cf. Brown, Driver & Brigge, p. 786; L. Köhler, Lexicon (1953), p. 732.

³⁵ 1QS 6.17, 7.24, 8.23, 9.8 (cf. 6.22).

³⁶ Rabin (n. 2), pp. 27ff.; cf. Black (n. 2), pp. 33ff., Driver (n. 2), pp. 113ff. But see note 63 below.

³⁷ As Rabin (n. 2) admits, p. 27.

³⁸ 2 Kings 18.23 = Isai. 36.8. This meaning is derived from a Mediaeval commentator and accepted in the New Engl. Bible. “Make a wager with” is the translation of the Rev. Stand. Vers.

³⁹ Prov. 14.10, 20.19, 24.21.

⁴⁰ Ps. 106.35, Ezra 9.2.

⁴¹ Dan. 2.43.

each other". There are, therefore, in the Old Testament, passages demanding the meaning "mix", just as there are passages with the other meaning; both are given in the lexica.

One of the ways the establish the meaning of this word in the Manual, is to look at related passages in the Scrolls. Rabin supports his view that the passages are prohibitions of "dealing with" non-members with a reference to Z.D. 20.7. This reads:

"Let no man *agree with*⁴² him in property and work."

There is, however, a closer parallel in the Manual itself, which points in the other direction, 1QS 5.14:

"No one must be *united to him* in his possessions and his property⁴³."

This fits well with the phrase "a community in Torah and property" where the cognate noun is used⁴⁴.

This evidence suggests that the translation "mix with" is not only possible, but likely, in the two disputed passages 1QS 7.24–25 and 8.23⁴⁵, and in fact it makes good sense. The passages should be translated in the following way:

"If one of the men of the community mixes with him in his purity or his property . . . his punishment shall be the same⁴⁶."

"None of the men of holiness must mix with his property . . ."

These rules forbid a member who has no property of his own to accept anything from the property of a deserter, or from anyone who has been expelled, whereas we are told 1QS 9.8:

"The property of the men of holiness who walk in integrity, their property must not be mixed with the property of the men of deceit⁴⁷."

Here the previous line makes it clear that it is the behaviour of the sons of Aaron, who control the property of the community, which is being regulated. Community property is not to be mixed with the property of outsiders. It is presumably the unrepentant who are called men of deceit and neither allowed to enter the community, nor to mix their property with that of the community⁴⁸.

There is a further objection to Rabin's view that it is *dealings* with outsiders which were forbidden. According to 1QS 5.16f. the community could buy goods for cash⁴⁹. What they were not allowed to do was to include the unrepentant man with his goods in the community⁵⁰. Dealings were allowed to the community, mixing with the goods of the wicked was not.

Rabin's last objection to the translation "mix" in these passages is the following⁵¹: "If the goods of the whole community were held in common, how could a single individual establish a 'community of goods' with an outsider? Moreover, how can the property

⁴² The word here is *y'wt*.

⁴³ The verb is *ywhd* or *yyhd*. Whatever the vocalization, this must come from the verb *yhd*, and its meaning is clearly "be united".

⁴⁴ 1QS 5.2, *yhd*.

⁴⁵ See above, p. 00.

⁴⁶ Braun (n. 1), *Radikalismus*, 1, p. 36 n. 14; Leaney (n. 1), p. 208.

⁴⁷ Compare note 35.

⁴⁸ It is less likely that it refers to novices; cf. Wernberg-Møller (n. 24), p. 135. Novices are less likely to be called "men of deceit", though "men of negligence" is a possible alternative translation.

⁴⁹ Presumably if authorized by the sons of Aaron, who alone control the property of the community (1QS 9.7), 1QS 5.16f. raises difficulties of its own which we shall discuss.

⁵⁰ 1QS 3.2, 9.8.

⁵¹ Rabin (n. 2), p. 29; cf. Driver (n. 2), p. 115; Black (n. 2), p. 35.

itself – in the last quotation (9.8) – establish a community of goods with other property?"

In reply to this, it is important to note precisely this difference of wording between those passages which forbid a *member* to *mix with the property* of an outsider⁵², and that which forbids the community *property* to be *mixed with* the property of men of deceit⁵³. The individual member had no private means, but could be tempted to share what an outsider offered him. The community was not to admit the unrepentant, nor his property, nor mix his property with that of the community⁵⁴.

2.

The procedure of admitting *new members* remains to be discussed. Rabin is on firm ground in pointing to differences of detail between the Manual and the accounts of the Essenes⁵⁵, though it might be possible to explain these⁵⁶. He is, however, forced by his denial of the existence of community of goods at Qumran, to adopt an unnatural rendering of the rule of admission⁵⁷. This orders the Overseer to accept the property of the new candidate, and to enter it into the account, but not "bring it forth to the Many". Rabin has to take this to mean "he shall not divulge the amount". The most natural rendering is "he shall not spend it on the Many"⁵⁸. This prohibition is in force, throughout the second year of probation, until the new member is enlisted "for mingling of his property"⁵⁹.

The procedure for admission would therefore seem to involve the following arrangements about property. Until the end of the first year the candidate gives nothing to the community⁶⁰, and receives nothing from them⁶¹. During the second year his property has been handed in, but is not yet to be spent on the community. The candidate can now receive from the community. He can "mix with their property" and "touch the Purity", but not yet "touch the drink of the Many"⁶². This presumably allows him to share the common meals, but not liquids, which were much more strictly controlled. In

⁵² 1QS 7.24, 8.23.

⁵³ 1QS 9.8.

⁵⁴ Within the community property was "intermingled" or shared. But "intermingling" or "mixing" with the property of outsiders was forbidden. Leaney (n. 1), cited John 4.9 for comparison, p. 196. That passage reflects a Rabbinic rule of A.D. 65 or 66 which forbade Jews to "use vessels together with Samaritans", cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (1956), p. 194 (following D. Daube). The Qumran community was even more scrupulous, and at an earlier date, in forbidding the sharing of food and property with fellow Jews.

⁵⁵ Rabin (n. 2), pp. 30f.

⁵⁶ The Manual could have been written a century before Josephus was born. The practice might have changed over the years.

⁵⁷ 1QS 6.20.

⁵⁸ So Wernberg-Møller (n. 24), Leaney (n. 1), Vermes (n. 1). The word *hwsy'* can mean "utter", but only when followed by *dbr*.

⁵⁹ 1QS 6.22.

⁶⁰ 1QS 6.19.

⁶¹ 1QS 6.16f.: He is "not to touch the Purity of the Many, nor must he be mixed with the property of the Many".

⁶² 1QS 6.20; cf. Leaney (n. 1), pp. 194f.

the third year his property is mingled⁶³, and he received both food and drink from the community. Presumably the common meals were eaten in the large dining hall discovered at Qumran, and the surrender of private resources went hand in hand with admission to the common life. The absence of wives and families, at this stage in the life of the community, no doubt facilitated this.

Two facts still require explanation. The first is the statement about *cash sales*. The second is the large number of coins found by the archaeologists at Qumran. The first difficulty is that the rule against accepting food or goods from outsiders is qualified by the phrase “except for cash”⁶⁴. Members were not allowed to accept gifts, or to barter, but they could buy goods for cash⁶⁵. This is clearly in conflict with the evidence we have examined so far. Three explanations are possible. The first is that there was some relaxation of the practice of community of goods, whereby individuals were allowed, with the permission of the sons of Aaron⁶⁶, to buy goods which the community could not produce⁶⁷. The second possibility is that this concession applied to a particular group within the community, such as those who were not yet full members⁶⁸. The third possibility is that this rule represents an earlier⁶⁹, or even more likely, later state of affairs. The rule in question is undoubtedly part of the current text of the Manual, but it seems that the work grew in stages, and this rule may well represent the beginning of a later⁷⁰ relaxation of the strict centralization of all funds.

The *many coins* found in the buildings at Qumran are a further reason for thinking that the entire sect cannot have practised strict community of goods for the whole of its life. The evidence is complex. No coins have been found in the many caves used by the community. In the buildings, however, more than four hundred coins have been found at all levels, except perhaps the earliest, and in all sections of the complex of buildings⁷¹. The great majority of these were bronze coins, though some silver ones were found. In addition to this, in one place, a hoard of 561 silver coins was found⁷². This buried treasure could have been placed in the ruins during the period of abandonment by the sect during the reign of Herod. On the other hand it could equally well have been placed there by the group which returned to the site in the period prior to the Revolt. The other coins were certainly dropped by members of the sect over many years.

⁶³ 1QS 6.22 “to pool his property”, or “to mingle his wealth”, *wl ‘rb ’t hwnw*. In this case a comparison with Jos. Bell, 2.8.3 (122) *Ktēmātōn anamemigménōn* would seem to be justified; cf. Dupont-Summer (n. 1), p. 65.

⁶⁴ 1QS 5.16f., noticed by Driver (n. 2), p. 115.

⁶⁵ Leaney (n. 1), p. 174, cites parallels from Rabbinic rules relating to trade with Gentiles. Cash payment is also required in Z.D. 13.15. There it is immediately followed by a rule to place associations for trade under supervision. That is natural enough in a rule designed for members of the sect who had private property.

⁶⁶ 1QS 9.7.

⁶⁷ Wernberg-Møller (n. 24), p. 97: “The wording of the present prohibition appears to exclude the idea of a consistently communistic society.”

⁶⁸ The Manual contains a number of constituent groups of rules; see n. 20 above.

⁶⁹ So Braun (n. 1), *Radikalismus*, p. 36 n. 6, also Leaney (n. 1), pp. 173f.

⁷⁰ Cf. Hahn (n. 1), pp. 264 n. 8, 268ff. For the view that the work grew in stages see J. Murphy O’Connor, *La genèse littéraire de la Règle de la communauté*: *Rev. bibl.* 76 (1969), pp. 528–549.

⁷¹ See the reports on the excavations in *Revue biblique*, but especially R. de Vaux, *L’archéologie et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte* (1961), *passim*, esp. p. 14 n. 2 which promises a definitive list. See also n. 94 below.

⁷² Below level 2, but above level 1b. The coins were mainly Tyrian silver tetradrachmae, a coin prized for its silver content, and often used to pay the Temple tax.

The large number of small coins, their locations, and the fact that they were found at almost all levels, is proof that coins were in constant use in the buildings at Qumran and at Feshkha. A rough estimate of the detailed figures would suggest that, on average, two or three coins have been found for each year of occupation, and that more were in circulation in the few years immediately preceding the Revolt.

The evidence as a whole therefore presents a problem. The Manual has many passages which suggest that members handed their property over to the community officials. Yet one passage assumes that individuals possessed cash. Coins have been found all over the buildings, not just in one room. Yet no coin has been found in the caves⁷³. Rather more coins were found from the final period of occupation, few if any from the earliest period⁷⁴.

A number of factors may account for the evidence we have accumulated. Firstly applicants to join the community presumably kept both possessions and money for the whole of their initial year in the community⁷⁵. This would account for some of the coins dropped by residents. Secondly visitors no doubt came to the buildings. Some of them perhaps came to sell goods that the community needed, or to buy its products. These visitors would have traded with the officials at least, perhaps also with applicants. Some of the coins could have been lost by them. Further, some of the members may have gone out to work, and returned to pay in their earnings to the community⁷⁶. Some of this money could also, occasionally, have been lost or hidden. Finally it is possible, Milik argues⁷⁷, that as the community grew, those who adhered to the older discipline of poverty withdrew to the caves, and those living in the buildings were allowed to keep coins.

3.

It might be appropriate, at this point, to consider the *economic basis* of the community at Qumran. There was an oasis at Feshkha and a farm there, linked to the buildings at Qumran. The two units probably provided for most of the needs of the community⁷⁸. There were sheep, goats and cows. Date palms grew there. The community had pottery kilns, a cormill, a baker's oven, and stores for fruit and grain. Aqueducts and cisterns supplied water. All this was no doubt built up as the community expanded. Grain probably had to be purchased elsewhere and transported. The need to do this would have been greater as the community grew larger⁷⁹. The means for purchasing supplies could have been raised by the sale of biblical manuscripts⁸⁰. The community

⁷³ De Vaux (n. 71), pp. 97f.; cf. Milik (n. 1), p. 90.

⁷⁴ De Vaux (n. 71), pp. 3f.; cf. Milik (n. 1), p. 51, who cautiously points out that one does not expect to find much from the earliest phase of occupation of any site.

⁷⁵ M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (1956), p. 231, puts the average membership at about two hundred. This would entail a steady flow of new members.

⁷⁶ Hahn (n. 1), p. 267 n. 23, urges caution on this point, as Qumran was rather remote. But the nearby plain was cultivated, cf. Farmer (n. 1), 1956, pp. 56–58.

⁷⁷ Milik (n. 1), pp. 89f., 96. Others think that the caves were used as sleeping quarters, cf. Pryke (n. 1), p. 320.

⁷⁸ De Vaux (n. 71), pp. 68f.; Pryke (n. 1), pp. 319f.; Milik (n. 1), pp. 48f., 52, 56, 151f.

⁷⁹ Milik (n. 1), pp. 52, 88.

⁸⁰ De Vaux (n. 71), p. 81.

could also have made use of two products from the Dead Sea: salt and bitumen⁸¹. At first the community probably had to be self-supporting, and could only buy products with its presumably very slender resources of common capital. Later, though it was still largely independent, its purchases could have been matched by sales. Also members may have gone out to earn money and paid it in on their return⁸².

We can now gather together the conclusions reached so far. The arguments of Rabin and others have shown that the situation at Qumran was more complicated than some assumed, but they have not disproved the existence of a system of community of goods. Sometime in the middle of the second century B.C., a breakaway group of Zadokites deserted the Jerusalem Temple, and eventually settled at Qumran. These men were poor⁸³. Their act of secession was not unconnected with persecution by the wealthy aristocracy associated with the High Priest⁸⁴. The dissidents who formed the Qumran Sect would no doubt have found life hard in a remote and difficult terrain by the Dead Sea. The first phase of occupation was by a small group which had few resources, and left few objects. It was probably at this stage that a system of common life was instituted⁸⁵. Meals were arranged in common, and the accommodation was communal. Their limited resources of money and property were presumably also shared.

After some years a new influx of members arrived and the buildings were enlarged. This development may have been the result of further persecutions under John Hyrcanus or Alexander Jannaeus⁸⁶. Rules were now needed to regulate the admission of new members, and to require them to hand over their property on full admission to the order. The influx of members led to the increase of agricultural activity, and also probably necessitated some purchases, at least of grain, from outside the area. This would account for the evidence of the Manual which contains rules requiring community of goods, and also allowing some cash purchases.

Soon, however, the change in circumstances resulted in a relaxation of the early community of goods. New members, and traders, brought money with them, and this accounts for some of the coins found in the buildings. In order to pay for food supplies some members might have gone out to work, and paid in earnings on their return. The Zadokite Documents legislate for members of the sect who were married and owned private property. This relaxation must have been adopted at Qumran⁸⁷, to judge from the

⁸¹ De Vaux (n. 71), pp. 68f.; Farmer (n. 1), 1955, pp. 298ff.

⁸² Hahn (n. 1), p. 270; see note 76 above.

⁸³ Z.D. 19.9 (7.20c); Hod. 2.32, 34, 3.25, 5.13ff.; 1QpHab 12.2ff.

⁸⁴ 1QpHab 12.2ff. The Qumran sect might also have had some connection with the persecuted and poor group which produced 1 Enoch 94–104. Copies of 1 Enoch were used at Qumran.

⁸⁵ One could compare the modern practice of setting up kibbutzim in difficult pioneer situations. On the small scale of the occupation of Qumran in period Ia see de Vaux (n. 71), pp. 3f.; cf. Milik (n. 1), p. 51.

⁸⁶ Late in the second century B.C. or early in the first, cf. de Vaux (n. 71), *ibid.*

⁸⁷ The Zadokite Documents may, of course, relate to a branch of the sect not at Qumran; but copies were found at Qumran, as were also copies of a rule of Herodian times combining rules in 1QS and Z.D. On this see Milik (n. 1), p. 96.

coins found, and the presence of women and children⁸⁸. By the time of the reoccupation in the first century A.D. a more relaxed regime obtained. Even so, the absence of coins in the caves suggests that some kept to the old ways, or that a degree of centralization was still in force.

Several motives have been suggested for the practice of community of goods at Qumran. Each can appeal to some feature of the text so far discovered. Certainly the sect was anxious to maintain its purity, and to keep itself separate from the wickedness of the unrepentant⁸⁹. It is also true that its priestly and hierarchical character⁹⁰ may have contributed something to its establishment of a common fund. One can further agree that the sect looked for the coming of the new age⁹¹. It was conscious of its status as "the poor"⁹², and emphatic about the dangers of wealth⁹³. While accepting all these considerations, it would seem appropriate to add that the early members of the sect were poor, and acutely aware that their poverty was not unrelated to persecution at the hands of those greedy for unjust riches. Further they lived in a situation where the sharing of resources was important for their survival. Their renunciation of private property was necessary on practical, as well as ideological grounds. The community at Qumran displays the classic features of other communes, a severe external threat, a strong sense of common identity, and commitment to a common set of beliefs⁹⁴.

David L. Mealand, Edinburgh

⁸⁸ The view that the older rules were relaxed at Qumran was proposed by Milik (n. 1), pp. 89ff., and Hahn (n. 1), pp. 268ff. On the question of celibacy see H. Hübner, *Zölibat in Qumran?* : New Test. Stud. 17 (1970–71), pp. 153–167. Also (though not available to me) A. Guillaumont, *A propos du célibat des Esséniens: Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer* ed. A. Caquot & M. Philonenko (1971), pp. 395–404.

⁸⁹ Segert (n. 1), pp. 71–3; Buchanan (n. 1), pp. 397f.

⁹⁰ Gärtner (n. 1), p. 10; Degenhardt (n. 1), p. 195. Priestly income at the Temple was shared. See 2 Chron. 31.5ff. and Jos. Ant. 20.8.8 (181); cf. L. Rost, *Gruppenbildung im A.T.: Theol. Lit. zeit.* 80 (1955), pp. 6f.; Steiner (n. 1), pp. 17–19.

⁹¹ Cross (n. 1), pp. 61f.

⁹² Kandler (n. 1), pp. 193ff.

⁹³ Braun (n. 1), *Radikalismus*, p. 37; Bammel (n. 1), p. 898.

⁹⁴ There is now an expanded English translation of one work cited above (n. 71): R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1973). References above to pp. 68f., 81, and 97f. of the French edition relate to pp. 84ff., 104, and 129f. (respectively) of the English translation, where some additional matter may be found.