Term after term, as I attempt to lead students to an integrated understanding of diverse Biblical thought, no problem vexes me more than the proper place in this thought for the concept of the Servant of the Lord. The identity and function of this mysterious figure, as intended by the still more mysterious author of the Servant Songs, remain elusive, despite the fact that, as my mentor, Dr W. F. STINESPRING of Duke University says, "much ink has been spilt" on the subject. Was the Servant an historical figure or a speculative one? Past, present or future, from the point in time of the author? Was he an individual or corporate figure? Israel, or remnant of Israel, or refined Israel, or ideal Israel? Messiah? To what extent did the concept aid in the formation of Jesus' understanding of his own mission? To what extent (if at all) did it underlay the evangelists' interpretations of the fact of Jesus? And, perhaps most intriguing, to what extent does it underlay a valid Christian concept of the Church?

Now, one of the prime values of the Qumran Scrolls to modern scholarship is the fact that they provide us with an ancient interpretation of the Old Testament. How the Qumran writers understood the Servant Songs may not determine for us what the author of the Songs intended, but it does provide us with a perspective view as to how the Songs were understood by some believers in antiquity much closer to the writing of the Songs, both in time and spirit, than we. This is the more important to Christians because of the fact that the Essene Community, like primitive Christianity, was an apocalyptically oriented sectarian daughter of Judaism, departing from the mother-religion about two or three centuries before Christianity's maiden flight. There is a community of

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religious thought between the Essene and Christian writers in which the Essene thinking is chronologically prior. The bond of community between the two is apocalypticism. Hence the Essene writings are of great importance to the interpretation of primitive Christian thought.

As we seek to answer the questions in the first paragraph, then, the Essene interpretation of the Servant of the Lord is relevant and potentially enlightening, though not determinative. The study of the scrolls has not yet reached the stage when an exhaustive examination of so broad a topic can be undertaken. Our purpose is to indicate a valid approach and to use this approach on a limited amount of material. The thesis of this paper, then, is that the eighth column of the Manual of Discipline from Qumran (1QS) bears evidence that the Essenes considered their own organization ("church") to be the eschatological and corporate Servant of the Lord, with certain soteriological functions, but that before this eschatology could be realized, certain other soteriological functions had to be performed by a divinely designated body of men within the larger organization. The thesis is not conclusive, because at several critical points there is no supporting evidence from the rest of the Qumran material. I think, however, that it is not contradicted elsewhere, and is worthy of consideration in the larger effort to reconstruct Essene thought concerning the Servant of the Lord.

By way of making an approach to this "larger effort", some things must be said. Unfortunately, we do not (yet) possess one of the sect's characteristic "commentaries" on the texts of the Songs. The publishing of such a commentary in the future may destroy the entire thesis here-in presented, but such are the vagaries of scholarship.

Lacking such a commentary, there are nevertheless several avenues to the problem open to us. One is the variants in the texts of the Servant Songs as preserved by the Essenes. I have maintained elsewhere that the condition of the text of 1QIs* has been influenced significantly by theological beliefs of the sect 1). Thus, a comparison of the texts of the Songs as preserved in the Qumran literature to the Massoretic texts (regardless of which reading, in any particular case, may be superior) may be fruitful in determining the sect's interpretation of the Servant. Thus the scroll reading of 2