

THE *MAGNIFICAT*: READ FROM ITS SOURCES?

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ABSTRACT

The Marian prayer in the Lukan Infancy Narrative, the *Magnificat*, remains always a source of exegetical investigation, theological reflection, as well as spiritual meditation. Its strong Old Testament background has long been recognized by scholars. For nearly every sentence of the prayer, parallels from various parts of OT can be identified. However, it is exactly this diversity of possible references that prevents a consensus among scholars as to the major source that may serve as the hermeneutical key to the *Magnificat*. In an attempt to deal with the issue, this paper reviews and re-evaluates the textual relationships between the OT passages that have been suggested as parallels and the Marian prayer. These are the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10), sentences from the Psalms, the prophetic corpus, the Pentateuch, the Sapiential Literature, and 1 Chronicles 16. The study suggests that all the texts reviewed may well have contributed to the formation of the *Magnificat*. Especially the notion of *ταπεινωσις* and the theme of the “change of fortune,” central to the Marian prayer, are present in these passages. This study shows that the different traditions that form OT contribute to the formulation of the *Magnificat* in their own way, and thus are indispensable for its interpretation.

KEYWORDS: *Magnificat*, *ταπεινωσις*, change of fortune, OT in NT.

INTRODUCTION

The *Magnificat* is one of the most treasured prayers in the Christian Tradition. In Catholic liturgy, it is said daily at vespers. The canticle is favored by Christians not only because it is, as traditionally held,¹ said by the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God,

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¹ It has long been known that a few manuscripts, i.e. *a b l*, reads *Elizabeth* instead of *Mary*; and at least the Latin translation of Irenaeus follows this reading. The Latin translation of Origen mentions that there are some manuscripts just read *she*. Cf. Frédéric Godet, *Commentaire sur l'évangile de saint Luc*, tome premier (Neuchâtel: Sandoz, 1871), 65 n. 1. With Germain Morin's 1897 article (“Deux passages inédits du ‘De psalmodiae bono’ de saint Niceta (IV^e-V^e siècle),” *Revue biblique* 6 (1897): 282-288, esp. 286-287) which publicized an interesting sentence in the treatise *De Psalmodiae bono* of a fourth to fifth century bishop St Niceta, i.e. *Cum Helisabeth Dominum anima nostra magnificat* “with Elizabeth our soul magnifies the Lord,” the debate between Marian and Elizabethan authorship of the canticle became heated. Henceforth, scholars have proposed both internal and external arguments for both positions. The dispute about the attribution of the canticle is at the same time mingled with the question of its textual composition, i.e. whether it is Mary, Luke, or certain pre-Lukan traditions (whether Judeo-Christian

when she visited Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-56), but also because of its richness in religious piety towards the God of Israel.

Concerning the authorship of the *Magnificat*, consensus has not been reached among scholars. There are mainly three positions: (1) It is originated from the one who sings it in the narrative; (2) It is composed by the author of the Gospel of Luke; (3) It is either a pre-Christian Jewish or Jewish-Christian composition, and it was later adapted and incorporated into the Lucan Infancy Narrative. Today, most scholars subscribe to the last position. As Raymond E. Brown, one of those scholars, remarks:

The most satisfactory solution is that the canticles were composed in a non-Lucan circle and that originally they praised the salvific action of God without any precise reference to the events that Luke was narrating in the infancy narrative. Nevertheless, when Luke considered these canticles, he saw how they might be brought into the infancy narrative with relatively little adaptation.²

In other words, it is more probable that Luke knew the canticle without association with its present context, thus the canticle is adapted and attached to it only loosely.³ Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that the *Magnificat* employs a lot of passages from different parts of the Old Testament (OT).⁴

Hence, it is legitimate to ask whether interpreting the *Magnificat* against its Old Testament backgrounds, recognized by scholars as possibly intended by the composer of the canticle, is a fruitful interpretive exercise. And if so, what the outcome would be. In order to answer these questions, we shall read the *Magnificat* alongside these OT passages, which are grouped under six headings, organized according to their canonical settings: the Song of Hannah, the Psalter, the Prophetic Corpus, the Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Corpus, Wisdom Literature, and First Chronicles. The Song of Hannah shall be handled in separation of the Pentateuch,

or simply Jewish) composed the canticle. This whole discussion is beyond the scope of the current paper. For a summary, see: Stephen Benko, "The Magnificat: A History of Controversy," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 263-275; Stephen Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), 108-113; more recently: Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, New Updated Edition, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 334-336.

² Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 349; see also: Bruce Grigsby, "Compositional Hypotheses for the Lucan 'Magnificat'—Tensions for the Evangelical," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 56 (1984): 159-172.

³ E.g., John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 35A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 63, 74.

⁴ The Old Testament background of this canticle has been thoroughly discussed in, e.g., James T. Forestell, "Old Testament Background of the Magnificat," *Marian Studies* 12 (1961): 205-244; Douglas Jones, "Background and Character of Lukan Psalms," *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S. 19 (1968): 19-50, esp. 20-28.

because scholars have identified a strong textual relation between it and the *Magnificat*. Textual comparisons⁵ offered below are in Greek, since until today there is no concrete evidence that the canticle has ever existed in Semitic forms;⁶ while the English translations are mine.

Now, we shall turn to the first group of texts with which the *Magnificat* is believed to be paralleled, the Song of Hannah.

I

The Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10; cf. 1:11) is commonly recognized as one of the Old Testament passages that set the background for the *Magnificat*.⁷ On the one hand, both Hannah and Mary praise God for the gift of a son, born out of divine promise and marvel, who was to become a great figure for Israel.⁸ On the other hand, the leitmotif of the *Magnificat*, namely that God reverses the fortune of the arrogant and the mighty and the misfortune of the poor and the lowly, is closely

⁵ The parallels can be found in all major commentaries on Luke and monographs and articles on the canticle, here I provide a non-exhaustive list of the bibliography: Forestell, "Old Testament Background of the Magnificat," 207-225; Jones, "Background and Character of Lukan Psalms," 20-28; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 82-85; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 356-357, 366-369; Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives*, 117-126; Helmer Ringgren, "Luke's Use of the Old Testament," in *Christians among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and George W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 230-232; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 68-74; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1, 1:1-9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 148-160; Herman Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the Third World*, vol. 1, Preface and Infancy Narrative (Luke 1:1-2:52) (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 122-134; François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 60-63; Kenneth D. Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God's People Intertextually*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 282 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 104-109; G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 261-262; Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 336-338, 358-360.

⁶ However, there have always been attempts to identify Semitic features in the *Magnificat*. See e.g.: Randall Buth, "Hebrew Poetic Tenses and the Magnificat," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 21 (1984): 67-83; and more recently: Hugo Méndez, "Semitic Poetic Techniques in the Magnificat: Luke 1:46-47, 55," *Journal of Biblical Studies* 135 (2016): 557-574.

⁷ Most notably: Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 357-365. See also: Joan E. Cook, "The Magnificat: Program for a New Era in the Spirit of the Song of Hannah," *Proceedings* 15 (1995): 35-43; Joan E. Cook, "Hannah's Later Songs: A Study in Comparative Methods of Interpretation," in *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 154, Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 256-257; Joan E. Cook, *Hannah's Desire, God's Design: Early Interpretations of the Story of Hannah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 282 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 102-107.

⁸ Christoph Stenschke, "Psalms and the Psalms in Luke's Infancy Narrative," *Baptist Theologies* 1 (2009): 59-92, esp. 64.

similar to that of the Song of Hannah.⁹ For some, the Song of Mary finds its inspiration from that of Hannah, as James W. Watts notes:

The position and contents of the *Magnificat* in particular shows clearly the influence of Hannah's Song ...: it is voiced by a mother in celebration of the gift of a child, its first person praise (Luke 1:46-48) echoes Hannah's sentiments (1 Sam1:16; 2:1), and the reversal motif dominates its contents (Luke 1:51-54).¹⁰

Since the nineteenth century, scholars, e.g. David F. Strauss and Johannes Hillmann, have observed textual similarities between the *Magnificat* and the Song of Hannah.¹¹ Below is the list of textual parallels upon which most scholars agree:

Lk 1:46	Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ· Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,	And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,
1 Sam 2:1a-b	καὶ εἶπεν ἔστερεώθη ἡ καρδία μου ἐν κυρίῳ	And she said, "My heart was made firm in the Lord"
Lk 1:47	καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτηρὶ μου,	and my spirit rejoiced on the basis of God my savior,
1 Sam 2:1d	εὐφράνθην ἐν σωτηρίᾳ σου	I rejoiced in your salvation.
1 Sam 2:1c	ὑψώθη κέρασ μου ἐν θεῷ μου	My horn is lifted up in my God
Lk 1:48a	ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ.	because he looked upon the low status of his female slave.
1 Sam 2:5c-d	ὅτι στεῖρα ἔτεκεν ἑπτὰ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ ἐν τέκνοις ἠσθένησεν	because a barren woman gave birth to seven, and the one with many children became weak.
1 Sam 1:11	κύριε [...] ἐὰν ἐπιβλέπων ἐπιβλέψῃς ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης σου	LORD! [...] If looking you shall look upon the humiliation of your female-slave,
Lk 1:49b	καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,	And holy [is] his name,

⁹ E.g., Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 337.

¹⁰ James W. Watts, *Psalms and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, Journal for the study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 139 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 180.

¹¹ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Explained*, trans. George Eliot (London: SCM, 1973 [German original: 1846]), 150; Johannes Hillman, "Die Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu nach Lucas: kritisch untersucht," *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie* 17 (1891): 192-261, esp. 201.

1 Sam 2:2a,c	ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἅγιος ὡς κύριος [...] οὐκ ἔστιν ἅγιος πλὴν σοῦ	because there is none holy like the Lord [...] there is none holy except you
Lk 1:51a	Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,	He did might with his arm,
Lk 1:51b	διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν·	he scattered the proud with the thought of their heart
1 Sam 2:3a	μὴ καυχᾶσθε καὶ μὴ λαλεῖτε ὑψηλά μὴ ἐξεληθάτω μεγαλορρημοσύνη ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν	Do not boast and do not say lofty things, do not let big-talking come out from your mouth!
1 Sam 2:3b	ὅτι θεὸς γνώσεων κύριος καὶ θεὸς ἐτοιμάζων ἐπιτηδεύματα αὐτοῦ	Because God is the Lord of knowledge and God always prepare for his own pursuit.
Lk 1:52a	καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων	he took down rulers from thrones
Lk 1:52b	καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινοὺς,	and/but he lifted up the lowly
1 Sam 2:8	ἀνιστᾶ ἀπὸ γῆς πένητα καὶ ἀπὸ κοπρίας ἐγείρει πτωχὸν καθίσει μετὰ δυναστῶν λαῶν καὶ θρόνον δόξης κατακληρονομῶν αὐτοῖς	He raises up from the earth the needy one and from the dunghill he lifts up the poor one to make them sit with the rulers of the peoples and making them possess/inherit the throne of glory
Lk 1:53a	πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν	those who are hungry he satisfied/filled with good things
Lk 1:53b	καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.	but those who are rich he sent away empty.
1 Sam 2:4	τόξον δυνατῶν ἠσθένησεν καὶ ἀσθενοῦντες περιεζώσαντο δύναμιν	The bow of the powerful ones became weak, and the weak ones have girded power

1 Sam 2:5a	πλήρεις ἄρτων ἠλαττώθησαν καὶ οἱ πεινῶντες παρήκαν γῆν	The ones full of bread has been made decreased, and the hungry have forsaken the earth
1 Sam 2:7	κύριος πτωχίζει καὶ πλουτίζει ταπεινοῖ καὶ ἄνυψοῖ	The Lord makes poor and makes rich, humbles and exalts

The identification of Hannah as the prototype of Mary in the *Magnificat* influences the interpretation of two key words in the *Magnificat*. According to 1 Samuel 1, Hannah had been childless, while the other wife of her husband, Peninnah, had many. Although Hannah’s husband loved her, Peninnah used to bully her for her childlessness. Thus one day Hannah prayed to the Lord for a male child, vowing that she would then offer him as a Nazirite to the Lord. Hence, read from this background, the ταπείνωσις in the *Magnificat* is the state of childlessness and the divine salvation from this situation is a child.¹²

One can immediately raise the question about this understanding of the meaning the ταπείνωσις in the *Magnificat*, since barrenness is by no means a problem for Mary. It is actually one of the reasons why some scholars propose that the *Magnificat* should be attributed to Elizabeth rather than Mary, since Elizabeth had been suffering from childlessness. In any case, the similarity between Hannah and Mary in this case is that, this gift of a child is the divine salvation about which Hannah praises, and the cause for which Mary calls God “my savior.” In addition, this background offers an explanation for the ὑπερήφανοι in Lk 1:51, i.e. those women who are proud of their fecundity and oppress the childless.

It should be added that, for some, ταπείνωσις refers to lowliness of Mary’s identity as the bride of a carpenter.¹³ It follows that the divine salvation is conferring the honor of being the mother of God on her, despite her continuous identity as the wife of a carpenter. In addition, some thinks that ταπείνωσις concerns Mary’s low status in spirit as a handmaid of the LORD. However, these two proposals are beyond the OT background of the canticle, and thus remain outside of the focus of this article.

In addition, there is a transition of praising God’s action from a personal to a communal perspective. In the *Magnificat*, the communal sentiment emerges since Lk 1:52, and in the Song of Hannah it is apparent in 1 Sam 2:4-8. This may hint at the socio-political influence of the sons of both women made in their lives, guided by the will of God, as subsequent narratives unfold. It should be pointed out that, common

¹² E.g., J. Gresham Machen, “The Hymns of the First Chapter of Luke,” *Princeton Theological Review* 10 (1912): 1-38, esp. 28.

¹³ Plummer, *Luke*, 32.

to both songs, the social salvation carried out by God is the reversal of fortune of the haves and the have-nots, the powerful and the powerless.

However, a direct comparison between the songs is not invulnerable. It has been pointed out that, just as barrenness is explicitly mentioned in Hannah’s song (v. 5b: ὅτι στεῖρα ἔτεκεν ἑπτὰ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ ἐν τέκνοις ἡσθένησεν “because a barren woman gave birth to seven, and the one with many children became weak”), it would not be omitted by the *Magnificat* if it were the motif.¹⁴ This leads scholars of the early 20th century to conclude that the canticle does not belong to its current context and is only an interpolation. They propose that the canticle was sung by a Jewish woman celebrating a victory of the nation, for which her children had possibly fought.¹⁵ Thus the ταπείνωσις in the song has become national humiliation by foreign nations¹⁶ and the divine salvation the turn of fortune for the nation.

That being said, the *Magnificat* remains one of the most plausible proposals as the OT background of the canticle. As noted by Michael D. Goulder that the similarity of both the words and structures between the two indicates clearly that the Song of Hannah is “Luke’s primary model for the *Magnificat*.” Not only that both songs begin with a couplet in a parallel fashion:

Lk 1:46	Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,	My soul magnifies the Lord,
1 Sam 2:1b	ἔστερεώθη ἡ καρδία μου ἐν κυρίῳ	My heart was made firm in the Lord”
Lk 1:47	καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου,	and my spirit rejoiced on the basis of God my savior
1 Sam 2:1c	ὑψώθη κέρας μου ἐν θεῷ μου	My horn is lifted up in my God

But also that “both move on to praise God’s holiness; and both turn half way through to the theme of God’s reversal of proud and humble, rich and poor.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Machen, “The Hymns of the First Chapter of Luke,” 28-29; cf. Friedrich Spitta, “Das Magnifikat, ein Psalm der Maria und nicht der Elisabeth,” in *Theologische Abhandlungen: eine Festgabe zum 17. Mai 1902 für Heinrich Julius Holtzmann*, ed. W. Nowack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1902), 61-94, esp. 79-84.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-27; cf. Spitta, “Das Magnifikat,” 89; Hillmann, “Die Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu nach Lucas,” 192-261, esp. 200.

¹⁶ In addition to the pre-Christian Jewish origin of the *Magnificat*, it has been proposed by scholars supporting Marian authorship that Mary herself intends the political deliverance in the canticle, spiritual salvation not excluded. See: Plummer, *Luke*, 32.

¹⁷ Michael D. Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm*, vol. I, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 226.

II

In addition to the Song of Hannah, commentators have observed that the composer of the *Magnificat* made use of the canonical psalter abundantly, both structurally and textually.

In terms of structure, the *Magnificat* is similar to many of the psalms, which are categorized as hymns of praise. In those psalms, “there is either a declaration of praise or a call to praise God (or both) and a reason that is set forth to indicate why praise is appropriate and indeed compelling and unavoidable.”¹⁸ The two parts correspond Lk 1:46b-47 and the rest of the canticle.¹⁹

The table below illustrates textual similarities between the *Magnificat* and a number of psalms:

Lk 1:46b	Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,	My soul magnifies the LORD,
Ps 33:4a	μεγαλύνετε τὸν κύριον σὺν ἐμοί	Magnify the LORD with me!
Ps 34:27	μεγαλυνθήτω ὁ κύριος	Let the LORD be magnified.
Ps 68:31	αἰνέσω τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μετ’ ᾠδῆς μεγαλυνῶ αὐτὸν ἐν αἰνέσει	I shall praise the name of God with an ode, I shall magnify him in praise.
Ps 102:1-2	εὐλόγει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐντός μου τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ 2 εὐλόγει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον καὶ μὴ ἐπιλανθάνου πάσας τὰς ἀνταποδόσεις αὐτοῦ	Bless the Lord! O my soul! And all that is inside me! Bless his holy name! 2 Bless the Lord! O my soul! And do not forget all his repayments!
Ps 144:21	αἴνεσιν κυρίου λαλήσει τὸ στόμα μου καὶ εὐλογεῖτω πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος	Praise of the LORD my mouth shall speak, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and forever and ever.

¹⁸ Patrick D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 69.

¹⁹ See further: Farris, *The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives*, 67-85.

Lk 1:47	καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου,	and my spirit rejoiced on the basis of God my savior,
Ps 19:6	ἀγαλλιασόμεθα ἐν τῷ σωτηρίῳ σου καὶ ἐν ὀνόματι θεοῦ ἡμῶν μεγαλυνησόμεθα	We shall rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of God we shall be declared/ made great.
Ps 34:9a	ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ μου ἀγαλλιάσεται ἐπὶ τῷ κυρίῳ	and my soul shall rejoice on the basis of the Lord
Ps 94:1	αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυὶδ δευτέρῳ ἀγαλλιασόμεθα τῷ κυρίῳ ἀλαλάζωμεν τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ ἡμῶν	A praise of an ode. David's. Let us rejoice in the LORD! Let us shout to God, to our savior!
Lk 1:48a	ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπεινῶσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ.	because he looked upon the lowliness of his female slave.
Ps 9:14	ἐλέησόν με κύριε ἰδὲ τὴν ταπεινῶσίν μου ἐκ τῶν ἐχθρῶν μου ὁ ὑψῶν με ἐκ τῶν πυλῶν τοῦ θανάτου	Have mercy on me! O LORD! See my humiliation from my enemies! You are the one who lifts me up from the gates of death!
Ps 24:18	ἰδὲ τὴν ταπεινῶσίν μου καὶ τὸν κόπον μου καὶ ἄφες πάσας τὰς ἀμαρτίας μου	See my humiliation and my trouble, and forgive all my sins!
Ps 101:18	ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν προσευχὴν τῶν ταπεινῶν καὶ οὐκ ἐξουδένωσεν τὴν δέησιν αὐτῶν	He has looked upon the prayer of the humiliated ones, and he has not despised their petition.
Ps 135:23	ὅτι ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει ἡμῶν ἐμνήσθη ἡμῶν ὁ κύριος ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ	Because in our humiliation the LORD remembered us, because

		forever is his mercy.
Lk 1:48b	ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί,	Behold! For from now on all generations will call me blessed
Ps 71:17	ἔστω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ εὐλογημένον εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας πρὸ τοῦ ἡλίου διαμενεῖ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ εὐλογηθήσονται ἐν αὐτῷ πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη μακαριοῦσιν αὐτόν	Let his name be blessed unto the ages! Before the sun his name shall remain. And in him all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed. All the nations shall call him blessed.
Lk 1:49a	ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνάτός.	because the powerful one did great things for me.
Ps 70:19a	ὁ θεὸς ἕως ὑψίστων ἃ ἐποίησας μεγάλα	O God, as far as the highest are the great things that you has done!
Ps 125:3	ἐμεγάλυνεν κύριος τοῦ ποιῆσαι μεθ' ἡμῶν ἐγενήθημεν εὐφραϊνόμενοι	The LORD has made great the doing with us. We have become rejoiced.
Lk 1:49b	καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,	And holy is his name,
Ps 110:9c	ἅγιον καὶ φοβερὸν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ	Holy and fearful is his name.
Lk 1:50	καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεὰς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.	and his mercy is from generation to generation for those who fear him.
Ps 102:11	ὅτι κατὰ τὸ ὕψος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐκραταίωσεν κύριος τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν	Because as the height of the sky is above the earth, the LORD has strengthened his mercy upon those who fear him.

Ps 102:13	καθὼς οἰκτῖρει πατὴρ υἱοὺς οἰκτῖρησεν κύριος τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν	Just as a father has compassion for sons, the LORD has had compassion for those who fear him.
Ps 102:17a	τὸ δὲ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν	But the mercy of the LORD is from ages until ages upon those who fear him.
Ps 117:4	εἰπάτωσαν δὴ πάντες οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον ὅτι ἀγαθός ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ	Do let all those who fear the LORD say that he is good, because his mercy is unto eternity.
Lk 1:51a	Ἔποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,	He did might with his arm,
Ps 117:15b-16a	δεξιὰ κυρίου ἐποίησεν δύναμιν δεξιὰ κυρίου ὕψωσέν με	The right hand of the Lord has done might, the right hand of the Lord has lifted me up.
Ps 88:11	σὺ ἐταπείνωσας ὡς τραυματίαν ὑπερήφανον καὶ ἐν τῷ βραχίονι τῆς δυνάμεώς σου διεσκόρπισας τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου	You has humbled like wounded the arrogant, and with your powerful arm you have scattered your enemies.
Ps 97:1	ᾄσατε τῷ κυρίῳ ᾄσμα καινόν ὅτι θαυμαστά ἐποίησεν κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτῷ ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ βραχίον ὁ ἅγιος αὐτοῦ	Sing to the LORD a new song! Because wonderful things the LORD has done, his right hand has saved for him, and his holy arm.
Lk 1:51b	διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν·	he scattered the proud with the thought of their heart

Ps 32:10	κύριος διασκεδάζει βουλὰς ἔθνων ἄθετεῖ δὲ λογισμοὺς λαῶν καὶ ἄθετεῖ βουλὰς ἀρχόντων	The LORD scatters the counsels of the nations, and rejects the thoughts of the peoples, and rejects the counsels of the rulers.
Ps 58:12	μὴ ἀποκτείνῃς αὐτούς μήποτε ἐπιλάθωνται τοῦ λαοῦ μου διασκόρπισον αὐτούς ἐν τῇ δυνάμει σου καὶ κατάγαγε αὐτούς ὁ ὑπερασπιστὴς μου κύριε	Do not kill them! Lest they may forget my people. Scatter them with your power and bring them down! Lord! My protector!
Lk 1:52a	καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων	he took down rulers from thrones
Lk 1:52b	καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινοὺς,	but he lifted up the lowly
Ps. 146:6	ἀναλαμβάνων πρᾶξις ὁ κύριος ταπεινῶν δὲ ἀμαρτωλοὺς ἕως τῆς γῆς	The one who takes up the gentle/kind/meek is the LORD, and the one who humbles/humiliates the sinful ones unto the earth/ground.
Ps 106:40-41	ἐξεχύθη ἐξουδένωσις ἐπ' ἄρχοντας καὶ ἐπλάνησεν αὐτούς ἐν ἀβάτῳ καὶ οὐχ ὁδῶ 41 καὶ ἐβοήθησεν πένητι ἐκ πτωχείας καὶ ἔθετο ὡς πρόβατα πατριάς	Contempt has been poured out upon rulers and in an impassible land and no way, 41 and he has come to the aid of the poor one from poverty and put families like sheep.
Ps 112:7-8	ὁ ἐγείρων ἀπὸ γῆς πτωχὸν καὶ ἀπὸ κοπρίας ἀνυψῶν πένητα 8 τοῦ καθίσει αὐτὸν μετὰ ἀρχόντων μετὰ ἀρχόντων λαοῦ αὐτοῦ	he is the one who raises up the poor one and from a dunghill he exalts the needy one 8 making him sit

		with rulers, with rulers of his people.
Lk 1:53a	πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν	those who are hungry he satisfied/filled with good things
Lk 1:53b	καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.	but those who are rich he sent away empty.
Ps 106:9b	καὶ ψυχὴν πεινῶσαν ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν	And a hungry soul he has satisfied/filled with good things
Ps 33:11	πλούσιοι ἐπτώχευσαν καὶ ἐπείνασαν οἱ δὲ ἐκζητοῦντες τὸν κύριον οὐκ ἐλαττωθήσονται παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ διάψαλμα	The rich ones became poor and hungered, but the ones who seek out the LORD shall not decrease in all good [things]. Interlude.
Ps 145:7	ποιοῦντα κρίμα τοῖς ἀδικουμένοις διδόντα τροφήν τοῖς πεινῶσιν κύριος λύει πεπεδημένους	[The LORD is the one] who makes judgment for the wronged ones, gives food to the hungry ones. The LORD loosens the bound ones
Ps 102:5	τὸν ἐμπιπλῶντα ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν σου ἀνακαινισθήσεται ὡς ἀετοῦ ἡ νεότης σου	He is the one who satisfy your desire with good things, he shall renew your youth like an eagle's.
Lk 1:54	ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους,	He helped/committed himself to Israel his child/servant, remembering mercy,

Ps 97:3a	ἐμνήσθη τοῦ ἐλέους αὐτοῦ τῷ Ἰακωβ καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτοῦ τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραηλ	He remembered his mercy to Jacob and his truth to the house of Israel.
Lk 1:55	καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	Just as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seeds forever.
Ps 104:8	ἐμνήσθη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα διαθήκης αὐτοῦ λόγου οὗ ἐνετείλατο εἰς χιλίας γενεάς	He remembered unto eternity his covenant, a word that he commanded into thousands generations.

Given the vast number of verses from the psalter that are paralleled to the *Magnificat*, the space of this paper does not allow a discussion about them all in detail. Furthermore, the parallels are scattered in the psalter, and that make interpreting the entire *Magnificat* on the basis of its psalms background rather difficult. Thus, among these psalms, only five shall be discussed in this section, i.e. Pss 34, 97, 102, 106, and 117 (LXX), which all parallel at least twice with the *Magnificat*, unlike the other psalms which do only once.

Psalm 34 contains two verses that are parallel to the *Magnificat*, i.e. Ps 34:9 // Lk 1:46b and Ps 34:9a // Lk 1:47. In other words, both compositions magnify and rejoice in the LORD with similar expressions. While the singer of the *Magnificat* magnify and rejoice in the LORD because he has looked favorably upon her ταπεινώσις, the psalmist magnify and rejoice in the LORD because the LORD saves him from his personal enemies (v. 1) by reversing the snare that his enemies has set for him (v. 8), and because the LORD vindicates him from possibly the false accusation of his enemies (vv. 24, 27).

If we interpret the *Magnificat* against this psalm, the ταπεινώσις mentioned in Lk 1:48 may refer to any kind of enmity and the ensuing persecutions, and the salvation which the *Magnificat* praises is the deliverance from such persecutions by God. By extension, the thought of the proud is the plot that they devise against the singer of the *Magnificat*; the poor, the humble one is the singer him/herself. It is evident that the theme of divine reversal is common to both the *Magnificat* and Psalm 34.

Psalm 97 also contains two parallels with the *Magnificat*, i.e. Ps 97:1 // Lk 1:51 and Ps 97:3a // Lk 1:54. For the most part, Psalm 97 exhorts its audience to sing praise to the LORD, but the motivation is not explicitly stated. Nevertheless, the reason is plausibly national-political, as v. 3 suggests, "He remembered his mercy to Iakob and his truth to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth saw the deliverance of our God" (NETS).

Read in this light, the ταπείνωσις in the *Magnificat* may be intended as the national disaster befell Israel, possibly losing a war and being subjugated to a foreign power(s). Hence, the proud and wealth may refer to the foreign nation(s) and the poor and humble Israel itself. If that is the case, then the hypothesis that the origin of the *Magnificat* as a Jewish victory hymn (see section VI for more details) is all the more possible.

Psalm 102 contains three parallels to the *Magnificat*, i.e. Ps 102:1-2 // Lk 1:46b, Ps 102:11,13,17a // Lk 1:50, and Ps 102:5 // Lk 1:53. This psalm can be called a psalm of mercy, as the word “mercy” and related vocabulary appear ten times in this psalm (vv. 4x2, 6, 8x3, 11, 13x2, 17). Instead of personal and national enmities and adverse situations, this psalm concerns the religio-ethical aspect of an individual, emphasizing that God would forgive the sins of the people. If the singer of the *Magnificat* had this psalm in mind when composing, the ταπείνωσις in Lk 1:48 may denote the national sinfulness of the Israelites (by extension, of humanity), and God’s mercy is his generous dealing with this human sinfulness, which is also the salvation of which the singer praises. However, the dualism of the proud and humble in the *Magnificat* does not exist in this psalm. In short, it is a truly universal psalm which celebrates divine mercy to all, proud and humble, wealthy and poor. Yet this also suggests that the singer of the *Magnificat* does not intend this utmost universality of divine love.

Psalm 106 contains two parallels, i.e. Ps 106:40-41 // Lk 1:52 and Ps 106:9b // Lk 1:53. This psalm praises the LORD for blessing the community of the psalmist. He sings about God releases the captives and leading them to a place of habitation (vv. 2-7, 9-10), safety in marine trips for doing business (vv. 23-30), as well as prevention of drought and famine, and blessing the community with fecundity (vv. 35-38). From this we may infer, should this psalm be in the mind of the singer of the *Magnificat* when s/he composed the canticle, the ταπείνωσις may refer to national disaster, either defeat and exile, accidents at sea, and famine, and the divine salvation sung in the canticle may refer to any of them. Then the hypothesized pre-Christian Jewish origin of the canticle as a victory song may be possible. The wealthy and proud may refer to the national enemies if ταπείνωσις refers to defeat and exile, or to the selfish people who are unwilling to open their warehouse to share food with the poor and hungry during famine, while there is no comparable counterpart if ταπείνωσις refers to natural challenges at sea.

Psalm 117 can also be called a psalm of mercy, since the clause ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ, “because unto eternity is his [the LORD’s] mercy,” recurs five times in this psalm, four at the beginning and one at the end (vv. 1,2,3,4 and 29 respectively), forming an inclusio. This mercy is experienced by the psalmist as being delivered by the LORD, particularly in life-threatening situations, both personal (vv. 6b,7b,8) and national (vv. 9-13). Thus, if read juxtaposed to Psalm 117, the ταπείνωσις in Lk 1:48 may refer to such dangerous circumstances where life is at stake, the proud the enemies, either personal or national. Should the latter be the case, then the pre-Christian Jewish origin of the *Magnificat* as a victory song finds support.

The brief survey above leads us to ask, if the different psalms, serving as background for interpretation, offer different results that are not completely compatible with each other, are necessary for the readers to choose only one of them as valid interpretative backgrounds. The answer is negative. For even if the content of these psalms differs, they all propose a similar framework, i.e. the theme of divine reversal. All the psalmists, in their prayers, consider themselves the weaker one vis-à-vis their enemies, either concrete (like personal and national adversaries) or abstract (like sin). They petition God to intervene so as to make them conquer their enemies, in other words, making them the stronger one and their enemies the weaker one. As it has been pointed out, this reversal motif is widely present in the canonical psalter.²⁰

III

In addition to the Song of Hannah and the psalter, commentators have also identified possible OT texts as the background for the *Magnificat* in the Prophetic corpus. Parallels that have gained scholarly consensus are listed below:

Lk 1:46b	Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,	“My soul magnifies the Lord,
Isa 61:10	καὶ εὐφροσύνη εὐφρανθήσονται ἐπὶ κύριον ἀγαλλιάσθω ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐπὶ τῷ κυρίῳ ἐνέδυσεν γάρ με ἱμάτιον σωτηρίου καὶ χιτῶνα εὐφροσύνης ὡς νυμφίῳ περιέθηκεν μοι μίτραν καὶ ὡς νύμφῃ κατεκόσμησέν με κόσμῳ	And with joy they shall rejoice on account of the LORD, let my soul exult on account of the LORD, for he has put on me a garment of salvation and a tunic of joy. Like a bridegroom he has placed around me a girdle, and like a bride he has adorned me with adornment.
Lk 1:47	καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου,	and my spirit rejoiced on the basis of God my savior,
Hab 3:18	ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ ἀγαλλιάσομαι χαρήσομαι ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου	But in the LORD I shall exult, I shall rejoice on account of God my savior.

²⁰ Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke–Acts*, 108.

Lk 1:48b	ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί,	Behold! For from now on all generations/births will call me blessed
Mal 3:12	καὶ μακαριοῦσιν ὑμᾶς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη διότι ἔσεσθε ὑμεῖς γῆ θελητῆ λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ	All the nations shall call you blessed, because you shall be a desired land, says the LORD Almighty.
Lk 1:49a	ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνατός.	because the powerful one did great things for me.
Zeph. 3:17	κύριος ὁ θεός σου ἐν σοὶ δυνατὸς σώσει σε ἐπάξει ἐπὶ σέ εὐφροσύνην καὶ καινιεῖ σε ἐν τῇ ἀγαπήσει αὐτοῦ καὶ εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ σέ ἐν τέρψει ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐορτῆς	The LORD your God is in you. A might one shall save you. He shall bring you gladness, and he shall renew you in his love, and he shall rejoice upon you in delight as in a feast day.
Lk 1:50	καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεὰς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.	and his mercy is from generation to generation for those who fear him.
Isa. 51:8c	τὸ δὲ σωτήριόν μου εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν	And my salvation shall be into generations of generations
Lk 1:51a	Ἔποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,	He did might with his arm,
Is 51:5	ἐγγίζει ταχὺ ἡ δικαιοσύνη μου καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ὡς φῶς τὸ σωτήριόν μου καὶ εἰς τὸν βραχίονά μου ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν ἐμὲ νῆσοι ὑπομενοῦσιν καὶ εἰς τὸν βραχίονά μου ἐλπιούσιν	Swiftly my righteousness is coming near, and as light my salvation shall go out, and in my arm nations shall hope, for me islands shall wait and in my arm they shall hope.
Lk 1:51b	διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοία καρδίας αὐτῶν·	he scattered the proud with the

		thought of their heart
Ez 17:24	καὶ γνώσονται πάντα τὰ ξύλα τοῦ πεδίου διότι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ ταπεινῶν ξύλον ὑψηλὸν καὶ ὑψῶν ξύλον ταπεινὸν καὶ ξηραίνων ξύλον χλωρὸν καὶ ἀναθάλλον ξύλον ξηρὸν ἐγὼ κύριος λελάληκα καὶ ποιήσω	And all the trees shall know that I, the LORD, is the one who humbles the tall tree and exalts the low tree, and the one who tries up the green tree and revives the withered three. I, the LORD, has spoken and am doing it.
Lk 1:54a	ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ,	He helped Israel his servant, remembering mercy,
Is 41:8	σὺ δὲ Ἰσραὴλ παῖς μου Ἰακωβ ὃν ἐξελεξάμην σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ ὃν ἠγάπησα	But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, a seed of Abraham, whom I loved.
Lk 1:55	καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	(just) as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seeds forever.
Mic 7:20a	δώσεις [...] ἔλεον τῷ Ἀβραὰμ καθότι ὤμοσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἡμῶν	You shall give [...] mercy to Abraham as you have sworn to our fathers
Is 49:14-16	εἶπεν δὲ Σιών ἐγκατέλιπέν με κύριος καὶ ὁ κύριος ἐπελάθετό μου 15 μὴ ἐπιλήσεται γυνὴ τοῦ παιδίου αὐτῆς τοῦ μὴ ἐλεῆσαι τὰ ἔκγονα τῆς κοιλίας αὐτῆς εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐπιλάθοιτο ταῦτα γυνὴ ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἐπιλήσομαί σου εἶπεν κύριος 16 ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν χειρῶν μου ἐξωγράφησά σου τὰ τεῖχη καὶ ἐνώπιόν μου εἶ διὰ παντός	But Sion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, and the LORD has forgotten me." 15 "Would a woman forget her child so as not to have mercy on the descendants of her womb?! But even if the woman would forget, I shall not forget you," said the

		LORD, "Behold! Upon my hands I have painted your walls. And before me you always are."
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Just as with the psalter, the parallels between the *Magnificat* and the prophetic corpus are also dispersed. However, unlike the former, the latter seems to share a similar concern, i.e. the exile and the return from it.

For instance, Is 61:10, which is parallel to Lk 1:46, encourages the audience to rejoice in the LORD, while earlier in Is 61:7 the motivation is explicitly stated: "Thus they shall inherit the land a second time, and everlasting joy shall be above their head" (NETS). Some verses before Hab 3:18, which is parallel to Lk 1:47, the prophet also expresses his confidence in God's punishment to the nations and his "salvation of your people, to save your anointed ones" (Hab 3:13; NETS). Many other parallel texts, e.g., Zeph 3:17 (cf. v. 14-20), Is 41:8 (cf. vv. 11-12,15); 51:5,8c (cf. v. 11) all talk about the restoration of Israel after the exile, and also the humiliation of its enemies.

The theme of divine reversal²¹ is also present among these prophetic parallels, e.g., Ez 17:24 (// Lk 1:51b). Isaiah 49 provides a more vivid picture: "On the face of the earth they [i.e. foreign kings and female rulers] shall do obeisance to you, and they shall lick the dust of your feet" (Is 49:8; NETS). Yet even its context refers to the restoration of Israel, via the parable of the two eagles and a vine (vv. 1-10), explained in vv. 11-24. The sin of the Israelites as the cause of the exile is acknowledged, but the prophet Micah mentions the divine reversal of fortunes between the nations and Israel, while at the same time professing that this divine intervention is due to the everlasting mercy of God who wipes off the record of iniquities (Mic 7:16-19; cf. Is 49:15).

Certainly, not all textual parallels are contributive to interpreting this New Testament canticle by way of its OT backgrounds. One of the examples is Mal 3:12, which is parallel to Lk 1:48b. In Mal 3:6-12, the LORD exhorts the post-exilic community not to forsake the statutes of the LORD, especially the tithe, but rather honor them, so that the LORD "will not destroy the fruit of your land" (v. 11b), but rather "all the nations shall call you blessed, because you shall be a desired land" (v. 12).

Although the word *ταπεινωσις* does not appear in these parallel texts, it is obvious that, should the composer of the *Magnificat* had these texts in mind, the word would refer to some kind of a national disaster comparable to the exile. Naturally, the divine salvation that is sung about would be God's intervention to deliver his people out of

²¹ This Theme of divine reversal, according to Karin Schöphin, prevails in the prophetic corpus, see: Id., "... denn er hat die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd angesehen" (Lk 1,48): Gedanken zum Hintergrund des Begriffsfeldes *ταπεινωσις* in ausgewählten prophetischen Texten der Septuaginta," *Biblische Notizen* 155 (2012): 5-22, esp. 21.

such situation and reversing the position of Israel from the weaker one, the oppressed, the poor, the humiliated, to the stronger one, the exalted.

IV

In the first section, we have briefly examined the similarities between the *Magnificat* and the Song of Hannah, which is part of the Deuteronomistic History. In fact, many other texts in the Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic corpus are proposed to be textual parallels to the canticle as well:

Lk 1:48a	ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπεινῶσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ.	because he looked upon the lowliness of his female slave.
Dt 26:7b-8	καὶ εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς ἡμῶν καὶ εἶδεν τὴν ταπεινῶσιν ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν θλιμὸν ἡμῶν	And the LORD heard our voice and saw our lowliness and our hardship toil and our oppression
	καὶ ἐξήγαγεν ἡμᾶς κύριος ἐξ Αἰγύπτου αὐτὸς ἐν ἰσχύι μεγάλη καὶ ἐν χειρὶ κραταιᾷ καὶ ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ τῷ ὑψηλῷ καὶ ἐν ὀράμασιν μεγάλοις καὶ ἐν σημείοις καὶ ἐν τέρασιν	And the LORD led us out from Egypt himself with great strength and with powerful hand and with his high arm and with great spectacles and with wonders.
Gen 16:11	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἰδοὺ σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις καὶ τέξῃ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰσμαῆλ ὅτι ἐπήκουσεν κύριος τῆ ταπεινώσει σου	And the angel of the LORD said to her [= Hagar], “Behold! You are pregnant and you shall give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Ismael, because the LORD has heard your humiliation.”
Gen 29:32	καὶ συνέλαβεν Λεῖα καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱὸν τῷ Ἰακώβ ἐκάλεσεν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ρουβὴν λέγουσα διότι εἶδέν μου κύριος τὴν ταπεινῶσιν νῦν με ἀγαπήσει ὁ ἀνὴρ μου	And Leah conceived and gave birth to a son to Jacob, and she called his name Reuben, saying, “Because the LORD has seen my humiliation, now me my husband shall love.”

1 Sam 9:16	ὡς ὁ καιρὸς αὖριον ἀποστελῶ πρὸς σὲ ἄνδρα ἐκ γῆς Βενιαμιν καὶ χρίσεις αὐτὸν εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐπὶ τὸν λαόν μου Ἰσραηλ καὶ σώσει τὸν λαόν μου ἐκ χειρὸς ἀλλοφύλων ὅτι ἐπέβλεψα ἐπὶ τὴν ταπεινώσιν τοῦ λαοῦ μου ὅτι ἦλθεν βοή αὐτῶν πρὸς με	“At this time tomorrow I shall send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him as ruler upon my people Israel, and he shall save my people from the hand of foreigners, because I have looked upon the humiliation of my people, because their outcry has come to me.”
2 Sam 16:12	εἴ πως ἴδοι κύριος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει μου καὶ ἐπιστρέψει μοι ἀγαθὰ ἀντὶ τῆς κατάρας αὐτοῦ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ	“If somehow the LORD may look at my [= David] humiliation, then he shall return to me good things instead of his curse today”
Lk 1:48b	ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί,	Behold! For from now on all generations will call me blessed
Gen 30:13b	μακαρία ἐγὼ ὅτι μακαρίζουσίν με αἱ γυναῖκες	Blessed am I! For the women call me blessed
Lk 1:49a	ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνατός.	because the powerful one did great things for me.
Deut. 10:21b	οὗτος θεὸς σου ὅστις ἐποίησεν ἐν σοὶ τὰ μεγάλα	This is your God who has done in you [= Israel] great things
Dt 11:7	ὅτι οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ὑμῶν εἶδρακαν πάντα τὰ ἔργα κυρίου τὰ μεγάλα ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὑμῖν σήμερον	Because your eyes have seen all the work of the LORD, all these great things he has done for you today!
Jdg 2:7	καὶ ἐδούλευσεν ὁ λαὸς τῷ κυρίῳ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας Ἰησοῦ καὶ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ὅσοι ἐμακροήμερευσαν μετὰ Ἰησοῦ ὅσοι ἐγνώσαν πᾶν τὸ ἔργον κυρίου τὸ μέγα ὃ ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραηλ	And the people were subject to the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders, all those who lived long with Joshua, all those who knew the work of the LORD, the

		great thing, that he has done for Israel.
Lk 1:49b	καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,	And holy is his name,
Ex 15:11	τίς ὅμοιός σοι ἐν θεοῖς κύριε τίς ὅμοιός σοι δεδοξασμένος ἐν ἁγίοις θαυμαστός ἐν δόξαις ποιῶν τέρατα	“Who is like you among the gods, O LORD? Who is like you, glorified among the holy ones, marvelous in glorious things, doing wonders?”
Lk 1:50	καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεάς καὶ γενεάς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.	and his mercy is from generation to generation to/for those who fear him.
Deut 7:9b	[κύριος ὁ θεός σου ... ὁ φυλάσσων ...] ἔλεος τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν καὶ τοῖς φυλάσσουσιν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ εἰς χιλιάς γενεάς	[The Lord your God ... is the one who keeps ...] mercy to those who love him and those who keep his commandments into thousands generations
Ex 20:6	καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς χιλιάδας τοῖς ἀγαπῶσίν με καὶ τοῖς φυλάσσουσιν τὰ προστάγματά μου	And doing mercy unto thousands generations to those who love me and keep my ordinances.
Lk 1:51a	Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,	He did might with his arm,
Ex 6:6	βάδιζε εἰπὸν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ λέγων ἐγὼ κύριος καὶ ἐξάξω ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς δυναστείας τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ῥύσομαι ὑμᾶς ἐκ τῆς δουλείας καὶ λυτρώσομαι ὑμᾶς ἐν βραχίονι ὑψηλῷ καὶ κρίσει μεγάλη	“Go say to the children of Israel! Saying: I am the LORD, and I shall lead you out from the power of the Egyptians, and I shall deliver you from slavery, and I shall redeem you by an uplifted arm and a great judgment.”
Ex 15:6-7	ἡ δεξιὰ σου κύριε δεδόξασται ἐν ἰσχύϊ ἡ δεξιὰ σου χεὶρ κύριε ἔθραυσεν ἐχθρούς 7 καὶ τῷ πλήθει τῆς δόξης σου συνέτριψας τοὺς ὑπεναντίους ἀπέστειλας τὴν ὄργην σου καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτοὺς ὡς καλάμην	You right hand, O LORD, has been glorified with strength. You right hand, O LORD, has broken enemies into pieces. 7 And with

		the fullness of your glory you broke opponents into pieces, sent your wrath and consumed them like straw.
Dt 3:24	κύριε κύριε σὺ ἤρξω δεῖξαι τῷ σῷ θεράποντι τὴν ἰσχὺν σου καὶ τὴν δυνάμιν σου καὶ τὴν χεῖρα τὴν κραταιὰν καὶ τὸν βραχίονα τὸν ὑψηλόν· τίς γάρ ἐστιν θεὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἢ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὅστις ποιήσει καθὰ σὺ ἐποίησας καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἰσχὺν σου	LORD! LORD! You have begun to show your trusted servant your strength and your power and your mighty hand and your uplifted arm, for which god is in heaven or on earth who will do just as you have done, and according to your strength.
Dt 4:34	εἰ ἐπείρασεν ὁ θεὸς εἰσελθὼν λαβεῖν ἑαυτῷ ἔθνος ἐκ μέσου ἔθνους ἐν πειρασμῷ καὶ ἐν σημείοις καὶ ἐν τέρασιν καὶ ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ ἐν χειρὶ κραταιᾷ καὶ ἐν βραχίονι ὑψηλῷ καὶ ἐν ὀράμασιν μεγάλοις κατὰ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἐνώπιόν σου βλέποντος	If there is a god who has been (at-)tempted goes to take a nation from the midst of a nation, by trial, and by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a powerful hand, and by an uplifted arm, and by great spectacles, like all the LORD God has done for you in Egypt, before your sight.
Dt 7:18-19	μνεῖα μνησθήσῃ ὅσα ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεός σου τῷ Φαραῶ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις· 19 τοὺς πειρασμοὺς τοὺς μεγάλους οὓς εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα τὰ μεγάλα ἐκεῖνα τὴν χεῖρα τὴν κραταιὰν καὶ τὸν βραχίονα τὸν ὑψηλόν ὡς ἐξήγαγέν σε	You shall definitely remember how much the LORD your God has done to Pharaoh and to all the Egyptians, 19 the great trials that your eyes have seen, the signs and the great wonders, the mighty hand and uplifted arm as I have led you out.
Lk 1:51b	διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν·	he scattered the proud with the thought of their heart
Gen 6:5	ἰδὼν δὲ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐπληθύνθησαν αἱ κακίαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ πᾶς τις	And when the LORD God saw the evils of

	διανοεῖται ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἐπιμελῶς ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρὰ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας	humans have multiplied on the earth and all those who think in their heart carefully about evil all the days, ...
Lk 1:55	καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	Just as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seeds forever.
Gen 18:14	μὴ ἀδυνατεῖ παρά τῷ θεῷ ῥῆμα εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἀναστρέψω πρὸς σὲ εἰς ὥρας καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σαρρα υἱός	Is any matter impossible before God?! In this season I shall return to you, and Sarah shall have a son.
Gen 18:18	Ἀβρααμ δὲ γινόμενος ἔσται εἰς ἔθνος μέγα καὶ πολὺ καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς	Abraam shall become a great and populous nation, and in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.
Gen 22:17	ἢ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου ὡς τοὺς ἀστέρας τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὡς τὴν ἄμμον τὴν παρά τὸ χεῖλος τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ κληρονομήσει τὸ σπέρμα σου τὰς πόλεις τῶν ὑπεναντίων	Truly, I shall definitely bless you, and I shall definitely multiply you seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand by the edge of the sea, and your seed shall inherit the cities of the adversaries.
Gen 17:19	εἶπεν δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῷ Ἀβραάμ ναὶ ἰδοὺ Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου τέξεται σοι υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰσαακ καὶ στήσω τὴν διαθήκην μου πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰς διαθήκην αἰώνιον καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτόν	But the LORD said to Abraham, "Truly! Behold! Sarah your wife shall give birth for you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac, and I shall establish my covenant with him as a covenant of eternity and for his seed after him."

Generally speaking, the contexts of these parallel texts involve three major motifs. The first motif is the divine selection of David as *the* king of Israel, e.g., 1 Sam 9:16 and 2 Sam 16:12 (//Lk 1:48a). The second is the exodus event, the greatest of the interventions of the LORD in Israelite history, the foundation of the people of

Israel. Moses, who led the Israelites through the exodus, and Joshua, Moses' successor and the one who completed the exodus by leading the Israelites into the promised land, are key elements in this motif as well. Most of the parallel texts outside of Genesis refer to this event, e.g., Ex 6:6; 15:6-7; Dt 3:24; 4:34; 7:18-19 (// Lk 1:51a); Ex 15:11 (// Lk 1:49b); Ex 20:6 and Dt 7:9b (//Lk 1:50); Dt 26:7b-8 (// Lk 1:48a); and to the two great figures in the history of Israel, e.g., Dt 10:21b; 11:7; Jdg 2:7 (//Lk 1:49a). The third motif is the LORD's eternal promise to Abraham and his descendents, e.g., Gen 17:19; 18:14,18; 22:17 (// Lk 1:55; cf. Gen 12:1-3). This collective tendency renders the ταπείνωσις in Lk 1:48, and the divine salvation that rescues the singer (and Israel) from it, a national catastrophe rather than a difficult challenge in an individual's life, and the proud and wealthy national enemies.

It is noticeable that a few parallel verses have not been mentioned. These verses from Genesis offer further aids to understand the *Magnificat*. Three verses are related to women, all troubled by the problems for offspring. On the one hand, it is about childlessness. Gen 29:32 (//Lk 1:48a) and 30:13b (//Lk 1:48b) are from the story of Rachel giving birth to Reuben and Leah's giving Jacob her maid who gave birth two sons to him, thus leading readers to interpret the word ταπείνωσις in Lk 1:48 as referring to childlessness. On the other hand, it is about having a child. In Gen 16:11 (// Lk 1:48a), the angel of the LORD assures Hagar that he has looked favorably upon her ταπείνωσις, i.e. Sarah's abuse. However, Sarah's hatred toward Hagar came from the fact that Hagar got pregnant but not Sarah, even though it was Sarah who passed Hagar, her maid, to her husband Abraham. Thus we obtain an ambivalent result to understand the *Magnificat*.

The other two passages, Gen 6:5 (//Lk 1:51b) and Gen 11:1-9, which may be an allusion by the same verse,²² may offer some hint regarding God's scattering the proud because of their plan. The first one provides the reason for God's destruction of humanity by a flood and the second God's dispersing humanity by confusing them with different languages. The first one is about general human sinfulness and the second human's pride to reach the divine realm all by themselves. It is interesting to note that both passages convey a sense of universality, i.e. that all humans are sinful and tempted to do away with God, and this is against the *Magnificat*'s dualism of the proud and the humiliated, the wealthy and the poor.

This overview of the Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic background of the *Magnificat* adds some insights to what we have attained in the previous sections. First, the great event and figures of the collective history of Israel serve as a historical framework for the canticle. Second, it takes on a more nuanced view on the problem of childlessness, if it is intended with the word ταπείνωσις by the composer of the canticle. Third, the universality of human sinfulness and hence humanity's need for divine salvation is much more emphasized by this background.

²² Walter Vogels, "Le Magnificat, Marie et Israël," *Église et Théologie* 6 (1975): 279-296, esp. 289.

V

In addition to all the OT parallels to the *Magnificat* mentioned above, some parallels from the Wisdom Literature have also been identified:

Lk 1:48a	ὅτι ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπεινωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ.	because he looked upon the lowliness of his female slave.
Sir 11:12	καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου ἐπέβλεψαν αὐτῷ εἰς ἀγαθὰ καὶ ἀνώρθωσεν αὐτὸν ἐκ ταπεινώσεως αὐτοῦ 13 καὶ ἀνώψωσεν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπεθαύμασαν ἐπ' αὐτῷ πολλοί	And the eyes of the LORD has looked upon him for good, and rebuilt him from his lowliness, 13 and raised his head, and many marveled at him.
Lk 1:51b	διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν·	he scattered the proud with the thought of their heart
Job 5:12-13	διαλλάσσοντα βουλὰς πανούργων καὶ οὐ μὴ ποιήσουσιν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν ἀληθές 13 ὁ καταλαμβάνων σοφούς ἐν τῇ φρονήσει βουλὴν δὲ πολυπλόκων ἐξέστησεν	[God is the one who] reconciles the counsels of the clever ones, let not their hands make it come true. 13 He is the one who catches the wise ones in their intelligence, he confused complex counsel.
Lk 1:52	καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινοὺς,	he took down rulers from thrones and/but he lifted up the lowly
Job 12:19	δυνάστας δὲ γῆς κατέστρεψεν	But the rulers of the earth he has overthrown
Job 5:11	τὸν ποιῶντα ταπεινοὺς εἰς ὕψος	The Lord is the one who makes the lowly ones into high place
Sir 10:14	θρόνους ἀρχόντων καθεῖλεν ὁ κύριος καὶ ἐκάθισεν πραεῖς ἀντ' αὐτῶν	Thrones of rulers the Lord has taken down and he has made the gentle ones sit in place of them.

These six parallels come from two books, Job and Sirach. Among the four parallels from the former, three are found in Job 5. This may not be a coincidence and suggest a similarity between the ideology of Eliphaz, the speaker of Job 5, and the

singer of the *Magnificat*. In his speech, Eliphaz expresses a dualism between the lowly and the wise, i.e. those who rely on God and those who have confidence in their own wisdom (cf. vv. 11-13). Further, he declares that the wise shall perish but the lowly shall enjoy blessings from God (cf. vv. 15-18). This dualism, as we have seen, corresponds to that in the *Magnificat*, esp. Lk 1:52-53. The other parallel in the book is Job's acknowledgement that he shares the same theology with his friends, that God is omnipotent and totally just (12:19). The only reason he struggles with God is that his current situation does not correspond to his righteousness and blamelessness (cf. v. 4). Regarding the two parallel verses from Sirach, it is difficult to draw significant interpretative insights from the two verses, for they lack narrative or discursive context for comparisons and contrasts.

In addition to this list, one might posit a textual relation between the *Magnificat* and the song of Judith (Jud 16:1-17), especially in v. 7:

Lk 1:52a	καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινοὺς,	he took down rulers from thrones but he lifted up the humble
Jud 16:7a	ἐξεδύσατο γὰρ στολὴν χηρεύσεως αὐτῆς εἰς ὕψος τῶν πονούντων ἐν Ἰσραὴλ	for she took off her widow's dress for the exaltation of the hard-pressed in Israel.

Nevertheless, the piety expressed in the two songs is not identical. A detailed comparison and contrast between the two songs is beyond the scope of this essay. One difference between them suffices our purpose here. In Mary's canticle, she (and in the later part Israel as personified in her) is solely receptive to the mighty work of God. There is nowhere in the *Magnificat*, not even in the infancy narrative, does Mary take the role of an agent in any degree, apart from her *fiat*. In contrast, Judith, in her song as well as in the narrative, she acts (vv. 7-10; cf. 13:1-10). She actually stands out in the song and in the narrative, as the only person who acts and results in victory, even though she attributes the victory to God (16:1-5, 13-17, esp. v. 5; cf. 13:7b). Thus, despite the textual allusion, Judith seems not to be the biblical figure that Luke wants his readers to recall when singing the *Magnificat*.

VI

It should particularly be noted that, based on the hypothesis of the pre-Christian Jewish origin of the *Magnificat* as a victory song, Paul Winter proposes a concrete historical context for the composition of the canticle, i.e. in the Maccabaeian times.²³ His argument lies mainly in the textual similarities between 1 Chronicles 16 and the canticle:

²³ Paul Winter, "Magnificat and Benedictus—Maccabaeian Psalms?," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37 (1954): 328-351, esp. 334.

Lk 1:46	Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ· Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον,	And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the LORD,
1 Chr 16:23	ἄσατε τῷ κυρίῳ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ ἀναγγεῖλατε ἐξ ἡμέρας εἰς ἡμέραν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ	Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Announce from day to day his salvation!
Lk 1:47	καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου,	and my spirit rejoiced on the basis of God my savior,
1 Chr 16:10b	εὐφρανθήσεται καρδία ζητοῦσα τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ	The heart will be rejoiced when it seek his [=God’s] good pleasure.
1 Chr 16:35a	σῶσον ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν	Save us! God of our salvation!
Lk 1:49a	ὅτι ἐποίησέν μοι μεγάλα ὁ δυνατός.	because the powerful one did great things for me.
1 Chr 16:9b	διηγῆσασθε πᾶσιν τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτοῦ ἃ ἐποίησεν κύριος	Tell fully to all his wonderful things that the Lord has done!
1 Chr 16:12	μνημονεύετε τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτοῦ ἃ ἐποίησεν τέρατα καὶ κρίματα τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ	Remember his wonderful things that he has done, marvels and judgments of his mouth!
Lk 1:49b	καὶ ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,	And holy is his name,
1 Chr 16:10a	αἰνεῖτε ἐν ὀνόματι ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ	Praise in his holy name!
1 Chr 16:35	καὶ εἶπατε σῶσον ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν καὶ ἐξελοῦ ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν τοῦ αἰνεῖν τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἅγιόν σου καὶ καυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς αἰνέσεσίν σου	And they said, “Save us, God of our Salvation! And deliver us from the nations! To praise your holy name and to boast in your praises!”
Lk 1:50	καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεὰς τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν.	and his mercy is from generation to generation for those who fear him.
1 Chr 16:36b	καὶ ἐρεῖ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς αμην καὶ ἤνεσαν τῷ κυρίῳ	And all the people shall say, “Amen!” And they shall praise the LORD.

Lk 1:51a	Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ,	He did might with his arm,
1 Chr 16:11	ζητήσατε τὸν κύριον καὶ ἰσχύσατε ζητήσατε τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ διὰ παντός	Seek the Lord, and be strong! Seek his face all the time
1 Chr 16:27	δόξα καὶ ἔπαινος κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἰσχύς καὶ καύχημα ἐν τόπῳ αὐτοῦ	Glory and praise are to his face, strength and boasting are in his place
1 Chr 16:28b	δοτε τῷ κυρίῳ δόξαν καὶ ἰσχύν	Give the LORD glory and strength!
Lk 1:53	πεινῶντας ἐπέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.	those who are hungry he filled with good things, but those who are rich he sent away empty.
1 Chr 16:21b	καὶ ἤλεγξεν περὶ αὐτῶν βασιλεῖς	And he rebuked kings concerning themselves.
Lk 1:52a	καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινούς,	he took down rulers from thrones but he lifted up the humble
Lk 1:54	ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους,	He helped Israel his servant, remembering mercy,
1 Chr 16:19	ἐν τῷ γενέσθαι αὐτοὺς ὀλιγοστοὺς ἀριθμῶ ὡς ἐσμικρύνθησαν καὶ παρόκησαν ἐν αὐτῇ	When they [=Canaanites] become few in number, as they were diminished and lived as strangers in it,
1 Chr 16:20	καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ἀπὸ ἔθνους εἰς ἔθνος καὶ ἀπὸ βασιλείας εἰς λαὸν ἕτερον	and they sojourned from nation to nation and from kingdom to the other people,

The parallelism between Luke 1 and 1 Chronicles 16 that Winter has identified leads to the assumption that “the *Magnificat* [...] belong[s] to the same period of history as the compilation of 1 Chronicles xvi.”²⁴ More concretely, he proposes that the canticle is composed in Macabaeian times as “triumphal odes after victory had been achieved on the battlefield.”²⁵ Read in this light, the δούλη in v. 48a does not refer to an individual, rather to a collectivity, i.e. Israel, which is designated in many places of the Hebrew Bible as “the daughter of Zion” (e.g., 2 Kg 19:21; Is 37:22). 2

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 334.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 341.

Mac 2:11 describes Israel as: ἀντὶ ἐλευθέρᾱς ἐγένετο εἰς δούλην “instead of a free woman, she has become a female-slave.” Other elements in the canticle receive different interpretation as well. The ταπείνωσις “humiliation” that the *Magnificat*, along with the entire ἡ δούλη “the female-slave,” or the entire people of Israel, would be the Seleucid rule. One would also identify the ταπεινοὶ and πεινῶντες as the Israelites. In addition, the ideas of salvation and mercy, which are prominent in the *Magnificat* (cf. v. 47 and vv. 50, 54 respectively), are also key words in the only post bellum song recorded in 1 Maccabees (4:24).

If 1 Chronicles 16 served as the background for the composition of the *Magnificat*, the comparison of the two compositions would be contributive to the understanding of the latter. First, 1 Chr 16:7-36 is sung by David before the Ark after it was moved into Jerusalem. In other words, the divine selection of (the house of) David may be the undertone of the canticle in Luke. Second, the perspective of David’s song is clearly national (cf. vv. 19-20, 35; also v. 21b). Thus when read against David’s praise, the elements in the *Magnificat*, i.e. the ταπείνωσις from which the singer suffers, the divine deliverance therefrom, the identity of the proud and humble, wealthy and poor, all take on a collective meaning. Lastly, albeit implicitly, the theme of divine reversal is present in the Song of David. For instance, 1 Chr 16:19-20 depicts the Canaanites, the original inhabitants of the promised land, as sojourners, while their land God has given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. 18), who had been sojourners in the wilderness.

CONCLUSION OF

In this article, we have tried to understand the *Magnificat*, which is embedded in the Lucan infancy narrative context only loosely against its proposed Old Testament backgrounds. These parallel texts are scattered throughout the OT. Given their vastness, it is impossible to gain unanimous interpretations of the canticle.

Above all, in terms of reading the entire canticle, OT offers both an individualist and collective perspectives. This leads to different interpretations of the elements in the canticle. One of the most significant notions, the ταπείνωσις, can be taken as the barrenness of a particular woman, or other unspecified adversaries suffered by an individual, or national or military disasters which befall upon Israel. Hence, the act of salvation that God has done must change accordingly, as well as to whom the terms the proud and wealthy, humble and poor refer.

If reading the *Magnificat* from its multiple allusion to the OT generates much ambiguities, would it be better not to do so? On the contrary, in my opinion, it is exactly because of this ambiguity that the canticle has gained importance in the Christian tradition, in terms of both theology and pious living. After all, what matters to the Singer is not him/herself, but the work that God has done (and shall do continuously)

to the Singer (and his/her community). As has been observed, the *Magnificat* explicitly sings about a series of reversals,²⁶ which may correspond to what the Singer calls “the great things.” What is more, as has been pointed out, these reversals have expanded the horizon of divine presence and actions for justice from national to universal.²⁷ In other words, all those who consider him/herself the ταπεινός (or ταπεινή) can fit him/herself to the identity of the Singer of the canticle, which on the one hand confesses the LORD’s previous (and continuous) great actions in human history to reverse the misfortune²⁸ of all those who fear him, and on the other hand expresses implicitly the petition that the LORD shall do likewise to anyone who pray the canticle through the ages. This historical sensitivity of the composer can also be deduced from the fact that s/he grounds the canticle upon the great figures and events in the history of Israel, referring explicitly to Abraham, but perhaps implies Moses and David, and the great event of the exodus.

The universalism of the theme of reversal by the divine not only encompasses all kinds of persons, but also the complete realm of the collective life of human beings, as Heinz Schürmann observes: “those who in v. 51 are qualified exclusively from the ethical-religious point of view, in vv. 52-53 they seem to be characterized from the social-political point of view.”²⁹ However, one should not over-spiritualize the *Magnificat*, thinking that “the poverty and hunger of the oppressed ... are primarily spiritual,”³⁰ for it is generally believed that, in contrast to the concern of “the poor in *spirit*” in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. Matt 5:3), Luke is preoccupied with poverty and neediness in the concrete sense.³¹ It is, I propose, the ultimate reason that the *Magnificat* has always enjoyed a highly respectable place in the Christian tradition, which does not consider the preferential option for the poor only an option, but its very identity.

Should Christians then take the *Magnificat* as a call to social revolution? Give Luke’s concern on the poor and needy in the concrete sense, this question seems all the more legitimate. It is true that both the text and the OT backgrounds of the

²⁶ Amanda C. Miller, “A Different Kind of Victory: 4Q427 7 I-II and the Magnificat as Later Developments of the Hebrew Victory Song,” in *What Does the Scripture Say?: Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity*, vol. 1, The Synoptic Gospel, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 192-211 [207-208]. For a discussion on how the magisterium and local churches receive this theme and turn it to pastoral directives, see: Herbert Scholz, “Mary in the Light of the Magnificat,” *Diwa: Studies in Philosophy and Theology* 36 (2011): 110-120.

²⁷ C. Hugo Zorilla, “The Magnificat: Song of Justice,” in *Conflict and Context: Hermeneutics in the Americas*, ed. Mark L. Branson and C. René Padilla (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 220-37, esp. 226.

²⁸ See, for instance, Pino di Luccio’s exploration of the theme of the “change of fortune” and universalism in the *Magnificat* by comparing the canticle with the book of Esther, not with a close textual comparison but a parallelism of movement of thought. Cf. Id., “La megillá de Ester y el Magnificat de María de Nazaret,” *Estudios eclesiológicos* 86 (2011): 39-55.

²⁹ Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 1, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 3/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 76.

³⁰ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 363. He warns his readers against this tendency again in one of his later articles, “Gospel Infancy Narrative Research from 1976 to 1986: Part II (Luke),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 660-680 [668].

³¹ Richard A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 114.

canticle demand readers not to mystify the ideal of social relations expressed, Severiano B. Pacheco rightly reminds us that the canticle, after all, grounds the source of social justice upon God, who is the ultimate judge of all that happened in human history.³² It is for us Christians to fight against injustice and build justice in the societies in which we live, but we have to recognize our effort is only to cooperate with God to establish his reign on earth. It is a difficult balance that the *Magnificat* makes Christians to strike.



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³² Severiano B. Pacheco, "Derriba del Trono a los Poderosos y Enaltece a los Humildes (Lc 1,52)," *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 63 (2013): 347-360 [359].