Τῆς δούλης in the Magnificat, Luke i. 48.

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Ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ, "He hath looked upon the low estate of his handmaiden." As it stands in the text, τῆς δούλης refers of course to Mary. This immediately raises the question of the origin of the hymn.

Four views are in the field: (1) that the song is Mary's, an utterance inspired by the emotional situation, the content of which is determined by Mary's familiarity with the lyric religious poetry of her nation; (2) that the song is a remnant of early Jewish-Christian hymnology; (3) that it is a Jewish hymn, borrowed and set in its present place by the Christian editor; (4) the view of Harnack (*Sitzungsb. d. Akad. d. Wiss.*, Berlin, 1900, 27), that it is the composition of the author of the Third Gospel. He supposes it to have been put in the mouth of Elisabeth, and early transferred to Mary by mistaken editing. The reference of the song to Elisabeth, however, does not affect our present problem.

Of these views, the most reasonable seems to be that the song is a fragment of Jewish psalmody, of the same type as that preserved in the Psalms of Solomon. The arguments for this position may be summarized thus:

1. The song has no reference to the peculiar position of Mary, and, curiously enough, no reference to a personal Messiah. On the contrary, it expresses the common Jewish Messianic hope, and, with the exception of τῆς δούλης, would have been perfectly appropriate in the mouth of any Judaistic poet.

2. It is distinctly national rather than personal. If τῆς δούλης be dropped out of consideration, the first person of the song may easily be read as national. In fact, it can scarcely be treated in any other way, as is shown by the progress of thought. The basis of the praise of ὁ κύριος (= אֲדֹנָי) is that "he hath done for me μεγάλα." And what are these μεγάλα? They are scattering the proud, putting down princes, lifting the humble to exalted places, feeding the poor with

good things while the rich are sent empty away, helping Israel his παῖς according to the promises of old — all expressions which belong to the national literature. For parallels see Resch, "Kindheitsevangelium," *Texte u. Untersuch.*, Band X, Heft 5; W. H.; Plummer's *Luke;* Harnack, *op. cit.*, and for the Ps. Sol., Ryle and James, p. xci. The entire thought lies within the common Jewish national range.

3. It is difficult to suppose it a Jewish-Christian interpolation, since it contains no recognition of a personal Messiah. All the hopes of the writer are grounded, not on a Messianic prince, but on the work of God himself. The Messianic hope of the writer belongs, not to the personal type of the authors of Ps. Sol. 17 and 18 and Enoch 37 ff., but to the impersonal type of the authors of Daniel, the Assumption of Moses, and the Book of Jubilees. Harnack's suggestion cannot be treated fully in a brief article like this, but one is led to wonder whether a compend of phrases from Hebrew literature so skilfully put together — and Harnack makes much of the constructive skill of the author — could have been produced by what must, in that case, have been the more or less academic performance of the Lucan editor. The fresh spontaneity of the song would seem to point to some author to whom the phrases of Jewish literature were a part of his very heart and life.

The general position that the song is Jewish is argued at length by Hillmann, *Jahrb. f. Prot. Th.* 1890. Holtzmann, *Syn. Evang.*, 3d ed., follows Hillmann. (In the first edition he calls the song "without doubt an early remnant of Jewish-Christian hymnology.") Neither, however, find the hymn a strictly national Jewish song. The feminine expression τῆς δούλης is in the way. Hillmann suggests that the song was "perhaps originally the song of thanks of a mother over the happy home-coming of a son from a victorious campaign against the oppressors of Israel" (*op. cit.*, p. 200). Such an explanation fails to fit the entirely national character of the song outside of the single phrase τῆς δούλης.

With regard to this phrase, it is only the feminine gender that creates any difficulty. May we not suppose that the gender is due to the editorial assignment of the song to Mary? Then, changing it to masculine, τοῦ δούλου becomes the translation of the Hebrew עַבְדּוֹ, used of the nation. Such a use of δοῦλος for עַבְדּוֹ in the national sense is found in the LXX in Isa. 48^{20} $49^{3.5}$ Ezek. 37^{25} Ps. 136^{22}. In Ps. Sol. the word is twice used in the plural for pure Israel: 2^{41} εὐλογητὸς κύριος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἐνώπιον τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ; 10^{4} μνησθήσεται κύριος τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐλέει. This plural use is in accord with

the method of expression in these Psalms. Jerusalem is personified in them, but the nation is always spoken of in plural forms.

Interpreting δούλης in this way, the whole song becomes consistent, and the use of the first person is throughout national. In putting it in the mouth of Mary the editor has simply followed ancient examples, like the song of Hannah, which is also incongruous to its situation, the blessing of Jacob, and the last words of Moses and David. Nor is there any reason to assume that he supposed this old and perhaps well-known song would be regarded as Mary's composition. He used it only as a fitting literary expression for the Messianic hopes and patriotic aspirations which he assumed to have filled her mind during the period preceding the birth of Christ. Here again he was following Jewish models. What was the attitude of the authors of the Prayer of Azarias and the Song of the Three Children toward their compositions? Did they intend them to pass as verbatim words of the characters to whom they are assigned, or simply as literary expressions appropriate to their situation?

To make τῆς δούλης the representative of an original עֶבֶד used of the nation is to simplify the exegesis of a passage that otherwise presents great difficulties. It only remains to add that the assignment of the song to Mary is more easily explained after the translation into Greek than before. It would then involve only the change of gender, while if made in Hebrew, it would have required the substitution for עֶבֶד of another word, as שִׁפְחָה or אָמָה.[1]

[1] The same arguments for a Jewish origin will apply to the first part of the Song of Zacharias, Lk. 1^{68-75}. Vs.$^{76-79}$ are regarded by Hillmann and Holtzmann as a Jewish-Christian addition. The arguments are (1) the change of tense from aorist to future, (2) the definite reference in the last part to the Messiah, with a Christian rather than a Jewish tone, (3) certain repetitions and discrepancies of thought between the two sections, (4) the word παιδίον, v.^{76}. Probably the analysis is correct, and the last section is a Christian addition to the original Jewish Messianic song; but the word παιδίον would of itself create no more difficulty than does δούλης in v.^{48}. It would be possible to regard it also as the representative of עֶבֶד, coming through παῖς, though in this case the meaning of עֶבֶד would be, not Israel, but the personal Messiah, as in Acts 4^{27-30} Mt. 12^{18}. The change from παῖς to παιδίον would be made to fit the reference of the word to the infant John. Probably, however, as said above, the section is Christian in origin, but the use of παιδίον creates no absolute demand for this interpretation.