

“GREATER THAN THEY” (LUKE 9:46) ON THE RECEPTION OF A MARKAN DOUBLET IN LUKE

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Abstract. The most widely accepted example of a Markan doublet is the logion on greatness in Mark 9:35//10:43–44. Both halves of this “sayings doublet” are themselves part of two episodes on quarrels among Jesus’ disciples (cf. Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45) which build something like a “narrative doublet” in Mark. Assuming Luke’s redaction of Mark, the present study analyzes the fate of this striking Markan doublet(s) within the Lukan framework in order to shed some new light at Luke’s redactional activity as well as his theological agenda. After a brief look at Luke’s incorporation of Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45, this paper highlights some unexpected interpretative challenges in Luke 9:46–48 and argues for a fresh reading of Luke 9:46 (based on a very old proposal) that may offer a solution to the riddles of Luke’s redaction of Mark 9:33–37.

Keywords: Gospel of Mark – Gospel of Luke – doublets – quarrel over greatness – redaction criticism.

One of the main reasons for the importance of so-called “doublets” in the history of the Synoptic Problem is their uneven distribution. While the gospels of Matthew and Luke contain a significant number of doublets, hardly any of them can be found in Mark.¹ The most widely accepted example of a Markan doublet is the logion on greatness in Mark 9:35//10:43–44. Both halves of this “sayings doublet” are themselves part of two episodes on quarrels among Jesus’ disciples (cf. Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45) which build something like a “narrative

¹ For terminological discussions (e.g., “sayings doublet”, “narrative doublet”) and the history of research on doublets in Luke, cf. W. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Wieviele Doubletten finden sich im Lukasevangelium? Forschungsgeschichtliche und methodologische Klärungen’, *ETL* 97 (2021), 191–222. For a discussion of doublets in Matthew, see P. FOSTER, ‘The Doublets in Matthew: What Are They Good For?’, in *An Early Reader of Mark and Q*, eds. ed. J. VERHEYDEN and G. VAN BELLE. BTS 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 109–138. Possible doublet-based arguments for or against a certain solution to the Synoptic problem are evaluated in W. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Luke’s Doublets and the Synoptic Problem’, *NTS* 68 (2022), 13–25.

doublet” in Mark.² Assuming Luke’s redaction of Mark, the present study analyzes the fate of this striking Markan doublet(s) within the Lukan framework in order to shed some new light at Luke’s redactional activity as well as his theological agenda.

This enterprise seems to be promising for at least two reasons: First, Luke is well known for his tendency to picture Jesus’ disciples in a rather favorable way. The omission of both Peter’s rebuke as ‘Satan’ (cf. Mark 8:33) and the abandonment by the disciples (cf. Mark 14:50) are among the most prominent examples for this Lukan characteristic. Hence it will be interesting to see how Luke deals with a Markan tradition which not only contains a quite unfavorable image of Jesus’ disciples but even appears twice within Mark’s narrative. Second, Luke’s treatment of doublets has been assessed in very different ways: While some scholars underscore Luke’s *Dublettenfurcht*,³ others state that Luke displays even more doublets than Matthew.⁴ Studying Luke’s redactional activity in relation to a doublet which he already found in one of his sources can fairly be expected to foster the understanding of Luke’s attitude to the literary phenomenon of doublets.

After a brief look at Luke’s incorporation of Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45, the following study highlights some unexpected interpretative challenges in Luke 9:46–48, proposing that a fresh reading of Luke 9:46 (based on a very old proposal) may offer some solutions to the riddles of Luke’s redaction of Mark 9:33–37.

1. Luke’s Reception of a Markan Doublet

On the assumption of Markan priority, Luke found two passages about quarreling disciples in Mark. With neither Mark 9:33–37 nor Mark 10:35–45 being part of the so called “great omission” (Mark 6:45–8:26, which is missing between Luke 9:17 and 9:18) the question poses itself in which way Luke, who tends to draft a more positive image of the disciples as Mark, incorporated these passages into his own narrative.

² For a helpful introduction to repetitions in Mark, see G. VAN OYEN, “Repetitious Style and the Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark”, in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: style, text, interpretation*, ed. G. VAN OYEN, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 223 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 109–125.

³ This view was most prominently advocated by H. SCHÜRMAN, ‘Die Dubletten im Lukasevangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Verdeutlichung des lukanischen Redaktionsverfahrens’, *ZKT* 75 (1953) 338–345: 341 n. 25. For a critique, cf. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Dubletten’ (see n. 1), 209–212.

⁴ Cf. M. TIWALD, *Die Logienquelle. Text, Kontext, Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 19.

1.1 Luke’s Reception of Mark 9:33–37

With the important exception of the “great omission” mentioned above, Luke’s ninth chapter follows the Markan story line quite closely until the beginning of the so-called *Reisebericht* or Central Section in Luke 9:51. This is also true for the dispute among the disciples which is related in Mark 9:33–37. As in Mark, this episode follows the second passion prediction (Luke 9:43b–45; cf. Mark 9:30–32; Matt 17:22–23) and precedes John’s complaint about the foreign exorcist (Luke 9:49–50; cf. Mark 9:38–40, missing in Matthew). Luke’s representation of the Markan material includes nevertheless a series of noticeable modifications. First of all, Luke omits the secret journey through Galilee mentioned in Mark 9:30, the return of the group to Capernaum, and the location of Jesus’ teaching ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ (Mark 9:33). The missing topographical information strengthens the connection between Luke’s version of Mark 9:33–37 and the second passion prediction.⁵ Because Luke further omits the short dialogue from Mark 9:28–29 (the references εἰς οἶκον and κατ’ ἰδίαν included), no change of time or place is narrated between the descending of Jesus, Peter, John, and James from the mountain the day after the transfiguration (cf. Luke 9:37) and the decision to go towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Thus, Luke 9:46–48 appears to be connected not only with the passion prediction in Luke 9:44–45, but even with the healing of the possessed boy in Luke 9:37–43.

In addition to these modifications of narrative context, Luke undertook a major reworking of the content of Mark 9:33–37, which is described by Joseph Fitzmyer in the following way: “He omits the first saying of Jesus (= Mark 9:35bc) and composes his own version of it at the end of the story (v. 48c). In introducing, first of all, the illustration of the little child and the saying about it, to which v. 48c is then appended, he creates a much more unified episode”⁶ then Mark 9:33–37, where “two incidents are topically arranged”⁷. Luke’s Jesus addresses the disciples (cf. Luke 9:43.46) but neither does he call the Twelve (ἐφώνησεν τοὺς δώδεκα, Mark 9:35) nor does he take the child in his arms (cf. Luke 9:47 with Mark 9:36; see also Luke 18:15–17, where diff. Mark 10:16 not even the laying of his hands on the children is reported). In sum, Luke 9:46–48 may not only be called “a much more unified episode” then Mark 9:33–35.36–37, but also appears to be much better embedded into its immediate context of Luke 9:37–50.

⁵ Cf. F. BOVON, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Lk 1,1–9,50), EKK III/1 (Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 517.

⁶ J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, translation, and notes*, The Anchor Bible 28 (Garden City: New York Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986), 815–816.

⁷ FITZMYER, *Luke I* (see n. 6), 815.

1.2 Luke's Reception of Mark 10:35–45

Luke's reception of Mark 10:35–45 is rather different compared to that of Mark 9:33–37. After the third passion prediction (Mark 10:32–34//Lk 18:31–34) and before the healing of the blind man at Jericho (Mark 10:46–52 [after Jericho]//Lk 18:35–43 [before Jericho]), a parallel to Mark 10:35–45 *is missing* in Luke's storyline. For this reason, Mark 10:35–45 is sometimes listed among Luke's omissions from Mark.⁸ Later in the Lukan narrative (Luke 22:24–27), however, we do find a second scene which depicts Jesus and his disciples discussing greatness: Placed immediately after the Last Supper (Luke 22:14–23), this pericope displays some striking similarities with Mark 10:35–45 and thus the possibility of a Lukan transposition (and transformation) of Mark 10:35–45 needs to be considered. Closely linked to the thorny issue of identifying sources behind Luke's passion narrative,⁹ the debate whether Luke omitted or transposed Mark 10:35–45 is organized around one crucial question: Is it plausible to assume that Luke inserted a quarrel (φιλονεικία) among the apostles into such a solemn context as the Last Supper?

This question appears to be even more pressing if one takes into account Luke's above-noted tendency to brighten the portraits of the disciples. Shall we consider that no one other than Luke, who demonstrably changed Mark several times in order to put the disciples in a more favorable light, moved the story about the disciples' quarrel to one of the most inappropriate places one could think of – right after the Last Supper? On first sight, this would seem to be absurd. On a closer look, however, Luke 22:24–27 fits quite well into Luke's narrative. Peter K. Nelson convincingly demonstrated that Luke 22:24 is closely connected to Luke 22:23 on at least two different levels. First, the reference backwards with δὲ καὶ is not “künstlich”¹⁰ at all, but guarantees that καὶ is taken in an adverbial sense: After the search for the betrayer *another* debate arises amongst the apostles.¹¹ Second, the structure of Luke 22:23 is paralleled in Luke 22:24 with both verses including an indirect question about a certain person within the group. Both observations lead to the impression that Luke

⁸ E.g., in D. RUSAM, 'Das Lukasevangelium', in *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, eds. M. EBNER and S. SCHREIBER, 3rd. ed., Kohlhammer-Studienbücher Theologie 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2020), 187–209: 193, who gives the following reason for Luke's omission: “Der Jüngerstreit in Mk 10,35–45 ist von Lukas deshalb ausgelassen, weil er wie eine Dublette des Streites von Lk 9,46 wirkt und dadurch die Jünger – ähnlich wie in Mk 8,14–21 – in schlechtem Licht dargestellt werden...”

⁹ Cf. the discussion in M. WOLTER, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 686–692.

¹⁰ H. KLEIN, *Das Lukasevangelium*, KEK I/3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 669.

¹¹ Cf. P. K. NELSON, *Leadership and discipleship: a study of Luke 22:24–30*, Dissertation series/Society of Biblical Literature 138 (Atlanta: Ga. Scholars Press, 1994), 139.

22:24–27 should be read in the light of Luke 22:21–23 with the former being an “escalation”¹² based on the latter. According to Nelson, “in terms of the Lukan story line, the immediate occasion for the v 24 quarrel is the v 23 dispute, for it is not impossible, that other factors (e.g., table position and posture) may have had a role in shaping the sequence of events.”¹³ In difference to Mark 10:35, where the request of James and John, ultimately leading to Jesus’ teaching about greatness in Mark 10:43–44, follows the third passion prediction (Mark 10:32–34) rather abruptly, the φιλονεικία of Luke 22:24 arises thus in a situation of doubt and stress. By this, Luke 22:24–26 is not only located at a plausible place within Luke’s narrative but also introduced in a way that makes the concern(s) of the disciples a bit more understandable than in Mark 10:35–45.¹⁴

This brief look at the incorporation of Mark 9:33–37/10:35–45 into the Third Gospel reveals some substantial changes by Luke’s redaction. In Luke 9:46–48, Luke moves the saying about greatness from the beginning of Jesus’ answer (Mark 9:35) to its end (Luke 9:48) and ties his version of Mark 9:33–37 very closely to its immediate context which turns Luke 9:37–50 into a new, coherent unit. However one decides upon the source behind Luke 22:24–26, it is both striking that Mark 10:35–45 is missing at its “proper” place in Luke (between Luke 18:34 and 18:35) and that Luke includes an episode about quarreling disciples at the Last Supper which is introduced in a very similar way as his reworking of Mark 9:33–37 in Luke 9:46–48 (compare Luke 9:46 [εἰσηλθεν δὲ διαλογισμὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς ἂν εἴη μείζων αὐτῶν] with Luke 22:24 [ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων]!). To sum up, Luke did not take over the doublet Mark 9:33–37/10:35–45 as it appears in Mark, but created a doublet of his own (Luke 9:46/22:24)¹⁵ on the basis of Markan material.

¹² NELSON, *Leadership* (see. n. 11), 140.

¹³ NELSON, *Leadership* (see. n. 11), 141. KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see. n. 10), 669: “Aus der Diskussion, wer der Verräter sei, wird ein Streit, wer der Größte ist (V.24).” This statement is meant ironically (as a critique of Luke’s bad connection at this point) – but in my opinion, it is true in its plain sense.

¹⁴ Although an elaborated case for or against a Markan background of Luke 22:24–26 lies beyond the scope of this study, the observation of G. CAREY, (‘Moving Things Ahead: A Lukan Redactional Technique and Its Implications for Gospel Origins’, *BibInt* 21 (2013), 302–319, at 309) that Luke’s transmissions of Markan material usually include heavy reworking, seems worth of noting.

¹⁵ Interestingly, Luke 9:46//22:24 is listed in most of the classical studies of Lukan doublets, but seems to be somehow “forgotten” in more recent literature on the topic, cf. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Dubletten’ (see n. 1), 213–214.220.

2. Difficulties With a Careful Redaction (Luke 9:46–48)

Luke 9:46–48 is, as we just have seen, a careful adaption and transformation of Mark 9:33–37 and could be considered a text-book example of Luke’s redactional activity. The resulting Lukan text, however, is not without its difficulties. Two observations are particularly striking: First, Luke uses ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ (Luke 9:49) to connect the discussion on greatness in Luke 9:46–48 with the following episode about the unknown exorcist. This leads to the question how John’s complaint can be understood as a response to Jesus’s teaching in the preceding verses. Second – and this is puzzling in a much more fundamental way –, the train of thought in Luke 9:46–48 seems to be far from clear: Even experienced commentators struggle severely in explaining the narrative logic of Luke’s redaction of Mark at this point. Both of these observations deserve a closer look.

2.1 John’s Report as Reaction to Jesus’ Teaching in Luke 9:49

In Luke 9:37–50, Luke keeps Mark’s sequence and tightens it by omitting topographical information from Mark 9:28.30.33 – thus all of the changes of place and time between Luke 9:37 and 9:51 disappear (cf. § 1.1). Moreover, Luke drops some of the Markan elements of the exorcist story (Mark 9:39b.41) – but unlike Matthew not the episode itself. As a result it is prominently placed as the ultimate completion of Jesus’ “Galilean ministry” immediately before the turning point of Luke 9:51.

Already in Mark the story about the unknown exorcist is connected with the dispute among greatness due to the catchword connection ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου/ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου (Mark 9:37.38). Although the expressions ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου (Luke 9:48a) and ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου (Luke 9:49) do not appear back to back in Luke because the saying on greatness is placed in between of them (Luke 9:48b), the link itself appears to be even stronger: On the one hand, there is no buffer between the dialogue on greatness and the story of the unknown exorcist (diff. Mark 9:36–37), on the other hand, the expression ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου is now placed in the center of Jesus’ response to the disciples (Luke 9:48a).

Luke not only strengthens an already existing connection between both stories but adds a further, more obvious connection of his own. Instead of Mark’s ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰωάννης, Luke’s version of the exorcist episode opens up with ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Ἰωάννης εἶπεν. Although ἀποκριθεὶς in Luke 9:49 often remains untranslated, it should not be underestimated. In their seminal study on *Semitisms in Luke’s Greek*, Albert Hogeterp and Adelbert Denaux analyze in great detail Luke’s use of ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν as “biblical language modelled after

LXX Greek”¹⁶ (or: “biblical Hebraistic variety of Greek”¹⁷) in great detail.¹⁸ They conclude: “Inchoative use of ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν is not ‘strictly redundant’, but it can mark the continuation or taking up of discourse”¹⁹. This becomes apparent if one looks at the “clear instances of non-responsorial ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν”²⁰ in Luke as given by Hogeterp/Denaux. Besides Luke 9:49, they list Luke 1:60 (Elizabeth’s reaction to plans about the name of her son); 13:2 (Jesus’ reaction to the story of Pilate’s victims); 14:3 (Jesus’ reaction to the appearance of the ἄνθρωπος ὑδρωπικός); 15:29 (the reaction of the elder son to his father’s invitation); 17:17 (Jesus’ reaction to the thankfulness of only one of the healed Samaritans) and 22:51 (Jesus’ reaction to cutting off an ear).²¹ In light of this evidence, François Bovon seems to be right: “Indem Lukas dieses Material bearbeitet, versucht er auch die nächste, die letzte Episode damit in Verbindung zu setzen, was daraus ersichtlich wird, daß die Johannesfrage (9,49) als Reaktion (ἀποκριθεὶς δέ) erscheint.”²²

Both of these observations – the increased force of the catchword connection ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου/ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου and the change of Mark’s ἔφη to ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν – demonstrate that Luke strengthened the connection between the dialogue on greatness and the story of the unknown exorcist. But why? Of course, both episodes deal with the correction of the disciples. Nevertheless it is legitimate to question the narrative plausibility of depicting John’s report as a *reaction* to Jesus’ teaching in Luke 9:48.²³

¹⁶ A. L. HOGETERP/A. DENAUX, *Semitisms in Luke’s Greek: a descriptive analysis of lexical and syntactical domains of semitic language influence in Luke’s gospel*, WUNT 401 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 386.

¹⁷ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388.

¹⁸ Cf. HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 381–388.

¹⁹ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388.

²⁰ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388.

²¹ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388, give Luke 13:14 as a further example, but ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν is missing there.

²² BOVON, *Lukas I* (see n. 5), 515. Similarly WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 360: “Formgeschichtlich handelt es sich um zwei Chrien, die thematisch voneinander unabhängig sind, jedoch von Lukas mit Hilfe des einleitenden ἀποκριθεὶς in V. 49a miteinander verklammert werden. In beiden Fällen werden die Jünger korrigiert und belehrt.”

²³ The tension is felt by KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see. n. 10), 355: “Das kleine Gespräch zwischen Jesus und Johannes erscheint wie ein Kommentar zur Aussage über die wahrhaftige Größe. Dennoch handelt es sich um einen anderen Gedanken.”

2.2 Issues With the Train of Thought in Luke 9:46–48

Speaking of “narrative plausibility”, Jesus’ teaching in Luke 9:47–48 is a challenge on its own. This is easily overlooked if interpreters take the message of Luke 9:47–48 for granted in respect of its *Vorlage* in Mark 9:33–35. Such readings *assume* that Luke wants to narrate Jesus encouraging the disciples to humble themselves and teaching them that the one who aims to become the smallest will receive true greatness. However, if one follows closely Luke’s text, several issues with such a *Markan interpretation* of Luke 9:47–48 appear. To illustrate this fact, I will briefly discuss three passages from major commentaries on Luke, demonstrating how quickly a Markan perspective on Luke 9:47–48 leads into trouble.

My first example comes from the volume on Luke in the *Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar* series, authored by Hans Klein. Commenting on Luke 9:48, Klein writes:

“Aber es wird jetzt nicht gesagt, daß dieses Kind in Wirklichkeit der/das Größte sei, sondern völlig unerwartet, daß derjenige, der dieses Kind im Namen Jesu, d.h. unter Berufung auf ihn, im Wissen um seinen Auftrag aufnimmt, ihn und damit Gott selbst aufnimmt (vgl. 10,16). Nicht das Kind an sich ist groß, sondern das, was ‘mit ihm’ aufgenommen wird. Das Kind hat nur eine abgeleitete oder gar nur bildhafte Größe. Groß ist also nicht, was getan wird, sondern was angenommen, aufgenommen wird. Es handelt sich um eine passive Größe und zwar für den Aufnehmenden, nicht für den Aufgenommenen. *Daraus wird etwas zu rasch der Schluß gezogen*: Groß ist, wer unter euch klein ist. Der Satz ist bewußt paradox gefaßt und ans Ende gerückt. Er erinnert mit μικρότερος noch an 7,28. Die wahrhafte Größe, so dürfte Lk gemeint haben, erkennt man an dem, der klein ist oder klein wird.”²⁴

Klein, a careful reader of Luke, is puzzled by two details of the text: First, he assesses the transition from Luke 9:47, where Jesus takes the child and puts it besides him, to Luke 9:48, where Jesus explains that receiving this very child means receiving him and, in fact, receiving the one who sent Jesus, as “completely surprising”. According to Klein, it would have been much more natural for Luke to follow up Luke 9:47 with a statement declaring that this child is the greatest. This reasoning reveals that in Klein’s view, the combination of Luke 9:47 and 9:48a does not account for a truly fitting response to the question about greatness posed in Luke 9:46. According to him, the fitting answer to Luke 9:46 is to be found in Luke 9:48b – which is the logion that responds to the question about greatness *in Mark* (see Mark 9:34.35).²⁵

²⁴ KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 10), 354–355.

²⁵ Accordingly, KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 10), 353, writes in the introduction to the commentary on Luke 9:46–48: “Auf die Problemanzeige in V.46 antwortet die Sentenz in V.48b. Die Bildhandlung in der Mitte mit Kommentar in V.47.48a hat damit kaum Berührungspunkte

Second, Klein thinks that after the exemplary act and its interpretation in Luke 9:47–48a the general conclusion in Luke 9:48b follows “a little bit too quickly”. Again, the Lukan sequence appears to be somehow loose or disordered in Klein’s view. Like with the transition from Luke 9:47 to Luke 9:48a discussed above, Klein implicitly identifies Mark’s sequence as the correct one without trying to explain why Luke should have rearranged it in such an unconvincing way.

A second example for the interpreters’ struggle with Luke’s train of thought comes from François Bovon’s commentary on Luke. Bovon, without doubt one of the most influential Lukan scholars of our times, shows similar concerns as Klein but aims for a slightly different solution. He writes:

“Aber *der dazu passende Spruch* ist nicht das nächste Wort, sondern das Weisheitslogion vom Kleineren, der in der Tat ‘groß’ ist (9,48b). Auf den ersten Blick behandelt das dazwischenliegende Wort (9,48a) ein anderes Thema: die theologische Zugehörigkeit der Gesandten zum göttlichen Urheber und die entscheidende ethische Haltung ihnen gegenüber. Aber die Reihenfolge innerhalb des Wortes (das Kind – ich [= Jesus] – der Aussendende [= Gott]) begründet das theozentrische Wort vom Kind. Damit wird also auch hier auf den Streit angespielt, wie die Zusammengehörigkeit der Geste (Jesus nimmt ein Kind zu sich [9,47b]) und des ersten Wortes (Anspielung auf dieses Kind [9,48b]) zeigt.”²⁶

Basically, Bovon’s trouble with this passage is the same as Klein’s: After commenting on Jesus’ action in Luke 9:47b he identifies the Logion in Luke 9:48b as “the saying which is fitting to this [action]”. Again, Luke 9:48a is seen as some sort of a distraction, as a somehow misplaced piece of teaching. In difference to Klein, however, Bovon proposes an explanation for Luke’s redactional changes. On the one hand, he sees the catchword connection in Luke 9:47b/48a as an allusion to the question about greatness. This minimizes the effect of distraction in Luke 9:48a. On the other hand, Bovon describes the structure of Luke 9:46–48 as concentric (V.46: A – V.47: B – V.48a: B’ – V.48b: A’) and designed to express two different aspects of justification: The acceptance of the elect by God and the acceptance of God (and his missionaries) by the believer. This is a sophisticated solution indeed, yet it remains doubtful if the concentric structure

und verändert den Gedanken etwas. Dies zeigt an, daß der Text eine Vorgeschichte hat. Sie wird in Mk 9,35.37 erkennbar...”.

²⁶ BOVON, *Lukas I* (see n. 5), 514–515.522 (on Luke 9:48a): “Merkwürdigerweise steht das deutende Wort zur Eingangsfrage nach der Größe in einer gewissen Spannung, weil das Kind nicht sofort nach dem erwarteten Paradox als der Erwachsene, d.h. als der ‘Große’ vorgestellt wird.”

found by Bovon helps any reader of Luke to cope with the assumed rupture between Luke 9:47 and 9:48.

With far less sophistication, but with far more directness, the author of my third and last example from commentary literature reacted to the structural challenges of Luke 9:46–48. In his commentary published with the widely read series *Regensburger Neues Testament*, Josef Ernst just placed the commentary section of Luke 9:48a *after* Luke 9:48b. Without changing text and translation of Luke 9:46–48 and without defending his approach on a methodological or hermeneutical level, Ernst creates a surprisingly smoothly running commentary on Luke 9:46–48. When he reaches Luke 9:48b (after Luke 9:48a!), he laconically writes:

“Die zweite Deutung der Symbolhandlung, die im vorliegenden Text an erster Stelle angeführt ist, gibt dem Gedanken noch eine andere Wendung: Jesus sieht das Kind in seiner Hilflosigkeit.”

Without any sign of hesitation, Ernst claims that “within the present text”, i.e. canonical Luke, “the second interpretation of the symbolic action” (= Luke 9:48a) is placed before the first one (= Luke 9:48b). According to Ernst, this second interpretation “turns the train of thought in another direction”. Without even wondering how a reader of canonical Luke would and should read the sequence Luke 9:46.47.48a.48b, he simply comments on the passage *as if* its sequence would be Luke 9:46.47.48b.48a. For sure, most students of Luke will not agree with this bold move. However, Ernst’s radical solution is closely related to the more nuanced reflections of Klein and Bovon. Far from being the odd approach of an outsider, Ernst’s decision to comment Luke 9:48a after Luke 9:48b just highlights the troubles with Luke’s sequence experienced also by other interpreters of Luke 9:46–48.

3. Repetition and Difference in Luke 9:46/22:24

In order to shed some new light on the interpretative challenges noted in the previous paragraph, it might be helpful to remember a very old proposal. Back in 1878, Bernhard Weiss drew attention to a small but striking difference between the two “accounts of quarrel” in Luke 9:46–48 and Luke 22:24–27. Compared to the topic of the φιλονεικία in Luke 22:24 which is rendered with τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων, the topic of the διαλογισμός in Luke 9:46–47 is expressed through a slightly different word order: τὸ τίς ἂν εἴη μείζων αὐτῶν. Usually both phrases are translated in roughly the same way. Joseph Fitzmyer, for

example, offers in Luke 9:46 the translation “Which of them would be greatest?” and in Luke 22:24 “Which one of them would seem to be greatest?”.²⁷

Weiss, however, argued that a translation of Luke 9:46/22:24 should not only take into account the difference between ἄν εἶη (Luke 9:46) and δοκεῖ εἶναι (Luke 22:24), as Fitzmyer’s obviously does, but also the difference in word order. With αὐτῶν placed not after τίς as in Luke 22:24, but after μείζων, Luke 9:46 allows a translation which is neither possible in Mark 9:34 nor in Luke 22:24, namely “Who would be greater *than they*?”.²⁸ Instead of narrating a conflict *within* the group of the disciples, this reading sees the disciples discussing if there might be someone greater than them *outside* of their group. According to Weiss, the usual translation of Luke 9:46 underestimates the difference of word order between Luke 9:46 and 22:24 and reads Luke 9:46 through a Markan lense (cf. Mark 9:34). Therefore Weiss harshly labels the classical translation as “[w]ortwidrige Harmonistik”²⁹, i.e. a harmonization with the Markan *Vorlage* that ignores the Lukan wording.

Weiss, however, did not find many followers for this proposal.³⁰ Most scholars found it unnecessary even to discuss this possibility and simply continued to read Luke 9:46 in the sense of “which of them”. An important exception to this rule is the brief but philologically careful commentary of Erich Klostermann. Commenting on Luke 9:46, Klostermann notes: “... αὐτῶν trotz 22₂₄ zu τίς gehörig, nicht zu μείζων; sonst hätte Jesus mit einer symbolischen Handlung bezeugen wollen: größer *als ihr* ist das demütige Kind, das ich hier neben mich stelle”.³¹ Klostermann accepts the different word order in Luke 22:24 as a possible argument in support of Weiss’s view (“trotz”), but nevertheless thinks that Jesus’ *reaction* (Luke 9:47) – placing the child besides him – is not compatible with

²⁷ FITZMYER, *Luke I* (see n. 6), 815 (9:46) and J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel according to Luke II (X-XXIV)*, The Anchor Bible 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 1411 (22:24).

²⁸ B. WEISS, *Erste Abtheilung, zweite Hälfte, die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas umfassend*. 6th. ed., KEK 6 (Göttigen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1878), 395. According to Weiss, “[will] Luk[as], der das αὐτῶν ausdrücklich nicht wie 22, 24 nach τίς setzt, die Frage nicht auf ihre Ueberhebung über einander, sondern auf ihre Selbstüberhebung über Andre beziehen (‘wer wohl grösser wäre, als sie’), um auch V. 49f. unter dies Thema zu subsumieren.”

²⁹ WEISS, *Evangelien des Markus und Lukas* (see n. 28), 395.

³⁰ Against Weiss see H. SCHÜRMAN, *Das Lukasevangelium (1,1–9,50)*, HThK III/1 (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1969), 575 n. 2, who argues that μείζων has to be taken as superlative and that αὐτῶν ist to be combined with τίς. W. GRUNDMANN, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, ThHK 3 (Berlin: EVA, 1969), 196, translates Luke 9:46 with “wer größer sei als sie” and explains (id., 197): “Der Text des Lukas läßt im Unterschied zur Markus-Fassung die Möglichkeit zu, die Frage der Jünger zu übersetzen, wer größer sei als sie; sie halten sich für die Größten, weil sie Jesu Jünger sind.” Against Grundmann see F. BOVON, *Lukas I* (see n. 5), 521 n. 40 (without reasons).

³¹ E. KLOSTERMANN, *Lukas*, HNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1919), 109 (emphasis original).

the reading “greater than they”. This reading, Klostermann argues, would lead to the consequence of Jesus assessing the child greater than the disciples. Yet this argument completely overlooks Jesus’ *teaching* (Luke 9:48a), which is not about the greatness (or rather: smallness) of the child at all but about receiving (δέχεσθαι) it. Moreover, Michael Wolter demonstrated convincingly the importance of the specification ἐπί τῷ ὀνόματι (Ἰησοῦ): It is not a certain act, not the receiving of the child (however perceived), which is of importance here, yet acting ἐπί τῷ ὀνόματι (Ἰησοῦ). In Wolter’s words: “Selbst wer etwas so Kleines und Unbedeutendes aufnimmt wie ein Kind, nimmt – sofern er es ἐπί τῷ ὀνόματι Jesu tut – Gott auf.”³² For this reason, Jesus’ twofold answer to the thought/discussion of the disciples (placing the child besides him and talking about it) does not lead to a comparison between the disciples and the child. Thus, Klostermann’s argument against Weiss seems unconvincing.

Most recently, Wolter himself aimed to refute Weiss’s reading. After conceding the philological possibility of the alternative reading (“Rein sprachlich könnte man 46b auch übersetzen: ‘wer größer sei als sie’”), he argues that “auf Grund von ἐν πᾶσιν ὑμῖν in V. 48d ist αὐτῶν nicht mit μείζων, sondern mit τίς zu verbinden”³³. There is, however, no necessity to combine ἐν πᾶσιν ὑμῖν with ὁ μικρότερος³⁴ and with μέγας. It seems perfectly possible to read Luke 9:48b as “The smallest one among you, he is great” without implying that “great” is meant in the sense of “great among you”. In contrast to Mark 10:43 (ὅς ἂν θέλη μέγας γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν; Luke 22:26: ὁ μείζων ἐν ὑμῖν; cf. also πρῶτος in Mark 9:35), Luke uses μέγας (9:48) here in an absolute way, as he does in Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist) and 1:32 (Jesus).

Hence, after more than 130 years of research, there seems to be still no decisive argument against Weiss’s proposal to read Luke 9:46 as “greater than they”. But should this *possible* reading also be regarded as a *probable* one? In my view, there are two observations in favor of a positive answer to this question: First, Luke’s use of “doublets” in general and second, the solution to the interpretative challenges (noted in § 2 above) which is offered by the reading “greater than they”.

Regarding the first point, it should be emphasized that the term “doublet”, as used in the study of the synoptic gospels, is a “fuzzy term”³⁵ indeed. As I have shown in detail elsewhere, there is currently neither an exact and unified definition of the term in New Testament scholarship nor an agreed list of

³² WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 362.

³³ WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 361.

³⁴ SCHÜRMANN, *Lukasevangelium I* (see n. 30), 577: “Auf die Frage nach der Größe wird nicht die auffordende Antwort gegeben: wer sich zum ‘Letzten’ und ‘Diener aller’ macht, sondern die seinshafte Feststellung: je und immer der Kleinste in der Jüngergemeinde!”

³⁵ I owe this description to Prof. Dr. Jens Schröter (Berlin).

doublets in Matthew or Luke.³⁶ Nevertheless, the long history of research on doublets provides us with many important insights into Luke’s treatment of repetitions that prove to be helpful for every student of Luke. In the present context, it is not important to agree on a certain definition of “doublet” or to connect this phenomenon with a specific solution to the Synoptic problem. It is relevant, however, that Luke repeats, connects and rearranges even very small portions of text. To name but a few examples, Luke inserts sayings in foreign contexts (Lk 21:18),³⁷ assimilates sayings to each other (Luke 8:16/11:33),³⁸ creates echoes (Luke 19:44/21:6; cf. Mk 13:2),³⁹ duplicates Markan material (Luke 9:22/17:25; cf. Mark 8:31),⁴⁰ applies parallel phrasing to create structural effects (ἐλεύσονται ἡμέραι in Luke 21:6/17:22; diff. Mark 13:2) and even uses repetitions as section markers (Luke 15:1–2 [par. 5:29–30] as opening to the dispute in Luke 15:1–32). In other cases, repetitive elements create a certain complementary effect (Luke 9:50b/11:23). While some of such smaller repetitions are located closely to each other, others appear in rather distant areas of the Lukan text (cf. Luke 5:32/19:10 or 11:43/20:46). Taken together, Luke’s ability to coordinate smaller textual units within the larger framework of the Third Gospel should not be underestimated.

In the case of Luke 9:46/22:24, it was noted above that Luke significantly reworked both Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45 and thus *created* the close parallel between Luke 9:46 and Luke 22:24 which is without a counterpart in Mark. Even if Luke 22:24–26 should stem from a pre-Lukan source other than Mark, Luke would have *assimilated* Mk 9:34 to this source. This is, of course, no definitive proof that Luke intentionally created the different word order of the disciples’ question in Luke 9:46 and Luke 22:24, yet it demonstrates that it was at least Luke’s concern to create some sort of connection between both verses.

Regarding the second point, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. As was shown above, Luke’s redactional activity transformed the various episodes in Mark 9:9–40 into a coherent unit without any changes of time and place

³⁶ Cf. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Dubletten’ (see n. 1), *passim*.

³⁷ Luke 21:18 (cf. Acts 27:34) is inserted between Mark 13:13a and 13:13b and builds thus a “redactional doublet” with Luke 12:7; cf. W. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Companions, Hairs, and Swords: Preliminary Remarks on Dys/functional Variation in Luke’s Story of Christ’, in *Christ of the Sacred Stories*, eds. P. DRAGUTINOVIC et. al., WUNT II/453 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 77–100: 82–85.

³⁸ Cf. J. SCHRÖTER, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 335, who points to the fluidity of the early textual transmission (*ibid.*, 335 n. 131), and H. T. FLEDDERMANN, ‘The doublets in Luke’, *ETL* 84 (2008), 419–422.

³⁹ Cf. WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 634.

⁴⁰ Cf. FLEDDERMANN, ‘Doublets’ (see n. 39), 413–415.

(Luke 9:37–50). Placed in the middle of this passage, the disciples' question "Who would be greater than we?" is bracketed by two stories of exorcistic (in)competence: In Luke 9:37–43 the disciples as a group fail to cast out a single demon (despite the power they received ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ δαμόνια, Luke 9:1), in Luke 9:49–50 a single foreigner casts out several demons. Seen from this perspective, the question of the disciples seems to be motivated by their failure as exorcists (obviously a lack of "greatness") on the one hand and the rivalry with a successful competitor active outside their group on the other hand. Because of Luke's tightening of the story line, John's conflict with the foreign exorcist must have happened sometimes before the transfiguration, maybe during the mission of the Twelve (Luke 9:1–6), which means that this is already a *past* experience of the disciples when the διαλογισμός of Luke 9:46 takes place.

Jesus's reaction in Luke 9:47, puzzling if one sees an in-group-conflict in Luke 9:46, is spot on: By pointing to the child besides him, he ensures the disciples that anybody (ὅς ἐάν) who receives a child in his name (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου) receives him and the one who has sent him. i.e., something besides which nothing greater can be received. Because of this, everybody within the group of the disciples (even ὁ μικρότερος!), who obviously received not only a child, but Jesus himself, is "great" (μέγας). In my view, the parallel with Luke 7:28 (λέγω ὑμῖν, μείζων ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν Ἰωάννου οὐδεὶς ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν) is striking: Even the smallest of the disciples, which are in some sense "in" the βασιλεία because of their fellowship to Jesus (cf. Luke 4:43; 6:20 and 12:32), is μέγας in such a sense that he is μείζων compared to John the Baptist who was not able to see the βασιλεία himself (cf. Luke 7:18–23).

Up to this point, the story is one of encouragement for insecure followers. But Jesus's teaching – anybody who receives a child in my name is μέγας – has another aspect, too. This other side comes to the fore through John's remark in Luke 9:49. Its designation as a response to Jesus' teaching is perfectly understandable if the conflict with the foreign exorcist already lures in the background of the διαλογισμός in Luke 9:46. Now the dialogue on greatness and acting in Jesus' name continues and takes another turn: While the disciples can be sure about their soteriological status (μέγας), they do not have reason nor right to attack the soteriological status of others outside their group who act successfully⁴¹ in the name of Jesus.

4. Conclusion

On the assumption of Markan priority, Luke found two episodes of quarreling disciples in his Markan source (cf. Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45). He used Mark 9:33–37

⁴¹ This is not a given, as Acts 19:13–17 demonstrates.

to create his own, significantly different version of a discussion (διαλογισμός) among the disciples in Luke 9:46–48. Besides rearranging this episode he integrated it into a coherent unit (Luke 9:37–50) placed between the Transfiguration and the beginning of the so-called *Reisebericht*. In contrast, Luke did not include Mark 10:35–45 into his narrative – at least not at its “proper” place between Luke 18:34 and 18:35. It remains an issue of debate if Luke 22:24–26, the quarrel of the disciples about greatness at the Last Supper, should be identified as a transmission of Mark 10:35–45, as Luke’s own creation or as material taken over from a non-Markan source. In any case, Luke did change Mark in Luke 9:46–48 in such a way that a striking parallel appears between Luke 9:46 and 22:24. Luke thus avoided to take over the doublet in Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45 as he found it in his source, but nevertheless created a doublet of his own (Luke 9:46 and 22:24) in the course of redacting Mark.

In spite of the widespread consensus that Luke redacted Mark 9:33–37 quite carefully, Luke 9:46–48 poses some challenges to interpreters of Luke. On the one hand, the close connection to the story of the foreign exorcist (ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Ἰωάννης εἶπεν, Luke 9:49 diff. Mark 9:38) demands an explanation. On the other hand, some Lukan scholars (e.g., Klein, Bovon, Ernst) struggle severely with the train of thought on Luke 9:46–48 and judge Jesus’ reaction (Luke 9:47–48a) to the disciples’ discussion (Luke 9:46) as a distraction before the “real” answer in Luke 9:48b.

Already back in the 19th century, Bernhard Weiss proposed to take the different word order between the two doublet halves in Luke 9:46 and 22:24 as a hint to an alternative reading of Luke 9:46 (“Who would be greater than they?”). While attempts to refute Weiss’ proposal (Klostermann, Schürmann, Wolter) remain unconvincing, the agreements and differences between Luke 9:46 and 22:24 – a parallel created by Luke himself! – should be taken carefully into account. Moreover, reading the disciples’ question in Luke 9:46 as “Who might be greater than they?” allows for a congruent interpretation of Luke 9:37–50 as a passage which shows the disciples’ self-assurance shattered by their incompetence as exorcists while their teacher reminds them of their status within the realm of the βασιλεία (cf. Luke 9:48 with 7:28). As a consequence, the apostles – and maybe some of their followers today – need to learn not to hinder people working ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ outside their own community.

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Taken together, a widely neglected proposal of old and insights from the current study of repetitions in Luke path the way for a fresh reading of Luke 9:46 which hopefully answers some riddles about Luke's redaction of Mark 9:33–37.

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