RESOLVING THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM USING THE TEXT
OF PRINTED GREEK SYNOPSES

In the Neirynck *Festschrift*[^1] I listed under several categories differences between the Greek text printed in the synopses of Aland[^2] (= Syn) and Greeven[^3] (= HG) and with cross-references to the synopses of Orchard[^4] and Boismard-Lamouille[^5] (= BL) in order to demonstrate the effect editorial text-critical decisions could have on an investigation into, or on statistics relevant to, the resolution of the Synoptic Problem. In that article I tried to present mere lists without commentary. In the present article I shall endeavour to make the dry presentation of lists into a practical exposition of how these texts (on which most exegetes will base their conclusion about the Synoptic Problem) can lead the unsuspecting along differing paths. For my examples below I shall use samples that reveal different aspects of literary interrelationship. We are concerned here only with those variants that are the cause of differences in the printed editions.

I divide the examples into *a*) those where the variants printed in one gospel affect the relationship with one other gospel, and *b*) those where the variants printed in one gospel occur in the triple tradition.

1. In Two Gospels

a) Matt. 11:9/Luke 7:26

There are numerous textual variants in these verses but Syn has chosen to print Matt. 11:9 with the same text as the parallel in Luke 7:26:

Matt.: ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην; ναι λέγω ύμιν, και περισσότερον προφήτου.

Luke: ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην; ναι λέγω ύμιν, και περισσότερον προφήτου.

This maintains the close parallelism between Matt. and Luke in this pericope about the witness of Jesus to John the Baptist. If one examines the same verses in HG there are significant differences between the parallels.

Matt.: ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην ναι λέγω ύμιν, και περισσότερον προφήτου.

Luke: ἀλλὰ τί ἐξεληλύθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην ναι λέγω ύμιν, και περισσότερον προφήτου.

Seeing the differences, one is then led to investigate whether Matthew’s version of the first question as printed by Syn is characteristic of the author; and whether Luke’s version of the second question in both Syn and HG is characteristic of that author. But most readers are unlikely to query the text-critical decisions behind these printed texts. As far as the Synoptic Problem is concerned a more usual, albeit myopic, reading of these in HG would encourage the reader to assume either Matt. and/or Luke had deviated from their source (Q?) or that Luke had adjusted the text he found in Matt. Users of Syn could add this verse to others that suggest both evangelists had been faithful to their source. It is also worth noting that not only in these verses but also in Luke 7:24 and 25 ἐξεληλύθατε is found in parallel to Matt.’s ἐξήλθατε in HG’s text.

Orchard prints the idiosyncratic ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε; ἰδεῖν προφήτην; in both Matthew and Luke which gives the same impression as Syn in displaying identical wording in the verses.
