NOTES AND STUDIES

JESUS READS A BOOK

Early in the narrative of Jesus’ Galilean activity, the synoptic gospels recount an episode in which Jesus teaches in the synagogue of Nazareth, greatly offending those who hear him. Luke’s account (4:16–30) is much fuller than those of Mark (6:1–6) and Matthew (13:54–8), incorporating a passage from Isaiah which Jesus reads. It is this richness of circumstantial detail that produces an interesting problem in Luke 4:17. The attempt to resolve it begins as a terminological investigation—on the meaning of the verb ἀναπτύσσω—and ends as a textual one, questioning the text usually printed for this passage.

Omitting the quotation from Isaiah, the account reads in standard texts as follows: καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαίου, καὶ ἀναπτύσσει τὸ βιβλίον εὑρέν [τὸν] τόσον οὐ ἦν γεγραμμένον ... καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον ἀπόδοες τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ ἐκάθισεν.

This is rendered in the Revised Standard Version, quoted here because it is neutral on the issue that will concern us, as follows: ’and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written ... And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.’

If one reads the commentaries and biblical lexica, however, a different and less neutral view of this passage presents itself. Here are some samples, in chronological order:

... but ‘rolled up’ would be a better rendering of πτύξας. The long strip of parchment, or less probably papyrus (2 Jn. 12), would be wound upon a roller, or possibly upon two rollers, one at each end of the strip.²

πτύξας The book was in the form of a scroll.³

Since the synagogue copies of Old Testament books were in scroll form, the use of the verb ‘to unroll’ is highly appropriate. Although copyists may have introduced ἀναπτύσσει as a pedantic correlative to πτύξας in ver. 20, it is more probable that, being accustomed to books in codex

¹ I am indebted to T. C. Skeat for a stimulating discussion by correspondence of several of the issues raised in this paper, and to a number of colleagues, particularly Carmela Franklin, Greg Horsley, Robert Kraft, Dirk Obbink and Seth Schwartz, for useful points and bibliographical direction.


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(or leaf) form, they introduced the frequently used verb ἀνάπτυξα, 'to open,' as an explanatory substitution for ἀνάπτυσσα.⁴

καὶ ἀνάπτυξας τὸ βιβλίον 'and having unrolled the scroll', cp. A-G s.v. ἀνάπτυσσα (βιβλίον is "scroll", ... as shown by ἀνάπτυξα, see below).⁵

[βιβλίον] means a 'scroll', similar to those found at Qumran... ἀνάπτυσσα ***, 'to unroll', is the appropriate verb to use (cf. πτύσσω, (4:20**), 'to fold up, roll up')... The v.l. ἀνάκτος, though well-attested ...may be due to scribes more familiar with codices than scrolls.⁶

The ptc. ἀνοίξας, 'having opened,' is the reading preferred by Nestle and Merk, but ἀνάπτυξας, 'having unrolled,' has the strong support of mss. X, D, Θ, and the Koine text-tradition .... Though it is the more proper word, the sense is not really affected.⁷

ἀνάπτύξας ('unrolled'; cf. v 20: πτέρνας, 'rolled up') is the appropriate expression for handling a parchment scroll.⁸

Before the development of the codex (forerunner of the book), scriptures were written on parchment or vellum, rolled on to spindles.⁹

Amid this sea of unanimity, there seem to be three main points: (1) βιβλίον refers to a roll (of parchment, most think); (2) ἀνάπτυσσα and πτύσσω refer respectively to unrolling and rolling up a roll and thus are the correct verbs to use with βιβλίον (meaning a roll); and (3) Luke's usage reflects the situation in Galilean synagogues in the early first century, at the time of Jesus' preaching ministry. The grip of this interpretation of Luke has been very firm.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Colin Roberts subscribed to it in The Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1 (1970), pp. 51–2, but his work with Skeat (cited below) undermined one of the foundations. Even Carsten Thiede, although a staunch partisan of the earliness of the codex, says that Jesus himself read from a scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue of
An only slightly more nuanced view is found in the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker *Lexicon* (BAGD), where we find κυλισθείσα defined as 'unroll' of a book in scroll form’ followed by references; under πτύσσω, however, we find ‘fold up … Of the folding of a document … πτύσσα τῷ βιβλίῳ after he had rolled up the scroll Lk 4:20.’ At least the reference to documents in this latter entry points the way to a less self-enclosed world of biblical interpretation, in which other contemporary Greek texts are taken into account. After all, any major Greek lexicon will tell the user that πτύσσω refers primarily to the act of folding, not to that of rolling. But, as with BAGD, the fixed notion that Jesus is thought to be rolling up a book in 4:20 has overwhelmed this knowledge. Moulton and Milligan, for instance, under πτύσσο (p. 538) say, ‘With this verb used of “rolling up” a scroll in Lk 4:20, its only occurrence in the NT, cf. πτυκτός, “a folding writing-tablet”, as in P. Strass I,39 (iii/A.D.).’ The situation with κυλισθείσα, as we shall see, at first glance gives more comfort to the notion of unrolling, but on closer examination this comfort dissipates. Far from being the ‘appropriate’ words, as our commentators rather unoriginally keep telling us, these are at best stretches from the meanings of the words.11

With βιβλίον, matters are still more complicated. It is certainly the standard word used by the Greeks for a book-roll (or ‘scroll’), but the roll does not exhaust the possible meanings of βιβλίον. As Roberts and Skeat point out, ‘it is remarkable that the Greek language never developed a specific word to designate the codex form’.12 By later antiquity, in fact, βιβλίον generally referred to a codex. Indeed, as Skeat showed, the term βιβλίον encompassed, as early as the end of the first century, even the parchment notebooks referred to as μεμβράνει (from the Latin membranae), as the phrase καὶ τὰ βιβλία, μάλιστα τὰς μεμβράνες

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11 C. P. Thiede and M. Ancona, *Eyewitness to Jesus* (New York, 1996), p. 27, cf. also p. 170. I have found no commentary on Luke which comments on this subject and disagrees; the chorus of assent includes also the commentators of W. F. Arndt (St. Louis, 1956), G. Gander (Lausanne, 1986), F. Bovon (Zürich, 1989), and C. F. Evans (London, 1990). Many commentators, of course, are not interested in such matters.

12 A. R. C. Leane, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (London, 1958), p. 118, although believing that the book was a roll, had a glimpse of the actual state of things: ‘Since the “book” was a roll a strict translation would be “he unrolled”, but this is not specially implied by the Greek.’ What ‘strict translation’ means, I cannot tell.

in 2 Tim. 4:13 shows. 13 *βιβλίον* could be used, already in classical times, to refer to a document or letter rather than a book. 14 There is thus no justification for any assertion that the use of *βιβλίον* in Luke guarantees that he is writing about a book-roll.

The third assumption, that Luke's information may be taken as a direct representation of the real situation in Jesus' lifetime, appears to be unstated, but it is pervasive. Given the obsessive zeal of biblical scholarship of the last two centuries to distinguish the nuggets of information of the time of Jesus from the authorial and redactional contributions of the various supposed intervening documents and of the evangelists themselves, the fact that this assumption is left unexamined is rather surprising. It is unlikely to be justified. Anachronism did not disturb the ancients in the way it sometimes does us, and there is no reason *a priori* to think that Luke would have been concerned with the difference between book practices of his own time and place and those of Nazareth in the lifetime of Jesus. For example, it has been noted by commentators that Luke has Jesus read from the Septuagint, which is unlikely to have been the text in use in synagogues in Nazareth or elsewhere in Palestine. 15 Even the plausibility of the very existence of a village synagogue in Galilee in the time of Jesus has been a matter of controversy. 16

All of the underlying assumptions of the prevailing consensus therefore appear shaky or downright wrong. The central question, which deserves to be examined afresh, is what Luke is likely to have meant in using the verbs *ἀναπτύσσω* and *πτύσσω*, for the meaning of *βιβλίον* can be established only from (1) the probable sense of the verbs governing it or (2) other circumstantial information. We will find that serious problems emerge from

14 This is well-recognized in BAGD; see below for further discussion.
15 E.g., François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, vol. 1 (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament III.1; Zürich, 1989), p. 211. This view, however, may itself be too optimistic about our knowledge of the milieu. Greek was certainly spoken in some circles in Sephoris, and it cannot be excluded that there were hellenophone worship services in Galilee.
16 See generally L. Grabbe, 'Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Reassessment,' *JTS*, NS 30 (1988), pp. 401-10, who is moderately positive on the existence of synagogues but does not offer any substantial evidence for non-urban synagogues at this date; H. C. Kee, 'Early Christianity in the Galilee: Reassessing the Evidence from the Gospels,' in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York, 1992), pp. 3-22, esp. pp. 9-14, who is hyper-sceptical of the existence of any pre-70 synagogues and sees Luke's entire picture as anachronistic.
this examination, which lead to a reconsideration of the reading ἀναπτύσσω, given by some manuscripts instead of ἀναπτύξω.

In the entry in LSJ for ἀναπτύσσω we do indeed find as a first definition, 'unfold the rolls on which books were written, open for readings'. It is buttressed by citation of Herodotus, Histories 1.125, with a cross-reference to chapter 48. In 1.125, Herodotus is recounting the story of how Cyrus the Great came to organize the Persian revolt from the Medes which led to the foundation of the Persian empire: γράφα τις βιβλίων τὰ ἐβολεύετο, ἀλήν τῶν Περ- σίων ἐποίησεν, μετὰ δὲ ἀναπτύξα τὸ βιβλίον καὶ ἐπιλεγόμενον ἔφη Ἀστυάγεα μιν στρατηγὸν Περσών ἄποδεκαν. Rawlinson translates this, 'He wrote what he thought proper upon a roll, and then calling an assembly of the Persians, he unfolded the roll, and read out of it that Astyages appointed him their general.' The tension in the translation is noticeable. But what does Herodotus mean by βιβλίον in this passage?

The appearance of βιβλίον in this episode begins in chapter 123 with Harpagos, who sends Cyrus a letter secretly sewn up in a hare, instructing the messenger to tell Cyrus to look inside for the message: οὕτω εἰσέθηκε βιβλίον, γράφας τά οἰ ἔδόκει, Herodotus says. The letter is quoted in chapter 124. It is 133 words long, hardly requiring a roll. We are not given the full text of Cyrus' faked letter, but it seems to have been shorter still. Nor is chapter 48 impressive evidence. Croesus is receiving back the responses of the various oracles which he has put to the test: ὃς δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι οἱ περισσεμφθέντες παρῆσαν φέροντες τοὺς χρησμοὺς, ἐνθαῦτα ὁ Κροίος ἐκατα ἀναπτύσσων ἑπώρα τῶν συγγραμμάτων. Only one of the oracles is quoted by Herodotus; it is five lines long. Why it should be supposed that a roll was required for 36 words is not evident. Even with all allowances for omission of epistolary opening and closing, and for authorial abridgement, the length of the letters is unlikely to have required much space.

Nothing in these passages of Herodotus, then, necessitates supposing that he was thinking of a roll; a single sheet of papyrus, folded, would be sufficient, and so would a tablet or a diptych of tablets. Papyrus is probably easier to stuff inside a hare, but it might be less durable in such an environment. In any event, one may render ἀναπτύσσω in Herodotus as 'unfold' with no violence to the evidence. A Greek reading or hearing the passage would

17 Rawlinson: 'When all the messengers had come back with the answers which they had received, Croesus undid the rolls, and read what was written in each.'
18 The Diccionario Griego-Español (2.262), indeed, lists both Herodotan passages under its definition 2, 'abrir en dos, desdoblár de hojas o tabillas, escritos,
certainly think first of the archetypal reference to a ‘letter’ in Homer, the folded πίναξ given by Proutos to Bellerophontes (Iliad 6.169: γράφας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ). Letters were mainly written on tablets, and opening meant unfolding.

Other passages are claimed in BAGD for the meaning ‘unroll a book in scroll form’. One is from 4 Kingdoms (2 Kings) in the Septuagint. In 19:14 Hezekiah receives messengers with a letter from the Assyrian king Sennacherib, threatening him with extinction if he rebelled: καὶ ἔλαβεν Εζεκιας τὰ βιβλία ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν ἄγγελων καὶ ἀνέγυρ ἐκ τῶν κυρίων καὶ ἀνέτυπον αὐτὰ Εζεκιας ἐναντίον κυρίων.19 The letter in Greek amounts to 80 words. Once again, then, the βιβλία are not books in scroll form, but a letter quite capable of having been written (again, even with a bit of verbiage at start and finish for the epistolary niceties) on a single pair of tablets, and it seems most likely that the translator is thinking along such lines.20

Similar is the citation of Josephus, Vita 223: τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἀναπτύξας μῆκος ἐμβλέποντος καὶ αὐτῆς ταχῦ συνει τὴν τῶν γεγραμμένων επίνοια, πάλιν αὐτὴν ἐσημειήμεν. ‘Opening the letter with no one looking on, and understanding at once from it the sense of what was written, he sealed it up again.’21 Folded letters were regularly sealed in this fashion, and nothing in the passage distinctively suggests a roll.22

etc.,’ along with other classical parallels. It does not give ‘unroll’ as a meaning for ἀναπτύσσω.

19 The Hebrew is translated in the Revised English Bible as follows: ‘Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and, having read it, he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord.’

20 In the LXX Isaiah 37:14, where the same incident is described, we find more simply καὶ ἔλαβεν Εζεκιας τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ τῶν ἄγγελων καὶ διακόπτες αὐτὸν ἐναντίον κυρίου. The verb in both passages (I am indebted to Seth Schwartz for this information) is the same, παρακεκ. The only other occurrence of the verb in the Old Testament is in Ezekiel 2:10, where it is rendered in the LXX with ἀνεκλύσασα and certainly refers to a roll. It is interesting that ἀνοίγω is used here where ἀναπτύσσω appears in the passage in 2 Kings. Cf. further below on ἀνοίγω and on this passage. It is curious that Hezekiah is said in 2 Kings to read the letter before taking it to the Temple and opening it before the Lord, and one might argue (despite the fact that αὐτὰ certainly refers to the βιβλία) that we should take ἀναπτύσσω here in the sense of explaining or setting forth a matter rather than with reference to the physical letter. The simpler formulation in Isaiah, however, suggests that this would be an excessively literal approach.

21 This passage is included in the list of passages for silent reading in antiquity given by A. K. Gavrilov, CQ 47 (1997), pp. 56–76 at p. 70.

22 I pass over their citation of Epictetus, Dissertationes ab Attiano digestae 1.17.21.1: ἐπισκέφθαι μοι τὰ σπλάγχνα, τί μοι σημαίνεις; λαβὼν καὶ ἀναπτύσσῃ, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσεται ὅτι κλλ. For the folds of entrails, see LSJ, s.v. πτέρος, 2 (citing Eur. Supp. 212, σπλάγχνω στεφάς).
The fourth citation in BAGD is from Clement of Alexandria’s citation of the Kerygma Petri (Πέτρος ἐν τῷ κτήματι περὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων): ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀναπτύξαντες τὰς βιβλίους δὲ εἰρήμεν τῶν προφητῶν. Nothing in the passage indicates what kind of books are at stake. We may suppose that Clement composed the passage in the early third century, but the date of composition of the apocryphal work he is citing is harder to establish, and the extent to which Clement may have edited its wording is unknown.

Some further passages are cited in the last German edition of Bauer’s lexicon in support of the meaning ‘to unroll’. But these are no more supportive. One is Irenaeus, Haer. 1.10.3, καὶ περὶ τοῦ τέλους καὶ τῶν μελώτων ὅσα τε κεῖται ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς ἀναπτύσσει; but this is an example of the metaphorical use of ἀναπτύσσει to mean ‘explain’; cf. the translation of A. Roberts and W. H. Rambaut, ‘unfold what is contained in the Scriptures’. Another is the Testament of Abraham, Recension B (ed. M. R. James, Texts and Studies II, p. 115, line 1): καὶ ἀναπτύξας ὁ ἄνδρὴ ἐκεῖνος μίαν τῶν βιβλίων τῶν δύον ἐκ τῶν χερουμβία ἀνεξήγησαν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τῆς φυγῆς τῆς γυναικοῦ, καὶ ἐβρευ. There is no indication of the form in which these βιβλία from the cherubim were written. Still less supportive is the Testament of Solomon (C. C. McCown (ed.), (Leipzig, 1922), 22,6), where πτύσας is used with reference to a letter (ἐπιστολή) of 16 printed lines; ἀναπτύξας there is a variant reading rejected by the editor.

If these references are unimpressive, more damaging still is the citation of Aesop, Fab. 295. A donkey and a dog are walking together on the road. εἰρωνεῖς δὲ ἐπὶ γῆς ἑαυτοις ἑμῶν

24 Mr Skeat points out to me Eusebius’ usage in ad Carpinum 29, explaining his canon table system, εἰ δὲν ἀναπτύξαι ἐν τὶ τῶν κοινῶν εὐαγγελίων .... There is no external physical detail to show that a codex is at stake, but there can be no doubt that the Gospels that Eusebius is referring to here in the fourth century were in codex form. With the Kerygma Petri, however, given a date any time in the second century, a determination of the type of book referred to can depend only on one’s sense of the likelihood that the codex was firmly established in church use at that date; the text is thus not independent evidence on either side of our issue.
27 In A. Hausnuth, Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum I.2 (Leipzig, 1956, 1959); Ben E. Perry, Aesopica (Urbana, 1925), p. 423, no. 264; variously cited also as Halm 332 and Chambré 277.
Another passage, not cited by these lexica, is only a bit less clear about the nature of the object at stake, namely the story of Polykrite narrated in Polyaenus' Strategemata (8.36.1.13). Polykrite writes and sends a letter to his brothers, telling them that they should attack that night. The letter (μολίβδον γραμματεῖον) is concealed in a πλακοῦς, a flat cake. When the brothers receive the cake, οἱ δὲ εὐρόντες τὸν μολίβδον καὶ ἀναπτύσσετε ἀναγνώρισον: 'they, finding the sheet of lead and unfolding it, read it.' Now the insertion of the detail of unfolding is Polyaenus' contribution to the story; his source, Plutarch, is silent about this aspect in his longer narration of the tale in Mulierum virtutes 254D6 (οἱ δ' ἐνυχοῦντες τὸν μολίβδον καὶ τὰ γράμματα τῆς Πολυκρίτης ἀναγινώσκειν...). (Earlier he calls the letter a μολίβδων γραμματίδων.) It is certainly true that lead curse tablets were commonly rolled up before being deposited, but lead tablets could also be folded. Since the πλακοῦς was a flat cake, it seems at least as likely that a flat-folded tablet would be readily concealed as a rolled one.

Even though ἀναπτύσσω does not mean to unroll, it would be unreasonable to claim that it could never refer to unrolling a roll. I have not found a case in which 'unroll' must be the meaning, but in the passage from the Kerygma Petri quoted above, it can-

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28 It is true that some six-witness contracts were written in the form of a double document, with one copy (or a shorter version) rolled up and sealed (a drawing of the process can be found in H.-A. Rupprecht, Kleine Einführung in die Papyrologie (Darmstadt, 1994), p. 136. But this is a feature of the early hellenistic period rather than the Roman, and belongs to documents more important than the modest private agreement at stake here, such as marriage agreements (although not wills, cf. W. Clarysse, P.Pet. 2 1, p. 16).

29 For an example, see Roman Inscriptions of Britain II.3, 2436.5. I am indebted to Roger Tomlin for advice on this subject.

30 An unfolded sheet would be easier still, and Plutarch may well have envisaged the letter in this form.
not be shown that this is not the meaning. The verb was used for a variety of actions of opening, including a common figurative use to mean 'explain' which was exemplified in the passage from Irenaeus cited above. Nonetheless, it should now be clear that the known instances of ἀναπτύσσω with an object bearing writing are otherwise all more straightforwardly explained as referring to a folded object; in no case is a rolled object likely to be meant.  

It is therefore more plausible to interpret the word in the text of Luke as referring to unfolding a book rather than to unrolling it. At the least, the tradition of insisting that ἀναπτύσσω is the perfect verb to express the act of unrolling should be abandoned. There is such a standard verb, and that is ἀνελίσσω (see LSJ s.v.).

The situation is different with the act of closing a roll. The simplex verb ἔλισσω appears not to be used with the meaning of rolling up a book. Perhaps more importantly, the act of shutting a book was not one that authors found it necessary to mention very often, either in Greek or in Latin. Luke is the only citation in LSJ for πτύσσω in reference to closing a book of any description. The OLD cites only two passages for the Latin equivalent, plico, which is used in Jerome's translation of Luke, meaning to close a book, both evidently referring to rolls. In sum, there is insufficient evidence to say as strongly about πτύσσω that it must point to a particular form of the book as one can with ἀναπτύσσω.

If the interpretation of ἀναπτύσσω offered here is correct, then, Luke would in using this verb envisage a scene in which Jesus opens and closes a codex-form book of Isaiah. No one, I believe, would suppose that the synagogue at Nazareth during Jesus' lifetime contained a codex. But is it plausible to suppose that Luke imagined the book in codex form? The answer depends on two controverted questions, the date at which Luke wrote and the date at which the codex came to be used for holding Christian scriptures. On the latter point, there seems to be agreement that the date falls in the first century: not later than c.100, Roberts and Skeat argued. Others have tried to push the date back still

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31 I have found no case—apart from Luke 4—in which the verb is used with reference to any longer document or literary work.

32 Seneca, Ep. 95.2: *historiam ingentem...artissem plicatam*, to be taken as 'un rouleau très serré' (Budé) rather than 'very closely folded' (Loeb); Martial 4.82.7, *si nimirum legisse duos (sc. libellos), tibi charta placent altera*: 'If it is too much to read two, let one book be rolled up; divided the work will thus become brief' (Loeb).

33 *The Birth of the Codex*, p. 63, cf. pp. 28–9, partly on the basis of Martial. For recent discussion of the dates of early Christian codices, see P. M. Head, *Tyndale
earlier, but there is not much evidence. Luke's date remains a matter of disagreement, but it is fair to say that almost all opinion would put it too in the last third of the first century. In other words, Luke and the generalized Christian use of the codex are approximately contemporary.

An interesting dilemma is thus posed. Skeat argued that the codex came into Christian use in order to hold the four gospels. If that view is accepted, then the writing of Luke must precede the introduction of the codex by at least some time. Luke would then be early in the period in question, the codex late. But if we find Luke describing the use of a codex as normal practice, then the introduction of the codex must precede Luke by at least some time. Even if one does not accept Skeat's view, however, and thinks that the use of the codex may have preceded Luke, there could not be much space between the two events, and Luke could hardly have been unaware that the introduction of the codex was very recent.

We have thus arrived at an uncomfortable point. There are no passages in which ἀπαντᾶσας refers clearly to unrolling a book-roll or any other rolled object; indeed, the evidence points strongly to the use of ἀπαντᾶσας to refer to unfolding hinged or codex-style objects. It is not, however, likely that when Luke wrote, such objects were used to contain scriptures in Christian churches; at best they were a very new innovation, and they may post-date Luke. It therefore seems worth while revisiting the possibility


34 Thiede and Ancona, Eyewitness to Jesus (above, n. 10), cite I. Gallo, Greek and Latin Papyrology (London, 1986), p. 14, who puts the date 'not later than 70 A.D'.

The statement is not footnoted, but for the codex he cites Roberts and Skeat.


36 It is worth while sketching briefly another possibility two colleagues have suggested, namely that what Jesus was handed was a roll of Isaiah which had been unrolled (by the attendant) to the point at which Jesus started to read, or about 90 per cent of the way toward the end. Opening the roll at this point might have seemed like unfolding, and closing it again like folding. A major difficulty with the notion of the roll's having been rolled to the proper passage is that what Luke quotes is not in fact all from Isaiah 61:1-2; rather, it includes a transposed phrase from 58:6 and an alteration of 61:2. Jesus would therefore not have found what Luke quotes at any ἐβρος in a roll. The suggestion also presupposes that the practice of having preselected passages (even if not a fully-developed lectionary) for the prophets was in use in Jesus' time, something for which there is hardly more evidence than for other aspects of synagogue practice in Galilean villages (see Zahn (above, n. 4), p. 234 and Fitzmyer (above, n. 7), pp. 531-2, for literature on the inconclusive debate about this matter). The suggestion therefore strikes me as more
of accepting ἀνοίγας, which occurs in some manuscripts and modern editions, as the original reading. In this case, ἀναπτύξας would be a later (but perhaps not much later) alteration of the text, occurring in a Christian community and deriving from the Christian use of the codex. Uses of ἀνοίγω in reference to unrolling a book-roll are unfortunately not much commoner than those of ἀναπτύσσω; indeed, the only passages of the Christian period known to me where this verb is used with reference to opening a book are in Revelation (5:1-5, cf. 20:12). It has been disputed what sort of book is meant there, and the codex has had its partisans.37 Certainly the verb is also used of opening Roman wills, which were normally written on tablets.38 Nonetheless, the prevailing opinion is that the passages in Revelation refer to rolls, principally on the grounds of the dependence of Revelation here on LXX Ezekiel 2:9-3:3, where the use of the roll is unmistakable, not only because Ezekiel will not have known the codex but because the writer uses the very specific κεφαλὴ βιβλίου for the book and ἀνελίσσω (to unroll) for his action in opening it.39

The evidence for ἀνοίγας in Luke 4:17 is substantial, including most importantly two critical early witnesses, the Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century) and Codex Vaticanus (fourth century),40 ἀναπτύξας, by contrast, can claim Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century) and Codex Bezae (fifth century). Both readings are thus well-established in the ancient tradition.41 Since the arguments for ἀναπτύξας have been based on faulty argumentation

ingenious than probable so far as concerns ἀναπτύξας. With πτέρας, however, the situation is different; see below, n. 42.

37 E.g., Zahn (loc. cit.) describes it as 'wie ein kaufmännisches Rechenbuch'. Other instances of ἀνοίγω with βιβλίον are from later commentators citing the biblical passage.

38 Diccionario Griego-Español 2.315 s.v. ἀνοίγω 1.a, citing Plutarch, Caesar 68.1: τῶν διαδρεχόντων τῶν Καίσαρος λογοθεσίων; Freisgler, Wörterbuch I, p. 127 s.v. ἄνοιγμα.


40 There is no papyrus evidence for the passage.

41 Cf. Michael D. Goulder, Luke: A New Paradigm (JSNT Suppl. 20; Sheffield, 1980), p. 308: 'But ἀνοίγας is read by ABLW 33, etc. ἀνοίγω is congenial to Luke (1:11/13-16), and ἀναπτύξας may have been substituted to correspond with πτέρας.' R. H. Charles (above, n. 39) also prefers ἀνοίγας.
about meaning, rather than about the manuscript evidence, they deserve no privileging. It remains true that even if we accept ἁλωθ as the correct reading, we must allow πτόζας to have a more extended meaning of ‘close’ in Luke 4:20, where no alternative readings are available. Such a meaning, however, is perfectly reasonable given the setting.\(^{42}\) It thus seems most likely that the development of a branch in the textual tradition giving ἀναπτόθας in 4:17 is an early reflection of the adoption of the codex as the standard form for Christian scriptures,\(^{43}\) whether that first meant (as Skeat argued) the four gospels or (as Gamble has suggested) the Pauline corpus.\(^{44}\)

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\(^{42}\) As Mr Skeat and Dr Obbink have pointed out to me, Luke presumably envisages Jesus as closing the roll where it was, rather than rolling it back some sixty chapters. The action of closing it would seem much like folding it shut, and πτόζας is a perfectly appropriate verb for that action.

\(^{43}\) It is interesting that in Jerome’s version the two verses do not use verbs derived from the same stem. Luke 4:17 reads et traditus est illi liber Isaiae prophetae. Et ut reuoluit librum, invent set locum, ubi scriptum erat, while 4:20 reads et cum plicuisse librum, reddidit ministro, et sedit. As noted above, plico is the equivalent of πτόζας, although slightly better attested with the meaning of closing a book. But Jerome does not use replito or explico, both attested as meaning to unroll a book, to render 4:17, even though either would be a close calque of ἀναπτόθας (replico the closer equivalent). Instead he uses reuoluo, with the same meaning. When he cites the same passage in his commentary to Isaiah (17.611, PL 24, 599C), he instead gives it as quo apero invent scriptum … Quando convolutum librum reddidit et sedit. Jerome will not have imagined the codex to be the book in use here, although he was very familiar with biblical codices; he routinely thought of the Old Testament as in roll form, and Isaiah as a grande volumen, in contrast to Christian scriptures (E. Arns, La technique du livre d’après Saint Jérôme (Paris, 1953), pp. 118–26. It is possible that the use of reuoluo and apero points to a reading ἁλωθ in the Greek manuscripts available to Jerome, because he might otherwise have used a -plico compound. The use of convolutum for the force of πτόζας in the commentary on Isaiah, however, shows that this cannot be taken for granted. Jerome’s manuscripts cannot be identified; see H. F. D. Sparks in Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1 (1970), pp. 299–30. Their affiliations have been a matter of controversy; see B. M. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament (New York, 1992), p. 76 with n. on p. 252 for bibliography, concluding that Jerome’s affinities for the tradition represented by Alexandrinus (A) and Vaticanus (B) are the most pronounced. As both of these have ἁλωθ, Jerome’s choice of words may support this view. But it must be said that Jerome’s affinity for A and B is not necessarily in opposition to Sinaiticus or Bezae, both of which have ἀναπτόθας, as these are not otherwise consistent groupings. See also A. Vööbus, Early Versions of the New Testament (Stockholm, 1954), pp. 61–2.