

Closed-Minded Hermeneutics? A Proposed Alternative Translation for Luke 24:45

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For these words have not been fashionably arranged by me, nor embellished by human technique, but rather David sang them, Isaiah preached them, Zechariah heralded them, Moses recorded them. Do you recognize them Trypho? They are stored up in your Scriptures, or rather not in yours but in ours, for we are obedient to them, but when you read them, you do not understand the “mind” in them [ὁμειῖς δὲ ἀναγινώσκοντες οὐ νοεῖτε τὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς νοῦν].¹ (Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 29.2)

Given the profound hermeneutical implications of Luke 24:45 regarding the relationship between the NT and the OT, critical scholarship has paid surprisingly little attention to this verse in its own right.² Yet Luke 24:45 gives what must be

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¹ All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The Greek text is from PTS 47:116.

² If the indexes in *New Testament Abstracts* are a fair guide, not a single article has been devoted exclusively to this verse in the last sixty years, and very few to the farewell discourse (Luke 24:44–49). Articles with some bearing on the hermeneutical issues generated by 24:45 include P. Bockel, “Luc 24,45: ‘Il leur ouvrit l’esprit à l’intelligence des écritures,’” *BTS* 36 (1961): 2–3. Richard J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24* (AnBib 82; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 203–20; Hilaire Duesberg, “He Opened Their Minds to Understand the Scriptures,” *Concil* 30 (1968): 111–21; Josef Ernst, “Schriftauslegung und Auferstehungsglaube bei Lukas,” *TGl* 60 (1970): 360–74; Augustin George, “L’Intelligence des

regarded as one of the most important statements in the NT regarding the manner in which Christian readers appropriate the Jewish Scriptures: τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς. In modern parlance, the verse has been consistently translated across the major modern research languages as something akin to the following: “Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (NRSV), “Da öffnet er ihnen das Verständnis, so daß sie die Schrift verstanden” (Luther [1984]), or “Alors il leur ouvrit l’esprit à l’intelligence des Écritures” (*Bible de Jérusalem* [1961]). The hermeneutical implications that derive from this reading are simple yet far-reaching. Put quite simply, it was necessary for Jesus to “open the minds” of his disciples in order for them properly to interpret the Scriptures. Apart from Jesus’ special action, their mental faculties were hermeneutically deficient. Moreover, there is a corollary to the need for Christian illumination. As Michael Wolter states regarding Luke 24:45:

Jetzt erst und endlich wird das Unverständnis der Jünger aufgehoben. . . . Indirekt wird damit nicht nur gesagt, dass das bisherige Unverständnis der Jünger auf einer Unkenntnis der heiligen Schriften Israels beruhte, sondern auch, dass die Abweisung der Christusverkündigung von Seiten der weitaus überwiegenderen Mehrheit des Judentums ihren Grund einzig und allein darin hat, dass sie ihre eigenen Schriften nicht richtig verstanden hat.³

Thus, granted the traditional rendering, not only did the disciples need to have “their minds opened” by the Lukan Jesus, but the corollary to this proposition is that Jews who have rejected Jesus are not able properly to understand their own Scriptures unless Christ should happen likewise to “open their minds.” In this way, seemingly, anyone who has not experienced mental reconditioning by Christ can not properly interpret—and this includes would-be disciples, Jews who have rejected Jesus, and all other non-Christians of whatever variety. A harmonizing explanatory appeal to Paul is not infrequently invoked by Lukan expositors at this juncture. Just as it is true for Paul that only in Christ is “the veil taken away” (2 Cor 3:16) so that the Jewish Scriptures can be read adequately, so also for Luke.⁴ This principle of “the need for the mind to be opened” in order properly to read the OT extends beyond NT studies proper, impacting relevant subfields such as systematic theology and biblical hermeneutics.⁵ But is this principle on firm translational ground insofar as it depends on the Lukan evidence?

écritures (Luc 24,44-53),” *BVC* 18 (1957): 65–71; Benjamin J. Hubbard, “Commissioning Stories in Luke-Acts: A Study of Their Antecedents, Form and Content,” *Sem* 8 (1977): 103–26; Jack Dean Kingsbury, “Luke 24:44–49,” *Int* 35 (1981): 170–74.

³ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HNT 5; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 792.

⁴ See Frédéric L. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (1881; trans. M. D. Cusin; 5th ed.; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 360; George, “L’intelligence,” 65–71; Ernst, “Schriftauslegung,” 192.

⁵ See, e.g., Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), I.2.514–16; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Descrip-*

In this article I would like to suggest that an alternative translation of Luke 24:45 merits serious consideration: “Then Jesus expounded the Scriptures so that the disciples could understand their meaning [νοῦς]”—that is, under the proposed alternative rendering, the “mind” in question is not a property of the disciples, but rather of the Scriptures. In light of my admittedly nonexhaustive scouring of the secondary literature, I have not been able to find anyone who has suggested this translation in the modern era.⁶ After presenting the basic syntactical features of Luke 24:45, I will present an overview of the early reception history of this verse in the hope that such an exploration might throw further light on the possibility of an alternative translation. Then, I will advocate for this alternative translation on the basis of Luke’s own usage, general semantic considerations, and context. Should the alternative rendering that I am proposing be accepted, certain weighty hermeneutical implications follow, and this paper will conclude by teasing out some of these implications. However, first I will give a quick summary of the basic syntactical issues in Luke 24:45.

I. THE SYNTAX OF LUKE 24:45

First, is the proposed alternative translation syntactically feasible? Luke 24:45 reads: τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς. Traditionally τὸν νοῦν has been taken as the direct object of διήνοιξεν, while τὰς γραφάς has been made the direct object of the infinitive συνιέναι. The result is: “Then [Jesus] opened their minds so that [they might] understand the Scriptures.” Although it is substantially less probable on the basis of word order alone, there is nothing syntactically objectionable to taking the more distant τὰς γραφάς as the direct object of διήνοιξεν, while reading τὸν νοῦν as the direct object of συνιέναι,⁷ resulting in the alternative: “Then [Jesus] expounded the Scriptures so that

tion with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 93–94; William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 82–85.

⁶ Of course, I am not so bold (or foolish) as to think I am the only one who has ever proposed this translation, but any previous discussion has not entered into the scholarly mainstream. The scope of the secondary literature I surveyed included the major critical commentaries in English, French, and German written in the last 150 years that were available to me (many popular-level commentaries were omitted), as well as *New Testament Abstracts*. I have also surveyed the monographs that seemed directly relevant, but I am not a Lukan specialist, and I am sure that some literature has inadvertently escaped my attention.

⁷ The accusative object frequently precedes the infinitive when the infinitive is complementary (e.g., Luke 5:12, 18; 6:39; etc.), a phenomenon that compares morphologically but not syntactically with the proposed alternative construction. A more appropriate comparison is with other infinitives of purpose/result that take a preceding accusative object. A few such examples include 1 Macc 14:23: τοῦ μνημόσυνον ἔχειν τὸν δῆμον τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν (“in order that the citizens of Sparta might have a record”); Rom 10:6: Χριστὸν καταγαγεῖν (“in order to bring

[they might] understand their ‘mind’—that is, their “meaning” or “underlying sense.”⁸ In either translation, the genitive αὐτῶν modifies τὸν νοῦν, but under the traditional rendering αὐτῶν refers to the unexpressed “disciples,” while in the alternative it designates the explicitly mentioned “Scriptures.”⁹ As I will demonstrate below, there are compelling reasons to question whether the word order should be decisive in this particular case. However, first a look at the earliest reception of Luke 24:45 may help us glean some fruitful information about the potentials and pitfalls of the proposed alternative translation.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF LUKE 24:45

Here I want to focus on the earliest reception history of Luke 24:45. Commentaries on the entire Gospel of Luke were relatively uncommon in antiquity. Origen treated Luke in fifteen volumes, but his commentary survives in only a few fragments and homilies, none of which covers Luke 24:45. We have extant a relatively complete Syriac translation of a commentary on Luke by Cyril of Alexandria, which is in fact a series of homilies. There is also a commentary in the Latin tradition by Ambrose, as well as a plethora of fragments and other minor works.¹⁰ All told, however, *Biblia Patristica* lists only fifteen references inclusive of Luke 24:45, and just six of these turn out to be directly relevant to this translational question,¹¹ to which a few additional texts that I have come across can be added.¹²

Christ down”); 2 Cor 6:1: παρακαλοῦμεν μὴ εἰς κενὸν τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ δέξασθαι ὑμᾶς (“we exhort you not to receive the grace of God vainly”); 1 Clem. 63.1: τὸν τῆς ὑπακοῆς τόπον ἀναπληρῶσαι (“to fulfill the station of obedience”); Origen, *Philoc.* 2.3: ἡγοῦμαι γοῦν καὶ τὸν ἀπόστολον τὴν τοιαύτην ἔφοδον τοῦ συνιέναι τοὺς θεῖους λόγους ὑποβάλλοντα λέγειν (“And in fact I think the apostle, in order that [we might] understand this sort of approach, sets down these divine words, saying . . .”)—see also Gen 47:29; 4 Macc 1:6; 10:14; Rom 10:7; 1 Cor 13:2; 1 Thess 1:8; *Herm. Sim.* 9.6.1. For other constructions showing unusual syntactical positioning of the object(s) around the infinitive consider, e.g., Luke 4:41; Acts 10:47; 17:7; 17:23: ἔχει γὰρ ἀπαγγεῖλαι τι αὐτῷ (“For he has something to report to him”); Rom 4:13; 1 Tim 6:5; Philo, *Cher.* 1.107; *Post.* 1.137.

⁸ For this translation of νοῦς, see below.

⁹ On morphological grounds either referent is possible, since the first and second declensions are identical in the genitive plural for αὐτός.

¹⁰ For discussion and essential bibliography on ancient Christian exegesis of Luke, see Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Bible in Ancient Christianity 1; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 344, 351–52.

¹¹ *Biblia Patristica* (6 vols.; Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1975–). The relevant passages are treated below. Those deemed irrelevant are Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 53.5; 106.1; *Ep. Apos.* 19; Irenaeus, *Epid.* 83; Cyprian, *Idol.* 14; Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 3.4.39; *Quaest.* 10; *Comm. Isa.* 1.96; *Theoph.* A 179.19.

¹² See below on Cyril, Eusebius, Ps.-Athanasius, and Augustine.

Irenaeus is the first Christian interpreter who quotes Luke 24:45, but he offers no expanding comments on the text and the Greek is not extant at this juncture (*Haer.* 3.16.5). The reconstructed Greek text of Irenaeus supplied by the editors of the SC edition is identical to that of Nestle-Aland for Luke 24:45, which is surely correct here.¹³ So Irenaeus himself does not offer an interpretation of Luke 24:45.¹⁴ However, an interpretation is provided by his Latin translator, who probably translated in the early third century prior to Tertullian:¹⁵ *Tunc adaperuit eorum sensum ut intellegent Scripturas* (“Then he opened their mind so that they might understand the Scriptures”). Since Latin differs from Greek inasmuch as the first declension is not identical to the second declension in the genitive plural, *eorum* cannot refer to *Scripturas*, and thus it is clear that the Latin translator of Irenaeus understood Luke 24:45 in the same manner as is prevalent today—that is, Jesus opened the disciples’ minds, not the Scriptures.

Another early Latin interpretation is provided by Cyprian in *Ad Quirinum* 4 (ca. 248). It is widely acknowledged that *Ad Quirinum* collects *testimonia* material that hails from a much earlier Greek-speaking milieu.¹⁶ Cyprian cites Luke 24:45 as part of the scriptural evidence purporting to show that the Jews were unable to understand the Scriptures prior to Christ. Like Irenaeus, Cyprian does not comment explicitly on Luke 24:45, but its interpretation is revealed by its Latin rendering: *Tunc adaperuit illis sensum, ut intellegent scripturas* (“Then he opened the *sensus* for them so that they might understand the Scriptures”).¹⁷ The Latin word *sensus* is much like the Greek νοῦς, in that both can mean the mental “faculty of perception” but also “the sense or meaning of a word or a text.”¹⁸ Ultimately the Latin is ambivalent, but the use of the dative *illis* (“he opened the *sensus* for the disciples”) rather than the genitive *eorum* (“he opened the *sensus* of the disciples”) may slightly favor the alternative translation I am proposing for Luke 24:45—that is, “he opened the *meaning* for the disciples.”

Lactantius provides two possible interpretations of Luke 24:45, the first in *Divinarum Institutionum libri VII* 4.20.1 (ca. 303–313). Although the setting in Galilee rather than Jerusalem is puzzling (see Luke 24:33), that Lactantius is referring to Luke 24:44–45 rather than 24:26–27 is likely since the disciples have been gathered “again”:

¹³ SC 211:306–7.

¹⁴ Cf. also *Haer.* 4.26.1.

¹⁵ On the date of the Latin translation, see Dominic J. Unger, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against the Heresies*, vol. 1, *Book 1* (ACW 55; New York: Newman, 1992), 14–15. A minority adhere to a fourth-century date.

¹⁶ Martin C. Albl, ‘And Scripture Cannot Be Broken’: *The Form and Function of Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (NovTSup 96; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 132–33.

¹⁷ Latin text in CCSL 3.1:10. A few manuscripts read *aperuit* rather than *adaperuit*.

¹⁸ On *sensus*, see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews’ Edition of Freund’s Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879), s.v. *sensus* II.B.2.a; on νοῦς, see LSJ, s.v. νόος III and discussion below.

discipulis iterum congregatis scripturae sanctae litteras, id est prophetarum arcana patefecit, quae antequam pateretur perspicere nullo modo poterant, quia ipsum passionemque euis adnuntiabant . . . Itaque nisi Christus mortem suscepisset, aperiri testamentum, id est reuelari et intellegi mysterium Dei non potuisset.

[In Galilee] he opened the writings of the Holy Scripture, that is the secrets of the prophets, to his re-congregated disciples, which prior to his suffering were certainly not able to be understood, for they announced [Jesus] himself and his passion. . . . Therefore unless Christ had experienced death, the testament could not have been opened; that is, it would not have been possible for the mystery of God to have been revealed and understood.¹⁹

Although the periphrastic nature of his interpretation makes any conclusions regarding his understanding of Luke 24:45 tentative, Lactantius does speak of opening the Scripture to unveil the secrets hidden in the prophetic writings rather than opening the disciples' minds. Thus, this first example gives modest support to the alternative translation.

However, a second example from Lactantius *De mortibus persecutorum* (ca. 317) is less clear, seemingly supporting both the alternative translation and the traditional understanding at the same time:

et diebus XL cum his commoratus aperuit corda eorum et scripturas interpretatus est, quae usque ad id tempus obscurae atque inuolutae fuerent.

and having remained with them forty days, he opened their hearts and interpreted the Scriptures, which until that time were rolled-up in obscurity.²⁰

Here Lactantius affirms, on the one hand, that Jesus opened (*aperuit*) his disciples' hearts (*corda*), perhaps conflating Luke 24:45 with 24:31, siding with the standard translation. But, on the other hand, he says that Jesus interpreted (*interpretatus est*) the Scriptures, which would favor the alternative. This second example is perhaps too periphrastic to yield any definitive conclusions, but it slightly favors the standard translation of Luke 24:45 since the correlation of *corda* with *aperuit* is the more significant point for our purposes.

Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Demonstratio evangelica* (written 314–319), provides a particularly critical example in his discussion of Dan 9:24, especially in light of his Greek-speaking milieu. Unfortunately, however, it is not certain that he has Luke 24:45 specifically in view with his allusion:

Instead of "And in order to seal up the vision and the prophet" [Dan 9:24], Aquila has made an improvement, it seems, when he says, "And in order to fulfill [τελέσαι] the vision and the prophet." For our Lord and Savior came *not* in order to

¹⁹ Latin text in SC 377:180–81.

²⁰ Latin text in SC 39:80–81.

lock up, as if to seal up the prophetic visions—which visions were in fact obscure and sealed up long ago. Rather he came, so to speak, as one removing the seals which lay upon the prophetic visions. **He both opened [ἀνεῳξέν] and unfolded [ἀνήπλωσεν] them, handing along [παροαδιδούς] the meaning [τὸν νοῦν] of the divine writings to his own disciples.** . . . Therefore the Christ of God came *not* in order to lock up “vision and prophet” [Dan 9:24], but rather to unfurl [ἀναπετάσαι] them and lead them forth [ἀγαγεῖν] into the light. Thus, it seems to me Aquila has done better in saying, “in order to fulfill the vision and the prophet” [Dan 9:24]. (*Dem. ev.* 8.2.30–32)²¹

If indeed Eusebius is offering an allusive interpretation of Luke 24:45, then this may be an example by a native Greek speaker of a preference for the alternative rendering of Luke 24:45 hereby proposed. Since Eusebius is interpreting some activity of Jesus with respect to the instruction of the disciples, it is noteworthy that among all of the passages in the fourfold Gospels, his words find the strongest linguistic and thematic connection with Luke 24:45, making the allusion probable.

In his *Commentary on Psalms* 125.2 (written 364–367), Hilary of Poitiers gives a translation followed by explicit comments that indicate that he understood Luke 24:45 in the manner represented by the traditional translation: *tunc aperuit sensum eorum, ut intelligerent Scripturas* (“Then he opened their mind so that they might understand the Scriptures”).²² Hilary makes his stance more explicit with the further statement: “Therefore, that which we understand is not from us, but from [Christ], who has made intelligent those who were ignorant.”

Ambrose preached on Luke in 377–378, and the contents of his sermons were worked into a commentary in 388–399.²³ Ambrose treats Jesus’ words in Luke 24:45 as an act of consolation to his troubled disciples:

Denique et conturbati sunt, ut habes secundum Lucan, et ideo aperuit illis sensum, ut intelligerent ea quae scripta sunt. (*Exp. Luc.* 10.173)

In fact also “they were upset” as you have it according to Luke, so that for this reason “he opened the *sensus* for them so that they might understand those things which are written.”²⁴

Thus, Ambrose sees the action of Luke 24:45 as Jesus’ comforting response to his grieving disciples. Unfortunately, Ambrose gives very little indication of whether he understands Jesus as opening the disciples’ minds or the Scriptures, so the Latin text he presents is our only guide, and, as in Cyprian above, the dative *illis* rather than the genitive *eorum* may tip the balance slightly in the direction of the alternative translation.

²¹ Greek text in GCS 23:2018.

²² Latin text in PL 9:685.

²³ Kannegiesser, *Handbook*, 1050.

²⁴ Luke 24:45 is cited again in the exact same form and with the same basic point in *Exp. Luc.* 10.179. Latin texts in SC 29:214, 216.

The commentary on Luke by Cyril of Alexandria (fl. 412–444) is problematic regarding Luke 24:45; it is found in a catena that is ascribed to Cyril, but its authenticity is doubtful.²⁵ Nonetheless, it is clear that this interpreter, whether Cyril or someone else, takes the traditional position on Luke 24:45:

Then He opened their mind to understand, that *so it behooved Him to suffer*, even upon the wood of the cross. Therefore, the Lord recalls the minds of the disciples to what He had said beforehand; for he had forewarned them of His sufferings upon the cross in accordance with what the prophets had spoken long beforehand; and he opens also the eyes of their heart, so that they might understand the ancient prophecies.²⁶

And so (Ps.)-Cyril affirms that it was the disciples' minds that were opened, which is made especially emphatic by the double metaphor "he opens also the eyes of their heart."

Ps.-Athanasius (ca. 500) echoes the words of Luke 24:45 in his *Expositiones in Psalmos* 119:131a, but introduces one important modification signaling that he aligns with the traditional rendering rather than the alternative:

"I opened my mouth and I drew breath": Now the [psalmist] requests the expository oracles. Also, for this reason the Savior opened the mind of the disciples in order that they might understand the Scriptures [Διὸ καὶ ὁ Σωτὴρ διήνοιξε τὸν νοῦν τῶν μαθητῶν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς ἱσαφάς]. And the understanding which is granted through the words prevents deception through pleasure or glory.²⁷

Here Ps.-Athanasius believes that the psalmist requested that God place oracles in his mouth. And since God granted this request (or so it is assumed), it is equally necessary that God grant the power for these oracles to be subsequently interpreted, which Ps.-Athanasius believes transpired when God opened the minds of his disciples. Note that Ps.-Athanasius forbids the alternative translation by his substitution of τῶν μαθητῶν in place of the αὐτῶν of Luke 24:45.

Finally, that infinitely influential theologian of the west, Augustine (fl. 387–430), provides a fitting climax:

²⁵ R. Payne Smith, ed. and trans., *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke by Saint Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859; repr., n.p.: Studion, 1983), 619. Smith declares, "St. Cyril can scarcely have repeated himself in so confused a manner, and the discussion at hand is scarcely worthy of him," while noting that the Aurea Catena is sometimes ascribed to Cyril by Nicolaus, but sometimes called anonymous.

²⁶ Trans. Smith, *Commentary*, 620 (slightly modified).

²⁷ PG 27:501. Traditionally this work has been attributed to Athanasius as a work of his later years, but the attribution has been called into grave doubt by Gilles Dorival, "Athanasius ou Pseudo-Athanasius," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 16 (1980): 80–89; and G. C. Stead, "St. Athanasius on the Psalms," *VC* 39 (1985): 65–78. The date of ca. 500 C.E. is based on the suggestion of Dorival but is quite uncertain.

*Tunc aperuit illis sensum. Veni ergo, Domine, fac claves, aperi ut intelligamus. . . . De Scripturas admones, et adhuc non intelligunt. Clausa sunt corda, aperi, et intra. Fecit: Tunc aperuit illis sensum. (Serm. 115.6)*²⁸

“Then he opened the *sensus* for them.” Thus come, O Lord, use your keys, open that we might understand. . . . From the Scriptures you admonish them, but up to this point they do not understand. Their hearts are closed, open, and enter in. He did it: “Then he opened the *sensus* for them.”

Regardless of whether *sensus* intends “meaning” or “understanding” on the translational level here, on the theological level Augustine seems to favor the standard interpretation of Luke 24:45. Christ must use his keys to open the hearts (*corda*) of the disciples; otherwise their minds remain as a locked box, unable properly to interpret the Scriptures.

The few quotations and allusions that make up the early reception history of Luke 24:45 give a slightly conflicted report. There are no absolutely clear-cut cases in which Luke 24:45 was interpreted in accordance with the proposed alternative translation “he expounded the Scriptures in order that they might understand their meaning.” However, there are several instances in which the alternative construal is plausible or perhaps even probable. Specifically, the alternative translation is encouraged by Cyprian, Ambrose, Lactantius in *Divinarum Institutionum*, and especially Eusebius. On the other hand, Irenaeus’s translator, Lactantius, in *De mortibus persecutorum*, Hilary of Poitiers, Ps.-Cyril, Ps.-Athanasius, and Augustine either explicitly or seemingly follow the standard interpretation. In brief, if the alternative translation that is being put forward in this article is deemed probable on other grounds, it has plausible support in the earliest reception history but does not command the majority.

III. ΔΙΔΑΧΕΙΝ IN LUKE-ACTS AND BEYOND

The best evidence for the proposed alternative translation is Luke’s own use of διδασκαλῆναι with αἱ γραφαί. The verb διδασκαλῆναι appears six times in Luke-Acts apart from Luke 24:45. Two of the instances are not particularly pertinent to the discussion at hand, apart from illustrating something of the typical range of διδασκαλῆναι when used in the literal sense (Luke 2:23, “opening the womb” [cf. Exod 13:2; Num 3:12; etc.]; Acts 7:56, “the heavens standing open”).²⁹ However, the other four uses of διδασκαλῆναι in Luke-Acts are highly relevant, two of which actually occur in Luke 24. Two of the usages support the traditional interpretation (Luke 24:31 and Acts 16:14), at least superficially, while the other two (Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2-3) forcefully undergird the alternative:

²⁸ PL 38:659; cf. *Serm.* 129.6 (PL 38:723); *Cons.* 2.74.

²⁹ See also διδασκαλῆναι with “the mouth” (Prov 31:25; Isa 5:14; Lam 2:16; etc.) and with “the hands” (Prov 31:20; etc.).

Luke 24:31

αὐτῶν δὲ διηνοιχθήσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν· καὶ αὐτὸς ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἅπ' αὐτῶν.

Then **their eyes were opened**, and they recognized him; and he disappeared from their vision.

Luke 24:32

καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους· οὐχὶ ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν καιομένη ἦν [ἐν ἡμῖν] ὥς ἐλάλει ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, ὥς διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς;

And they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us when he was speaking to us on the road, when **he was expositing the Scriptures** for us?"

Acts 16:14

Λυδία . . . ἥς ὁ κύριος διήνοιξεν τὴν καρδίαν προσέχειν τοῖς λαλουμένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Παύλου.

Lydia . . . **whose heart the Lord opened** to heed the things said by Paul.

Acts 17:2–3

. . . καὶ ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος ὅτι τὸν χριστὸν ἔδει παθεῖν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστὸς [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς ὃν ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.

. . . and on three Sabbath days [Paul] debated with them **from the Scriptures, expositing [them]** and demonstrating [from them] that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, while saying, "This Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you, is the Christ."

There are two passages that lend some credible support to the standard interpretation, although not in an unambiguous manner. As Luke 24:31 and Acts 16:14 illustrate, in addition to its literal meaning, διανοίγω can be used metaphorically in conjunction with an appropriate anthropological term such as "eyes" or "heart" to denote a moment of intellectual insight. In fact, there are sixty-two occurrences of διανοίγω in the LXX, the NT, Philo, Josephus, and the Apostolic Fathers, nine of which fall into the category of anthropological metaphor for the attainment of intellectual insight.³⁰ In Luke 24:31, it is the "eyes" (ὀφθαλμοί) that are opened, whereas in Acts 16:14 the Lord opens Lydia's "heart" (καρδία). Thus, these two passages would appear to lend weighty support to the traditional interpretation of διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν as "he opened their mind."

³⁰ For ὀφθαλμοί, see Gen 3:5–7 (twice); 2 Kgs 6:17–20 (twice); Prov 20:13; and Luke 24:31; for καρδία, see 2 Macc 1:4 and Acts 16:14.

However, it is striking that there are *zero* instances, to the best of my knowledge, in all of antiquity of *διανοίγω* or the related verb *ἀνοίγω* with *νοῦς* as the object prior to the fifth century C.E. (excluding, of course, the reception history of Luke 24:45 as discussed above).³¹ In brief, if Luke does indeed take *νοῦς* as the object of *διανοίγω*, then Luke's usage is a singularity prior to the fifth century C.E. for *no other author attests this idiom*. Moreover, it is not as if *διανοίγω* and *ἀνοίγω* are rare. For instance, these two verbs occur 413 times in the NT, LXX, Josephus, Philo, and the Apostolic Fathers, but the collocation of *διανοίγω* or *ἀνοίγω* with *νοῦς* as the object is never made here or elsewhere, as might perhaps be expected if the traditional translation is indeed correct.³² Thus, "to open [*διανοίγω* or *ἀνοίγω*] the *νοῦς*" is not a common idiom for the attainment of intellectual insight in our literature—in fact quite the opposite—it *never* occurs apart from the reception history of Luke 24:45.

Furthermore, *διανοίγω* does *not* involve scriptural exposition in either Luke 24:31 or Acts 16:14 in a fashion that might compare with Luke 24:45. Rather, in Luke 24:31 the eyes of the travelers are "opened" when Jesus breaks the bread—the Scriptures are not in view. Thus, the specific semantic context of 24:31 is quite different from that of 24:45, so we should not necessarily expect that *διανοίγω* would be used in a semantically comparable way. The same can be said for the "opening" of Lydia's heart in Acts 16:14. After Paul and his companions talk (*ἐλαλοῦμεν*) with the women, Lydia responds to the things said by Paul (*τοῖς λαλουμένοις*). Although Paul presumably did argue to Lydia from the Scriptures, the *topos* of scriptural exposition is in fact noteworthy for its *complete absence* in the pericope about Lydia's conversion. Therefore, the precise semantic context of Acts 16:14 does not compare favorably with Luke 24:45 either. Thus, neither Luke 24:31 nor Acts 16:14, the two texts that provide the strongest exegetical basis for the traditional translation, has an exegetical context that truly compares to Luke 24:45.³³

³¹ The first occurrence of *νοῦς* as the object of *διανοίγω* appears to be Joannes Archiereus, *Ἰωάννου ἀρχιερέως τοῦ ἐν Ἐβειγία περὶ τῆς θείας τέχνης* (ed. M. Berthelot and C. É. Ruelle; Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs 2; Paris: Steinheil, 1888; repr., 1963), 2:264 line 7 (*διανοίγων τὸν νοῦν*). Cf., however, Origen, *Fr. Hom. Job* 2.377 line 8 in J. B. Pitra, ed., *Analecta sacra spicilegio Solesmensi parata* (2 vols.; Paris: Tusculum, 1884), in which *διανοίαι* is the object, which is closely associated with *νοῦς* (pl.). These results are based on my own TLG searches, which were made difficult by the complex morphology of (*δι*)*ανοίγω*. Consequently, I am confident, but not absolutely certain, that I was able to evaluate all the occurrences in the TLG database.

³² Nor are there any instances in the NT, LXX, Josephus, Philo, or the Apostolic Fathers in which *διανοίγω* or *ἀνοίγω* takes as an object any other noun which falls within the same anthropological semantic domain as *νοῦς*, such as *συνείδησις*, *διάνοια*, *νόημα*, *φρόνη*, *φρόνησις*, or *ὁρμή*, the one exception being *σύνεσις* in LXX Hos 2:17 (*διανοῖξαι σύνεσιν αὐτῆς*, "in order to open her comprehension"). See L&N §26 regarding the semantic domain of *νοῦς*, which does not list *σύνεσις* but probably should (cf. BDAG, s.v. *νοῦς*).

³³ On the exegetical contexts of Luke 24:32, 45; and Acts 17:2–3, see further below.

On the other hand—and this point is crucial—the two passages, Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2–3, that speak in favor of the alternative translation do so in an emphatic manner. Just *exactly* as is hereby being proposed for Luke 24:45, the author of Luke-Acts himself explicitly takes αἱ γραφαί as the direct object of διανοίγω in Luke 24:32: διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς (“he opened/exposed the Scriptures for us”). Not only is this so, but Luke uses αἱ γραφαί as the object of διανοίγω not just once, but a second time. In Acts 17:2–3 a correlation between διανοίγω and αἱ γραφαί appears again, where the latter serves as the implied direct object of the former: διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος (“He debated with them from the Scriptures by expositing [them] and demonstrating [from them]”). So Luke himself twice makes the same basic syntactical connection as is proposed for the alternative translation with the same verb and object. Furthermore, not only is there a close lexical link between Luke 24:45 and Acts 17:2–3 in terms of verb and object; there is also a correspondence in terms of the content of the Scriptures said to be “opened.” In Luke 24:46a the content of the Scriptures is “that the Christ is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day” (παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ). The content of the Scriptures “opened” in Acts 17:2–3 is nearly identical: “that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead” (ὅτι τὸν χριστὸν ἔδει παθεῖν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν). Thus, αἱ γραφαί is in effect twice made the object of διανοίγω by Luke himself and there is a correspondence between the content “opened.” Would it be surprising if Luke 24:45 should prove to be a third case?

Not only is there evidence on grounds internal to Luke-Acts that αἱ γραφαί may have been intended as the direct object of διανοίγω in Luke 24:45, but general semantic concerns point in this direction as well. Although διανοίγω does indeed have the literal and metaphorical senses discussed above, it also has a specialized semantic range that includes activities such as the “opening-up” or “exposition” of a word, phrase, text, or book.³⁴ Although there is a possible instance in Philo,³⁵ the author of Luke-Acts appears to be the first extant author to employ this specialized exegetical meaning of διανοίγω.³⁶ After Luke-Acts, the next clear

³⁴ See BDAG, s.v. διανοίγω 2; LSJ, s.v. διανοίγω III.

³⁵ Philo, *Somn.* 2.36 (Greek text in Colson and Whitaker, LCL: εἰρήνης δὲ Νεφθαλείμ διανοίγεται γὰρ καὶ εὐρύνεται πάντα εἰρήνῃ, ὡς συγκλείεται πολέμῳ· τὸ δὲ ὄνομα μεταληφθὲν πλατυσμός ἢ διανεωγμένον ἔστί, “Now Naphtali is a symbol of peace, for all things are opened up and expanded by peace, just as all things are closed up by war; so his name is a substitute for ‘expanded’ or ‘having been opened up’”). Whether a specialized expository meaning is intended for διανοίγω in this passage depends on whether Philo is making a play on the symbolic interpretation of the name Naphtali by deliberately using expository vocabulary to explain its interpretation. The matter is unclear, although I think it somewhat doubtful.

³⁶ Based on my own TLG searches.

example is in Clement of Alexandria, after which the examples quickly multiply in the patristic era.³⁷ Thus, the specialized interpretative semantic field of διανοίγω (“to exposit”) is secure in Luke-Acts on internal grounds and in the subsequent literature. In fact, both BDAG and LSJ assign Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2–3 to this specialized interpretative semantic field.³⁸

In summary, some support for the traditional translation of Luke 24:45 as “he opened their minds” is garnered in Luke-Acts via the similar idioms “their eyes were opened” (Luke 24:31) and “whose heart the Lord opened” (Acts 16:14), but the parallels are inexact. Neither διανοίγω nor ἀνοίγω takes νοῦς as an accusative object in any of the relevant literature, as might be expected if the standard translation is correct. On the other hand, the strongest possible evidence, the characteristic usage of the author of Luke-Acts himself, points in the direction of the proposed alternative translation. In both Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2–3 the verb διανοίγω takes αἱ γραφαί as the object, whether explicitly or implicitly, precisely as is here proposed for Luke 24:45: “Then he exposted [διήνοιξεν] the Scriptures [τάς γραφάς] so that they might understand their meaning [νοῦν].”

IV. ΝΟῦΣ: LEXICAL SEMANTICS

The semantic range of νοῦς is of vital import to this study. The traditional translation takes αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν as referring to the disciples’ minds. The alternative translation being proposed regards νοῦς as the “mind” of the Scriptures. In the lexical analysis below I will show that part of the semantic range of νοῦς synchronically available to the author of Luke-Acts includes νοῦς as the unitive sense or meaning of a word, passage, or text.

Unfortunately, nothing can be gleaned regarding Luke’s own semantic preferences with respect to νοῦς because its sole instantiation in the corpus is Luke 24:45 itself. However, the word νοῦς occurs 787 times in the LXX (30), the NT (24), Philo (686), Josephus (37), and the Apostolic Fathers (10). BDAG gives three definitions: “the faculty of intellectual perception,” “way of thinking,” and “result of thinking.” However, in so classifying the meanings, BDAG has excluded an important part of the semantic domain of νοῦς that is well attested throughout the Hellenistic era. LSJ is more helpful in this regard, giving “*sense, meaning* of a word, etc.,” as a possible gloss for νοῦς and offering examples extending from the fifth century B.C.E. to the

³⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.15.127.2 (Greek Text in GCS): διανοιχθεῖσαι δὲ αἱ γραφαὶ καὶ τοῖς ὅτα ἔχουσιν ἐμνήνασαι τὸ ἀληθὲς αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο, “But as pertains to the Scriptures being exposted and to the truth itself being revealed to those who have ears.” Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologetica*, PG 35:500; Basil of Caesarea, *Enarrat. in proph. Isa.* 13.258 (τοῦ διανοίγειν τὰς Γραφάς); etc.

³⁸ BDAG, s.v. διανοίγω 2; LSJ, s.v. διανοίγω III.

first century B.C.E.³⁹ Moreover, although νοῦς is not found within this semantic field in the LXX, the NT, Josephus, or the Apostolic Fathers, it can be readily illustrated from Philo,⁴⁰ Justin Martyr,⁴¹ Clement of Alexandria,⁴² Origen,⁴³ and many other Fathers.⁴⁴ One particularly good example that illustrates the semantic field of “unitive sense of a text” for νοῦς is Philo’s idealized description of the expository approach of the Therapeutae:

αἱ δὲ ἐξηγήσεις τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων γίνονται δι’ ὑπονοιῶν ἐν ἀλληγορίαις· ἅπαντα γὰρ ἡ νομοθεσία δοκεῖ τοῖς ἀνδράσι τοῦτοις εἰκέναι ζῶν καὶ σῶμα μὲν ἔχειν τὰς ῥητὰς διατάξεις, ψυχὴν δὲ τὸν ἐναποκείμενον ταῖς λέξεσιν ἀόρατον νοῦν.

Now, their expositions of the sacred Scriptures come about through [accessing] the underlying meanings [concealed] in allegories. For the entire given law code seems to these men to resemble a living being, having on the one hand the literal ordinances for a body, and on the other the stored-up invisible “mind” [or “meaning”] for a soul with respect to the plain wording. (*Contempl.* 1.78)

Here Philo makes the “underlying meanings” (ὑπόνοιαι) and the “invisible mind” (ἀόρατος νοῦς) of the sacred Scriptures synonymous. They are akin to the soul, the unseen inner part of a human, and are therefore contrasted with the outer part of the man, the body. In this manner they are also placed opposite to the “written law code” (νομοθεσία) and the “plain wording” (λέξις) of the Scriptures. The overlap in semantic range between νοῦς, ὑπόνοια, and a third term, διάνοια, in ancient interpretation has in fact already been well established by others,⁴⁵ and νοῦς, when used in this fashion, can be suitably glossed as the “underlying meaning.”

³⁹ LSJ, s.v. νόος III, which gives as examples Herodotus 7.162 (οὔτος δὲ ὁ νόος τοῦ ῥήματος); Aristophanes, *Ranae* 1439; Polybius 5.83.4; Philodemus, *Rh.* 1.106–7; etc. Cf. also the definition and references given by Johannes Behm “νοέω, νοῦς, νόημα, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 4:948–80, 989–1022, esp. 952–54, 1.e.

⁴⁰ Philo, *Sacr.* 1.71: τὸ γὰρ «μεθ’ ἡμέρας θύειν» τοιοῦτον ὑποβάλλει νοῦν, “for the statement, ‘to sacrifice after some days,’ holds this sort of meaning”; *Spec.* 1.200: ταῦτα μὲν ἡ ῥητὴ πρόσταξις περιέχει. μὴνύεται δὲ καὶ νοῦς ἕτερος αἰνιγματώδη λόγον ἔχων τὸν διὰ συμβόλων· σύμβολα δ’ ἐστὶ τὰ λεχθέντα φανερά ἀδήλων καὶ ἀφανῶν. “Now these things contain the express command, but another meaning is revealed in a riddling fashion through symbols. Now the revealed expressions are symbols of things unrevealed and unmanifest.”

⁴¹ Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 29.2 (see quotation in the introduction above).

⁴² Clement of Alexandria, *Quis div.* 5; *Strom.* 1.9; 7.1 (texts in *PGL*, s.v. νοῦς II).

⁴³ E.g., Origen, *Hom. Jer.* 5.16 line 10 (text in SC 232); *Comm. Jo.* 1.31 section 224 line 1 (text in SC 120); for others, see *PGL*, s.v. νοῦς II.

⁴⁴ This usage is widespread, being evidenced in Athanasius, Eusebius (as in *Dem. ev.* 8.2.31 above), Didymus the Blind, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, et al. For additional references in the fathers, see *PGL*, s.v. νοῦς II.

⁴⁵ See the brief notice “dianoia, noein, hyponoia,” in appendix I of Robert M. Grant, *The Let-*

Furthermore, the semantic range of νοῦς as denoting the unitive meaning of a text is certainly *not* to be understood as restricted to specialized interpretative discourse involving allegory, theoria, and the like—discourse that might be deemed unsuitable for illustrating Luke 24:45. For example, consider this more mundane use of νοῦς from the papyri (dated to 164 B.C.E.):

τῶν πρὸς ταῖς πραγματείαις οὐ κατὰ τὸ βέλτιστον ἐγδεχομένων τὸν τοῦ περὶ τῆς γεωργίας προστάγματος νοῦν.

because the officials do not put the best interpretation on the meaning of the decree concerning agriculture. (*P.Paris* 63, line 27)⁴⁶

Since the “sense” of the apparently ambivalent written decree is the point of contention, an appropriate gloss for νοῦς would seem once again to be the underlying, unitive “meaning” of the text in this example as well.

In short, although not acknowledged by some standard NT lexical resources such as BDAG, the semantic range of νοῦς includes the definition “the meaning of a word, passage, or text,” as is attested by relevant literature written before, after, and contemporaneous with Luke-Acts. There is no reason to exclude the “meaning of the Scriptures” as a possible definition of αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν in Luke 24:45. In fact, the probability of this definition is substantially enhanced when Luke 24:45 is situated in the broader context of Luke 24.

V. LUKE 24:45 IN CONTEXT

So far four essential points have been established: (1) the alternative translation “he opened the Scriptures so that they might understand their meaning” is not favored by the word order but is permitted by the syntax of Luke 24:45; (2) the author of Luke-Acts effectively twice takes αἱ γραφαί as the object of διανοίγω in interpretative contexts exactly as is proposed for the alternative translation; (3) the verb διανοίγω has a specialized expository field within its semantic domain; and (4) the semantic field entailing the “meaning” of a text is well attested for the noun νοῦς by Luke’s contemporaries in a wide range of literature. What remains is to draw all of the preceding arguments together by examining the context of Luke 24:45. A strong case can be made in favor of the following result: When Luke 24:45 is evaluated in light of its context in Luke 24, the semantic fields required for the proposed alternative translation are seen to be those that are in fact actualized by the author of Luke-Acts. Moreover, additional support for this conclusion

ter and the Spirit (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 125–26, which contains numerous illustrations from the primary sources.

⁴⁶ In *Notices et Extraits* XVIII.ii (ed. Brunet de Presle; Paris, 1865), cited in MM §3563, s.v. νοῦς, trans. Mahaffy.

is provided by the manner in which this proposed alternative translation clarifies existing scholarship on the use of the Scriptures in Luke-Acts as a whole.

Luke 24:45 in the Context of Luke 24

Jesus' rebuke to the Emmaus travelers in Luke 24:25–27 forms the first explicit hermeneutical reflection in Luke 24:

O foolish men—indeed you are slow of heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and all of the prophets **he interpreted** for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures [διεξηγήνευσεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἐαυτοῦ].

Note that it is not the Scriptures *themselves* that are directly interpreted here but something more oblique: the “things concerning” Jesus “in all the Scriptures.” This first hermeneutical reflection receives additional commentary in 24:32 when the Emmaus travelers recognize Jesus and say: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking with us on the road, when **he expounded the Scriptures** for us?” (ὥς διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς). Note carefully that this is an explicit reference back to the activity of 24:27. In forging this connection, Luke essentially equates διεξηγήναι, which is a standard exegetical term,⁴⁷ with διανοίγω, showing that, when the context concerns interpretation of a text, the semantic field of διανοίγω that is in fact actualized by Luke is the specialized expository field outlined above.

Subsequently the Emmaus travelers return to the eleven and the others, at which time Jesus says:

“These are my words which I spoke to you while still with you, that it was necessary for all the things which have been written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms to be fulfilled concerning me.” Then he **expounded the Scriptures** in order that they might understand their meaning [τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς]. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Christ is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance is to be preached on the basis of his name for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. . . .” (Luke 24:44–47)

I have presumed the alternative translation here to show how I see it fitting into its immediate context. First, the subject under discussion perfectly suits the specialized expository semantic field of διανοίγω that has been isolated above, with αἱ γραφαί as its object, just as in Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2–3 (discussed above).

However, what might not be quite so evident is that, apart from any conclusions that might follow regarding διανοίγω with αἱ γραφαί, context encourages the interpreter to take νοῦς as the “meaning” of the Scriptures rather than the

⁴⁷ See BDAG, s.v. διεξηγήναι.

“mind” of the disciples. This is true for both 24:44 and 24:46–47. In 24:44 Jesus is talking precisely about the true meaning of the Scriptures, not the literal text just as in 24:27. In 24:44 the very word “fulfilled” (πληρώω) strongly implies that a core essence, something that penetrates below the surface meaning of the Scriptures, is the topic of discussion. Moreover, that Jesus says that these things were written “about me” (περὶ ἐμοῦ) further suggests that an underlying sense is in view (cf. περὶ ἑαυτοῦ in 24:27).

Furthermore, when in Luke 24:46–47 the author goes on to detail the content of the Scriptures, the content so depicted does not match the plain sense meaning of the Scriptures very well.⁴⁸ As Joseph A. Fitzmyer notes, “it is impossible to find any of these elements precisely in the OT, either that the Messiah shall suffer, or that he is to rise, or that it will happen on the third day.”⁴⁹ After all, when read for the plain sense, where do the Scriptures say that “the Christ suffered and rose from the dead on the third day?” However, if Luke is not detailing the literal content of the Scripture but rather its νοῦς, its true “meaning,” suddenly Luke’s statement snaps into clear focus. In brief, the context of both 24:44 and 24:46–47 fits the semantic field of νοῦς that I am proposing quite well.

In summary, the context of Luke 24 substantially favors αἱ γραφαί as the object of διανοίγω for Luke 24:45, which is being used in a specialized manner (“to open up a text” or “to exposit”), precisely as is found in Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2–3. If this is accepted, then νοῦς must be the object of συνιέναι and refer to a property of the Scriptures. However, even apart from this necessity, the subject under discussion in both 24:44 and 24:46–47 is not the Scripture itself but its unitive underlying sense, which suits the alternative translation of νοῦς (“meaning”) here proposed.

Luke 24:45 in the Context of Scholarship on Lukan Hermeneutics

For some time now, a debate has been under way regarding how to classify Luke’s use of the OT as a whole.⁵⁰ H. J. Cadbury emphasized Luke’s view of God’s

⁴⁸ There is, of course, ongoing discussion as to whether 24:47 is to be understood as referring to the content of the Scriptures or rather if only 24:46 is so depicted. Joseph A. Fitzmyer would restrict this interpretation to 24:46 since he believes the text to be under the influence of a later Christology and the early kerygma (*The Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [2 vols.; AB 28, 28A; New York: Doubleday, 1981, 1985], 2:1581, 1584). However, as Dillon correctly notes (*From Eye-Witnesses*, 214), this is syntactically improbable. This tension disappears under the alternative translation, for it is not the content of the Scriptures themselves that are hereby presented but their unitive “mind.”

⁴⁹ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1581.

⁵⁰ For the contours of this debate I am largely indebted to Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lukan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTSup 12; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 27–46.

sovereign control of history, and believed that this resulted in a promise–fulfillment scheme with apologetic leanings, a view that was largely endorsed in the influential redactional work of Hans Conzelmann.⁵¹ This would be subsequently characterized as a “proof from prophecy” hermeneutic by Eduard Lohse, Paul Schubert, and others.⁵² And although many would go on to question the precise suitability of this description,⁵³ it remains widely recognized by all that the author of Luke–Acts does read the Scriptures within a framework that stresses divine control over the Scriptures, history, and the present.

I submit that the proposed alternative translation captures precisely what these scholars have been expressing, while simultaneously bringing a new poignancy to scholarly descriptions of Lukan hermeneutics. For Luke, the diverse writings of the Scriptures have a cohesive “mind,” a νοῦς, an overarching yet submerged “intelligence” that integrates their diversity and seamlessly weaves the Scriptures and all else into a unified divine economy. Thus, for the author of Luke–Acts, it is not just that the Scriptures “are fulfilled”; it is that they “*had to be fulfilled*,” so that the underlying purposes of God encased in the Scriptures might come to pass: “O brothers, it was *necessary* that the Scriptures be fulfilled [ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν] which the Holy Spirit spoke in advance through the mouth of David” (Acts 1:16). For the author of Luke–Acts, the “mind” of the Scriptures is nothing other than the “meaning” deliberately breathed into the Scriptures by God, who is the author of the Scriptures, history, and all human affairs.

VI. SUMMARY

I have proposed that an alternative translation of Luke 24:45 should be given strong consideration: “Then Jesus expounded the Scriptures so that they might understand their meaning,” rather than the traditional rendering, “Then Jesus opened their mind so that they might understand the Scriptures.” This alternative translation is not supported by the word order and is weakly attested in the earliest church, although it is plausible that a few authors understood it in this fashion. Moreover, I have not found anyone who has proposed this alternative translation

⁵¹ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke–Acts* (2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1961); Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; London: Faber & Faber, 1960).

⁵² Paul Schubert, “The Structure and Significance of Luke 24,” in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann zu seinem 70. Geburtstag am 20. August 1954* (ed. Walther Eltester; BZNW 21; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1957), 165–86; Eduard Lohse, “Lukas als Theologe der Heilsgeschichte,” *EvT* 14 (1954): 256–75.

⁵³ E.g., Charles H. Talbert, “Promise and Fulfillment in Lucan Theology,” in *Luke–Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (ed. Charles H. Talbert; New York: Crossroad, 1983), 91–103; Martin Rese, *Alttestamentliche Motive in der Christologie des Lukas* (SNT 1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969).

within modern scholarship. Yet the following eight points speak in favor of the alternative translation: (1) the syntax of Luke 24:45 allows the alternative, so context must be determinative; (2) in Luke 24:32 and Acts 17:2–3 αἱ γραφαί is the object of διανοίγω exactly as the alternative proposes, showing that this syntactical correlation is typical for the author of Luke-Acts; (3) neither διανοίγω nor ἀνοίγω ever takes νοῦς as a direct object prior to the fifth century apart from the reception history of Luke-Acts; (4) the verb διανοίγω has a specialized expository semantic field as is illustrated by Luke-Acts itself and subsequent literature; (5) the immediate context in which Luke 24:45 is found is expository, making it likely that διανοίγω has that specific expository meaning here; (6) νοῦς can and does signify the “meaning” of a text for many of Luke’s contemporaries; (7) the content expressed in Luke 24:44 and 24:46–47 is better described as the underlying “meaning” of the Scriptures rather than the plain sense of the Scriptures, just as in 24:27; and (8) viewing νοῦς as a property of the Scriptures rather than the mental faculties of the disciples provides a surprising yet fitting capstone to previous efforts to describe Lukan hermeneutics. If these eight points are deemed persuasive, certain important hermeneutical implications follow. In the remainder of this article, I will briefly weigh three of them.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

First, the most obvious and weighty implication: If Jesus did not open the disciples minds in Luke 24:45 but rather explicated the Scriptures, then it follows that this text does not posit supernatural illumination of the mind as a necessity for understanding the Scriptures. Other texts may do so, but Luke 24:45 does not.⁵⁴ Does this therefore mean that any person, even a non-Christian, can attain to a proper reading of the Scriptures apart from Christ’s special “opening of the mind”? For Luke, the answer would appear to be yes, although this affirmation must be immediately qualified.

⁵⁴ The other traditional proof-text for this position, 2 Cor 3:16, is also fraught with difficulties. For Paul the veil does not obscure the meaning of the text directly, but rather it blocks the Jewish listener/reader from seeing the “cessation of the glory.” In my own reading of this text, Moses’ veiling is an enacted parable signifying that the Mosaic dispensation is destined to cease. The transfer of the veil over the heart of the one reading/listening to “Moses” symbolizes the inability of some interpreters to see that “Moses” himself (that is, the Pentateuch in modern parlance and Moses as a character therein) announces the end of his own dispensation, a point that ultimately can be discovered only by receiving the apostolic kerygma with its concomitant guiding hermeneutic. On the other hand, 1 Cor 2:6–16 affirms that the indwelling presence of the Spirit is ultimately necessary for the full comprehension of any spiritual matter, which might presumably extend to scriptural interpretation. For a full discussion, see my tentatively titled *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul’s Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco: Baylor University Press, forthcoming).

For the author of Luke-Acts, the important point is not whether the “mind” of the reader is opened but rather that someone, whether Christ or another, must serve as a *suitable guide* to the reader in order to explain the “meaning” of the Scriptures. In fact, Luke expressly acknowledges that a guide is needed: “Then Philip ran to the chariot and heard the eunuch reading the prophet Isaiah, and he asked, ‘Do you understand that which you are reading?’ He replied, ‘How shall I be able, unless someone leads me?’” (πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυνάμην ἔαν μὴ τις ὁδηγήσει με) (Acts 8:30–31). Thus, one who has not yet been exposed to the “mind” of the Scriptures cannot hope to interpret in a fully adequate manner. Even Apollos, who is able to teach accurately (ἀκριβῶς) about Jesus from the Scriptures while only knowing John’s baptism, must have the “way of God explained to him more accurately” (ἀκριβέστερον αὐτῷ ἐξέθεντο τὴν ὁδὸν [τοῦ θεοῦ]) by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24–26). Moreover, the Bereans did not search the Scriptures diligently *de novo* apart from hearing the apostolic preaching, but rather in response to it (Acts 17:11). For Luke, the hermeneutical imperative is that a *qualified guide* must open the “mind” of the Scriptures for those who have not yet become sufficiently acquainted with the way of the Lord; whether that guide be Jesus (Luke 24:27, 32, 45), Philip (Acts 8:30–35), Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:24–46), Peter (Acts 2:14–36; 3:11–26), or Paul (Acts 13:16–41; 17:2–3) is immaterial.

Which brings me to my second point. Until now I have referred to the “mind” of the Scriptures in Luke 24:45 as their “meaning” or “underlying sense,” but can we be more precise? What, for the author of Luke-Acts, is the “mind” of the Scriptures? The answer, which can be seen from the passages already explored in this paper, is that it is the core content of the early Christian kerygma:

that it is necessary for all the things which have been written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms to be fulfilled concerning me (Luke 24:44)

that the Christ suffered and rose from the dead on the third day, and repentance was preached on the basis of his name for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:46b–47)

that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead (Acts 17:3)

Compare these statement by Luke with, for example, Paul’s avowedly kerygmatic statement in 1 Cor 15:3b–5:

that Christ died in behalf of our sins in accordance with the Scriptures [κατὰ τὰς γραφάς], and that he was buried and that he has been raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas then the Twelve.

Although limitations of space allow me to do no more than state this point in the briefest fashion, I nonetheless submit that for Luke the “mind” of the Scriptures—their unitive “meaning”—is essentially the primitive apostolic kerygma.

A third and final implication: the basic hermeneutical model adopted by Justin, Irenaeus, Athanasius, and many later (proto-)orthodox fathers finds a strong precedent, perhaps even a vindication, in Luke 24:45.⁵⁵ Although it would be dangerous and foolish to lump all of patristic exegesis into one mold, it is undeniable that many of the fathers seek after the mind of the Scriptures, frequently understood as a summary of the apostolic kerygma, the rule of truth, the recapitulation, or simply “the creed,” as their fundamental guiding force in biblical interpretation.⁵⁶ As Irenaeus said regarding proper hermeneutical method in response to his gnostic opponents:

anyone who keeps unchangeable in himself the Rule of the Truth [*regulam veritatis*] received through baptism will recognize the names and sayings and parables from the Scriptures, but this blasphemous theme of theirs he will not recognize. For even if he recognizes the jewels, he will not accept the fox for the image of the king. He will restore each one of the passages to its proper order and, having fit it into the body of the Truth, he will lay bare their fabrication and show that it is without support. (*Haer.* 1.9.4)⁵⁷

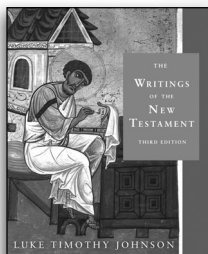
Now whether these early fathers actually attain to the same “mind” of the Scriptures as Luke is not my point, nor part of my claim. Rather, I want simply to note that, should the alternative translation hereby proposed be found persuasive, there is intriguing continuity in hermeneutical procedure between the author of Luke-Acts and the (proto-)orthodox church. For the author of Luke-Acts, neither inward illumination nor a supernatural opening of the mind is needed in order to interpret the Scriptures successfully, but rather a qualified guide who can introduce the would-be expositor to the “mind” of the Scriptures, that is, to the foundational apostolic kerygma.

⁵⁵ See Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 18: “What has not been explicitly noted before is that all along creed-like statements and confessions must in practice have provided the hermeneutical key to public reading of scripture before Irenaeus articulated this.”

⁵⁶ On this point, see Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 29–45, esp. 43, 122–30; eadem, “The ‘Mind’ of the Scripture: Theological Readings of the Bible in the Fathers,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (2005): 126–41; John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 33–44.

⁵⁷ Trans. Unger, *St. Irenaeus*, 48 (Latin text in SC 264:150).

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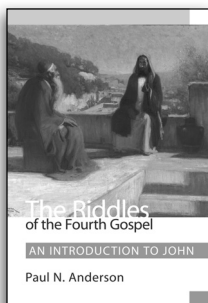
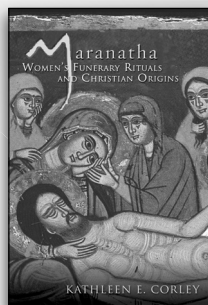
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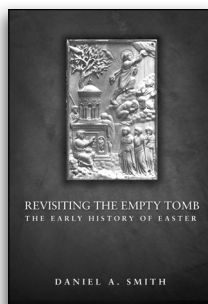
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