

***Nilus of Ancyra and allegorical
interpretation of Luke 22: 36
against the background of ancient exegesis***

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Only Luke records Jesus' enigmatic words to His disciples:

He said to them:

When I sent you out without purse or haversack or sandals, were you short of anything?

'No, nothing,' they said.

He said to them:

'But now if you have a purse, take it and the same with a haversack; if you have no sword, sell your cloak and buy one' (Luke 22: 35-36).

Christ anticipates possible doubts of his disciples. In Luke 22: 35 he shows that he changes his ordinances, from his previous instructions.

Nilus of Ancyra (died c. 430), as the only author who lived in antiquity, dedicated a discourse on these enigmatic words of Jesus¹. How does the interpretation of Nilus present himself against the background of ancient exegesis? In this paper we will try to ascertain the originality of the Greek writer against the background of others. We will appeal both to Greek, and Latin commentaries on those words. Nilus explained his thought in the first part of his discourse. Further, as is often the case with ancient authors, he displays subplots, unimportant for our exegesis.

¹ Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud: 'Nunc, qui habet sacculum, tollat'* (Luc. 22, 36), PG 79, 1264-1280.

1. Hermeneutics of Luke 22: 36

In the reflection on hermeneutics of considered words of Jesus we meet some traces in the ancient times. Nilus and other authors specify the rules that should be followed in doing interpretation.

Nilus and the exegetical problems

At the beginning of the discourse Nilus indicates the apparent contradiction between Jesus' order of total poverty in Luke 9: 3; 10: 4 par. and the command in Luke 22: 36, to take for the journey a purse, bag or even a sword. When we read the words of the Gospel in the figurative sense (*katà tēn anagōgēn*), they bring a lot of benefit. If interpreted literally, they appear to be in conflict with other words. Such a contradiction arises not only in relation to the purse and the bag, but also with the sword. One prophet encourages us to forge swords into plowshares (Isaiah 2: 4), and the second to forge plowshares into swords. (Joel 4: 10)². Christ, who orders to take along the sword, earlier prohibited the usage of any violence (Matthew 5: 39)³.

Origen warns against literal interpretation

Origen warned against a literal understanding of Luke 22: 35-36. To follow such interpretation someone could sell his coat and buy a sword, *maybe even be killed by the sword*. He would act not only against the will of Jesus, but also against his own wellbeing⁴. For him, the words taken literally prove to be *the letter of the Gospel*, which kills⁵.

Understanding the meaning of renunciation of the bag and purse

Ambrosiaster reflects on the contradiction in the Gospel of Luke between the order of poverty given by Jesus to Apostles and His request demanding that they get appropriate things. It is easier to understand the first order. Sent disciples were told to take nothing for the journey, because thanks to the peace they proclaimed to the signs taking place and their teaching of kindness, they will receive, what is necessary⁶. Ambrosiaster interpretation of Jesus 'recommendation in Luke 22: 36 we will present later.

² Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 1

³ Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 1; 3.

⁴ Origenes, *Commentarii in Matthaeum (fragmenta)*, XV, 2.

⁵ Origenes, *In Leviticum homiliae*, VII, 5.

⁶ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, 104, 1-4.

Christ's pedagogy as a key to the exegesis

In view of the difficulties with the words of Jesus, Nilus refers to the important hermeneutical rule. The existing discrepancies he accounts for pedagogical reasons. Christ adapts the truth to the level of the listener⁷. The entire exegetical lecture of the monk of Ancyra refers precisely to such a pedagogy in which Christ requires something else at different stages of spiritual growth.

Different meaning in different situation

Rightness of pedagogy is also a key in the interpretation of Luke 22: 36. Augustine, in discussion with Manicheans, explains the divergence using pedagogy. He states, that *without any inconsistency, precepts and counsels and permissions may be changed, as different times require different arrangements*⁸. Augustine's thought is echoed in the Venerable Bede. In his opinion, the difference between the precepts given by Jesus in Luke 22: 36 and those given earlier stemmed from the different situations. This new situation is exceptional and is associated with the persecution of the Master and his disciples⁹. Besides the character of listeners, there is a ground of external circumstances. This argument can be extended to the concept of pedagogy as a disciple disposition does not develop in isolation from the external environment.

2. Bag and purse

In the passage that we have quoted from, Jesus, in the face of His passion, permits the disciples to take a bag and purse, forbade earlier during the first missionary expedition. Such precept requires more explanation.

The Disciples – from poverty to possessions

According to Nilus, if we read the words of Luke, regarding the symbolical meaning of purse and bag, in view of the pedagogical key of Christ, we are able to overcome the contradiction of a more literal understanding. Interpreting the purse and bag as tokens of material poverty, Nilus concludes that Jesus recommends the Apostles, *in the beginning of their search for piety*, to refrain from the signs of tangible property. At this stage of their progress, attachment to worldly things is a grave obstacle to those who are straining after holiness and God's wisdom. However, he permits the ones who experienced spiritual progress, their new use, be-

⁷ Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 1.

⁸ Augustinus, *Contra Faustum*, XXII, 77.

⁹ Beda Venerabilis, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, VI, 22.

cause they are free from the attachment to them and can use them appropriately¹⁰.

Imposed poverty becomes a subject of advice

Such interpretation of the words of Jesus is a long disquisition given by John Chrysostom, a master of Nilus. It is possible that Nilus was inspired by his explanation. According to Chrysostom Christ would first educate disciples to believe in God's power. Once they have experienced it and they believed, he gave them the opportunity to practice the formed virtues. However, He did not provide complete protection, but permitted them to be tempted and tried, and because of that – ever vigilant. The bag was to remind them of the need for attention, vigilance and diligence. Jesus acted like a swimming instructor who at first supports the student, protects him and then as he gains self-reliance exposes him to greater risk. Finally, leaving them for themselves reveals not so much their own but His power. As chicks escape from the nest, previously looked after by their parents, then forced to fight for survival, so the apostles left Palestine where they were exposed to difficulties and shortages. The question is whether they were short of anything earlier (Luke 22: 35), Christ points at his previous conduct. Now they will experience thirst, hunger, nakedness, many dangers and distress so that they might have won a bigger award. The master allows them to take the bag and purse, so they can choose for themselves the most appropriate attitude, not just being passive instruments in his hands, but winning on their *own philosophy*. Chrysostom seems to believe that the subject of poverty in the lives of the Apostles is an imperative. Abolishing the earlier ban on having anything and referring to their freedom, Christ expects that they won't go beyond their necessary needs. They still should not have their homes, servants and things being used for a convenience. Saint Paul and his associates, Priscilla and Aquila, may serve as examples, who were content with what they had (1 Timothy 6: 8)¹¹. As we can see, the subject is a perfunctory statement for Nilus but for Chrysostom a comprehensive lecture.

Material goods are allowed during persecutions

The same motif of the consent to dispose of material things takes Bede the Venerable. However, the situational context is changed, but does not seem to rule out the situation described by Nilus and Chrysostom. It is not so much about the state of spiritual perfection but more about the

¹⁰ Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 1.

¹¹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In illud: Salute Priscillam et Aquilam (Rom. 16, 3)*, II, 2-4; Idem, *In Matthaeum homiliae*, LXXXIV, 1.

persecutions for Christ's sake. In such a situation, is not only allowed, but it is necessary to have material funds. Indeed, in times of peace, Christ told the disciples to take nothing for the time of proclamation of the Gospel, because they will live on the Gospel. But when the time of persecution comes and the preaching of the Word becomes impossible, His disciples were allowed to have material possessions, until the persecutions die away and then again a time for the evangelization comes. Then they will receive support from their listeners¹².

3. Cloak

Unlike bag and purse, Christ recommended to get rid of the mantle. Such an option seems rather enigmatic: to use a purse or bag and carry the sword but getting rid of the coat. Since the literal interpretation of the passage expresses a virtually impossible precept, our interpreters not only evade the literal meaning, but in general, do not deal with it as too complex. They deal with it only with its symbolic meaning.

Cloak – a symbol of ascetism

The passage of Luke 22: 36 provides a possibility that despite the fact that these goods are allowed, one still does not possess them. Nilus does not refer to such situation; his attention is directed at the symbolic meaning of the cloak or generally speaking clothes. What does the symbol of cloak stands for, which one is allowed to sell in order to buy a sword? The figurative interpretation is required here. In a rather lengthy and intricate argumentation Nilus shows that disposal of the cloak indicates a rejection of the primary stage of asceticism. The Disciple, relying on the fight with passions and sin, enters into the higher stage, namely, the contemplation of God's word *and the efforts to obtain the power of the word*. The man, who has achieved inner harmony and peace, could now devote himself to higher things, contemplation and teaching others.

Cloak - as a symbol of worldly possessions

There are several other authors who have indicated a different approach to the same problem. Ambrose believes that a Christian fulfills the command of Jesus to sell his cloak and buy a sword, when he rejects *the desired wealth, spiritual negligence, and trappings of power*, and turns to God's things, inflames in himself a zeal like a spiritual and powerful weapon to fight for God's cause¹³. To sell tunic and buy a sword is an instruction by Jesus to his disciples which should be interpreted as a renounce-

¹² Beda Venerabilis, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, III, 9.

¹³ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, I, 14.

ment of possessions with regard to the Gospel¹⁴. According to Abba Poemen the passage of Luke 22: 36 means this: *let him who is at ease give it up and take the narrow way*¹⁵. It seems that someone else demonstrates another approach based on various interpretations such as Ambrose, when he says that Jesus' command to take a purse and bag or sell a tunic and buy a sword, expresses the search for eternal goods. These words require abandoning the worldly way of life and living in the power of the Holy Spirit¹⁶. Nilus interprets the coat as an elementary asceticism struggle with sin and passions, other authors – only wealth, pleasures and passions. The sale of the cloak according to Nilus means the fulfillment of this basic stage of asceticism; according to others - the renunciation of those things. The direction of Nilus' thought and other authors is alike, although Nilus would have put the symbolic purchase of sword, at the higher stage of spiritual development; and the others - at the customary ascetic level.

Cloak - symbol of the body subjected to asceticism

Maximus the Confessor introduces new subtleties into his commentary: "Who has the purse, that is the spiritual knowledge, let him take a bag, that is, many of the virtues, and the one who does not have, let him sacrifice the body to the perils of getting virtues and fight wisely with passions and evil spirits until he achieves the peace of God"¹⁷. Anyone of the above mentioned interpreters does not refer to the purse and bag as a separate symbol, treating these things together. All these are generally close to the literal meaning, because they are synonymous of material means. Maximus the Confessor considers them as an image of spiritual things, knowledge and virtue. The cloak that Jesus advised to sell becomes a metaphor of the body subjected to the acquisition of virtue, and sword – an ascetic struggle against sin and evil spirits. The author, in relation to Nilus and others, with similar conclusions, makes their own interpretation of symbols.

4. Sword

Let us consider the symbolism of the sword. Just as a metaphor of sold mantle, this image requires allegorical interpretation.

Sword as a metaphor of contemplation and teaching

Nilus insists that Jesus never accepted the use of the sword, wanting his disciples always to *have a peaceful and gentle disposition*. The sale of a

¹⁴ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, X, 54.

¹⁵ *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Poimen 112.

¹⁶ Anonymus, *Commentarium in Lucam*, 22.

¹⁷ Maximus Confessor, *Capita theologica et oecumenica*, I, 78.

cloak defines precisely the end of the fighting with passions and severe asceticism. The purchase of a sword suggests the entry into the phase of contemplation and preaching in the power of words¹⁸. Sword represents for other authors a supernatural zeal, enabling the power of the Holy Spirit to fight for the things of God and acquirement of supernatural goods.

Biblical roots of the symbolism of the sword

It should be emphasized that the symbolism of the sword in the sense of the Word of God is rooted in the Bible (cf. Hebrew 4: 12). Many other authors maintain the same position. It also alludes to Ambrose in the context of Luke 22: 36: *There is still a spiritual sword so that you would sell your patrimony and buy the word (the Gospel), which clothes the interior spirit*¹⁹. A Christian renouncing certain worldly goods might receive a supernatural wisdom in abundance.

A sword is a practice of virtues

Bede the Venerable applies metaphor indicating a difference between the order of Jesus in Luke 10: 4 par. and Luke 22: 36. Therefore, the first step is not just about the cloak, but refers to all things. The first word spoken by Jesus prevents from taking anything for the journey, the second one – even orders to bring the sword as well. The author points to the diversity of the rules of life in times of peace and in time of persecution. The first recommendation concerns the first case, the second – the other. There are virtues appropriate for anytime, such as mercy, humility, patience, and there are virtues that might be practiced recurrently according to the discernment, such as fasting, night vigil, and psalms reading²⁰. Bede does not connect the recommendation of Jesus in Luke 22: 36 with a higher stage of spiritual life, as Nilus does. However, the perception of asceticism as the initial step in the spiritual life is common to both writers. All poverty in Luke 10: 4 applies to this phase as well. They also perceived a more flexible permission in Luke 22: 36 allowing less strict observance of poverty in a situation where the spirit of freedom has already been achieved. Then comes to the fore the cultivation of other virtues and practices of piety.

Sword – fighting against the devil

In the *Apophtegmata Patrum* we encounter a brief commentary on this verse attesting to the variety of ancient interpretations. Abba Poemen

¹⁸ Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 3-5

¹⁹ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, X, 54

²⁰ Beda Venerabilis, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, III, 9.

said: *It is written in the Gospel: Sell your cloak and buy a sword.* It should be understood: *Who has achieved peace of mind, let it give up and let him take a fight. He spoke about the fight against the devil*²¹. Abba Poemen explains these words in a contrary manner to Nilus of Ancyra. Both of them agree that the purchase of a sword represents a higher stage of spiritual life, permanent state of peace. They differ, however, in terms of the rest. For Nilus sword is a symbol of contemplation, for Poemen – a fighting against the evil spirit, which a monk has to entertain. In fact, contemplation and struggle with the demons are not mutually exclusive, as is shown in the lives of the saints. Quoted apophthegmata illustrates the impact of the environment on a biblical interpretation. Nilus attributes to his symbolism of the sword passion and apologetic accents. Christ spoke those words in the face of the coming sufferings. Encouragement to take a sword calls on the Apostles to be prepared to fight the enemies of truth. However, they cannot be guided by wrath in this struggle, but *by the zeal for God's honor*. They are supposed to equip themselves with *the warlike Word* as if abandoning the original softness. This change results from a change in the attitude of the enemy, who enters into a decisive battle²². Sword of the Word is powerful because it exposes the falsehood of its opponent²³.

Sword – a symbol of the Passion of Christ

If we read commentaries on this passage, there are a number of authors who put an emphasis on the Passion. Commenting on the meaning of a sword which the disciples were told to purchase and carry, John Chrysostom explains that this is a symbol of Christ's passion in which they will participate²⁴. It does not mean that the sword was intended to be used. They are supposed to use it as a symbol, namely, carrying it to express the *betrayal* of Jesus²⁵. Since Nilus belonged to the closest circle of Chrysostom's disciples thus it is possible that he was directly inspired by the interpretation of his master.

Passion and apologetic symbolism of the sword

Ambrose demonstrates a similar symbolism of the sword referring to Christ's disciple where he accentuates asceticism as the measure of participation in the Passion of Christ: *There is also a sword of the agony, if you free yourself from the body, for this sacrifice you might buy a sacred crown*

²¹ *Apophthegmata Patrum. Collectio systematica*, XXI, 14.

²² Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 2.

²³ Nil of Ancyra, *Sermo in illud*, 6.

²⁴ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In illud: Salutate Priscillam et Aquilam (Rom. 16, 3)*, II, 3.

²⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Matthaeum homiliae*, LXXXIV, 1.

of martyrdom for yourself²⁶. It seems that the echo of the idea of “white” martyrdom to be heard, accessible to those who master their bodies.

Sword of freedom in the adoption of the Passion of Christ

In the same way, in Christ’s passion context, although in a slightly different way, the image of sword is interpreted by Ambrosiaster. And the fact that before the Passion Christ commanded the Apostles to bring a purse, bag, and obtain a sword does not escape his attention. One of the disciples understood these words literally because during Jesus’ capture he was carrying his weapon (Matthew 26: 51 par.). Jesus did not intend to use a weapon for defense against the coming aggressive horde. The sword became a symbol of preventient knowledge possessed by him, the power and control over events received from Father or even permitting him to stop the impossible to avoid torture. He pointed to his voluntary self-abatement because Jesus didn’t take advantage of this power on account of the salvation of people²⁷.

Two swords – participation in the Passion and obedience to the Father

The Venerable Bede, by a synthesis of an ancient exegetic legacy, reconciles both of these interpretations, referring to the two swords in Luke 22: 38. At this point Jesus is in the company of the wicked. So it will be even later when he will be hung on the cross between two robbers whether descend into the abyss after the death trying to save those whom wanted to save. The Apostles brought two swords. Jesus said: *That is enough* (Luke 22: 38). The swords refer to the Passion of Christ. One of them was used during Jesus’ arrest by a disciple who took out his sword and cut off the ear of the servant, the second one – on the order of Jesus, remained in the sheath (Matthew 26: 51). The first sword represented disciples and their courage and love to the Master and their readiness for anything, the second – Jesus’ renunciation of the extraordinary help of God or people; patience of the Savior and his obedience to His Father’s will unto death on the cross²⁸.

The literal meaning of a sword

Although, as we have seen, the Church Fathers willingly devote themselves to the spiritual interpretation of Jesus’ command to purchase a sword, nevertheless, we encounter a number of accounts interpreting this

²⁶ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, X, 54.

²⁷ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, 104, 1-4.

²⁸ Beda Venerabilis, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, VI, 22.

recommendation literally. Nilus represents the majority on ancient tradition that avoids the literal interpretation of that instruction of Jesus.

Jesus' words are not a recommendation but statement of fact

Saint Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea, makes an exception to this rule. He applies to the biblical manuscript traditions which affirm the use of a word *will take* instead of *may take* as we just saw in the verse, above. On the basis of it he states that these words are not imperative, but *a prophecy of the Lord, who announces that the Apostles, forgetting about the gifts and the law of the Lord, dare to reach for the sword*²⁹. For the bishop of Caesarea it is unnecessary to refer to the figurative meaning here.

Immature disciples are allowed by Jesus to have a sword

Ambrose interprets literally the precept to purchase a sword. In this exegesis Jesus' pedagogy plays a fundamental role which takes into account the maturation of disciples as indicated at the beginning of this work. The bishop of Milan is asking Christ a question: *Why (Lord) you choose to buy a sword, if you forbid me to kill? ... Maybe in order to be ready for a defense and not necessarily for revenge... However, the law does not ban me from reciprocating a blow. Maybe that's why you told Peter offering two swords "that is enough". It was allegedly acceptable until the time of the Gospel, according to the fact, that the Law taught justice, whereas the Gospel shows a superb goodness. Many consider this to be unfair, however, the Lord was not unjust; unable to avenge, he preferred to sacrifice himself*³⁰. Ambrose was convinced that Jesus' precept reveals certain educational purpose. Jesus during his arrest allows his immature disciples to take an intermediate stand: not to seek revenge, permissible by the Law, but also, in accordance with that law, to undertake a physical defense against attackers. A more perfect, fully evangelical attitude shows the Master, who resigns from the physical defense, giving approval to his death as a martyr.

Augustine refrains from explanations

Augustine is more restrained as a regular listener of Ambrosian sermons. In his view, the fact that Peter cut off the ear of the attacker, proves the truth that he really had a sword. He interprets this fact in this manner: *although he has been ordered to carry a sword, he did not receive the order to use it. Apparently the will of the Lord was unknown why he had to carry a weapon, but it was known that he did not want it to be used*³¹. The Bis-

²⁹ Basilios Magnus, *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 251.

³⁰ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, X, 53n.

³¹ Augustyn, *Contra Faustum*, XXII, 77.

hop of Hippo who, like Ambrose, interprets literally Jesus' precept to carry a sword, in principle – refrains from explaining its meaning.

5. Conclusion

Nilus of Ancyra the first part of *De oratione* devoted to the interpretation of Luke 22: 36. He appears to be a creative interpreter assuming from patristic tradition *things both new and old* (cf. Matthew 13: 52). Like others, he is aware of the external contradiction between these words given by Jesus earlier order of total poverty to his disciples. This contradiction has led many authors to do in-depth biblical reflection. In the exegesis of Nilus and other authors the key link is the pedagogy of Christ who teaches the truth taking into consideration external circumstances including the disposition of the audience.

There are three closely intertwined elements in the patristic interpretation: ascetic, christological and missionary. The difference in interpretation of various topics by the same authors determines their methods of translation. The interpretation of Luke 22: 36 can follow either a strictly literal direction or figurative preventing them from providing a coherent and comprehensive approach to the entire statement of Jesus. Only Maximus the Confessor makes an effort to enclose the entire verse, completely. Generally, patristic interpretation of Luke 22: 36 focuses attention on the clarification of particular physical objects: purse and bag, cloak and sword.

The authors, besides Maximus the Confessor, understand purse and bag as one. According to Nilus, who appeals to more literal interpretation and the key of Jesus' pedagogy, the consent to retake purse and bag indicates the freedom of spiritually mature disciples to dispose of the material resources during their apostolic ministry. Furthermore, Nilus is supported by an even deeper explication of his teacher, John Chrysostom.

This motif is not seen in other writers and gets the impression that Chrysostom inspired Nilus' view. The Venerable Bede enriches this subject through the context of persecution indicating that during repression a need for more unhampered using of material resources is necessary.

The precept to sell a coat has for our authors only figurative meaning. The symbolism of a cloak oscillates around an elementary Christian struggle against evil. Various authors associate differently this thing, but the conclusions are similar. Selling of cloak means rejection of wealth and pleasures, overcoming of passions and sin, having control over body through abstinence. Nilus is in the mainstream of ascetic interpretations but it seems that he gives it his own originality. He explains that to get rid of a cloak signifies not only interest in asceticism, but – moving a step further – full effectiveness to it.

Therefore, he is heading already for the next stage of spiritual maturity. Since to sell a cloak means effectiveness in extensive asceticism, it im-

poses an explanation of what it means to buy a sword. To buy a sword means to move to the stage of spiritual contemplation and proclamation in the power of the Word of God.

The motif of sword contains a rich symbolism in other authors. In *Apophthegmata* one of the elders combines this symbol with the state of achieved spiritual peace and considers it more dramatic, connecting with the fight against evil spirits. Some writers do not enter into the subtleties of spiritual progress but still interpret the image of sword as an elementary fight between imperfections and virtues.

The sword symbolism as a preached Word presented by Nilus, although of the biblical origin, introduces us to the context of Christ's passion. Since the opponents of truth arise and want to persecute Christ and His Apostles, Jesus calls his loved ones to take up the sword of the Word and defend the truth. This interpretation in relation to the Passion of Christ, pointing more to the "active" commitment in it is combined with another, which appeals to "passive" participation. The second one appears – also in the perfunctory explanation – in Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom.

Perhaps Nilus was inspired by the thought of Chrysostom initiating his own interpretation. To acquire a sword for Chrysostom, in the closer sense, means to share in the Passion of Christ through physical presence of the disciples in the events of the Passion or suffering for Christ.

Ambrose seems to point to a continued partnership by offering spiritual sacrifices and dying for yourself. Ambrosiaster's "passive" aspect of the Passion, in turn, refers to Christ himself. The purchased but never used sword expresses Jesus' divine power which He gives up standing in front of his persecutors. Venerable Bede accepts aspects, "active" and "passive". First one he interprets in the spirit of Chrysostom, the second – Ambrosiaster.

Several authors have interpreted a sword in the literal sense, especially since Luke the Evangelist reports the real possession of the sword by the disciples of Jesus during his arrest. Ambrose explains this fact by Jesus' tolerance to the immaturity of his disciples who have not quite grown out of the Old Testament. It is significant that Augustine, somehow, had a great respect for allegorical speculation, refrains from expressing his opinion on the physical meaning of the swords. Nilus, on the other hand, shows no interest in the literal interpretation of swords acquired by the Apostles.

As long as we realize none of Origen's commentary on Luke 22: 36 did not survive. The difficult thing is to determine how far back the roots of Nilus exegesis of the words of Jesus go. Tangibly, we feel the impact of John Chrysostom but in general, the spirit of ancient exegesis. Nilus read the writings of others, he was a scholar and let develop through others. Drawing on the legacy of his predecessors he enriched her by his own

originality and perhaps was the first to give a better lecture on these enigmatic words of the Gospel.

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