

OF WHAT USE IS THE SWORD FOR THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LUKE 22:35-38 IN THE LIGHT OF NEW TESTAMENT ETHICS ON NON-VIOLENCE

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Abstract

This essay conducts a biblical exegetical study of Luke 22:35-38 to clarify Jesus' directive to the disciples: "And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one!" The sword saying is interpreted with the background of Jesus' teachings and actions in other related sections of the New Testament. The purpose of the study is (i) to evaluate the sword saying and situate it correctly within the New Testament setting, and with special emphasis (ii) that the use of sword in the defence of Jesus at his arrest (Lk.:22:49f par) and Jesus' reaction demonstrate clearly Jesus' absolute rejection of violence of any kind; (iii) that the sword-saying is a didactics in metaphor; (iv) that Christians who insist on any form of legitimate violence must themselves consider how they fit in their belief with the verdict of Jesus on violence and arm resistance. Discourse analysis and word study are the main exegetical tools applied. The result of the search may be less desired especially in an environment of Christian persecution, but Christians ought to appreciate the sword metaphor and stimulate thought of other meaningful ways to survive, and mission in an unfriendly environment.

Key Words: Discipleship; Mission; Dialogue; New Testament Ethics; Violence; Retaliation; Armed Resistance; Sword

Introduction

The Gospel message on violence, retaliation and arm-resistance in Gospels, especially in Luke's Gospel (6:27-40; 9:54-55; 22:50-52), is of the most debatable areas in New Testament scholarship. Sometimes interpreters find themselves helpless in the face of persecution and inhuman treatment; when rights are denied, and life is at stake, when the demand for mission calls for resistance. More unsettling is the two-side picture of the Lucan Jesus, who, in his pronouncements (6:26-36), teaching (9:51-55) and actions (23:34) criticises violence and retaliation, and on sending his disciples to mission, instructs them to be peaceful (10:2) and to take nothing along with them (10:4; cf. 9:3). But towards the end of his mission on earth, he commands the disciples: "And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one!" (22:36). Therefore, the question asked is: Of what use is the sword for the disciples? The attempt to find possible solutions to the puzzle forms the central interest of the study.

The article evaluates the sword theme and argues that the reference to the destructive weapon should be read in the immediate context of 22:38, 47-53. However, the study makes reference to other NT texts, especially within the canonical gospels, in order to appreciate more the demands of the sword maxim. It emphasizes that Jesus', and sharp criticism of the use of sword in the defence of Jesus by his disciples (Lk. 22:49f par) is obvious evidence of Jesus' total condemnation of any form of violence and armed resistance. It further argues that Luke cannot mean by sword in v.36 a lethal weapon.¹ The sword saying is simply a didactics in metaphor; it is a powerful symbol of crisis.² Again, Christians who contend on any form of legitimate violence must themselves consider how they qualify themselves in their belief with the verdict of Jesus on violence and armed resistance.

The study applies discourse analysis and word study in the interpretation of the text. The analysis of the formal textual factors follows closely Louw-Nida's classification models.³ The word study concentrates on three major lexemes: ἱμάτιον (outer garment), μάχαιρα (sword) and ἰκανόν (enough). The text is then subjected to contextual and comparative analysis within the passion narrative tradition. Finally, attention will be drawn to some of the complexities associated with the text.

Text Delimitation

The unit under discussion (22:35-38) is of the farewell discourse at the Last Supper (22:1-38) between Jesus and his disciples. The discourse takes place at the table (v.14) in a large upper room (vv.11-12) in Jerusalem. It is on the directive to the disciples to carry purses and bags, and also to provide themselves with swords.

The immediate preceding passage is on Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial (vv.31-34)⁴ and the subsequent unit on Jesus' prayer at Mt Olive (vv.39-46), which is also associated with change in location (22:39).⁵ One of the fascinating aspects, the farewell discourse and also the interest of the study is on the directive to the disciples to sell their mantle (outer garment) and buy swords. The motif of sword will be repeated in vv.49-52. Incidentally, the passage is one of those found only in Luke among the canonical gospels.⁶

¹ Robert J Karris, "The Gospel According to Luke" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E Brown, Joseph A Fitzmyer and Roland E Murphy, 675-721. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1990:716-717.

² Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 716.

³ Johannes E Louw and Eugen A Nida, *Greek-English-Lexicon of the New Testament*. Based on Semantic Domains. 2nd edition, 2 Vols. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989, (e-copy).

⁴ I Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Lk. A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I Howard Marshall and W Ward Gasque. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978:10-11.

⁵ This study is partly motivated by the presentation of Anthony Iffen Umoren "Jesus' Directive to Buy a Sword in Luke 22:35-38 and the Right to Self Defence" during the 23rd CIWA Theological Week (26-30 March, 2012) at the Catholic Institute of West Africa Port Harcourt, Rivers State. However, the position of this article differs substantially from Umorem's interpretation of the same text as a tool for Christian self-defence.

⁶ W Radl, "ἱμάτιον" in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 Vols, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmanns, 1990, (e- copy).

Formal Textual Factors of vv.35-38

Verbs of Communication and Possession

There are 7 major classes of verbs in the text. The dominance of the verbs of communication (saying – λέγω) and of possession (having – ἔχω) are dominant. Λέγω appears in all the verses: twice in vv.35,38, and once in vv.36-37. ἔχω appears also in all the verses except v.35. The incidence of the verbs of communication reveals a level of inter-human relation within the world of the text. The verbs of possession evoke the feelings of conserving and acquiring. The negative nominal participial phrase μὴ ἔχων (v.36) conveys the sense of need to be satisfied. The use of the verbs of take (αἶρω), sell (πωλέω) and buy (ἀγοράζω) in the imperative mood demonstrates the importance and urgency of the discourse. The verbs are closely linked with artefacts for travelling – purse (money), bag (containing clothing and other necessities), and sword (for protection). In other words, the pronouncement is missionary oriented. The concentration of the verbs in the imperative mood in v.36 may suggest Luke's special prejudice for the statement expressed as a simple instruction, ὁ ἔχων βαλλάντιον ἀράτω, ὁμοίως καὶ πήραν (the [one] having a purse let him take [it] likewise also a purse), and also in a 'reciprocal antonym' rather than negation, thus πωλησάτω τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ (*sell!* your mantle) and ἀγορασάτω μάχαιραν (*buy!* a sword). It is a language of command influenced by an urgency of mission.

Nouns of Artifacts and Status

Verses 35-36 contain most of the nouns. Βαλλάντιον, (purse) πήρα (travelling bag) and ὑπόδημα (sandals) appear together in v.35. Βαλλάντιον and πήρα will appear again in v.36, while ἱμάτιον (cloak) replaces ὑπόδημα. Μάχαιρα appears only in v.36 but twice. That is to say, two new nouns (ἱμάτιον and μάχαιρα) are introduced in v.36 to take a place of 'interest'. The disciple, who has no μάχαιρα must sell his ἱμάτιον to possess μάχαιρα. All these are objects suitable for travelling. They can also offer some comfort and protection.

However, the preference of one value (μάχαιρα) to the other (ἱμάτιον) in v.36 creates a kind of hierarchy of choice in the world of the text. Expressing this in common parlance, sell what you *have* (that is of lesser value) to buy what you *lack* (of higher value)! It contains also some tension:

And he said to them:

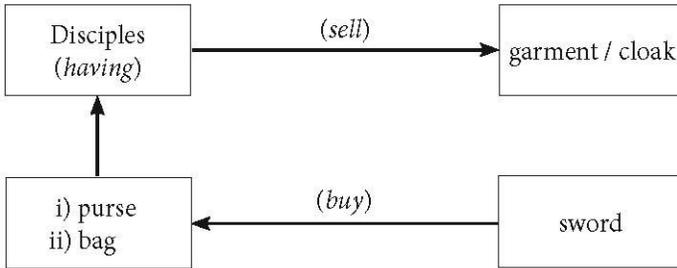
But now the [one] having a purse (wallet) let him take [it],

likewise also a bag, = *possession*

and the [one] not having, let him sell his outer garment = *dispossession*

and let him buy a sword, = *repossession*

Therefore, the disciples must be prepared to make a sacrifice, to give up things of lesser value (ἱμάτιον) for things of superior value (μάχαιρα). It is a tension built on the conflicting interest between the comfort of ἱμάτιον and the crisis of μάχαιρα.



There is further tension between vv.35-36. In v.35 the disciples “were not short of anything” (μή τινος ὑστερήσατε). Now in v.36, they lack something, and therefore are ordered: πωλησάτω ... καὶ ἀγορασάτω (sell and buy!) in order to transform the state of μή ἔχων (not having) to the state of ἔχων (having).

Conjunction and Adverb

There is tension between the temporal subordinating conjunction clause of v.35 and the adverbial clause of v.36. The reference is between a definite time in the past (v.35) and in the present (v.36). In v.35 it is ‘then’ (ὅτε) and in v.36 it is ‘now’ (νῦν). It brings out the contrasting moment between the two incidents, despite the fact that the two verses share the same grammatical objects – βαλλάντιον and πήρα, expressed in genitive form in v.35 and accusative in v.36. It demonstrates the changing moment and the challenging mission of the disciples, which requires additional material to cope with, hence the sword.

The combination of the present participial and imperative verbs together with the adverbial νῦν in v.36 stretches the new situation into the future. Thus in v.36 the present participle phrase with an embedded subject, ὁ ἔχων (the one having) forms a positive perspective of the injunction. It governs the aorist imperative ἀράτω (let him take it up), and the two direct objects placed in the accusative case – βαλλάντιον (a purse) and πήραν (a bag – as backpack).⁷ Secondly, from a negative perspective, the negative present participial phrase with an embedded subject, ὁ μὴ ἔχων (the one *not* having), governs two aorist imperatives: πωλησάτω (let him sell) with its direct object ἱμάτιον (outer garment/cloak), and ἀγορασάτω (let him buy) with its direct object μάχαιραν (a sword). So, in the new dispensation the one having (or whoever has) a purse must take it up, and likewise a bag; secondly, the one not having (or whoever does not have) a μάχαιρα (sword) *must* sell ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ (his outer garment or cloak) and *must* buy the sword. Simply put: the directive to buy a sword is central and forms the dominant linguistic element in the text.

There is also a high probability that not all the disciples have swords. Otherwise the pronouncement of Jesus will not make any sense. This can be demonstrated by the introduction of logical quadrangular and hexagonal relations.

⁷ Other alternative understanding of the grammatical rule will later be raised in this study.

Logical Quadrangular and Hexagonal Relations

Logical Quadrangular Relation

Logical quadrangle in the context of this study is a four-node graphic (propositional) point of logical relations. Its graphic nodes are so interrelated that none is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of the world of the text.⁸ The logical nodes of the quadrangle can be represented mathematically (quality-quantity) and graphically (relations).

Quality and Quantity

A = *Affirmo* (by quality) *ut universaliter* (by quantity).

E = *Nego* (by quality) *ut universaliter* (by quantity).

I = *Affirmo* (by quality) *ut partialiter* (by quantity).

O = *Nego* (by quality) *ut partialiter* (by quantity).

Relations

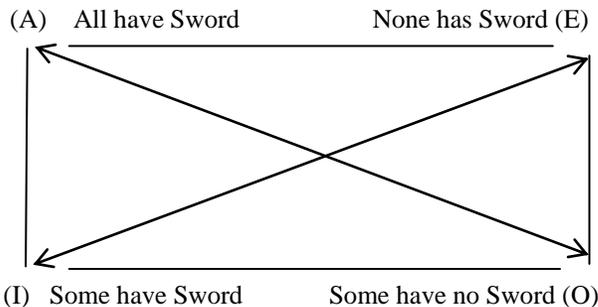
A and E are related to each other by contrary/exclusion.

I and O are related to each other by subcontrary/inclusive disjunction.

A is related to O, and E to I by contradiction/exclusive disjunction/contravalance.

A is related to I, and E to O by implication.

I is related to A, and O to E by replication.

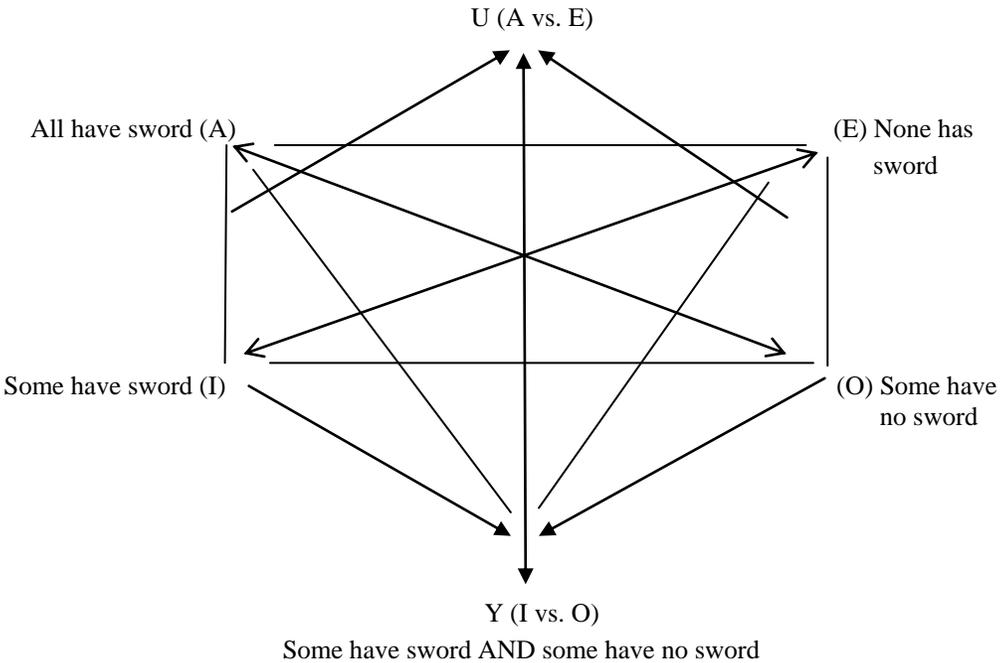


The graphical nodes of the logical quadrangles indicate clearly the possible logical conditions of the disciples within the world of the text. A and E are exclusively contrary to each other, and therefore could not have possibly existed within the world of the text since they are constructed on *universaliter*. In other words, if all have sword, the statement makes no meaning; and if none has sword, then it becomes very difficult to explain v.38 (also vv.49-51). I and O are respectively the logical implication (sub-contrary/inclusive disjunction) of A and E respectively. It narrows the world of the text. It creates a relation of inclusive disjunction with *partialiter*. Besides, it is the subcontraries that generate the entailments and presuppositions of the statement, thereby highlighting the *implied – that which is never said but should have been said*.⁹ This is clearly seen in the hexagonal relations.

⁸ E Güttgemanns, *Einführung in die Linguistik für Textwissenschaftler* I. Kommunikations- und informationstheoretische Modelle. Bonn: 1978:97.

⁹ Michael Enyinwa Okoronkwo, *The Jerusalem Compromise as a Conflict-Resolution Model. A Rhetoric Communicative Analysis of Acts 15 in the light of Modern Linguistics*. Bonn: Borengässer, 2001:154.

The Hexagonal Relations



Logical hexagonal relation is contextually a *double-3-sided* relation. Its use here is to explain the logical relation of the linguistic entities in the text in order to determine more accurately the world of the text. It shows that A and E are two contrary worlds, and I and O are their respective implications. Y is the possible world of text constructed from the sub-contrary I and O. However, Y is related to A and E as sub-contrary, and to U as contradiction. Thus the analysis shows that the world of the text is understood as the middle-point between the two extreme worlds that exists outside the text.¹⁰ It answers the question that while Jesus is speaking, *some* of the disciples already have swords with them.

Referential and Relational Markers

The discourse referential consist of speaker v.37 (ἐμοί ἐμου), receptor vv.35 (ὑμᾶς), 37 (ὑμῖν) object vv.35 (οἱ; τινος; οὐθενός), 36 (ὁ ὁ τὸ), 37 (τὸ, τό τὸ) 38 (οἱ ὁ), and demonstrative/deictic reference v.37 τοῦτο. The speaker-receptor relation between Jesus and the disciples: Jesus (v.35a); disciples (v.35b); Jesus (vv.36-37); disciples (v.38a); Jesus (v.38b). Jesus appears consistently as the referee in the discourse. He always makes the emphatic interventions. He is always the principal subject, the initiator and modifier of the discourse vv.35-37. Luke always allows Jesus at strategic points in the text to come up with definite interventions. He introduces the discussion with question v.35a, modulates the discourse vv.36 and 37, and closes the dialogue v.38. The three interventions of Jesus are clearly indicated by third person singular to third person plural speech markers:

¹⁰ Cf. Okoronkwo, *Jerusalem Compromise*, 154-155.

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς (v.35a: and he said to them); ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς (v.36: he *however* said to them), εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς (v.38: *but* he said to them). Jesus is solely and unambiguously addressing his words to his disciples sitting at the table with him.¹¹

The disciples, on the other hand, are the receptor vv.35,37. They are the major grammatical object of the text vv.35(1x), 36(2x), 38(1x). Their responses in the text are simply indicated by third person plural speech markers: οἱ δὲ εἶπαν (vv.35,38: they *then* said). Thus the suppression of the explicit expression of the grammatical object (Jesus) whether as a proper noun or pronoun. It indicates among other things the superiority of and respect for the grammatical object (Jesus). The subordinate role of the disciples in the dialogue is unambiguously emphasised with the vocative status marker of respect κύριε (v.38: master, sir, lord). So, there is no mistake that Luke's formulation of the passage is along the rabbinic tradition of master-disciple relationship. Therefore, the injunction to sell the cloak and buy a sword may be understood as instruction from a rabbi to his disciples.

The deictic ὁ [ἔχων] ... ὁ [μὴ ἔχων] goes beyond the implied audience (the disciples at the table) to include the later disciples. It brings out the universal demand of the sword-motif. From the analysis, the linguistic constituents inform the reader of the relationship between the dramatis personae, the dialogical character of the discourse, and above all, the subject matter, which centres on the sword-theme.

The use of the three forms of the grammatical persons in the text informs the reader that the account is a 'narrative-dialogue.' The frequency of the third person pronoun is also evidence of the dominance of the narrator in the narrative scheme. Definite article of the masculine gender is identified in the whole verses (vv.35:1x; 36: 2x;38:2x) with exception of v.37. The preponderance of the lexical feature indicates that the principal characters in the text are mainly male, precisely Jesus and the Twelve.¹²

The text is also syntactically weaved together with various discourse markers. These include the relational marker of addition καὶ (vv.35:3x; 36:3x; 37:2x), δέ (vv.35:1x; 36:1x; 38:2x); of disassociation ἄτερ (v.35:1x); of contrast ἀλλὰ (v.36:1x); of reason/cause γάρ (v.37:2x); and of association μετὰ (v.37:1x). The frequent incidence of the discourse relational marker in the passage, especially in vv.35-36 shows the structural coherence of the text. However, the introduction of the contrast marker ἀλλὰ together with the conjunctive enclitic particle δέ and the adverb νῦν naturally separates v.35 from v.36, and ultimately makes v.36 the major focus. The appearance of the discourse relational of reason maker γάρ in v.37a seems very awkward. It distorts the sequence of the narrative. It could have served Luke better to allow it after v.53.

Some difficulty is associated with the discourse marker of direct address ἰδοῦ (behold! See! Look! – as interjection) and the adjective of completive degree ἰκανόν (enough). The interpretation one makes of the two statements associated with the lexemes will go a long way to establish the meaning and purpose of the sword. The discourse marker ἰδοῦ serves to draw attention to a critical and important situation. It marks the decoding of the sword-meaning by the disciples. The disciples' understanding of the sword-mandate is expressed in v.38: Κύριε, ἰδοῦ μάχαιραι ὧδε δύο – "Lord, look, here are two swords." It shows that the central issue of concern in Jesus' two-pronged directive is the new element, the sword. Suffice therefore to mention here that it is in v.38 that there appears to be a role shift. The

¹¹ Cf. Umoren "Jesus' Directive to Buy a Sword..."

¹² This probably settles the issue of number and sex during the last supper, at least from the perspective of Luke.

disciples now assume the grammatical subject. Pragmatically, they are only responding to the sword-injunction (v.36), and therefore, responsive to the extent Jesus allows them. Their reaction is a short and sweet enthusiasm, modulated by Jesus' final intervention: accomplishment and surprise, which will definitely collapse for having failed to decode the information effectively. It betrays also Luke's interest and his teaching on non-violence through the introduction of the motif of misunderstanding. Jesus concludes the discussion by censuring their understanding and naivety. Thus he told them: *ἰκανόν ἐστι* – "It is enough." Here lies the crux of the message. Here also lies the problem of the text. What does the statement mean? Is it approval or disapproval of the use of sword? Hence there is need to examine the word *ἰκανόν* more closely.

Ἰκανόν and its Possible Implications

The adjective, *ἰκανόν*,¹³ occurs about 40x in the New Testament. The largest number of the usage is found in Luke, thus 9x in the Gospel and 18x in Acts. The etymology is probably from the root *ικ-* (*ἰκω*, *ἰκνέομαι*, *ἰκόμην*) suggesting 'to reach with the hand,' 'to attain.' It is also used from the time of the tragic dramatists with the basic sense of 'adequate,' 'sufficient,' 'enough' or 'large enough.'¹⁴ Nevertheless, the word as frequently used in Hellenistic literature and in the LXX shows a broad range of usage, and portrays no sense of emphasis or preference to a particular usage.

The NT usage is secular and Hellenistic. It has the sense of (a) sufficient or generally great quantity: 'enough, sufficient, many,' or (b) a suitable quality, in the sense of 'good, useful' in relation to suitability or propriety.¹⁴ In the Lucan literary tradition, it is both attributive and absolute (Acts 12:12; 14:21; 19:19), and exhibits the character of a relative quantitative referent for people, disciples, words, time, etc. It is also used as a predicate (with the infinitive *ἰνά* or the preposition *πρός*) of suitability for something. In combination with *λαβεῖν* the adjective refers to acceptance of a security (Acts 17:9).¹⁵ Incidentally, it is only Luke, who records the saying of Jesus to his disciples concerning the coming emergency (22:35ff).

But what does Jesus mean when he makes the statement: *ἰκανόν ἐστιν* in v.38? Rengstorf observes that the statement can be interpreted in two ways: (i) that the two swords are sufficient for what is ahead; or (ii) that his disciples have completely misunderstood him by presenting him with two swords, thus a censure. If one understands the statement as censure, Rengstorf argues, one is then faced with three interpretative challenges:

- (i) Does the censure refer to the general incomprehension of the disciples?
- (ii) Or, is the statement referring only to their particular misunderstanding of the sword injunction?
- (iii) Or, is the pronouncement about their folly in relying, not merely on the two swords which they have produced, but on weapons of any kind including human power and protection?

¹³ Karl Heinrich Rengstorf "ἰκανός, ἰκανότης, ἰκανόω" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9 Vols. ed. G Kittel and G Friedrich, transl. Geoffrey W Bromiley, 3:293-296. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1972-1981, (e-copy).

¹⁴ Peter Trummer, 'Ἰκανός' in in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. 3 Vols. ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, 2:184-85 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1990:184.

¹⁵ Trummer, 'Ἰκανός'. 184.

For Rengstorf, therefore, the third interpretative implication carries the weight of the text; it is the folly of relying on human power and protection that is being condemned. But how does Rengstorf come to the notion that the reference is about the folly of relying on weapons? According to him, the first question suggests that Jesus breaks off the discussion as useless, thus citing Deut. 3:26 (ἱκανούσθω σοι μὴ προσθῆς ἔτι λαλῆσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον – “Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again!”). But Rengstorf is quick to note that the view lacks the necessary linguistic support. The second possibility, according to him, conveys ironic tone to the saying: “This is more than enough = *satis superque*, with the implication that the two swords are absurdly inadequate in the present situation.” The idea is also dropped by him, for “there is no irony in the parables”. Rengstorf finally settles for the third, thus insisting that the statement is designed to shake the naïve self-confidence of the disciples and to free them from hoping in the sword. According to him, that is the way Luke himself probably understands the statement. He further appeals to the immediate preceding unit on Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial (vv.31-34) as sharing some theological characteristics with the statement. So, Rengstorf concludes:

The two swords are really enough for Jesus; He does not need any other weapons... He hereby reveals the patience with which He both goes to death and also suffers the misplaced love and loyalty of His disciples. *The swords are not forbidden, for they play their part in the arrest (22:49ff. par.). But He tries to make it clear to those who own them that their calculations are erroneous.* What takes place in Gethsemane is a significant ending to the discussion of the swords in the hands of the disciples. It shows that in spite of the readiness of His disciples to intervene, Jesus must tread His divinely appointed path alone, since none of those who have been under His teaching has yet learned to orientate his own will to the will of God. Yet the ἱκανόν ἐστίν tells us that his fellowship with them continues even when they break off their fellowship with Him (*italics not original*).¹⁶

Rengstorf, however, errs by treating the passage as parable, thereby wrongly rejects the statement as *irony*. It is also very difficult to justify the ‘exclusive’ interpretation he applied to his understanding of the text. The general incomprehension of the disciples, their misunderstanding of ‘this’ particular moment and their folly in relying on the sword can be read together from the text. Again, to argue that *the swords are not forbidden, for they play their part in the arrest (22:49ff. par.)* suggests that the sword is either for Jesus’ defence or for his indictment. But it is significant to note that Jesus does *not* say “*the two swords are enough,*” he rather says “*it is enough*”. If Jesus is referring literally to swords by that statement, then two swords cannot be enough; otherwise one has to justify the injunction in v.36 (ὁ μὴ ἔχων, ... ἀγοράσει μάχαιραν). Also, Jesus’ reaction to the use of the sword in v.51 does not agree with the idea that the statement of Jesus in v.38 is approval of the two swords. It is more likely that the statement refers to the response of the disciples for their inability to get the message right. Independently, Sweatland and Lampe caution that the reader should not miss the Lucan irony.¹⁷ That is to say, ἱκανόν ἐστίν is intended by Luke as irony. If that is the case, then the text can be understood as didactic in irony. This may also mean that the sword, of which Jesus speaks (v.36) is not the kind of sword the

¹⁶ Rengstorf, “ἱκανός, ἱκανότης, ἱκανόω”.

¹⁷ See DM Sweatland, *BTB* 13 (1983:23-27); GWH Lampe, “The Two Swords (Lk. 22:35-38),” *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E Bammel et al. Cambridge, 1984:335-51.

disciples present to him (v.38). Jesus must have meant something else, something more than the literal sword.

Although Anslow and Tannehill may consider the passage (vv.35-38) from different perspective, they still end up emphasizing two major points: (i) as irony, and (ii) as fulfilment of prophecy. For them the passage serves preparing the disciples for the coming event in Gethsemane. Jesus refers to the Isaiah prophecy of the the Servant of Yahweh with evil-doers which must be fulfilled in him, and which is now drawing to an end (v.37). Anslow further argues that it is probable that Jesus puts forth a new and ironic instruction to the disciples precisely *because* he knows they will fail? Perhaps he is subtly pointing out the willingness of his disciples to abandon his previous teachings regarding nonviolence in favour of buying swords for self-defence. But the subtle irony is not unfruitful, since his disciples will not have to buy a sword – they already have two! Jesus’ new ‘instruction’ has exposed what they have already planned to do. On presenting the two swords to Jesus, he responds with, “It is enough,” perhaps an expression of frustration (enough of this conversation!);¹⁸ perhaps an indication that the swords will be sufficient to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12.¹⁹ If the latter is the case, then Jesus has instructed his disciples to obtain swords knowing they will inevitably use them as ‘transgressors’ in order to fulfil the Isaiah prophecy (v.37).

So, it may not be correct to draw any conclusion that the passage is in any way encouraging the use of swords or any other means of violence for self-defence. “It is enough” informs the reader that “the misunderstanding is complete”. The scriptures foretell it; Jesus resigns himself to it. It is part and parcel of his vocation. ... “Enough! No more of this!” ... the passage limits the entire world to only two swords.²⁰ In other words, the passage is more about the fulfilment of prophecy and the failure of the disciples to understand that Jesus must die. Jesus does not teach or encourage anyone to purchase weapons for self-defence; in fact he is critical of doing so! This interpretation is consistent with the Lukan narrative, and with Jesus’ non-violent ethic across the Gospels.²¹

Co-textual Reading of the Text ²²

The passage (vv.35-38) is read with the immediate co-text on the prediction of Peter’s denial (vv.31-34) and the arrest of Jesus (vv.49-53) where the motif of the sword reappears.²³ This may help to appreciate the purpose of the sword. The text on the prediction (vv.31-34) opens with the metaphoric expression ὑμᾶς τοῦ σιναῖσαι ὡς τὸν σῖτον (v.31: to sift all of you like wheat), followed by Jesus’ prayer that Peter’s faith may be strengthened, and then the prediction of Peter’s denial of the knowledge of the person of Jesus. However, the significance of faith in the passage is emphasised by Jesus’ declaration: ἐγὼ δὲ ἔδεξθην περὶ σοῦ ἵνα μὴ ἐκλίπη ἡ πίστις σου (v.32a: but I have prayed

¹⁸ MCA [Matt Anslow]. “Luke 22:36 and Self-defence: Did Jesus Teach Us to Buy Swords?” *Life.remixed*, 20 July, 2013, (Web). 8 April, 2014.

¹⁹ Robert C Tannehill, *Luke*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996:323.

²⁰ Eric Stoner (November 2, 2010, (blog)). Misreading the Gospel of Luke. Waging Nonviolence. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/2010/11/misreading-the-gospel-of-luke/>

²¹ Cf. MCA [Matt Anslow]. “Luke 22:36 and Self-defence”.

²² Cf. Max Turner, “Utterance Meaning” 828-33 in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, (ed.) Kevin J Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 2005, (e-copy).

²³ The latter has a different setting, thus a movement from the upper room to Mt Olive. But all falls within the large setting of the passion narrative.

for you that your own faith may not fail). However, Peter's reliance on human strength is both his weakness and failure (vv.54-62).

The sword motif (vv.49-52) reappears in the next literary unit (vv.39-53). Within the unit are the movement to Mount of Olives (v.39), Jesus urging his disciples to pray (v.40), Jesus' withdrawal (vv.41-44), his reminder to his disciples on the importance of prayer (vv.45-46), and his encounter with Judas and the group that have come to arrest him (vv.47-48). Then the climax is the intervention of the disciples (v.49), who express a wish that is carefully presented, in a future indicative deliberative question. It signifies an action already guaranteed to take place. It is an assertive statement, not a question or statement to obtain permission from Jesus for their action.²⁴ So, the action of striking with the sword (v.50) is an action performed without Jesus' approval (v.51).²⁵ It is important to observe that disciple's resistance does not win the approval of Jesus.²⁶ That notwithstanding, Jesus' statement (v.51) is subject to many different interpretations just as the response in v.38. The imperative present active of ἐάω, expressed in the second person plural, indicates that Jesus is referring to the disciples; and that the meaning of the command is 'to let go, leave alone.'

However, the phrase ἕως τούτου comes along with its own difficulties. According to Marshall, the words put together give three different interpretations:²⁷

- (i) 'Stop further action; go only as far as this and no further'. The understanding here is that the action is already performed. It is, therefore, enough to justify the action of the disciples, thus a tacit approval of minimal armed resistance.
- (ii) The disciples should not go further than that. They should allow events to run their course and allow the people to arrest Jesus since their resistance is useless either because it has already been divinely ordained or that the disciples cannot match the force of those who have come to arrest Jesus.
- (iii) Another, probably older, interpretation is that the phrase is directed to the police to permit Jesus to touch the ear of the wounded man.

But the detail of the healing of the wounded man shows Jesus' disapproval of the use of sword, and that his movement is not based on force.²⁸ The address is to the disciple never to act in that fashion. Moreover, Jesus cannot reproach the people using club and sword to arrest him (v.53) and at the same time encourage his disciples to use the same. In other words, the cotextual analysis suggests Jesus' condemnation of μάχαιρα as a weapon whether it is used by his disciples or his opponents who come μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων to arrest him (v.52). The actions of the disciples (vv.49-50) and Jesus (v.51) may now serve as

²⁴ F Rehkopf, *Die lukanische Sonderquelle*. Tübingen, 1959:60.

²⁵ One sees here the idea of rendering a person unfit for priestly service (Jos. Ant. 14:366), and the attack on the high priest by attacking his servant (2 Sam. 10:4f.; Mk. 12:1ff.) cf. D Daube, 'Three Notes having to do with Johanan ben Zaccai', *JTS* ns. 11, 1960, 53-62, especially 59-62; also E Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 15th ed. Gottingen, 1959:322 n. 5. It could be seen as a historical detail of interest to one, who is a doctor.

²⁶ Johannes Horst, "Οὐδὲ ὡτίου ὡτάριου ἐνωτίζομαι" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9 Vols. ed. G Kittel and G Friedrich, transl. Geoffrey W Bromiley. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972-1981, (CD copy).

²⁷ I Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), ed. I Howard Marshall and W Ward Gasque. Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978:837.

²⁸ W Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 3rd edition (Theologischer Handkommentar zum NT). Berlin, 1966:414.

a key to appreciate the statements of the disciples and Jesus in v.38. Jesus could not have condoned the use of sword in v.38 only to condemn the same in v.51.

The Text Interpretation

Jesus opens the conversation by taking the initiative to remind the disciples of their early missionary experience (cf. 10:4): ὅτε ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς ἄτερ βαλλαντίου καὶ πήρας καὶ ὑποδημάτων, μή τινος ὑστερήσατε (v.35a: “When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?”). The answer to the question is already envisaged. The temporal marker ὅτε (when) combined with the negative particle (μή) anticipates the answer from the disciples, hence ‘οὐδέν’. (v.35b: “No, not a thing”).

Now, Jesus exploits the answer of the disciples to alert them again (cf. 10:18; 22:31) that the new time within the era of fulfilment is dawning, and that hostility and persecution will be their bedfellow²⁹ (cf. 9:22-26), hence the need for sword: ἀλλὰ νῦν ὁ ἔχων βαλλάντιον ἀράτω, ὁμοίως καὶ πήραν, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἔχων πωλησάτω τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀγορασάτω μάχαιραν (v.36: “But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one”). For Plümacher, the basis for the command is apocalyptic. The idea is that one must be equipped for the messianic tribulations of the end time (v.36).³⁰ But whether Conzelmann is correct in his insistence that the strong ἀλλὰ νῦν (here only in Luke) draws a contrast between the time of Jesus and the time of the church,³¹ or as Minear holds, between the peaceable conditions of the mission and the impending crisis in the career of Jesus,³² one clear fact is that the situation is now different from the past.³³ It is no longer as before when the generosity of the people could suffice (10:7-8). The disciples must be ready to confront the new challenge and the changing reality of their call to discipleship. So, relating v.36 to v.35 the saying anticipates the hostility and persecution of the Christian mission, hence the disciples must be prepared.³⁴

Another challenge is whether the new instruction in v.36 counteracts the earlier one (v.35; also 10:4) so that the new ruling governs the mission of the Church. Though opinions vary, majority opinions support keeping both instructions as necessary for the mission, especially if the sword-saying is understood metaphorically and as referring to an attitude of mind rather than to physical equipment of destruction.³⁵ The participial expression ὁ ἔχων ... ὁ μὴ ἔχων ... (v.36: the one who has ... the one who has not...) is also exposed to various interpretations:

- (i) ‘Let the person who has a purse and wallet take them, and let the person who does not have them sell his cloak and buy a sword.’³⁶ On this view, the person who has a purse with money in it is to buy a sword, and the person, who has no money to buy sword, is to exchange his cloak for a sword.³⁷

²⁹ Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 716.

³⁰ Plümacher, “μάχαιρα, ἡς ἡ.”

³¹ Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit*, 5th ed. Tübingen, 1964:9,74,97,186.

³² Cf. Minear, “A Note on Luke xxii.” 36:128-134.

³³ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 824.

³⁴ Plümacher, “μάχαιρα, ἡς ἡ”.

³⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 825.

³⁶ Alfred Plummer, *St. Luke*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: 1922:505.

³⁷ J Finegan, *Überlieferung der Leidens- und Auferstehungsgeschichte Jesu*. Giessen, 1934:16.

- (ii) ‘He who is well provided for/he who is destitute,’³⁸ all must provide themselves with sword.

One sees here no substantial difference between the idea of the ‘one who has money to take it and buy a sword,’ and ‘one who has no money to exchange one’s mantle for a sword.’ It further indicates that in both interpretations, the disciples are yet to possess the sword, and that it is obligatory for every disciple to have one. Hence the sword is considered a necessity for the mission.

- (iii) The third interpretation may imply the object *μάχαιραν*: ‘Let the person who has a sword take his³⁹ purse; and let the person who does not have a sword sell his cloak and buy one’. One of the implications in such interpretation is the presumption that some of the disciples already have swords, and others are yet to. Secondly, that the sword is already considered part of the mission but only to be made mandatory now. Thirdly, that the possession of sword is for the *haves*, thus a status-marker and a sign of wealth. Fourthly, if the third implication holds, then there exists in the circle of the disciples the *haves* and *have-nots*. Fifthly, that those, who could not have the sword, until the time of the injunction is issued, must now make it a priority and have one. *But now*, it is mandatory, they *must* sell their mantle, if that is the only valuable asset that remains with them, and *must* buy a sword. Such interpretation seems to be coherent if v.36 is read together with v.38a, as earlier proposed.

The saying in v.36 also brings out the extreme plight of the disciples and a value-reversal. Normally, a garment for comfort at night and protection under the Palestinian weather conditions is an utter necessity for life; to give it up for a sword implies dire circumstance is at hand. The sword is now the most important. It takes precedence over mantle. It is important to note between mantle and sword. The former is a symbol of comfort and peace, and the latter a symbol of crisis, hostility and war. Could it then be said that Jesus asks the disciples to trade their comfort and peace for crisis, hostility and war? One should not also forget that the sword can stand for resoluteness, security and vigilance. The sword can be a warning that the disciples should guard themselves against approaching hostility and persecution. They ought to be vigilant and resolute. So, one may agree with Plümacher that v.36 does not necessarily call for a sympathetic understanding for the use of weapons of destruction whether in terms of self-defence or retaliation.⁴⁰

Verse 37 comes up not necessarily as an explanation to v.36. It offers the reason and justification for the entire Passion Narrative events. It is in Jesus that the Old Testament prophecies will find their fulfilment.⁴¹ For Luke, the stress is on the progress of Jesus’ career governed by divine necessity as expressed in the Scripture.⁴² The saying is also a prophecy of future hostility and for the disciples to appreciate the fate of their Master (cf. 9:22-26). Another intriguing aspect of the narrative is Luke’s deployment of the phrase *τό·καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη* (v.37b: and with lawless men he was counted), which is an intentional literary act that avoids any impression that Jesus is identified with the evil-

³⁸ E Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium*. Handkommentar zum NT, 2nd ed. Tübingen, 1929:214.

³⁹ It is assumed, and correctly so, that the implied audience are those at the table, hence the apostles.

⁴⁰ Plümacher, “μάχαιρα, ἡς ἡ”.

⁴¹ V Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*. London, 1937:193.

⁴² Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 825-26.

doers.⁴³ Some scholars equally see the prophetic citation as the early Church's attempt to produce scriptural justification for the 'offence' of the cross, which equally reflects the mind of Jesus himself.⁴⁴ Jesus' emphasis is that hostile persons will treat him as an evil-doer' and that he is prepared to be counted with evil-doers since he has taken their side and made himself similar to one of them.⁴⁵ Though beyond the scope and interest of this study, the solutions offered do not settle all the ambiguities associated with the wording.⁴⁶

Verse 38 brings the discourse to its climax. Misunderstanding motif is emphasised. The disciples by their response (ἰδοὺ μάχαιραι ὧδε δύο – look, here are two swords – v.38a) misinterpret the sword saying. And they continue to fail to understand the necessity of the death of Jesus (cf. 9:45). The sword language will come up again in vv.49-51. Here Jesus simply replies: ἰκανόν ἐστιν (It is enough – v.38), and in v.51: Ἐὰντε ἕως τούτου (No more of this!). The two statements carry the meaning of the cross. The use of ἰκανός could be Lucan, the phrase has a Semitic equivalent (cf. Deut. 3:26; also Gn. 45:28; Ex. 9:28; 1 Ki. 19:4; 1 Ch. 21:15).⁴⁷ "It is enough!" is simply a rebuke.⁴⁸ The closest resemblance in OT is in Deut. 3:26: καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς με ἰκανούσθω σοι μὴ προσθῆς ἔτι λαλῆσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον – (and the LORD said to me, "Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again!") So, the idea is that Jesus puts a stop to the dialogue. It is not that the two swords are enough. Rather Jesus must have made the utterance "with satiety or sorrow,"⁴⁹ for the disciples' inability to understand and appreciate the lesson of non-violence as preached and practised by Jesus himself (cf. Lk. 9:52-55). In other words, Jesus' reaction to the disciples' possession of swords (v.38) must here remain overshadowed by the answer (v.51) to their question about the use of the sword (v.49).⁵⁰

Summary and Conclusion

The text of Lk. 22:35-38 is identified with some peculiar characteristics exclusive to Luke. It is one of the most challenged texts of the New Testament, open to various interpretations that sometimes contradict the very call of Christ for non-violence, non-retaliation and non-armed resistance. Consequently, the study takes another look at the text from the perspective of discourse analysis and word study.

The formal textual factors as well as the logical quadrangular and hexagonal relations depict v.36 as the pivot of the passage. The lexical structures and formulations reveal that

⁴³ Even if the citation goes back to MT or LXX of any version or its influence, Luke still has the freedom to modify the tradition. But he used it the way it is found because it pays Luke's literary strategy.

⁴⁴ Marshall gives a summary of the thought of V Taylor, (*Jesus and His Sacrifice*, 193f.), and RT France (*Jesus and the Old Testament*. London, 1971:114-116 on the issue.

⁴⁵ J Weiss und W Bousset, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Göttingen, 1, 1917, 513; Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 214; AJB Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man*. London, 1964:31.

⁴⁶ Cf. H-W Bartsch, *Wachet aber zur jeder Zeit*. Hamburg, 1963:197-98.

⁴⁷ Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 168 n. 9; TW Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*. London, 1949:342.

⁴⁸ Weiss und Bousset, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 513-14.; Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 214f.; TW Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, London, 1949:342; Hahn, *Christologische*, 168. See also the same motif in Lk. 9:55. Incidentally, the words have been taken in other ways: ironically: 'Two swords will be enough (Lagrange, 558) to fulfil the prophecy and to make us look like brigands' (Minear, 131; FW Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, St. Louis, 1972:225; or 'two swords will be sufficient to demonstrate the sheer inadequacy of human resources'. Neither of these alternatives is at all probable.

⁴⁹ Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 507.

⁵⁰ Iimacher, "μάχαιρα, ης, ἡ".

the passage is a structured *farewell narrative dialogue* with some concern and anxiety for the survival of a mission. The language of the text is command, which places values in conflict: the mantle and the sword, comfort and crisis, peace and persecution. It is then discovered that the symbolism of the preferred value (sword) cannot totally be separated from the less preferred (mantle). There is also in the text, a hint of the challenge of the changing mission strategy.

The textual factors portray the tensions within the text. The tensions are not only between characters, but also between values. The lexical analysis further suggests that the text is a farewell narrative dialogue between characters of different status. Jesus' intervention at strategic points of the dialogue becomes obvious, so also his role as a Rabbi teaching his disciples. The lexemes tell of an overarching influence of the narrator, and a strong literary bias for male dominance, and the predominant role of Jesus. Put together, the disciples at the table are the implied audience, the receptor of the farewell command. They are limited to the Twelve, with whom Jesus tries to appreciate his life and ministry in the light of Isaiaic prophecy of the Servant of Yahweh with evil-doers which must be fulfilled in Jesus. He understands the Isaiaic text as a prophecy of his life, which is now drawing to an end (v.37). But the disciples fail to understand Jesus. They take the farewell injunction literally and produce two swords (v.38a), hence Jesus reprimands them for their lack of understanding (v.38b) – a lack that will become more obvious when Jesus is arrested (vv.49-53). The communication breakdown by the disciples' misunderstanding of the message of Jesus⁵¹ shows that they are yet to learn and come to terms with the hard teachings of Jesus, especially as they affect Jesus' passion and death.

The study, however, calls for a more critical and comprehensive approach to the language of the sword as found in the text. Consequently, the world of the text is reconstructed with the aid of logical quadrangular and hexagonal relations. The find is that the true world of the text is built on relation of inclusive disjunction with *partialiter*. The quadrangular and hexagonal relations highlight the *implied* – that which is never said but should be said. They draw attention to the fact that some of the disciples are already carrying swords at the moment of Jesus' injunction. It reinforces the teaching of the Jesus of Luke against the use of weapon as a means of self-defence and/or self-assertion.

The conclusion drawn from the word study of *ἰκανόν* is the same as that of the logical quadrangular and hexagonal relations. It states clearly that the passage does not encourage any use of sword or any other means of violence for self-defence. It also agrees with the general outlook of the Lukan narrative, and with Jesus' non-violent ethic across the Gospels. A co-textual reading of the passage further undermines the application of any form of violence in the sword motif. It supports the identification of the text as didactic in metaphor and irony. It is a teaching that expresses the necessity to cope with the new realities of mission. It goes beyond the implied audience to include later disciples. It is a call to be ready for hardship and self-sacrifice.⁵² It brings out the universal and all-time demand of the sword for the survival and enhancement of the prophetic mission of the Christian religion. The sword language is a prophetic warning for the disciples to guard themselves in anticipation of the suffering, persecution and martyrdom that will be associated with their mission. When all is gone, it is the word of God that will suffice to protect the disciples. The word of God is metaphorically the sword which every believer

⁵¹ The same motif of misunderstanding is also identified in Lk. 9:51-55.

⁵² Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*. 824-25.

must price and treasure above all values. The disciples' reliance on the word assures them of security, protection and success in all challenging situation.

Experience also reveals that violence ultimately produces nothing except the destruction of the one who appeals to it. Jesus' statement *ἰκανόν ἐστίν* (v.38b: it is enough) remains the antidote to violence and armed resistance. It is a direct message to all who resort to violence as a means to an end. It is an imperative declaration on the futility of violence. The message is for all humanity. As McKenzie puts it: a minimum respect for the words of the Gospel would prevent anyone from advocating the use of violence to advance the course of Jesus and of humanity.⁵³

⁵³ McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 854.