

Keilany Santos

BIB336: Parables

Week 14: Final Exam

April 26, 2023

The interview between Flusser and Roy Blizzard provides insightful information about the background of Jesus. Flusser's explanation of the words "the poor in spirit" and the languages that Jesus spoke contribute to a deeper comprehension of Jesus' teachings and the intellectual and cultural traditions that influenced them. Flusser is one of the foremost scholars in the world today on the New Testament, and he has an extensive background in the Greek text of the New Testament. Flusser helps us see Jesus as an isolated figure and part of a rich and varied intellectual and spiritual tradition by placing him in his historical and cultural context. Flusser starts off by mentioning how when we read the gospel, we can hear the voice of Jesus and recognize Jesus' personality. He stated and agreed with what the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, said: "We can hear from the Gospel Jesus' own voice when we know how to hear." Flusser mentions how Jesus is unique in the whole world and that it is impossible to define Jesus' personality. He said that Jesus was a Jewish teacher and leader and had a special contact between himself and God. Jesus is the center of the message of the kingdom of heaven. Flusser thinks, as Buber said that we can hear Jesus' voice, but we can also do it better by studying the gospels on the Jewish background or even more when we see Jesus as part of Judaism of his days.

Flusser mentions how many scholars think that Jesus spoke Greek, but Flusser stated that Jesus knew both languages of the land, Aramaic and Hebrew. But when Jesus taught, he clearly taught only in Hebrew. Flusser mentions how when we study not only the rabbinic literature, but

even the Dead Sea Scrolls, we see that from the time of the Maccabees, the language of the Jews was Hebrew. He also mentioned the discovery of the so-called Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira), one of the apocryphal books written in Hebrew. We also see that Flusser mentions how all Jewish prayers of his time, with one exception (the Kaddish), are in Hebrew, and there are not even Aramaic words in the Talmud. Jews do not speak Aramaic they speak and write in Hebrew.

Flusser says that the saying “poor in spirit” was taken from Isaiah 60 and that in Greek, it is “poor” or “poor hearers.” He understood that it means “the poor who have the gift of the Holy Spirit”. He saw with the help of the Dead Sea Scrolls that there is no contradiction between Luke, who speaks about the poor, and the “poor in spirit,” which means “the poor who have the Holy Spirit.” You can only know this if you know the Hebrew background Flusser said. He said that “poor in spirit” means that those who are poor have the Holy Spirit. He also stated that it is forbidden, especially in the synoptic gospels, to make theology from the Greek wording when you cannot recognize the Hebrew wording which is behind it because it is important to know that the sayings of Jesus were translated by equivalence, which means that the Hebrew word was always mostly translated by a Greek word. Flusser warns readers not to use the New Testament in the New English Bible because those men know Greek but do not know the original language Hebrew. So they translated the Greek without knowing what was behind it.

What surprised me in this interview was that we mostly see Aramaic words in the gospel of Mark. It was mentioned that Flusser has doubts that those words were done by Mark himself, who was a Jew of the Dispersion and wanted to make a kind of “couleur locale” and put there the Aramaic. But as mentioned by Flusser, it is impossible to translate some of the words in Jesus into Aramaic, which just shows how Jesus' teaching was taught in Hebrew, not Aramaic.