Re-Placing the Galilean Jesus:
Local Geography, Mark, Miracle, and the Quest for Jesus of Capernaum

by

Rene Alexander Baergen

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Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
University of St. Michael’s College
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ABSTRACT

In a discourse notorious for disagreement, the extent to which scholars agree on placing the historical Jesus in and around Capernaum is remarkable: it is his centre (E. P. Sanders; G. Theissen), hub (J. Reed), and headquarters (R. Horsley), emblematic of his kingdom (J. D. Crossan) and constitutive of his career (S. Freyne). Nonetheless, reconstructions of Jesus routinely privilege other sorts of place (especially religious, political and cultural) at the expense of local geography. In other words, the historiographical conviction that Capernaum and environs matter for an historical description of Jesus has yet to be translated methodologically, or made to ‘count’ exegetically, in such a way as to occasion a reading strategy correspondingly sensitive to geographical place. My project is an attempt to address this lacuna.

On the basis of G. Theissen’s attempt to prioritize for purposes of the historical enterprise those texts in the Synoptic tradition which bear the mark of local perspective (*Lokalkolorit*), I suggest that we select similarly for the purpose of an historical description of Jesus those traditions which are ‘marked’ first, by the place names and, also, by the local perspective of Capernaum and environs, otherwise known as the Lake Region of Galilee, which is where scholarship has been wont to locate the man. Such a geographical criterion indicates a set of data clustered in Mark 4:35-8:26 as the most logical textual site at which to begin a closer analysis, or to dig deeper, if and when we take seriously the historiographical wager that Jesus’ local place
matters. It is true that much of this material can be explained, subsequently, in the name of the Evangelist “Mark.” But it is also true that this explanation only goes so far vis-à-vis the local memory of Jesus as regional holy man and local thaumaturge of the Valley, possessed of the dunamis to manage single-handedly the various, locally experienced contingencies of life lived precisely there. Another, more exacting explanation is required, which I supply, by way of conclusion, in the name of the historical Jesus of Capernaum.
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Introduction

*To live is to live locally.*
Edward Casey (2009 [1993], 321)

I.
This was originally to be a thesis on the parables of Jesus. I had been struck by the unanimity with which Jesus scholars of all ideological persuasions identified the geographical place of the historical Jesus under the guise of “the Valley,”¹ “the Lake Region,”² the “border region” of Galilee,³ or otherwise in the name of Capernam and environs.⁴ I wondered whether the concrete detail implied in this datum might redirect the discourse of the quest from the sort of theological investment which has always hovered round it to the material realities of a life lived, sometime and (especially) somewhere, which has always been at least the stated goal of the quest. I decided to explore the effect, for an historical description of Jesus, of paying closer attention to those textual memories marked by the local place where Jesus scholars otherwise put the man. The parables seemed a natural place to begin.

Admittedly, the impression that the parables would be the site at which to encounter the textual imprint of Jesus’ local place is one inspired by the likes of C.H. Dodd (1936) and Joachim Jeremias (1972). Dodd’s famous turn of phrase (1936, 21) that the parables represent “probably a more complete picture of petit-bourgeois and peasant life than we possess for any other province of the Roman Empire except Egypt,” continues to resonate, as does Jeremias’ suggestion (1972, 11) that the parables sit near the historical bedrock of the tradition. Following Dodd and Jeremias, the parables are regularly surveyed for remains of Jesus’ social and cultural

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¹ Eric Meyers (1976; 1979; 1985) and Sean Freyne (1980a).
² Sean Freyne (2004).
context. Why not as well for traces of Jesus’ local geography? What more likely site, in other words, at which to encounter the textual remains of Capernaum and environs and, by extension, the textual traces of the historical person Jesus?

The more I immersed myself in what historians have said about Jesus’ definite place, however, the less I found myself engaging the parables tradition. To be sure, the parables are very clearly germane to life in general in the Roman East; for this reason, they are obviously of interest to the student of the historical Jesus. But for this same reason they do not speak nearly as incisively to the particular possibilities and limitations of a life lived in particular, “by the sea,” in Capernaum and environs. In other words: what makes the parables interesting as a statement of political economy germane to life as it was experienced on the eastern frontier of the early Roman Empire also makes them difficult as evidence particular to Capernaum and environs and to life, or a life, lived precisely there (and not simply anywhere or everywhere in the Roman East). The more I attempted to engage those texts which did speak to life lived precisely there, and not elsewhere, at least ostensibly, the more I found myself reading a set of texts normally eschewed by historical Jesus scholarship, namely, the miracle accounts of Mark’s gospel. The point bears repeating: the more seriously I took the scholarly consensus, i.e., that the historical Jesus belongs in Capernaum and environs if he belongs anywhere or somewhere in particular, the more I began to question my own textual starting point.

Needless to say, this changed the project which ensues. It became to a certain degree an exercise in the historical methodology of the quest in the key of place with a basic methodological question at its core: Where do we begin, exegetically, when we agree, geographically, that the historical Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum and environs? How do we sort and otherwise test the various and sundry memories of Jesus which are collected in his

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\[\text{5 Thus, for example, William Herzog (1994), Bernard Brandon (1989), Charles Hedrick (2004) and John Kloppenborg (2006, on the Parable of the Tenants).}\]
name, in the documents we call the Jesus tradition, from (in light of) the historiographical conviction that his local place in Capernaum and environs ought to matter? How do we go about the quest from the perspective of place?

Saying this should make it clear that what follows is not simply an attempt to better contextualize what we think we otherwise know to be the case about the historical Jesus. What follows is not only an attempt to draw a more detailed background against which to read those memories which we have already decided to privilege, on prior grounds, vis-à-vis the historical Jesus. This has been done.  

When it comes to the methodology of the quest, however, which has to do, essentially, with deciphering what counts, historically, from among the various and sundry memories of Jesus’ earliest followers toward an historical description of the man and what not, the approach that sorts the text first (by any number of historical criteria) and only then applies what we know of Jesus’ local place begs the question. It misses the point, which is precisely to establish from the perspective that Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum the critical (exegetical) database from which to describe the man as an historical figure.

This is the first point to establish by way of introduction: Granted the scholarly commonplace which puts the historical Jesus in Capernaum and environs (so Chapter One). Granted everything scholars know about this particular place (so Chapter Two). The real point of the present endeavour is to explore how this datum applies to the negotiation or testing of the Jesus tradition (so Chapters Three and Four), with the purpose of saying what might be said historically about Jesus “in place” in as methodologically disciplined and as transparent a manner as possible (so Chapter Five).

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II.
There is of course a philosophical discussion behind this statement of intent—on the relevance of place to the experience of being, the development of identity and, by extension, to the elaboration of memory.\(^7\) Is place the prerequisite of being, for instance, which is to say, a given, “at once the limit and the condition” of identity?\(^8\) Can we do, or be, without it?\(^9\) Or is place socially constructed, “brought into being” by the practice (and performance) of everyday life?—in which case it is more a means of social discourse than an index of identity.\(^10\) Does place hold memory, inherently, by its persistent and particular character?\(^11\) Or, if place is made and remade by the practice of living (as per Cresswell 2002), is it actually part of the production and reproduction of —


\(^8\) This is Edward Casey’s view (2009 [1993], xiii): “Despite the costly character of an accelerated life, it remains the case that where we are- the place we occupy, however briefly- has everything to do with what and who we are (and finally, that we are). This is so at the present moment: where you are right now is not a matter of indifference but affects the kind of person you are, what you have been doing in the past, even what you will be doing in the future.” More to the point (2009 [1993], 23): “The ‘how’ and the ‘who’ are intimately tied to the ‘where,’ which gives to them a specific content and a coloration not available from any other source. Place bestows upon them ‘a local habitation and a name’ by establishing a concrete situatedness in the common world.”

\(^9\) Casey (1997, ix) would suggest not: “Whatever is true for space and time, this much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all- to exist in any way- is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over them and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to recognize this primal fact?”

\(^10\) Take Tim Cresswell for instance (2002, 25): “Place is constituted through reiterative social practice- place is made and remade on a daily basis. Place provides a template for practice- an unstable stage for performance. . . Place is the raw material for the creative production of identity rather than an a-priori label of identity. Place provides the conditions of possibility for creative social practice.”

\(^11\) Casey (2000 [1987], 189) is predictably effusive: “Place is a mise en scène for remembered events precisely to the extent that it guards and keeps these events within its self-delimiting perimeters. Instead of filtering out (as place can do for inappropriate, ill-placed memories), place holds in by giving to memories an authentically local habitation: by being their place-holder.” But social memory theorists also recognize the way in which place (the external environment) “localizes” or “fastens” memory. Thus already Maurice Halbwachs (1980 [1950]), followed in this regard by Alan Kirk (2005, 2).
memory? What difference does the place I am in now make to my experience of identity, and how?

These questions are not insignificant, if and when we want to say something about Jesus’ sense of place. They have everything to do with his “attitude” toward the natural environment (Was Jesus an ecologist?) or the degree to which his natural environment should be involved, or invoked, in his identity, or his call, or his purpose (Does his departure from John’s message of judgement post-wilderness have to do with his relocation to “fertile” Galilee? Does his announcement of God’s grace have to do with his experience of the lake’s bounty?). But this is not my conversation. My questions are more modest (though no less interesting).

I begin instead with the simple observation that Jesus’ local place in and around Capernaum is implicated, already, in the discourse of the quest. This is a second point which is important to establish from the outset: Jesus in and around Capernaum is a commonplace in the history of interpretation. It is unmistakable in the various and sundry “data” which we call the Jesus tradition. Jesus is remembered variously “by the sea,” “on the sea,” in and around Chorazin and Bethsaida, “on the other side,” in the Decapolis, and so on, which means as often as not, though of course not exclusively, in Capernaum and environs. Scholarship agrees that this material matters.

What to do with this data is my question. How to exercise this data historically vis-à-vis a properly historical description of Jesus is my concern. I cannot emphasize that point enough. To discount these traces of local place, without further ado, is difficult, as we will see; they are too deeply laid in the memories of Jesus’ first followers. To ignore them is irresponsible; particular place is the stuff of history, conventionally told, no less than specific time. But it is not clear how

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these traces actually inform (make different) an historical conversation about Jesus. That is my question.

Let me attempt to focus the foregoing by saying it this way: at issue in what follows is not whether local place should matter for the purposes of historical description. The quest takes this as given. This is why the attempt to understand the place of Galilee has come to occupy centre stage in the search for Jesus. This is why Jesus scholarship would continue talking about the place of Capernaum 2000 years after the departure of its most famous sometime inhabitant. And that is enough for present purposes. Place is pertinent. To say this is to say nothing new. At issue is how this historiographical commonplace is translated methodologically, or brought to bear exegetically, on the textual collection of memories which make up the Jesus tradition, on the basis of which we intend to produce a historical conversation.

That also can be put more precisely: The question is not whether place makes a difference to historical description, whether place is worth the historian’s attention per se. Scholarship has answered that question affirmatively. Nor is the question whether particular place makes a difference to Jesus per se. I leave Jesus’ subjective sense of place (how it affected his call; how it influenced his experience of God; etc) to historians more ambitious than I, not least because it puts the cart before the horse, since it remains to be worked out exactly how the historiographical assumption regarding place will shape the database which provides the evidence for whatever we might know or say subsequently about the historical Jesus.

The question is how the memory of Jesus in local place informs the way we sort and otherwise test the earliest recollections of Jesus’ first followers from which or upon which historical description of the man becomes possible. This is a question of historical methodology. It has to do with how we talk about Jesus as an historical figure: Of the various memories collected, redacted and elaborated in the Jesus tradition, which of these “count” toward a
description of the man as an historical figure in the name of place and which not? Which will be included in the historical story I tell about the person Jesus from the perspective of place and why?

This being the case, I need to unpack two more methodological assumptions. The first has to do with what is possible. Namely: I assume that something can be said about Jesus as an historical individual, as a matter of fact, without in any way denying that whatever can be said about Jesus, as a matter of fact, will also be emplotted (Hayden White) or troped (Paul Ricoeur), aligned ideologically and almost invariably freighted with other concerns. I can agree that writing history is an act of interpretation, bringing form (by way of plot and climax and beginnings and endings) to the uninterrupted flow of the past on the basis of “data” which are already and necessarily interpreted.

That this is the case, however, does not obviate the possibility of speaking historically about Jesus. It does not make of the quest a blind alley or a cul de sac. The fact that the historian of Jesus may find her hands tied by the need to retell, in one way or another, and thus to construe beginnings and endings where there are none self-evident, does not imply the end of the historical enterprise, in general, or the emptiness of the attempt to say something in particular about Jesus as an historical figure. This is simply the sort of complexity which belongs to the (historical) conversation.

What follows necessarily participates in this complexity. It is written out of the conviction that the conversation which proceeds in the name of the historical Jesus is worthwhile, fully aware that the same conversation is neither self-evident nor straightforward by any means. Given the dogmatic alternative, complication in this regard is a welcome inconvenience.
If it is possible to say something about the historical Jesus, however, I also assume that whatever can be said of the historical Jesus must be said via the memories of his earliest followers, however encumbered or elaborated those memories prove to be on further examination. This is my second methodological assumption: The practice of memory is as close as the quest will come to its object. It is the necessary condition of the discourse.

This may cause discomfort, but there is no way around it. All of the “data” which have to do directly with Jesus come already remembered—which is to say, already interpreted. This makes the historian an “interpreter of interpretation” (Le Donne 2011, 40). To wit, and in the words of the new quest’s elder statesman: “History is only accessible to us through tradition and only comprehensible to us through interpretation” (Käsemann 1964, 18). Said otherwise: everything which we would claim to know about the historical Jesus comes to us as a function of early Christian memory.14

Making this position even more tenuous is the literary situation of these memories in the Gospels, which, if not entirely or merely discursive invention, are certainly rhetorical production. This means that their memories of Jesus (in or out of place) are variously interested and always involved. They are interpretations, of necessity. This much is implied the moment we treat the

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14 But this is not as radical as it sounds. Thus: Nils Dahl (1991, 94): “In no case can any distinct separation be achieved between the genuine words of Jesus and the constructions of the community. We do not escape the fact that we know Jesus only as the disciples remembered him.” Morna Hooker (1970–71, 486): “All the material comes to us at the hands of the believing community, and probably it all bears its mark to a lesser or greater extent.” Halvor Moxnes (2003b, 17): “To say that this material will take us back to the earliest layers of the Jesus tradition means that this is as far as we can come. We are not attempting to find the ‘real’ historical Jesus, independent of any context.” James Dunn (2005, 31): “The historical Jesus can be none other than the Jesus-who-made-the-impact-which-is-the-beginning-of-the-Jesus-tradition. We can see Jesus of Nazareth only through the eyes and ears of these first disciples, only through the impressions embodied in the teaching and stories of Jesus that they put into their enduring forms.” Dale Allison (2010, 436): “Our sources are complex artifacts, the collaboration of, among other things, fallible perceptions, imperfect memories, linguistic conventions, cultural assumptions, and personal and communal agendas. Differentiating an original event or saying from all that has mingled with it and been superimposed upon is often perhaps a bit like trying to separate streams after they have flowed into a river.”
gospel tradition as an artifact of memory. As memory theorists have begun to point out, it could not be otherwise.\textsuperscript{15}

What is more, there is no question that place, as it surfaces in the Gospels, Capernaum and environs included, participates in this complexity. It is not hard to find place invested rhetorically, for instance—which means that it is used to point beyond itself in one way or another—or enacted discursively to “economize” and “organize” what is otherwise a jumble of memories.\textsuperscript{16} The way in which the Gospel of Mark elaborates Galilee at its beginning (1:9, 14-15, 28, 39) and its end (14:28; 16:7), as the place of encounter with Jesus, is only the most obvious example of the way in which the Gospels think with or by means of place.\textsuperscript{17}

At the same time, the way in which the Gospel of Mark also thinks despite the more local places whose presence actually complicates the Gospel’s theological narrative should give pause. I am thinking of those local places which stand apart from the Gospel’s architectural design by almost any account: Bethsaida (6:45), for instance, or Gennesaret (6:53), or Dalmanoutha (8:10). At a minimum, these place names signal something else in the fabric of the Gospel, not compassed by the rhetorical explanation. At a minimum, they require further explanation. But it may also be that they reflect another, distinctive memory, which exists resolutely between the lines of the text, however encumbered by Mark’s rhetorical presentation.

In saying this I do not wish to forget the critical insight which has driven the criticism of Mark, for instance, from William Wrede (1904) and Albert Schweitzer (1906) to Burton Mack

\begin{itemize}
  \item To note only those who write with specific reference to Jesus, see especially, and most recently, Anthony Le Donne (2011; 2008, 41–64; 2007), Dale Allison (2010, 1–30), Alan Kirk (2010), Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher (2005), and James Dunn (2003; 2005).
  \item These are Alan Kirk’s terms (2005, 2): “Spatio-temporal frameworks are crucial, for it is not possible to remember apart from memories fastened to definite places and times. Time and locale act as economizing, organizing principles that condense and render into emblematic composites the memories associated with them. Memory attaches to places and landscapes, and likewise survives, erodes, or perishes along with them.”
  \item Willi Marxsen (1956) is usually credited with this insight. The Gospel of Matthew uses Egypt in the same way: who Jesus is, for Matthew, is embodied symbolically in his sojourn to and exodus from Egypt.
\end{itemize}
(1988) and beyond. In the Gospels we are dealing with rhetorical invention; I take this as given. But for present purposes, in order to see something that is routinely overlooked, I focus on the point at which the critical reading of the Gospel as rhetorical invention begins to exhaust its explanatory force.

III.
These intentions and understandings can be further focused in terms of structure. My project begins in Chapter One with a geographical datum on which we all would appear to agree—that the historical Jesus belongs in Capernaum and environs, if he belongs anywhere. This is not controversial; in fact, it is about as close as the quest has come to an assured result. It turns out, however, that Jesus in and around Capernaum is also something of an empty fact—a datum which approaches the status of a scholarly commonplace, with which no one disagrees, but one without effect, for all (historical) intents and purposes, whose particular significance for an historical description of Jesus is consistently obscured in the interest of other concerns. Scholarship agrees, in other words, but routinely fails to do anything (historical) about it.

This is my point of departure: Capernaum is routinely invoked, as Jesus’ local place, and promptly forgotten. As we will see, the same thing happens to the Lake Region of Galilee: no one disagrees that the lake basin deserves separate comment, so far as I can tell. But the data which are particular to this place are seldom brought to bear on the historical description of its most famous sometime inhabitant. In either case, what begins as a promising historical venture toward the local place of Jesus is derailed far short of its mark. Chapter One details the derailment. Its purpose is to decipher what actually happens in the discourse of the quest in the name of Capernaum and environs.

Chapter Two is a salvage operation. Its purpose is to recover that collection of data which makes of Jesus’ geographical “centre,” “hub” and “headquarters” in Capernaum and environs a
datum of interest in the first place. In other words, having reviewed in Chapter One the many and various ways in which historical Jesus scholars agree regarding the importance of local place, and Capernaum and environs in particular, but then routinely switch registers when it comes to describing Jesus, Chapter Two attempts to put back into consideration and to elaborate as thickly as possible the considerable geographical detail contained in the name of Capernaum—temperature schedules, precipitation problems, soil realities, and the like—and to do so in a way which resists facile generalities and easy averages.

Much of this detail has already been announced by Eric Meyers and his students under the guise of the Lake Region of Galilee (Meyers 1976; 1979; 1985; 1997; Reed 2000; Chancey 2003; 2005). In fact, most of the pieces for a robust, regional perspective on Jesus’ local place are already present. The problem is that very little of what these scholars say about the Lake Region has been brought to bear directly on the historical description of Jesus, even though, to say it again, this is the place where everyone agrees the man belongs.

Having filled out, geographically, the “fact” of Capernaum and environs in Chapter Two, Chapter Three turns back to the commonplace with which we began (i.e., that Jesus belongs here, in Capernaum and environs, if he belongs anywhere), and in particular, to the exegetical implication of this conviction. This brings us to the methodological question which sits at the heart of the project, namely: how do we sort and otherwise test the various and sundry memories of Jesus which are collected in his name, in the documents which we call the Jesus tradition, from the historiographical perspective that his local place in Capernaum and environs matters? How does this shared conviction reshape the textual database from which we describe Jesus as an historical figure?

Fortunately we are not the first to ask the question. Gerd Theissen goes before us, though, as we will see, his legacy is quite clearly mixed. He charts a path, nonetheless, which we will
detail in the first half of Chapter Three, in the name of *Lokalkolorit* (1984; 1985a; 1985b). This is the recognition that some texts bear in themselves the mark (indication) of local perspective (or local colour) and for this reason are inherently of historical interest, history being a matter of local place (and specific time) whatever else it also is. Theissen stops short of what he has promised, for reasons which will become clear. But where he becomes distracted, I suggest we carry on. What does this mean? At a minimum, that we prioritize (select for further testing) those textual traditions which are marked, first, by the place names and, also, by the local perspective of the Lake Region—which is where scholarship is otherwise wont to locate Jesus. When we do this in the second half of Chapter Three we arrive at a set of memories collected in Mark 4:35-8:26. This is the site at which our testing of the Jesus tradition therefore most profitably begins.

These are programmatic strokes; it is Chapter Four that supplies the exegetical detail. In other words, after identifying in Chapter Three the textual site at which to begin, namely, Mark 4:35-8:26, Chapter Four distinguishes more precisely where the memories selected here are indebted to the sort of interests conventionally associated with the Markan redactor and where not. Chapter Four delineates where exactly the preliminary database represented in Mark 4:35-8:26 can be explained in the name of the Evangelist “Mark” and where the memories contained here must be assigned to something or someone else, which might be the historical Jesus.

Granted this distinction is not at all straightforward, it is nonetheless a convention of critical biblical scholarship. I take it as such. But in order to make the point as plainly as possible, I take Paul Achtemeier’s well-known treatment of Mark 4:35-8:26 (1970; 1972a) as my heuristic guide. Achtemeier, of course, finds miracle catenae in this material. I will not. That is not why he is helpful. He is helpful for two other reasons: First, because his approach to Mark 4:35-8:26 embodies the methodological movement which I seek to emulate, downward (backward) from that which we claim to know (which is the redactional work of Mark) in the interest of that which
we do not (which in this case will be “pre-Mark”). This is the only way to discipline the
imagination. And second, because the way in which he deciphers Markan interests in Mark 4-8
represents the standard approach of critical scholarship, even to a fault. I take Achtemeier as my
collection partner in Chapter Four, in short, to keep my project honest so that the database
which finally emerges—which is, after all, the point—does so as critically and transparently as
possible.

Once we have accounted for the sorts of projects typically associated with the evangelist
“Mark,” in Chapter Four, we are left, in Chapter Five, with a textual substratum or a set of
textual traces—a sort of local, located, memory of a regional thaumaturge (wonderworker) Jesus
of Capernaun—which needs to be explained (read) otherwise.

Of course the pattern of memory which surfaces within Mark 4:35-8:26, once everything
that might be described conventionally as redactional intervention has been accounted for, is also
aligned typologically. That is no surprise given what we are told about the way in which memory
works. But neither is the remaining pattern exhausted or entirely encompassed by the typological
(mythological) explanation routinely proposed (as we will see, in the name of the Exodus or
Moses or Elijah-Elisha). In fact, this sort of explanation does not actually go very far at all; it
does not explain very much at all of the textual memory under investigation.

Having made this point as plainly as possible at the outset of Chapter Five, I proceed in
the remainder of the chapter to another, further or more exacting explanation, namely, that the
pattern of memory which surfaces in Mark 4:35-8:26 is a kind of regional folklore, or local
history, articulating life in the Valley in the name of one especially noteworthy and apparently
memorable thaumaturge. After accounting for the usual, typological (mythological) explanation,
in other words, I re-read the memory contained in Mark 4:35-8:26 in another register, in the
idiom of the Valley, as a statement of life then and there, which is to say, as a set of problems

18 As per Kloppenborg (2000, 116–118) on the redactional analysis of Q.
fairly conventional to the Lake Region—storms, some exorcism, hunger and disease—which is also, finally, construed and condensed (remembered) in the name of Jesus. This being the case, what we learn from this material has as much to do with the exigencies of life in the Valley in the first century CE as it does with the historical Jesus. Still, this may be as close as the quest will come to an historical account of the man from the perspective of local place.

In the end, with Jesus in the Valley, we are forced to confront a memory which the quest has long resisted. In fact, it is a memory which the quest (as an Enlightenment project) was originally imagined to forestall: Jesus as wonderworker. To be sure, the idea of Jesus as a worker of miracles is comfortably mainstream—it is safely prophetic (Sanders) or symbolic (Crossan) and always religious (Meier). But the practice of his art—the peculiar exegetical content which goes into this label and makes it stick historically to the person who was Jesus—is consistently forgotten. In other words, and in a piece of telling symmetry, Jesus thaumaturgos is also an empty fact, at least in the discourse of the quest, like Jesus in Capernaum. If and when we are serious about engaging in an historical conversation worthy of the name, it calls for content no less. But this is where my project ends and something like a life of Jesus would begin.

IV.
There are obviously other things to say, historically, about the person Jesus, and other ways to say them: that he left his household of origin, for instance, and heard about it from his mother; that he spoke in parables about another way of being in, but not of, society; that he created enough social or political friction to occasion Roman interest, warranted or not; and so on. Taking place seriously does not change this. It does not “trump” the other ways in which the quest has also sought to speak about the historical Jesus. It does not even give us a full bios of Jesus. In the terminology of the quest, it adds another index or analytical category to the methodological palette: call it a geographical criterion. In the name of place, it introduces another
way of interrogating (sorting) the earliest memories of Jesus in the interest of saying something more, or something more precisely, about the man as an historical figure.

Of course a geographical criterion will be particularly inclined to say something geographical, viz. local, about Jesus. That is, after all, the point. Why would this matter? Let me conclude this introduction with three reasons for bringing local place to bear on the quest:

First, to be in (geographical) place is a necessary condition of what it means to be historical. It is part of that thick specificity which we conventionally imagine to distinguish what is historical from what is not. Ergo: a conversation about the historical Jesus—which has as its aim historical description of the man—will want to pay careful attention to his (geographical) place(ment).

This is standard historiography. If and when we are committed to an historical description of Jesus, we will want to include specific time and particular place, whatever else, as best the data allow. To paraphrase Gerd Theissen (2002, 246) in this regard: How else can the fictitious be distinguished from the historical except by localizing the latter in a particular time and place, and then by letting this particular time and place determine or shape the description of whatever may inhabit it?

We would not be doing history, for instance, or doing it very well, were we to describe Jesus without setting him in the first quarter of the first century CE. This goes without saying. “Herodian economics” (Freyne 1995a), for instance, will be more germane to an historical description of Jesus than the economic conditions which gave rise to the conflict in 70 CE. The foundation of Tiberias, c. 19/20 CE, will matter more than the foundation of Legio, c. 120 CE.19

So Chancey (2005, 61–69). Chancey makes the point even more trenchantly in an earlier article on “the neglected significance of chronology” (2003). But there he also extends the point to local place (2003, 175): “I am arguing that the interplay of local culture and Greco-Roman culture looked different at different points in time at different places.” (emphasis mine) Or again (2003, 187): “This overview also suggests that we should pay more attention to regional variations in the extent of Greco-Roman influence.” (emphasis mine) That Chancey concludes without questioning the category of Galilee suggests that he has yet to take his own advice seriously enough.
The same applies to local place. The more precisely we can speak about the local place where Jesus lived and worked and deposited whatever trace remains he left behind—Galilee instead of Palestine, to be sure, but also Capernaum, Magdala, Tiberias and Hippos, which is really to say the region of the lake, instead of Nazareth and Sepphoris—the more precisely we can speak about Jesus as an historical figure. And with preciseness comes force and intelligibility.

Jesus scholars know this. It is why, for instance, Sean Freyne (1997b, 63–67; cf. Schröter 2006b, 79) can question John Crossan’s whole project by questioning his grasp of Jesus’ local place.20 It is why the quest has so readily adopted the idiom of archaeology.21 It is why the study of Galilee, recently, threatens to displace and supplant the entire enterprise.22 For whatever reason, however, scholarship has been unwilling or unable to apply this historiographical conviction in any systematic fashion to the exegetical business of the quest, namely, to the testing of the memories of Jesus’ first followers about the man. Scholarship says place and then forgets, or moves on to more pressing concerns.

I am reminded of the way in which scholarship lined up for a time behind dissimilarity as a means for talking about Jesus, agreeing in principle that peculiarity matters only to recoil at the exegetical effect, which was, as often as not, a Jesus genuinely (disturbingly) different. One thinks of the energy spent undermining even the possibility that some of these differences might

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20 Thus (Freyne 1997b, 64): “if one were to follow Crossan’s methodology to its logical conclusion—that is, use only material from stratum one—it would be difficult to locate Jesus anywhere.”


22 Sean Freyne (1994, 76); Andrew Overman (1997, 67); Halvor Moxnes (2001a, 26); Morten Jensen (2006, 5).
be explained by looking sidelong at ancient Cynicism.\(^{23}\) In this case, scholarship has not been able to stomach the (historical) results of its own (methodological) brew.

My suspicion is that something similar happens, albeit on a different scale and for different reasons, at the prospect of Jesus contained in, and constrained by, local place. What would become of the stories we tell about Jesus, in the name of restoration eschatology, for instance, or Empire, or egalitarianism, were we to begin with the lived complexities of Capernaum and environs and tenaciously refuse to resolve or to reduce them? Would the archetypal narratives which the quest likes to tell in the interest of religious, political and cultural identity survive the specific constraints of local place? And if not, with what would we be left? But this is precisely why a geographical criterion matters, namely, to force us to acknowledge and to confront the proper limits of our not yet properly historical imagination. This is a second reason to bring place to bear on the quest.

But a third reason is most important: Jesus in local place signals a set of historical possibilities which the quest has yet to engage. The quest has been transfixed by Jesus’ thought, as though this were all that mattered. This is true even when his thought is couched in the idiom of place. Take E. P. Sanders’ stated intention to discuss Jesus “in a particular time and place” (1993a, 2), for instance, which turns out, in the end, to have everything to do with Jesus’ ideas. Thus, according to Sanders, one studies Jesus “in the same way as one studies what Jefferson thought about liberty, what Churchill thought about the labour movement and the strikes of 1910 and 1911, what Alexander the Great thought about the union of Greek and Persian in one empire, and what their contemporaries thought about these great men while they still lived.” But Sanders is typical in this regard. Finding out “what Jesus thought” has tended to be the point, explicit or not.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\) Betz (1994) and Eddy (1996) are typical; but see also Tuckett (1989). For this point, see Kloppenborg (2000, 422) and Vaage (2003, 129–132).

\(^{24}\) So James Crossley (2009a, 90), who suggests, with tongue “only partly” in cheek, that the
Quite by contrast, taking local place more seriously, as a point of departure, anchors the quest in the thick contingencies of embodied existence. A “local” Jesus is not just a talking head. He resists the facile labels of scholarship. He is hard to reduce or otherwise to separate from his specific setting. But this frees the discourse to notice the sort of details in the memories of Jesus’ first followers which seemed mundane, before, but now, when they are collected, suggest a particular kind of material existence, within the exigencies of life lived in a marginal place, at the bottom (of the Rift Valley), where storms intrude without warning, Legion looms and food and healing are in short supply.

Perhaps this is why scholarship has failed to notice the details of this particular place or to make much of them collectively: because the quest has not traditionally inhabited so fragile, or fraught, a location as this. On the contrary, the quest is typically, and comfortably, removed from the margins—economically, politically and socially. But this is also why the local place of Jesus matters: because taking this place seriously helps us to imagine historical possibilities which we have not been able to imagine otherwise.

quest might be renamed “the quest for the historical Jesus’ theology and ideas.”

So, for instance, Dieter Georgi (1992, 83), who locates the quest within “the evolution of bourgeois consciousness”; or Kwok Pui-Lan (1998, 76), who calls the quest (in the past tense) “an obsession of the West”; or Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2001, 28), who excoriates the quest as “elite discourse.” Leif Vaage (2003, 132) explains most fully: “the historical Jesus has been that Jesus who ‘makes sense’ to modern, bourgeois, ‘enlightened’, viz. ‘secular’ Christians in urbanized, industrialized, imperial, viz. globalized Europe and North America. In this context—for specific economic, political and social reasons with theological implications that warrant further exploration—the historical Jesus first emerged and took place.” Vaage’s point has to do with the quest’s resistance to a “popular” Jesus. I suggest the same type of resistance to a Jesus who is eminently “local.”
Chapter 1  
De-Ciphering Place: 
Capernaum and the Tradition of the Galilean Jesus

*The issue of whose history is being told is one worth bearing in mind for those writing lives of Jesus.*  
James Crossley (2009a, 79)

**Introduction**

Recent scholars of the historical Jesus agree on very little—not the social and cultural context which deserves privilege for the historical description of Jesus,¹ not the most effective way to sort the “evidence,”² not even what exactly counts as “evidence” in the first place.³ But on the particular association of Jesus with the little fishing village of Capernaum on the northern shore of the Kinneret, Jesus scholars are unanimous:

- E.P. Sanders (1993a, 98), for instance, makes Capernaum Jesus’ “centre.” In his opinion, the synagogue in Capernaum embodies both the religious setting of Jesus’ activity and the means by which Jesus’ “ministry” would be extended throughout the villages and small towns of Galilee, eventually to include “all Israel” (1993a, 107).
- John Meier (1994, 133,649–650) calls the village of Capernaum Jesus’ “home base,” “the pivotal place” in Jesus’ Galilean ministry, and, along with Jerusalem, the “beachhead” for Jesus’ announcement of God’s kingly rule.

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¹ “Jewish,” as per E. P. Sanders (1985; 1993a) and Sean Freyne (2004; 2008); “Mediterranean,” as per John Dominic Crossan (1991); “urban,” as per Andrew Overman (1997); “itinerant,” as per Gerd Theissen (1998); etc. The variations in each case can be multiplied *ad nauseam.*

² Sanders (1985, 4) is strikingly candid in this regard, though his alternatives also demonstrate the limitations of his project: “One may start with what comes first in the Gospels (repentance in view of the coming of the kingdom), with what strikes one as most characteristic (such as the call of sinners), with the sayings material which seems to have been least subject to alteration (often held to be the parables), or with the sayings which could not conceivably have been created in the early church. . .”

³ Dennis Polkow (1987) distinguishes fully twenty-five different “criteria” for sorting out the Jesus tradition.
• David Flusser (1997, 44) makes the geographical setting of Jesus’ ministry in the district around Capernaum “strictly factual.”

• Jürgen Becker (1998, 25) argues from the pattern of place names in the gospels that the “northwest coast” or “upper region” of the lake was Jesus’ “primary location.” The indication that Jesus was active “in all of Galilee,” by contrast, is “Mark’s own creation.”

• The Jesus Seminar, in The Acts of Jesus (1998, 57–58), is “virtually certain” that Capernaum was one of the centers of Jesus’ activity and the “hub” of his teaching and healing activity.

• Gerd Theissen (1998, 166, 180–181; with Annette Merz) considers Capernaum the “centre” and “base” of Jesus’ public activity, notwithstanding Jesus’ itinerant mode of life: “From here [Jesus] addressed the Jewish countryfolk in and around Galilee who had been made unsure of their identity by Hellenistic city culture.” (emphasis mine)

• Paula Fredriksen (1999, 160–165) associates Jesus’ move to “Jewish” Capernaum with the beginning of his “mission,” as though his relocation there was a necessary pre-condition to the ministry that followed or even an embodiment of it.

• Jonathan Reed would have the little village of Capernaum—which is “peripheral” and “unremarkable” but entirely “Jewish”—the “hub” (2000, 139, 144) and “perfect place” (2000, 169) for Jesus’ activity.

• Bruce Chilton (2000, 124–149) thinks Capernaum “the only town in Galilee where [Jesus] could hope for a favorable reception.”

• John Dominic Crossan (2001, 118–135; with Reed) makes Capernaum emblematic of Jesus’ counter-cultural kingdom, by explicit contrast with Caesarea Maritima, Sepphoris and Tiberias, even as he finds Jesus at pains to escape Capernaum so as not to domesticate or

4 Crossan and Reeds’ description of Capernaum reads like a litany of what Capernaum was not. Thus (2001, 119): “Like most Jewish villages in Galilee... first-century Capernaum lacked the
otherwise to “broker” the kingdom which he proclaims.\(^5\)

- James Dunn (2003, 317–319, 593–594) considers Capernaum Jesus’ “home” and even more significantly, in a telling choice of vocabulary, the hub for Jesus’ “mission outreach” to the Jewish “settlements” in the Golan and the Galilee.

- Richard Horsley (2003, 111) calls Capernaum Jesus’ “headquarters.” From there, Jesus embarks on a campaign of village renewal aimed unmistakably at the Roman imperial rulers and their Herodian and “high-priestly” representatives in the urban centres of power to the south.\(^6\)

Greco-Roman architectural features that were part of the common urban parlance. . . It didn’t have a gate. . . and there weren’t any defensive fortifications or walls. There were no civic structures. . . There is not even evidence of a basilica structure. . . The archaeological excavations to date have uncovered no overtly pagan artifacts. . . and there are no indications that there were statues or any other kind of iconography. The village had no constructed agora, or market. . .” Or again, on the next page (2001, 120): “Just as important as the lack of public buildings for assessing Capernaum at the time of Jesus is its lack of centralized planning. It was not on an orthogonal grid and had no perpendicularly intersecting thoroughfares. Archaeologists have found no trace of a cardo maximus or decumanus. . . None of the streets were paved with stone slabs. None were adorned with columns or porticoes. None were wider than 6 to 10 feet. . . None had channels for running water. . . None of the building materials associated with urbanism and wealth greeted ancient visitors to the site: there were no plaster surfaces, no decorative frescos, no red granite from Aswan, no white marble from Turkey, no marble of any kind, no patches nor even tessarae stones, and no red ceramic roof tiles in Roman Period contexts.” All of this is actually an argument from silence for what Crossan and Reed already know to be the case, which is that Capernaum was “like most Jewish villages in Galilee.” The idyllic “reconstructions” which they include communicate much the same. So Burke Long (2003, 206): “There is as much desire as history here.”

\(^5\) This is Crossan and Reed’s reading of Jesus’ clandestine departure from Capernaum in Mark 1:35-38 (2001, 132): “to settle down at Capernaum and let all come to him is against the geography of the Kingdom of God. That is why Jesus ‘came out’ from Peter’s (wife’s) house. It could not be his ‘home base’ as if the Kingdom of God could, like the kingdoms of Caesar Augustus at Rome, of Herod the Great at Caesarea, or of Herod Antipas at Sepphoris and then Tiberias, have a dominant center, a controlling place, a local habitation and a name.” See also Crossan (1991, 346–347).

\(^6\) As it does for Sanders, the synagogue figures large in Horsley’s project. This time, however, it signals Jesus’ concern with community revitalization (2003, 111–112): “When Jesus repeatedly goes into a/their ‘synagogue,’ he is not going into a religious building, but a local village assembly. . . He was pointedly dealing with whole communities, not just individuals, in the context of their meeting for self-governance. He was not dealing only with what we moderns call ‘religious’ matters, but with the more general political-economic concerns of village communities as well. . .”
• Sean Freyne (2004, 48–53) finds Jesus’ move to Capernaum constitutive of his career, even if Jesus relates to this “principal site” of his ministry and its commercial values predominantly by contrast, in the guise of prophetic critique.

• Jens Schröter (2006, 90) calls the specific region around Capernaum—which is also its own social and cultural environment—“das Wirkungsgebiet Jesu,” though Jesus is still, and more often, “aus Galiläa” (2006; 2009).

• James Charlesworth (2008, 11) admits that Jesus focused his ministry “in the northwestern section of the Sea of Galilee,” otherwise “defined” by “Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum,” though all that he includes in this regard in his most recent list of “relatively certain” facts about Jesus (2011, 117) is the generic statement that Jesus taught “on the outskirts of cities and villages.”

• Craig Keener (2009, 182–183) thinks Jesus’ association with so insignificant a place as Capernaum unlikely to have been invented: “No one in either Jerusalem or the Diaspora would make up such a town as a strategic site for the Messiah’s ministry.”

• Maurice Casey (2010, 165,170,501) agrees that Capernaum was the “major centre” of Jesus’ activity, though it is more often in terms of Galilee, which was “completely Jewish,” that he describes Jesus’ prophetic ministry.

In other words, Jesus scholars of all methodological and ideological stripes agree that if the historical Jesus is to be found anywhere or somewhere, he is to be found in and around Capernaum. If he is to be described, historically, he is to be described on the northern shore of the Kinneret, in terms of this local place, whether he is subsequently cast in the guise of eschatological prophet, itinerant healer, Cynic, holy man, Rabbi, counter-cultural peasant or social reformer. In a discourse notorious for disagreement, here is a point of consensus which should give pause—a datum on which scholars who otherwise proceed with different
epistemological biases, by means of opposing methodological assumptions, on the basis of divergent ideological investments, can nonetheless agree. This is my point of departure.

To be sure, given its presence throughout the documentary memory of Jesus which we call the Jesus tradition, it should not surprise that Capernaum would find so consistent a place in the discourse of the quest. In the Q material, for example, Capernaum is the locale for Jesus’ conversation with the centurion (7:1-9), which makes it the only named location for a saying or action of Jesus in the document. Later, it is condemned together with Chorazin and Bethsaida (10:13-15), 4 kms to the north and east, respectively; but even then it is singled out for particularly harsh critique. In the Gospel of Mark, Capernaum is the place where Jesus is “at home” (2:1, 9:33; cf. 2:15), the place where he begins to teach (1:21), and the place in which he first engages directly the demonic forces which so occupy his attention elsewhere (1:23-25). In the Gospel of Matthew, Capernaum is Jesus’ own “polis” (9:1), the place to which Jesus goes “in order that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled” (4:12-16), and the place where (even) Jesus is expected to pay the half-shekel tax (17:24-27). And in the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus returns to Nazareth after his encounter with John in the wilderness, Capernaum is the locale already associated with Jesus’ healing activity (4:16-30, especially v. 23). Even in the Gospel of John, where Cana (2:1-11; 4:46) initially competes with Capernaum in this regard, it is in Capernaum that the crowd which follows Jesus (for example, to Gaulanitis; 6:24) routinely expects to find him.7

The importance of this place for the textual memory of Jesus finds no scholarly dissent. No one suggests that Jesus’ association with Capernaum is historically irrelevant, or beside the point, or entirely rhetorical invention. But this historical consensus has yet to generate the sort of engagement one might have expected with the constellation of geographical data which made

7 See especially Richardson (2002).
Capernaum what it was—which was, at very least, “not Nazareth.” The geological basin which
determined Capernaum’s peculiar horizon, in other words, the routes which led in and out, and
the water which must surely have conditioned its singular material existence—these details have
not often been brought to bear on the scholarly commemoration of Jesus, even that Jesus whose
“centre,” “hub” or “headquarters” was for all intents and purposes in and around Capernaum.
Certainly the local geography of Capernaum has not garnered as much scholarly attention as the
agrarian world of Nazareth (which purportedly accounts for Jesus’ upbringing) or the urban
landscape of Sepphoris (which does the same by contrast). This is strange, to say the least, if it is
the former—the lakeside village of Capernaum—where all agree Jesus belongs, eventually, and
that by his own choice. Why would the quest so uniformly invoke a datum (in Capernaum) which
it subsequently fails to pursue? Why would the quest say Capernaum so routinely in answer to
the question of the historical Jesus and then look elsewhere?

In Capernaum

In what follows, I will not take issue with this scholarly consensus. I can agree, at least for the
sake of argument, that Jesus had a “home” or a “hub” or a “headquarters” in Capernaum,
whatever this means practically or in terms of his lived experience. This much seems reasonably
secure in the Jesus tradition, if not as self-evident or as obvious as scholarship often pretends.

In Q, for instance, which is otherwise not exactly forthcoming geographically, Capernaum
emerges twice by proper name: as the only named location for a saying or action of Jesus (7:1-9;
cf. Reed 2000, 139; with the possible exception of “Nazara” in 4:16, though this has nothing to
go with it), and as the special target of Jesus’ invective, together with Chorazin and Bethsaida,
though in terms which are reserved elsewhere for the likes of Babylon (Is 14:11,13,15) and Egypt
The tendency among Q scholars is to assign both 7:1 and 10:12,13-15 to a redactional stratum of composition, so it may be that the explicit presence of Capernaum reflects more immediately the Q community’s rationalization of its own experience there (Reed 1995, 33; Kloppenborg 2000, 148). Still, the comparative prominence of Capernaum is striking, all the more so given that the rejection Jesus experiences there, in Q’s memory, is quite the opposite of the memory we find in the Synoptics (for instance, in Luke 4:23).

The Gospel of Mark has considerably more to say about Capernaum. Jesus is εν οἰκώ in Capernaum (2:1)—though Mark’s possible design of Jesus’ “first day” around the “πώλις” of Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34) should give pause. In fact, the proto-typical manifestation of Jesus’ authority in Mark 1 by teaching and healing looks very much like Markan redaction (cf. Boring 2006, 61–67). Likewise, in the same chapter, the positioning of Jesus in “all Galilee” (as especially in 1:28 and 39). At the same time, however, the uncharacteristic naming of Simon in 1:16 (x2), 29, 30 and 36 (compared to the remainder of the Gospel) and the explicit temporal

8 Compare Richardson (2002, 317,318). But Capernaum’s sharp rejection also suggests its initial significance for the Jesus movement. So Meier (1994, 650): “Capernaum’s climactic place in Jesus’ denunciation (a dubious distinction) suggests what all Four Gospels intimate: among the towns of Galilee, Capernaum is the chief beneficiary of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. All the more, then, is Capernaum guilty.”

9 Literally “in (a) house”; compare Mark 9:33, “ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ” which is also in Capernaum. Eugene Boring (2006, 74) reminds us that ἐν οἰκώ is a standard Greek phrase meaning “at home”; thus, e.g., 1 Cor 11:34 and 14:35. Some manuscripts (Alexandrinus, Ephraemi, the Ferrar group, 1006, 1506 and the Koine text) read εἰς οἶκον (“in a house” or “at home”), a phrase which occurs at three other points in Mark (3:20; 7:17; 9:28), though, as Adela Yarbro Collins notes (2007, 181), always without the verb ἐστιν. Given its attestation in P88, Sinaicus, Vaticanus, Bezae, the Washington (Freer) manuscript and the Koridethi Gospels, among others, the likelihood is that ἐν οἰκώ is the earlier reading. So also Metzger (1971, 77). Boring and Yarbro Collins, following Bultmann, think that the setting in Capernaum in 9:33 is a parallel to Jesus’ introduction into Galilee in 1:21, given that Mark 9:33 is the last time Jesus appears there before departing for Jerusalem, and therefore redactional; but this still leaves the impression that Mark thinks Jesus has a ‘home’ in Capernaum.
indications in 1:21, 32 and 35 (again compared to Mark’s practice elsewhere) suggest that there is more afoot than simply rhetorical invention.\footnote{In fact, commentators from Taylor (1966, 178) and Pesch (1977, 129) to Guelich (1989, 61) and Marcus (2000, 177–179) go so far as to locate a preMarkan tradition here.}

More to the point, Jesus’ explicit affinity for Capernaum (1:21; 1:29; 1:33), his presence in the synagogue in Capernaum (1:21) and his connection with “the house” there (with the definite article; cf. 2:15) actually interrupt Mark’s more patent attempt to locate Jesus’ ministry elsewhere, i.e., in “all Galilee” (as per 1:9, 14-15, 28 and 39), especially in a first chapter that is otherwise programmatic for the Gospel. So important a juncture as this would be the last place we might expect Mark to sequester Jesus in an insignificant and obscure fishing village, were he able to avoid it; in fact, Jesus’ exchange with Peter in 1:35-39 appears to address exactly this problem: “Let us go on to the next towns, in order that I may also preach there; for that is why I came out [i.e., left Capernaum behind].” If anything, then, Capernaum (and Jesus in Capernaum) is a problem at this point in Mark’s story which Mark does what he can to overcome.\footnote{So Etienne Trocmé (1975, 53): “The Evangelist seems to have sought to introduce into material which did not lend itself very well to the purpose the idea of a ministry pursued by Jesus throughout the whole of Galilee (1.14; 1.39; 7.31; 9.30).”}

For his part, Matthew introduces Capernaum in 4:12-16, as he is wont, with the gravitas appropriate to scriptural fulfillment. Evidently this is Matthew doing what he does best, which is to set the story of Jesus within its scriptural frame, here vis-à-vis Isaiah 9:1-2 (cf. Luz 2007, 125–131). The geographical intent (toward Galilee “of the Gentiles”) is clearly Matthean as well; in fact, it is clear already in Matt 2:1-6, 13-15, 16-18 and 22-33 that Jesus’ movement in Matthew’s story is theologically invested. In the case of 4:15-16, however, Matthew’s scriptural frame actually results in geographical difficulties—the region of Zebulun, to which Jesus goes in step with Isaiah’s prophecy, is precisely the place from which he has just come, according to Matt 4:13. Because it is hard to imagine Matthew introducing this sort of discrepancy of his own
accord, without cause, commentators have again suggested an earlier tradition which, among other things, remembered Jesus in and around Capernaum.\(^{12}\)

Luke, likewise, uses Jesus’ relocation from Nazareth to Capernaum to inform his telling of Jesus’ story, both to prefigure the course of Jesus’ public ministry and to anticipate the subsequent experience of the apostles in Acts (Marshall 1978:178; Fitzmyer 1981:526,529; Tannehill 1972; 1986, 68–73). Like Matthew, Luke adopts the core of the scene from Mark (on the Two Document Hypothesis). But by prefacing Jesus’ relocation to Capernaum with his decisive rejection “by his own” at home in Nazareth and by moving the entire scene forward to the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, Luke anticipates quite patently Jesus’ eventual rejection by the people of Jerusalem. Even more significantly, Luke uses Jesus’ move beyond his own *patris* of Nazareth to Capernaum to signal the trajectory of the gospel, which comes to a head, geographically, in Rome, and, theologically, in the Gentile mission of the church (thus especially Acts 13:46; cf. 18:6; 26:20; 28:28).\(^{13}\) Both developments have everything to do with the typical interests of Lukian redaction. At the same time, however, and not to be overlooked, Luke 4:23 suggests that even Luke’s Gospel allows the prior association of Jesus with the environs of Capernaum.\(^{14}\) What Jesus has done in Capernaum is already proverbial by this point in Luke’s narrative.

\(^{12}\) For instance, Luz (2007, 156–158) and Davies and Allison (1988, 378). Luz (2007, 571) thinks Matt 13:55-56 and 17:24-25 point in the same direction. The former implies that only Jesus’ (married?) sisters remained in Nazareth; the latter simply assumes that Jesus and Peter reside in “the house” in Capernaum (though whose house this is remains unclear; cf. 9:10,28).

\(^{13}\) Tannehill (1986, 71–72) suggests that Acts recalls the Nazareth scene precisely at the outset of the mission to the Gentiles (in 10:36-38). In Nazareth Jesus proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord; in Acts 10:35, “the circle of those ‘acceptable’ to God,” as Tannehill says, “is declared to include people ‘in every nation’. . . The proclamation of ‘the Lord’s acceptable year’ is now to be understood as a proclamation to people of every nation.”

\(^{14}\) Fitzmyer (1981, 535), at least, thinks that 4:23 is also evidence of an earlier tradition: “The reference comes from a source that has been used here in the conflation and Luke has retained it without eliminating the inconsistency.”
To be sure, in the Gospel of John it is in Cana that Jesus is first active (2:1-11; compare the presumption in Luke 4:23), to Cana that he returns after his first visit to Jerusalem (4:46), and only from Cana that he effects the healing of the royal official’s son in Capernaum. What is more, Nathanael, who is later identified “of Cana” (21:2), is among the first disciples (with Andrew, Peter and Philip who hail “from Bethsaida”), and apparently the first from Galilee. In John, that is to say, Cana competes with Capernaum as the more local place of Jesus.

But even in John, Capernaum remains a significant presence. Immediately after his first sign, Jesus goes there “with his mother and his brothers and his disciples” (2:12) and remains there, albeit not for long. John’s narrative presumes that Jesus is known there (hence the royal official’s request in 4:46b-47) and the crowd that subsequently follows Jesus to the other side of the sea (6:2) expects to find him in Capernaum again after he has disappeared during the night (as per 6:24). That the crowd would go to Capernaum intuitively, or at least without comment, is all the more telling given that the only disciples we know of at this point in John’s story hail from elsewhere.

Peter Richardson (2002, 321–322) has argued recently that the Signs Gospel, in particular, is “dominated geographically” by the conviction that it is Cana, not Capernaum, that is “Jesus’ own ‘place’”: Cana is the locale of Jesus’ first two signs and the third (which

15 Dodd (1963, 235–236) finds here a correlation of sorts with Matt 4:13 (κατώκησεν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ) and Luke 4:31 (κατῆλθεν εἰς Καφαρναούμ) and concludes that, “it seems probable that all three evangelists followed a pre-canonical tradition in which it was a datum that during the Galilean ministry (or part of it) Jesus fixed his headquarters at Capernaum, though John has made no further use of the datum.” So also Raymond Brown (1966, 113). John Meier (1994, 649) finds this to coincide well with Mark’s indication in 3:20-35.

16 Note however that Robert Fortna (1970, 39) thinks the second sign (4:46-54) was originally introduced by 12:2a (“after this he went down to Capernaum”), which would place the healing not in Cana but either in Capernaum or, more likely in Fortna’s opinion, on the road between Cana and Capernaum. By keeping Jesus in Cana, John has increased the distance between Jesus and the sick boy. Richardson (2002, 321 n.23) thinks the official’s entreaty in 4:49, “come down before my child dies,” makes more sense if Jesus has not yet departed.
Richardson relocates from John 21:1-14) is associated with Cana through Nathanael’s identification (21:2). By contrast, Capernaum is ostensibly a mere stop on the way to Judea: “when [Jesus] arrives there [after the feeding of the multitude in Gaulanitis, 6:24] the village is unnamed and nothing happens” (2002, 322).17 This may be, but the catch of fish (21:1-14), the feeding of the multitude (6:1-15) and the walking on water (6:16-20), with the subsequent landing on the other side (6:21), are all associated explicitly with the Lake Region of Galilee, if not expressly with Capernaum, which makes the locale of the lakeshore, at least, more integral to the Signs Gospel than Richardson allows. And it remains the case that the crowd knows to find its “Rabbi” in Capernaum by the sea (6:24) even in the Signs Gospel.

None of this is as self-evident as the scholarly consensus occasionally presumes; but all of it is reasonably secure. In any case, for present purposes, I do not intend to dispute it. Neither do I intend to debate the finer points of first century CE Capernaum by invoking new archaeological data, for instance, or applying fresh sociological models.18 Doubtless that is an important discussion. In my opinion there is simply more to be gained by exploring the role this datum has played in the discourse of the quest. There is more to be gained, in other words, by cross-examining the way in which the rhetorical prominence of this datum has masked other ideological interests in the conversation and served to invest them in the discourse in the name of “good” history. That is the intention of my first chapter.

Given the consensus that the historical Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum, what I am concerned about in the remainder of this chapter is the ideological freight which this datum

17 But note that Fortna (1970, 238) includes John 6:17—which names Capernaum as the disciples’ destination—in his reconstructed Signs Gospel.

has carried in the discourse of the quest, which is to say, what sort of work we are doing, in the quest, in the name of Capernaum. What I propose, therefore, rather than another reconstruction, is an archaeology of the quest with the particular place of Capernaum as case in point.

**Under the Sign of Galilee**

That we should read the quest as a particularly instructive ideological discourse is not an original proposition. It is simply to agree with the likes of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2001), William Arnal (2005; 2009) and James Crossley (2008) that the conversation which proceeds in the name of the historical Jesus is significant in itself as an exercise in making meaning. From this perspective we begin with the suspicion that the conversation about Jesus is itself culturally, politically and theologially involved, that it is implicated in any number of other (often unstated) concerns, and in actual fact—which means in actual practice—that our talk about Jesus serves routinely to articulate these other concerns under the academic cover of “history.”

Halvor Moxnes (2003a; 2009; 2012) makes this point nicely vis-à-vis the 19th century reconstruction of Galilee and the emergent politics of European nationalism. He reminds us, for instance, that Friedrich Schleiermacher was actively involved in the articulation of a German national identity in and around the time of his lectures on the life of Jesus (beginning in 1819; published in 1864) (Moxnes 2003a, 101–104; 2009, 30–33). Key to the emerging national identity which Schleiermacher espoused was the correspondence of a (unified) German people to a (unified) German land. So it seems to Moxnes no coincidence that Schleiermacher’s life of Jesus sponsors exactly this sort of relationship: by his ministry to a unified (jüdische) nation throughout a unified (jüdischen) land, Jesus (according to Schleiermacher) correlates the two.

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19 In other words, and at least as regards my point of departure, I agree with Schüssler Fiorenza (2001, 3): “I see the problem to be investigated in these pages not as one of ‘data’ but as one of epistemology, that is, as how scholars make meaning out of the ‘data.’”
Galilee is a problem for Schleiermacher (and for Schleiermacher’s Jesus) because it disrupts the ideal of national unity; but here it is evidently Schleiermacher’s contemporary concern that sets the agenda.

For David Friedrich Strauss, writing some 30 to 40 years after Schleiermacher,20 on the cusp of German unification, the concern is rather different. Says Moxnes (2003a, 113): “In Strauss’ view, it was the religious division caused by the halt of the Reformation, which resulted in a division between the Protestant North and the Catholic South that was the main cause that prevented a united Germany.” What was needed to complete the nationalist project was a return to the essence of religion—which Strauss finds, or rather, which Strauss invests, in Galilee, and especially in Jesus in Galilee. As a result, with Strauss (2003a, 115), it is the contrast between Galilee and Jerusalem—freedom, liberal spirit and “hybrid vigour,” on the one hand, “fanaticism” and conservative “formalism,” on the other—that finds pride of place, with Jesus, of course, firmly ensconced in the former.

In either case, what is at stake under the sign of Galilee is less the material definition of a geographical locale called Galilee than a particular 19th century political aspiration—to the extent that the category of Galilee becomes something of a place-holder in the discourse, or a cipher, for what is a more protracted, ideologically interested and very contemporary debate. In the name of Galilee the contours of a 19th century concern are given a place in the discourse. They are invested in, and emboldened by, a narrative which is ostensibly just history, “only the facts,” or the like, even though the motivating concern for Schleiermacher and Strauss is anything but. At least this is Moxnes’ argument.

20 Note that Moxnes has in mind Strauss’ “more popular” work on Jesus, Das Leben Jesus für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet (Leipzig, 1864; ET A New Life of Jesus. Vol 1. London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), published the same year Schleiermacher’s lectures were finally printed.
What the category of Galilee does not do for the 19th century quest, paradoxically, and here I would put the matter even more strongly than Moxnes, is bring to bear on the historical description of Jesus that constellation of singular data which makes of the Galilee a significant geographical datum in the first place—I mean the sort of geological, topographical and climatological data, for example, which makes of Galilee what it was, concretely and materially. In the act of turning Galilee to their own ends, in other words, or using Galilee as a sponsor for their own (political) aspirations, Schleiermacher and Strauss (and the list could be extended; cf. Moxnes 2001a; 2001b) sit lightly to the material reality of Galilee. They forego the complexity of material realities which make first century CE Galilee interesting and historically tangible in favour of another set of ultimately abstract concerns. My suspicion is that something similar happens also, but even more acutely, with Capernaum.

Capernaum, In So Many Words

According to Moxnes (2003b, 19), one of the marks of the recent quest is a renewed interest in first century CE Galilee as the specific place of the historical Jesus:

When Sean Freyne wrote the first major study of Galilee in 1980, it was an obscure topic, of little interest to students of the historical Jesus during the Second Quest. Since then an extensive program of excavations in Galilee has opened up new vistas and has contributed to new knowledge about Galilee in antiquity. The last twenty years of excavations in Galilee have brought to light material remains that cover almost every aspect of life in Galilee from Roman and Byzantine periods: villages and towns, with houses of a large variety of types and sizes, palaces, synagogues, aqueducts, roads, and of course all sorts of pottery, housewares, mosaics, tools—even a fishing boat from the Sea of Galilee!

Part and parcel of this has been the resurgence of Capernaum—archaeologically, to be sure, but also rhetorically. Simply put, scholars of Jesus like those listed at the outset of this chapter have more to say about Capernaum than ever before, even though the archaeological
imprint of first century CE Capernaum has remained extremely faint. The question is whether what scholars are saying in the name of Capernaum, in the thirty years since Freyne’s work, with the apparent benefit of archaeological and sociological sophistication, takes into account the sort of geographical data which makes Capernaum and environs a discernible entity in the first place. The answer is not promising.

Take E.P. Sanders, for instance, who is famously animated by what he calls the “almost indisputable facts” when it comes to the historical Jesus (1985, 11; 1993a, 10). Capernaum seems to rank among these “facts,” though it does not actually make Sanders’ list (1993a, 98):

The centre of Jesus’ work seems to have been a small Galilean town called Capernaum. It was near here that he called his chief disciples, two pairs of brothers: Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Peter had a house in Capernaum, and there Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law. In its synagogue he healed a paralytic (Mark 2.1-12 & parr.). And it was in Capernaum that he shared a meal with the tax collector Levi. The meal took place ‘in his house’, probably meaning ‘in Levi’s house’, though ‘in Jesus’ house’ is not impossible (2.13-17).

But Sanders continues in the next paragraph (1993a, 98) to frame the significance of this datum more particularly:

The principal issue, however, is to understand in what circumstances Jesus began to tell other people his views of the kingdom of God. How was it that he could enter a new town and teach in the synagogue? Did he stand up in the back of a large hall and interrupt the sermon? Was it socially unacceptable behaviour for a stranger to insist on speaking in a synagogue?

In other words, what begins ostensibly with the recognition of concrete geographical place (Jesus is initially associated with “a small Galilean town called Capernaum”) gives way,  

21 This is not to imply that Capernaum went unnoticed in the earlier quest. But for Gustaf Dalman (1924) or Walter Bauer (1967 [1927]) or Albrecht Alt (1949; 1964), what was noticed under the guise of Capernaum, or underlined, was by and large the traditional history of salvation: Jesus’ move from Nazareth to Capernaum was a move from the “old” or the “stony” (Alt) or the “pharisaic” (Bauer) to the new, “freshly ploughed,” where Nazareth evidently stands in for Judaism (by contrast with Sepphoris; cf. Reed 2000, 105–106) and Capernaum by the lake becomes, in Dalman’s words, “the very home of Christianity” (1924, 138).
quite without argument, under the guise of Jesus’ immediate “circumstances,” to the rhetorical privileging of the synagogue—“the synagogue” being a place which Sanders assumes, again without argument, to be explicitly religious and entirely generic. By the end of the second paragraph, this generic place is actually what matters most. In other words, Jesus’ geographical “centre” (in Capernaum) has given way to a theological construct (the synagogue) which for Sanders, at any rate, has everything to do with Jesus’ “views” of the kingdom of God.

Sanders (1993a, 102) does eventually allow that the peculiarity of Capernaum will “probably” have been determined by the fact of the lake, and for this reason that Capernaum will have been different vis-à-vis inland Galilee, if not necessarily unique. But this hint of peculiarity does not in any way impinge on Jesus’ ministry, which was itinerant, by Sanders’ account, and uniformly concerned with the reconstitution of “all Israel” (1993a, 107).

Compared to this theological ideal, local geography is expressly insignificant. The fact of the lake makes no difference. In fact, Sanders goes further: “For our purposes [those purposes being “to describe Jesus’ environment or context” (2002b, 3)], we can largely ignore the areas that went to Philip, Salome and Syria” (2002b, 8), even though the area that went to Philip was within easy walking distance (c. 4 km) of Jesus’ “centre,” and the area that went to Syria was in plain view almost immediately across the water, at least in the city of Hippos. In other words, the datum of Capernaum—its down-to-earth geographical materiality—is in practice not actually a significant datum at all for Sanders. The local geography of Capernaum, which surely includes its situation abutting the areas that went to Philip and to Syria to say the least, is simply deemed not to be significant. It makes no difference to Sanders’ historical description. To put it differently, “Capernaum” in Sanders’ construction becomes almost entirely a rhetorical site from which to address the religious identity of Jesus and thus, by extension, his theological project. If and when the complexity of local geography interferes with these concerns, it is simply ignored, by Sanders’ own account.
Capernaum appears to quite the opposite effect in Richard Horsley’s project, though at first, in Horsley’s 1995 *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, it hardly appears at all.\textsuperscript{22} When it does surface subsequently, in Horsley’s *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (1996, 112–118), it is the apparent archaeological discrepancy between the eastern end of the village and the western end that attracts most comment. This is telling. According to Horsley, “spacious,” “large” and possibly “public” buildings of “dressed stones” and “plastered walls” at the eastern end of the village (the present Greek Orthodox site) suggest a degree of affluence; “smaller,” “poorer” houses made of undressed “field stones” at the western end (the Franciscan site) suggest the opposite. Put together, however, they sponsor a description of first century CE Capernaum as a village which was very definitely socially stratified.

Horsley’s reconstruction is rife with difficulty. Most strikingly, it relies almost entirely on material evidence dating to the second and third centuries or later, as even Horsley admits.\textsuperscript{23} But the point to notice is not whether Horsley is right or wrong. The point I would highlight is the degree to which Horsley’s description of Capernaum effectively inscribes in its description of architectural remains exactly the conflict between rich elite and poor peasant which otherwise informs his description of Jesus. This bears repeating: by framing the archaeology of Capernaum the way he does—which means essentially lumping together evidence which spans several

\textsuperscript{22} To be exact, it appears in two paragraphs (1995c, 193–194) under the heading “Nazareth, Capernaum, Meiron.” This is also interesting. It suggests that Capernaum is already for Horsley merely another instance of the typical, agricultural Galilean village. This move clears the way for the dichotomy of rural peasant and urban elite which otherwise guides his project.  
\textsuperscript{23} Horsley cites only Laughlin (1993). Compare Reed (2000, 151): “Not all of the ruins... were occupied in the first century C.E. and none of the easternmost antedate the seventh century C.E. Excavations by Vasilios Tzaferis on the Greek Orthodox property have determined that Capernaum’s center shifted eastward at the close of the Byzantine Period... These areas cannot be included in estimates of Capernaum at earlier times.”
centuries in order to distinguish socio-economic strata—Horsley makes of Capernaum a prototype of the societal tension between rich and poor, elite and nonelite, which is otherwise so significant for his understanding of Jesus. Capernaum inscribes this conflict in Horsley’s discourse (literally: 1996, 118–130). Capernaum enables Horsley to broach the topic under the cover of archaeology, evidence notwithstanding.

In Horsley’s 2003 *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*, Capernaum becomes Jesus’ centre and, explicitly, the “headquarters” of his village “campaign” (2003, 111). Even more notably, however, in *Jesus and Empire*, Capernaum’s geographical location finally figures: by Horsley’s account, it is within “easy access” of the other villages of Galilee and “opposite” Antipas’ new capital city of Tiberias. To wit (2003, 169 n.4): “We usually think in terms of the east and the west sides of the Sea of Galilee. But because of the contours of the shoreline, Herod Antipas’ second capital city, Tiberias, was situated opposite Capernaum and other villages such as Chorazin on a north-south axis.”

What is striking here is the way in which Horsley manages the local geography of Capernaum—which is easier to access from the city of Hippos, across the water, than it is from most of the “other villages” of the lower Galilee, and hardly “opposite” Tiberias, though the two are certainly visible to each other—in order to replicate once again in the concrete landscape of the Lake Region the ideological dichotomy, between imperial rule and local resistance, that so concerns him elsewhere. The effect of this rhetorical remapping of the landscape (putting Capernaum “opposite” Tiberias, together with “other villages such as Chorazin”) is to exchange the usual religious dichotomy (Jewish Capernaum over against “the other [Gentile] side”; as per Sanders) for a dichotomy which is entirely political: Capernaum is now a peripheral and powerless village “opposite” the centre of power in Tiberias. Jesus, likewise, is located very deftly at the margins of empire, from which place he now engages directly in its critique. Be this
as it may or may not be, the point to notice, again, is the way in which Capernaum serves to
sponsor Horsley’s alternative political (anti-imperial) aspiration. The problem, of course, is that
at this point we are talking about something quite other than geographical specificity.

Perhaps this should not surprise. By his own (much later) account, Sanders (2008) came
to the study of Jesus intent on comparing Judaism and Christianity.\textsuperscript{24} It only follows that his
principal concern in writing about Jesus will have been the way in which Jesus answers the all-
important (for Sanders) question of religious identity, or, as Sanders put it already in 1985, the
way in which Jesus “fits” as a figure “in religious history” (1985, 321). Horsley, meantime, has
long understood himself to be speaking more or less directly to his (American) context of
imperial power (2003; 2008b). That his answer to the question of Jesus is implicated in the
(re)construction of political identity, in this very particular setting, simply follows.

To be sure, these interests are not particular to Sanders and Horsley. Sanders and Horsley
simply do us the favour of expressing them more candidly, or more transparently, than most, not
unlike Schleiermacher and Strauss before them. The point to carry forward, for which Sanders
and Horsley are as representative vis-à-vis Capernaum as Schleiermacher and Strauss are
representative vis-à-vis Galilee, is the degree to which the local place of Jesus has served as a
place-holder for other issues in the quest.

The more difficult question is the extent to which something similar applies also to that
body of scholarship which locates itself within what we might call the tradition of the “Galilean”
Jesus, where historical description of the man proceeds in terms of the material peculiarity of his
local place (“in Galilee”) to such an extent that the quest for Jesus threatens to be consumed by
the quest for the historical Galilee (so Freyne 1994, 76; Overman 1997, 67; Moxnes 2001a, 26;
Fiensy 2007, 26). The fact that this tradition of Jesus scholarship begins explicitly from a
\textsuperscript{24} At least he sets his academic autobiography (2008) under exactly this name.
recognition that local place matters to historical description (hence Jesus is emphatically “Galilean”) makes the question all the more pressing. Here, if anywhere, we might expect to find the geographical datum of Jesus’ local place making a significant difference to the way the conversation about the man is conducted.

Jonathan Reed’s *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (2000) is exemplary in this regard, both for its evident control of the archaeological data and for its formative impact on the emerging tradition of scholarship which privileges the “Galilean” designation. In this endeavour, Reed accords to Capernaum the usual rhetorical prominence. It is the “hub” of Jesus’ activity. It is his “home base.” In fact, it is the “perfect place” for Jesus’ ministry—apparently because of its political status as “unimportant” and “peripheral” (2000, 138, 144, 169, 216).

Very much in contrast to both Sanders and Horsley, however, it is evident that Capernaum is for Reed also a definite geographical locale. It is situated in space: “on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, some 200 meters below sea level.” It is conditioned by climate: “hot summers and mild winters.” And it is distinguished from the remainder of Galilee by geological peculiarity: “the region is basalt, with fertile soil but whose ubiquitous black lava stones and boulders create arduous agricultural conditions” (2000, 144). The latter, at least, affects the productive opportunities available to Capernaum’s inhabitants, as distinct, for instance, from those who lived inland adjacent the Beth Netofa and Jezreel valleys: “Plowing fields for any kind of grain is cumbersome [in the basaltic environs of Capernaum], though over the generations small, cleared areas have allowed peasants to eke out some wheat and cereal. Likewise, many kinds of trees have difficulty taking root in this terrain, though it is suitable for olive trees and vineyards” (2000, 144).

The lake also makes Capernaum a peculiar sort of place in terms of productive
opportunities and even more in terms of mobility (2000, 162):

Capernaum’s location offered considerably more opportunities for contact with Gentiles and was more accessible to gentile sites [including those of Hippos and Gadara] than most Galilean villages, particularly the small settlement of Nazareth.

Or again (2000, 166):

In addition to Capernaum’s closeness to Philip’s territory, the Sea of Galilee provided immediate refuge and a host of landings outside Antipas’ territory.

The difference between Capernaum and Nazareth (landlocked; in the heart of lower Galilee) could hardly be clearer.

So it is surprising to find Reed subsequently and repeatedly (esp. 2000, 152, 157, 160) at pains to re-describe Capernaum as a “typical” Jewish village. He refers to Capernaum’s apparent foundation in the Late Hellenistic period (“tied to the Maccabean expansion or colonization of Galilee”). He cites its apparently “modest” material culture, including “common” pottery, undecorated Herodian lamps and “so-called Herodian stone vessels” (2000, 160), describes its layout as “typical,” “organic” and “domestic” (2000, 152–153), and calls its construction “low in quality,” “simple” and “crudely made” (2000, 159). The former makes Capernaum a typical example of the widespread “Jewish” settlement of Galilee at the end of the second century BCE (where “Jewish” presumably means “Maccabean” 2000, 145, 217). The latter allegedly brings Capernaum into line with other “Jewish” sites in the Galilee and the Golan. In fact, by Reed’s account Capernaum is so typical of the archetypal “Jewish” village, in the end, notwithstanding

25 Though Reed (2000, 165) thinks the description of lake fishing as any sort of economic windfall is exaggerated: “The fact that Zebedee, the father of James and John, worked with hired hands (µισθωτοί) in no way indicates wealth on his part or a significant entrepreneurial fishing enterprise (Mark 1:20) [pace Kee (1992) and Freyne (1988b, 160–161; 2004, 52)]. Rather, it points to the common practice of seasonal, daily, or hourly hiring of peasants dispossessed from their land who sought to eke out a living in the larger villages and cities.” I agree, without excluding the possibility of a “Yonah-Zebedee’s collective” (Luke 5:10 describes the sons, Simon, James and John, as κοινωνοί; cf. Hanson 1997, 105 and Horsley, G. H. R. 1989, 110–111).
the absence of ritual baths, that the initial geographical distinction between it and Nazareth is almost entirely obscured. In Reed’s own words (2000, 161): “One should envision... that in moving from Nazareth to Capernaum, Jesus went from a small Jewish settlement to a larger, but still Jewish, village.”

Again, the issue here is not whether Reed is right or wrong in this regard. Undoubtedly first century CE Nazareth and first century CE Capernaum shared certain architectural and material characteristics, and surely they diverged in certain ways as well. The point to notice is rather the ideological work that Capernaum is doing in Reed’s discourse.

Thus, on the one hand, Capernaum is for Reed a “border town” (2000, 143), “the closest site in Antipas’s territory to Philip’s” (2000, 146), and a place of “considerable interaction” with peoples outside of Galilee (2000, 146, 148, 162). In other words, it is an atypical village compared to the remainder of inland lower Galilee. Here Reed announces the geographical particularity of Capernaum as few others. No sooner is the door opened, however, than it is closed again. For on the other hand, and in the end, Reed’s Capernaum is most memorable as a cultural quantity: it is a “Jewish” village within a “Jewish” orbit among similarly “Jewish” villages on the northwest shore of the Kinneret (2000, 217).

In a word, Capernaum comes effectively to symbolize what Reed finally calls a culturally “homogenous” Galilee (2000, 216) in which seaside and inland are rhetorically assimilated, despite their material idiosyncrasies, in the interest of a uniform cultural identity. That is its legacy for the discourse according to Reed. For the historical Jesus this legacy translates more or less directly into a similarly uniform and, it turns out, almost entirely traditional Jewish context (if and when by traditional we mean one associated expressly and uniformly with ritual purity and dietary restriction; cf. Reed 2000, 43–49).
To be clear, I do not doubt Jesus’ Jewish context. But it seems to me that the geographical peculiarity of Capernaum which Reed perceives makes such a context considerably more complex and potentially more diverse (and thus more interesting) than the language of homogeneity allows.\textsuperscript{26} Interestingly, however, cultural complexity, at least as it appears in the form of the Cynic hypothesis, is precisely what Reed’s construction of Capernaum effectively and self-consciously excludes from the discourse.\textsuperscript{27}

I want to be clear: my point has not been to engage these reconstructions of Capernaum as right or wrong historically, whatever that would mean in practice. That sort of conversation has its place; it makes certain assumptions about admissible evidence and takes for granted the relevance of the answers it supplies. My interest has been instead to highlight the way in which each of these reconstructions actually corresponds with other concerns, whether those concerns be religious (Sanders), political (Horsley), or “cultural” (Reed). Reconstructing Capernaum as per Sanders, Horsley, and even Reed, has invested these concerns in the discourse under the guise of good history; but it has done so, paradoxically, at the expense of precisely the sort of geographical peculiarity which makes Capernaum an interesting historical datum in the first place. The result is that the local geography which makes Capernaum “uncompromisingly itself,”\textsuperscript{28} or at very least “not-Nazareth,” has been almost entirely forgotten.

\textsuperscript{26} William Arnal’s argument (2005, 29) vis-à-vis the “Jewish Jesus,” namely, “that the simple assertion that Jesus was a Jew is categorically not sufficient to tell us what kind of Jew he was” (emphasis original), applies equally to Jesus’ allegedly “Jewish context,” i.e., the simple assertion that Jesus’ context was “Jewish” is categorically not sufficient to tell us what kind of Jewish context he participated in.

\textsuperscript{27} Whatever else it means for Reed, Jesus’ Jewish “orbit” means that suggestions of Cynic influence “make little sense” and, in fact, are ruled out of court without argument whatsoever as “highly unlikely” (2000, 218).

\textsuperscript{28} The phrase, used of the irreducibility of place, is Wendell Berry’s (2005).
Perhaps this too should not surprise. After all, the interest of the quest is not in Capernaum, *per se*, but in one sometime inhabitant of the early first century CE, and place, Capernaum included, is always and necessarily socially encumbered. If history is really “about ourselves,” as William Arnal (1997, 317) has put it in discussing the “Jewish” Jesus, and our construction of the past only elliptical commentary on the world as it now is, we should not be surprised that the construction of Capernaum articulates other scripts. De-ciphering Capernaum will be no different in this regard. But the simple substitution of abstract and pre-fabricated categories of religious, political and cultural identity (as per Sanders, Horsley and Reed) for the rich complexity and material tenacity of local geography seems ill-advised if the object of the conversation remains the historical Jesus—which is to say, precisely not your “average” Galilean (Vaage 2011, 122).

If and when this is the intent of the quest—not simply the articulation of a collective (“average”) identity under the sign of Galilee or an abstract potential in the name of Capernaum but “*a life,*” “supremely local and particular,” (Vaage 2009, 94)—then it is completely logical that we contest the geographical amnesia of the quest and begin to recover that collection of data which makes of Jesus’ geographical “centre,” “hub” and “headquarters” something correspondingly local and particular—which is to say something worth remembering in the first place. To do otherwise would be to settle for an abstraction.

**In the Lake Region**

The dislocation of Capernaum from its geographical situation anticipates the analogous fate of the Lake Region of Galilee, of which Capernaum is a part, though if anything the effacement of the Lake Region in the quest has been even more complete. It is not that the Lake Region is a novel proposal. It is as clearly geological as the Upper and Lower Galilees. Its defining feature—
the Rift valley on the eastern edge of the Lower Galilee—is as topographically pronounced as the Meiron massif, which is typically taken to define the boundary between the Upper and the Lower Galilee. It is plainly recognized by the Mishnah as a region whose agricultural regime calls for special comment alongside the Upper and Lower Galilees:

Three regions [are delineated] with respect to [the laws of] removal: Judea, Transjordan and Galilee. And each of these [is divided] into three regions. [The Galilee is divided into] the Upper Galilee, the Lower Galilee and the Valley. From Kfar Hananiah and northward, all [places] in which sycamores do not grow [are regarded as] Upper Galilee. And from Kfar Hananiah and southward, all [places] in which sycamores do grow [are regarded as] Lower Galilee. And the region of Tiberias [is regarded as] the Valley. (m. Shebiith 9.2; trans. Louis Newman)

Even Josephus allows the climatological distinction of the Rift valley (War 4.455-456), notwithstanding what he is more often remembered to have said about “the two Galilees” (War 1.22; 3.35-39). On this point contemporary geographers reaffirm Josephus’ geographical vision unanimously.29

But in contrast to the Upper and the Lower Galilees, which are granted readily enough in the quest and whose significance seems now to go without saying for the historical description of Jesus, the Lake Region of Galilee is only rarely registered in the quest and even then it has remained without any apparent significance for the description of Jesus. In other words, the sort of regional thinking which has long recognized the distinction between the Upper and Lower Galilees, and the importance of this distinction for historical description, has yet to be applied to the Lake Region of Galilee with anything approaching the same care or consistency.

This much is actually apparent already in Eric Meyers’ series of articles first expounding the theory of Galilean regionalism (1976; 1979; 1985; 1997). To judge from subsequent scholarship, the contribution of these articles has been to inscribe in the discourse the distinction of the Upper Galilee from the Lower. The former is routinely found “less Hellenized” and “more conservative,” in Meyers’ initial formulation, by an argument from numismatic, epigraphic, ceramic and aesthetic indices; the latter is found comparatively cosmopolitan. Granted some degree of overstatement (cf. Reed 2000, 215–216), this division has become a truism of Jesus scholarship.

But alongside the Upper and the Lower Galilees, Meyers also attests a “Rift Valley region” (which he later calls the “Lake Kinneret region”). He defines the latter economically by the “busy trade” of the Kinneret (1976, 95), iconographically by “an increasingly developed aesthetic” along the lake shore (1976, 99), and culturally by the influence of the Hellenistic cities on the other side of the lake (1985, 126). In fact, he even speaks of a “culture of the lake” (1985, 126), manifest especially in the second and third centuries CE but defined already in the first century CE and marked by a significant and sustained contact between west and east across the water.

This is the place of Jesus’ “headquarters,” in Meyers’ opinion. So it is interesting that the peculiar “culture” of this locale seems not to extend to Meyers’ Jesus or even to the description of Jesus’ Galilean context. In fact, both of the latter—Meyers’ Jesus and his Galilean context—are consistently defined by the lower Galilee.

The progression in Meyers’ argument is striking (1979, 698; cf. 1976, 95; 1997, 59):

Strangely enough the bulk of Jesus’ career is located in Lower Galilee (Nazareth, Nain and Cana) and in the Rift Valley region, with headquarters in Capernaum. The isolation that is often associated with the Galilean personality is therefore quite inappropriate when we speak of Jesus of Nazareth, who is growing up along one of the busiest trade routes of ancient Palestine at the very administrative centers of the Roman provincial government. . . The real question is whether or
not anyone in Lower Galilee who might have lived along so busy an area could have escaped the dominant cultural tendencies in their region? (sic) (emphasis mine)

Jesus’ affinity for the Lake Region is allowed (though it seems already “strange enough” for some reason). But any affinity for his “headquarters” in Capernaum is rhetorically obscured by his home town—we are speaking, after all, of Jesus of Nazareth. Reference to Nazareth shifts attention to a nearby, but unnamed, administrative centre, a.k.a. Sepphoris. And reference to the administrative centre of Sepphoris finally focuses the “real question,” explicitly, on the dominant profile of the typical inhabitant (“anyone”) of the Lower Galilee. In short order and without argument whatsoever, Jesus is plucked from his particular “headquarters,” “in the Rift Valley region,” to be returned to the more or less generic place whence he reputedly came, that being the “dominant cultural tendencies” of the Lower Galilee; all of this very much despite the cultural distinction which Meyers himself establishes between the two regions, namely, the Lower Galilee and the Lake Region.

To be sure, the question of the historical Jesus is not often Meyers’ explicit focus. But when it is (as per 1997), his implicit substitution of a centre that is “overwhelmingly” Jewish, “in every respect” (1997, 64), for a culturally complex periphery is telling. Interpretive possibilities which Meyers himself raises in the name of the Rift Valley region are disciplined in the end and constrained by the dominant profile of the “overwhelmingly” Jewish Lower Galilee.

**In the Name of the Border**

What Meyers so helpfully exemplifies is endemic to the tradition of the Galilean Jesus. Special comment is reserved in descriptions of first century Galilee for the “fringe,” “periphery” and “border region,” including especially the immediate surround of the lake. Under this heading, scholarship has tended to find opportunities for industry (fishing) and interregional trade (with
the “mostly Gentile” areas on the other side of the lake) not encountered in the interior (Kee 1992; Strange 1992; Hanson 1997; Reed 2000, 148,162–163; Jensen 2006, 169–175). Living in this sort of place is said to imply a certain awareness of the cultural atmosphere in the cities across the water, and perhaps even a degree of competence in the lingua franca of the Hellenistic-Roman world similar in kind, if not in degree, to that encountered in the coastal cities of the Mediterranean (Chancey 2002, 180; following Freyne 1980a, 141). At the very least, it seems assured that in such a “border region” as the Valley, encounter and interaction with the inhabitants of adjacent territories will have been particularly common (Zangenberg and Fassbeck 2003, 302–305; Chancey 2002, 165–166,169; 2005, 20,). That the Lake Region is a different sort of place, demanding separate comment, is simply not in question, to judge from those scholars who should know.

Mark Chancey’s summary in this regard is instructive and worth quoting in full, if only because the distinction of the Lake Region is advanced so decisively (2002, 164):

In the border areas of Galilee, in contrast to the interior, daily contact with inhabitants from the villages and cities surrounding the region can be assumed. The argument of proximity is persuasive: Galilean settlements were simply too close for neighboring villages to have been totally isolated from them. Consider the area around the Sea of Galilee. A thirty-minute walk from Capernaum brought one into what was during the time of Jesus Philip’s tetrarchy. The population did not instantly and dramatically change the moment one crossed the border—witness the lack of clear evidence for paganism at Bethsaida—but nonetheless, when one crossed the Jordan, one was, in effect, entering into predominantly gentile territory. This was all the more the case the further one walked south along the eastern coast of the lake, eventually arriving at the Decapolis city of Hippos. Travel by boat was also a possibility, of course, as the trips of both Jesus and Josephus illustrate. On the sea, fishermen, merchants, and travellers from both sides of the water would have sailed past each other, and often. Contact was virtually assured by the relatively small size of the lake.
This is the particular locus of the Galilean Jesus. No one suggests otherwise. The preference for an itinerant Jesus, “without any fixed abode” (as per Schröter 2009, 53; following Theissen 1973; Crossan 1991; Crossan, et al. 2001, 132–134, 163–166) simply begs the question, given that Jesus’ “itinerancy” remains located primarily within the bounds of the Valley, by any explanation, even if it is just as clearly not located exclusively there. Excursions to the north (to Tyre and Sidon) and west (for example to Nazareth and Nain) simply prove the rule, namely, that it is to the Lake Region that Jesus consistently returns, however itinerant scholarship would have him. When Jesus finally leaves the Valley for Jerusalem in the south he meets a swift and almost predictable end. Scholars of the Galilean Jesus know this.

Nonetheless when it comes time to describe Jesus, historically, or even to map what is usually called “Jesus’ Galilee,” the region of the lake disappears, often quite literally, as though it were forgotten.


Topographically, Galilee is divided into three distinct regions which to some degree shaped the social and cultural characteristics of their inhabitants. To the north, Upper Galilee is a hilly region. . . Trade and travel were arduous because of steep hills; in the absence of large fertile plains, the slopes were mostly used for vineyards and olive trees. . . Lower Galilee is characterized by four valleys running east-west, with less imposing hills. The largest of those valleys, the Beth Netofa, had rich, fertile soil, was well watered after winter rainfalls, and produced the kind of highyield crops from summer through fall that could support an urban population. . . The geological formations in Lower Galilee and especially around Sepphoris are mostly limestone, which is relatively easy to quarry into building blocks that harden with exposure to the sun, making it an ideal material for large-scale construction projects. . . The third region, around the Sea of Galilee, is

30 So Chancey (2005, 229) in conclusion, in what amounts to a rebuttal of Sanders (2002b) and a rejoinder to everything he himself has written previously: “Rome did not occupy Galilee, but Jesus, growing up a few miles from Autocratoris, traveling extensively around what would become known as the Sea of Tiberias, would have had daily reminders of Rome nonetheless.”
volcanic, characterized by basalt stones that are porous and harder to shape. . .
The soil in this region is full of potato- to football-sized rocks and boulders that make plowing almost impossible. . . (emphasis mine)

So the conventional distinction, i.e., “three distinct regions” with social and cultural implications.

Yet on the accompanying map, entitled “Galilee’s Regions,” the distinction that ought to matter most for the description of Jesus disappears. The “third region” of Galilee (Jesus’ local place by common consent) is completely obscured by Upper and Lower Galilee in the west and in the east by the Golan and the Decapolis. It is swallowed up. The particular place of most relevance to the historical description of Jesus, by Reed’s own account (2007, 58–59), is simply forgotten, or ignored.

Less obvious, but also more typical, is the tendency (as per Chancey 2002, xiii) to obscure the region around the lake by omitting the other (eastern) side from view, quite literally, as though the lake formed an impermeable boundary, with the other side simply of no interest to a life lived allegedly on the western and northern shore. This is the cartographic equivalent of Sanders’ desire to ignore those territories which abut directly on the local place of Jesus simply because they fall under a different political apparatus. But it has no better defense. It is a cartographic sleight of hand which serves most plainly to demonstrate the disconnect scholarship still experiences from the complex materiality which is Jesus’ local place (in which a lake, as we shall see, is more a highway than a hindrance).

The tradition of the Galilean Jesus is right to announce the peculiarity of the Lake Region of Galilee. That it does this in political, economic and cultural terms is as much a part of Meyers’ legacy as is the distinction of the Upper from the Lower Galilee. The problem is one of geographical amnesia; namely, when the conversation turns to Jesus, the distinction is forgotten. When it comes to describing Jesus, the same geographical distinction which is registered repeatedly in the name of a “fringe,” a “periphery,” or a “border region” of Galilee is overlooked.
The geographical difference of the Lake Region is not allowed to make the Galilee of Jesus significantly different, even though all agree that Jesus lived precisely there.

Chancey (2005, 20) attempts to justify this situation as a logical preference for the material culture “of most of Galilee” over the material culture associated only with the “cities and areas on its perimeter.” But this only makes his presuppositions (about what really counts) plain. If all agree that Jesus belongs precisely on the “perimeter” or in the “border region” around the lake it seems strikingly illogical to look elsewhere for the “material culture” of most relevance (unless, of course, “elsewhere” coincides with other concerns). At any rate, the effect is actually to exclude from serious consideration for Jesus’ regional context precisely that local geography which everybody otherwise agrees is most germane to his life and legacy.31 In the name of “most of Galilee,” Jesus’ local place is written out of the picture.

Sean Freyne has consistently resisted this trend. As early as 1980, in the book that launched the current interest in Galilee as the place of Jesus, Freyne was interested in the detail of geology, including the geology of the Lake Region (1980a, 14–15). “The Valley,” as Freyne called it then, following the Mishnah (Shebiith 9.2), meant “the Jordan rift from its sources at the foot of Mount Hermon to the Beth Shean valley, south of the lake.” But the significance of the Valley for the study of the Galilee, according to Freyne, was the way in which it “enclosed” the lake from west and east (1980a, 14–15):

Thus the shore and its immediate hinterland had a character of its own quite different from the village life inland. The lake itself with its plentiful supply of fish provided the only real natural resource of the region apart from agriculture, and there is ample evidence that this was exploited to the full. Besides, as already mentioned it was navigable, and so contacts with the different life-style of Transjordan were possible.

31 As Vaage (2011, 122) suggests, Meyers’ region of the lake also makes much of what is said about “Jesus’ Galilee” by virtue of Nazareth or Sepphoris “beside the point.”
Freyne explained the results of this geographical situation in terms of urbanization, mobility, industry and “cosmopolitan” culture (1980a, 15):

Inevitably, the process of urbanization here was hastened by the industries associated with the lake, and the shore is dotted with settlements, some of which at least had a very different atmosphere to the villages of the interior (Philoteria, Tarichaeae, Tiberias). . . Life in the valley then appears more cosmopolitan and mobile than elsewhere in Galilee, where the older more settled form would seem to have a better opportunity to prevail despite various political changes.

Freyne has undoubtedly had occasion to nuance the details of this presentation. He has revised his view of Galilee’s settlement history (1980a, 23–26; compare 1988b, 170; 2004, 60–91; 2007a, 20–29), revisited repeatedly the question of urbanization and its effect on the Galilean hinterland (1992; 1995b; 1997c), the Lake Region included, and developed a more nuanced reading of “Herodian” economics (1994; 1995a), based in part on the fish “industry” of the Lake Region (1994, 110–111; 1995a, 35; 2004, 51–52).

But the basic distinction of the Lake Region, because it is essentially geological in character, has remained constant. In Freyne’s fullest statement on the issue (2004, 24–59), the region remains a singular place in Jesus’ life, characterized by a rich and fertile soil base, plentiful water supply, a diversified economy and a “thriving” fishing industry. All of this sets the Lake Region apart from even the Lower Galilee.

Most recently, in the 2006 SNTS Presidential Address (published 2007b), Freyne goes even further to define the peculiar character of the region by reference to the healing potential of its waters (including at least at Banias, Hammath Tiberias and Hammath Gader) and the presence there of local, professional healers (“medical practitioners”) of the sort that Josephus remembers visiting in Capernaum (Life 403-404). It is in this particular context, “rather than in lower Galilee” (2007b, 158, emphasis mine), that Jesus secures a permanent retinue, rubs up against the “commercial values” of the lake fishing industry and makes healing available “to both wealthy and poor alike,” by explicit contrast with the (Herodian) norm (2007b, 159).
Nonetheless, the detail of the Lake Region does not interrupt Jesus’ theological vision as Freyne describes it (2004; cf. 2008). Nor does the distinction of the Lake Region from the Lower Galilee, which Freyne repeatedly deems significant in terms of ecology, economy and even cultural activity, imply for Freyne a Jesus somehow more germane to this peculiar place than to any other Galilean locale. Quite the contrary, it is Jesus’ “inherited religious tradition” that seems to matter most—which means effectively the Jewish scriptures—and this abstraction which is consistently more relevant to Freyne’s discussion than the mundane environs of the lake. In the end, it is from the ideal perspective of Isaiah and Daniel—not the concrete complexity of the lake or its contested horizons—that Freyne finally speaks to the character of Jesus.

In sum: When it comes to the historical description of Jesus, the very voices that so helpfully instruct regional thinking routinely forget the data they themselves produce vis-à-vis the specific locale which he is said, repeatedly, to have occupied. From Meyers to Freyne, scholarship which announces the particularity of this place, in the name of Capernaum or under the guise of the Lake Region, reverts midstream to the safer shore when it comes to describing Jesus, which seems not actually to include the peculiarity or cultural complexity of the lakeshore village of Capernaum or the Lake Region at all. Said otherwise, the self-evident difference of this particular place vis-à-vis the remainder of Galilee is not allowed to complicate things by making the historical description of Jesus significantly different (but, to be clear, no less Jewish); it certainly has yet to affect the way scholarship evaluates the textual memory of Jesus. Instead, notice of the peculiarity of the Lake Region of Capernaum and environs consistently gives way to the discursive privilege of inland (homogenous) Galilee, which is finally and decisively normative for even the “border regions” which Jesus is said to inhabit.
There is a simple paradox at play here: Jesus in Capernaum and environs is equally assured and ignored or forgotten. The association of Jesus with this particular place is not at issue. There will be some who question the significance of this association but none who has denied it outright to date. Scholars of the Galilean Jesus, following Eric Meyers, have demonstrated the peculiarity of this place beyond a reasonable doubt. By all accounts, this is the location of the historical Jesus.

The problem is that this datum has yet to be brought to bear on the historical description of the man. Jesus who belongs in Capernaum, by common accord, has remained resolutely “of Nazareth.” More prosaically, his scholarly commemoration has remained consistently indebted to the Lower Galilean milieu of Nazareth and Sepphoris, even though it is the Lake Region of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum which all agree stands in more immediate geographical relation to his life and legacy.\(^{32}\) When it comes to describing Jesus, in other words, the distinction of Capernaum and its environs as his more local place is simply passed over without comment.

At stake in this paradox is the logical extension of the case for Galilean regionalism which Meyers first announced in the name of the Galilean Jesus. The argument has been that regional awareness makes it exceedingly difficult and increasingly naive to conceive of the Galilee as a single entity—the Upper Galilee is not the Lower Galilee, in other words. This is so in terms of economic opportunity and cultural ambiance because it is primarily so in terms of

\(^{32}\) This even though Nazareth is only obliquely related to Jesus in the tradition. The fact that he is identified (and distinguished) with the epithet suggests precisely that he is no longer routinely there. Thus Vaage (2011, 122): “it is now virtually a truism of critical scholarship that before Jesus’ baptism by John—at best—there is essentially nothing to be known ‘historically’ about Jesus,” which he sharpens as follows, “At least, there is no early Christian evidence regarding an earlier phase of the historical Jesus’ life that would allow us to say anything at all ‘historically’ about this period that would not also be true for every other male of the same social group and socioeconomic status (about which, however, we know next to nothing) in the region.”
topography, geology and climate. It simply will not do, historically, to confuse the two. The point has complicated the discourse considerably, to the extent that any notion of Jesus’ “Middle Eastern,” “Mediterranean,” or “Jewish” context now seems rather glaringly atypical. This is where the tradition of the Galilean Jesus is right.

Still, the argument that regional difference matters to the historical description of Jesus has yet to be taken to its logical extent; for if the Upper Galilee is not commensurate with the Lower, but rather depends for description on local knowledge of precipitation, temperature and relief, for instance, and the same applies mutatis mutandis to the Lower Galilee, the same also applies to the “third region” of Galilee, otherwise known in Meyers’ construction as the region of the lake. And if it is this “third region” of Capernaum and its environs that is the more local place of the historical Jesus, as all appear to agree, then it stands to reason that any attempt to say what might be said about the man, historically, ought to begin precisely there. To do anything other is to confuse the historical grounds of the conversation. This is my point of departure.

**Conclusion**

The quest has yet to apply to the historical description of Jesus what it otherwise knows to be the case about his more local place—this is the contention of my first chapter. Capernaum is noticed, to be sure, and with much rhetorical effect. But as a datum which is significant for the historical description of Jesus it is consistently overlooked. It has yet to make the conversation about Jesus significantly different. Likewise, the Lake Region of Galilee is readily affirmed. One has only to follow Meyers’ lead in this regard. But when it comes to describing Jesus, the peculiarity of his erstwhile home in the Lake Region is ignored or simply forgotten.

In either case, the abstract categories of religion and politics and culture effectively obscure the sort of local, peculiar and complex data (of climate, relief, soil, etc.) which pertain
there to a degree and with an intimacy with which they do not pertain just anywhere and everywhere. The result is that Jesus’ local place is left an empty fact—a datum which is nowhere disputed, but one which lacks the necessary content to make a real difference to his historical description.

To be sure, this is not an issue if an account of what Clifford Geertz (1973a, 30) calls “the hard surfaces of life,” including place, is not our interest; that is, if our interest is primarily ideological or rhetorical or theological. There is nothing wrong, per se, with the sort of identity politics which scholars such as Sanders, Horsley, and Reed pursue implicitly in the name of Capernaum. But for a conversation which claims to be historical, which is to say at very least concerned with the mundane detail of someone, sometime, somewhere, this sort of geographical amnesia is a problem.
Chapter 2
Definite Place: The Lake Region of Galilee

Wisdom comes out of an ant heap.
Ba-Ila proverb

Introduction

Capernaum has mattered to the quest for the historical Jesus. It has featured routinely as Jesus’ “centre,” his “hub” and his “headquarters.” It has carried the weight of a given. The notion that Jesus belongs there, if anywhere, is one of the few points on which scholars of the historical Jesus seem to agree. This makes it an interesting datum.

What makes this datum also an eloquent point of entry into the discourse, however, is the evident inability, or unwillingness, of these same scholars to bring it to bear on the historical description of Jesus in any significant fashion. Capernaum has mattered, in other words, but not in practice; not as it might. In practice, at least when it comes to the historical description of Jesus, the material (geographical) conditions which make Capernaum interesting in the first place have been consistently neglected. In practice, “Capernaum” has been a discursive space—a place-holder in the discourse for other issues, or a cipher by which to raise the more protracted concerns of religious, political and cultural identity.

In the discourse of the quest, in other words, Jesus’ association with Capernaum is an empty fact—a datum which no one disputes but at the same time a datum which has lacked the meticulous, material content to make a real difference to the historical description of Jesus. It may be as close to a given as the quest will ever come. But scholarship has yet to harness its historiographical potential for a description of the man remembered there as nowhere else. This is where Chapter Two begins. Having explored in Chapter One the many and various ways in which scholars agree, only to switch registers when it comes to describing Jesus, Chapter Two
sets out to recover that collection of data which makes of Capernaum and environs a datum of interest in the first place.

What applies to Capernaum (i.e., notice and neglect) applies as well to the Lake Region of Galilee. It is not that this geographical distinction is contested. Scholars of the Galilean Jesus, following Eric Meyers, do us the favour of making quite plain what sets the Lake Region of Galilee apart. When it comes to Jesus, the difference of this peculiar place is simply forgotten, eclipsed by the convenient circumstance of political boundaries, for example, or obscured by the comfortably traditional imprint of “Jewish” Galilee.

This sort of geographic amnesia is not entirely surprising, given the location of at least much of the quest within a North Atlantic, late-capitalist, professorial class which gives every impression of transcending time and place.\(^1\) In any case, the quest has not often been asked to examine its location(s). It has been more conversant with source theories and textual methodologies (“the boundless world of books and ideas,” Zencey 1996, 15) than it has been aware of the particularity of watersheds and growing seasons, for instance, though it is the latter which undoubtedly make for local place.

Nonetheless, it remains the case, as Clifford Geertz (1996, 262) would have it, that no one lives in the world “in general.” No one avoids the intensity of place. This insight is not especially novel; but the methodological ramifications are far-reaching for the discourse.

Where the quest has responded, it has done so by paying increased attention to the Galilee as a more particular place for Jesus. This is where I have suggested the tradition of the Galilean Jesus gets it right. This is the beginning of a stance more sensitive to the detail of local place. But if this is the beginning of such a stance, it is also clear that it does not go nearly far enough, if we

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\(^1\) So, for instance, Eric Zencey on the “rootless” professor (1996). At stake, according to Zencey (1996, 18), is a deep-seated epistemological bias: “We in the Western world have traditionally valued the universal over the particular, the general statement over the local exception, the grand, capital-T Truth over the particular details of the specific cases from which that truth was induced. The truths that our professorial class carries with it are supposed to transcend time and place.”
are not to rest content with the world “in general.” “Galilee,” in short, is hardly the most particular place for Jesus, as Meyers et al so helpfully demonstrate.

In sum: the evidence of the previous chapter is that the geographical sensitivity which puts Jesus in Galilee has not extended to the historical description of Jesus in Capernaum. What the tradition of the Galilean Jesus gets right, in other words, needs to be pressed further, with particular attention to the fact of Capernaum and environs, otherwise known as the Lake Region of Galilee. What does it mean, in terms of environmental conditions and productive opportunities, to name this place as relevant to the historical Jesus? This is the challenge and the purpose of the present chapter.

Definite Place

It is true, of course, that the Lake Region of Galilee has not often suggested itself as a discrete area of historical investigation. Geographically, in terms of geology, topography and climate, it is clearly a peculiar place. Josephus (War 4.455-456) allows as much. The Mishnah (m. Shebiith 9.2) recognizes its agricultural cycle as deserving special comment.² And modern geographers uniformly distinguish the Valley as a particular climatological region.³

But in the usual historico-political narrative the Valley appears more frequently as a sharp line of dissociation between east and west, a boundary, in other words, in the sense of the modern world. To wit: the eastern side falls under the political jurisdiction of the Roman province of Syria and/or the political entity of the Decapolis, Gamla and the so-called Golan

² *m. Shebiith* 9.2, trans. Louis Newman: “Three regions [are delineated] with respect to [the laws of] removal: Judea, Transjordan and Galilee. And each of these [is divided] into three regions. [The Galilee is divided into] the Upper Galilee, the Lower Galilee and the Valley. From Kfar Hananiah and northward, all [places] in which sycamores do not grow [are regarded as] Upper Galilee. And from Kfar Hananiah and southward, all [places] in which sycamores do grow [are regarded as] Lower Galilee. And the region of Tiberias [is regarded as] the Valley.
occasionally excepted. The west, excluding the territory of Scythopolis, is variously Hasmonean, Herodian and (from 63 BCE) at least nominally Roman.

This bifurcation of east from west is received largely on the strength of Josephus’ account of the lines of Roman administration (for example, War 3.35-44), though it has been inscribed again in the modern, post-1947 political narrative. Since that time the partition of the eastern side of the Valley from the western side has been culturally and archaeologically entrenched. But the effect has been the same, as a brief perusal of Biblical atlases will show, namely, the eclipse of the ecological identity of the Valley in favour of its political fragmentation.

According to a recent treatment by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2000), the same applies to the region of the Mediterranean. The scale is obviously different, but the analogy is instructive (2000, 23):

[T]he most disturbing feature of the Mediterranean past must be the infrequency with which even a significant part of the sea and its hinterlands have constituted anything remotely like a political entity. The empires whose sphere of control or influence has embraced some Mediterranean shores have nearly all had centres of gravity well beyond the region. . . The single conspicuous example of the pan-Mediterranean empire is that of Rome. . . Yet not even the celebrated pax Romana could hope to eradicate the immense diversity of provincial loyalties and cultures. . . Rome’s was an empire in which the precarious unity of Greek and Roman language and culture and an economy of extraction and coinage were totally

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4 Mordechai Aviam (2007) has proposed no less than 11 archaeological indices to elaborate the political partition of (Jewish) Galilee from its (Gentile) surround: Hellenistic period pottery; Hasmonean coins; ritual baths; stone vessels; pagan temples; synagogues; churches and monasteries; Kfar Hananiah type pottery; statuary and figurative art; ossuaries; and secret hideaways). Reed (2001, 216) goes so far as to make the Valley a “cultural barrier” between a “homogenous” Jewish community and the (Gentile) other. The former is attested archaeologically by the supposed “ethnicity markers” of ritual baths, stone vessels, kokhim shafts with ossuaries and the absence of pig bones. See also Aviam (2004a), Moreland (2007), Meyers (2008), Zangenberg (2008) and Chancey (2009).

5 In fact political jurisdiction is not nearly so simple a matter. East and west sides of the Valley were occasionally governed jointly (under Herod, 39-4 BCE); the eastern shore was divided between Philip (Gaulanitis, etc; 4 BCE - 34 CE) and the province of Syria; and the western shore was distinguished from the remainder of the Galilee under Agrippa II (54/55-93 CE). Regarding the modern situation, what Thomas Weber (454) says of Umm Qais (ancient Gadara) is telling, namely, that its inhabitants looked to Tiberias as their most immediate market town until 1947. Only after a political boundary was imposed did they turn to the east (to Irbid). But this means that the dissociation of east from west is not nearly as natural or as timeless as those who mind the present political boundary would like to assert.
dependent on communications; and for all the fame of the Roman road, the most basic and the most vital lines of communication lay across the sea.

What interests me here is the way in which Horden and Purcell pursue an integrated ecological region (“the Mediterrranean”) notwithstanding the evident realities of political disintegration (“not even the celebrated pax Romana could hope to eradicate the immense diversity of provincial loyalties and cultures”). They define a region, in other words, not by the momentary disturbances of history (what Braudel famously called l’histoire événementielle 1972 [1949],) but by its ecological imprint, which means, for the Mediterranean, by the connecting medium of the sea (which is already the principal player in Braudel’s longue durée).

Horden and Purcell (2000, 22–23) suggest that the fracture of the Mediterranean has been political, “in every sense,” owing more to a paradigm which privileges the nation-state, endorses the political concerns of the texts on which our histories rely and embodies contemporary religious division, than to natural frontiers and physical environment. In terms of the former, it may be that the Mediterranean basin has always been fragmented, not unlike the Rift Valley. But in terms of the latter—in terms of watersheds and growing seasons and ecological opportunities—their point is that the Mediterranean has always been a region.

It goes without saying that Horden and Purcell’s Mediterranean is a region on a far different scale than the Kinneret; I would not want to push the analogy too far. But it serves at this point to loosen the grip of the usual narratives of political history and to anticipate in their place the geographical significance of water—which served the ancient Mediterranean as a means of communication much more surely than it did as a mode of dissociation. This will prove an important analogy for the role of the Kinneret.

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6 But scale is not prohibitive of the comparison. Horden and Purcell (2005, 366–367) make the point that their approach is readily applicable to the Baltic world, the Indian Ocean or even to the Thames Valley. On the question of Mediterranean unity, compare Horden and Purcell (2000, 485–523) with especially Harris (2005) and Herzfeld (2005).
Horden and Purcell (2000, 53–88) go on to develop the Mediterranean as a collection of “definite places,” by which they mean a collection of geographical units or micro-ecologies, each distinguished by the environmental “givens” of geology and topography and climate, for instance, and by the specific human productive response to these givens. It is this interplay that makes a definite place for Horden and Purcell: not merely rocks and rainfall and soil variety but the creation of a lived environment (a productive landscape), by means of human opportunism and ingenuity, on the basis of these environmental givens. And it is exactly this complex and multifaceted interplay of environmental givens and particular human productive response that is required if we are to make of the Lake Region of Galilee a meaningful datum for the historical description of Jesus and not simply an empty fact.

A Definite Place Called the Lake Region of Galilee

At the centre of this project lies the biblical Sea of Galilee, which is a lake, by any other name, and a rather small one at that, easily navigable and exceptional not for its surface area (c. 165 km²) but for its age and its topographical predicament: the lake surface is 210 metres below the level of the Mediterranean. In fact, the lake and its immediate basin are entirely contained in the deep and very narrow tectonic trough of the Jordan valley, which is itself an element of the Great Rift Valley. In the east and the west, respectively, the lake is bounded by the steep basalt ridges of the TransJordan and the lower Galilee. To the northeast (the Buteiha) and the northwest (the Gennesar) alluvial valleys rise from the lakeshore to present a bridge of sorts out of the trough to the surrounding plateau 400-500 metres above. But considerable seismic activity, numerous

8 The Kinneret is considered in limnological parlance a “relic” lake from the Tertiary period—meaning that it preserves archaic fauna and supports a larger number of endemic species than many relatively younger post-glacial lakes elsewhere in the northern hemisphere. Cf. Serruya (1978).
thermal springs (especially lacustrine) and the relative salinity of the lake—which recalls the extension of a prehistoric and hypersaline Lisan sea from the Hula to beyond the Dead Sea—make the Valley much more clearly participant in the geology of the Jordan valley, extending north to south, than partner to the sloping plateau of the east or the highlands of the west.

The water of the Kinneret complicates this participation insofar as it moderates winter temperatures and increases relative humidity sufficiently to distinguish the area immediately around the lake from the Hula valley to the north and the lower Jordan valley to the south. The former experiences regular winter frosts as a result of its proximity to Mt. Hermon (Orni, et al. 1971 [1964], 155); to the south, average rainfall remains below the minimum necessary for dryland agriculture.\(^9\)

The apparent advantages of tropical temperatures and the availability of water drew a dense belt of settlement to the lakeshore in antiquity: Tiberias, on the southwest shore, just to the north of the hot springs of Hammat Tiberias; Magdala/Tarichaea, 6.5 km north at the southern edge of the infamous Gennesar valley (and the mouth of the Nahal Arbel); Capernaum, on the northern shore, adjacent to the most shallow point in the lake but also the locale reportedly most attractive to fish because of adjacent thermal springs;\(^{10}\) Chorazin, 3 km in- (and up-) land; Bethsaida/Julias (which I take to be et-Tell),\(^{11}\) on the east bank of the Jordan, some 2 km inland of the lakeshore very likely because of the accidents of erosion; Gamla, further to the east, on an

\(^9\) The climatic distinction with the lower Jordan valley in particular is sufficient for Zohary (1962, 50–53) to include the surround of the lake, minus its southern point, in the Mediterranean plantgeographical territory though he is quick to admit that the precise boundaries between the broadly-conceived Mediterranean and the so-called Irano-Turanian territory to the south “cannot be drawn with exactitude” in terms of vegetation. Agricultural activity, in particular, in especially the valleys on the eastern and southern “borderlands” of the Mediterranean zone, has meant the formation of a wide transitional belt of inter-regional and migratory vegetation between the two. Zohary’s careful description of local phytogeographical conditions provides an important corrective to the prescriptive modelling of climatic regions according to aridity (Köppen 1931) and/or potential evapotranspiration (Thorntwaite 1948). See also Rosenan (1970c) and Goldreich (2003, 13).

\(^{10}\) So, for instance, Masterman (1908, 41), Nun (1989a, 14) and Rousseau & Arav (1995, 94). Serruya (1978, 132) notes as well the attraction for fish of the deltaic formation at the mouth of the Butela valley to the northeast.

\(^{11}\) See especially Arav (1988), Kuhn and Arav (1991) and Shroder and Inbar (1995); but compare Steven Notley’s reply (2007).
isolated spur 10 km inland of the lakeshore, staring directly across the water at Tarichaea; Hippos (Susita), on another spur further south, 350m above the lake and directly across from Tiberias; and at the lake’s southeast corner, at the mouth of the Yarmouk valley, the hot springs of Hamat Gader and on the ridge overlooking the entire basin (and like Gamla 10 km inland) the city of Gadara.\(^\text{12}\)

Indications are that the population represented by these settlements was growing quickly in the first century CE. Jonathan Reed (2000, 84; 2008, 11) has suggested that Galilee’s population “more than doubled” from 50 BCE to 50 CE, whatever its absolute numbers.\(^\text{13}\) In any case, the foundation of Tiberias in 18 or 19 CE and the raising of Bethsaida/Julias to the status of polis in 30 CE make especially plain the participation of the Lake Region in this trend.

But population growth around the lake was not simply an urban phenomenon. Uzi Leibner’s recent and detailed study of settlement history in eastern Galilee (2006; 2009) records the archaeological appearance of new and expanded settlement at the time on at least the western side of the Valley.\(^\text{14}\) And Reed (2008, 10) notes as well the expansion in physical size of the small villages of Capernaum and Gamla during the same period.\(^\text{15}\) In this light, and given, in

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\(^\text{12}\) Compare Rousseau and Arav (1995, 247) and Vaage (Vaage 2011, 122–123), in the opposite direction.

\(^\text{13}\) With regard to Capernaum, for instance, Meyers and Strange (1981, 58) give a figure of 12,000 - 15,000 on the basis of the extent of the archaeological site (“just under 30 hectares”) and a likely number of people per hectare (400 - 500). By the same technique, but with more modest estimates (“perhaps as low as 6 hectares”; “likely around 100 persons per hectare”), Reed prefers about 1,700 (1994, 212) or between 600 and 1,500 (2000, 149–152; cf. Crossan and Reed 2001, 119). Reed discounts Josephus’ comment in War 3.43, that even the villages of Galilee contained “above 15,000 inhabitants,” as “absurd” and “grossly exaggerated.”

\(^\text{14}\) Leibner surveys an area of some 285 square kilometers, extending roughly 15 km west of the Kinneret from the Sepphoris-Tiberias route in the south to the foothills of the Upper Galilee in the north. He finds “dramatic population growth” (2006, 115) and “a great wave of settlement” (2009, 331–345) from the end of the second century BCE through the first half of the first century CE, both in terms of settlement number (with 16 new sites established in the early Roman period) and settled area (an increase of some 50%), and concludes that the population doubled in the Early Roman period. Leibner attributes increased rural settlement, in particular, to Herod Antipas’ urban construction projects—which, for our purposes, clearly implicates the vicinity of Tiberias—even if the actual foundation of the agricultural settlements around Tiberias seems to parallel or even predate the foundation of the city.

\(^\text{15}\) In fact, Reed (2008, 12,23–25) actually argues that cities act as “demographic brakes” on population growth. This is of a piece with his caution that population growth not be equated with economic prosperity, at least not without argument. The latter still needs to be brought to bear on the region of the lake.
addition, the limited land base in the Valley to begin with, it is not surprising to find the elite of first century Tiberias pursuing estates beyond its bounds (as per Josephus *Ant* 18.36-38; *Life* 33; cf. Freyne 2004, 49).

**Farming**

Among historians the same two factors of temperature and rainfall which drew this band of settlement have tended to inspire confidence in the Valley’s agricultural potential bordering at times on romantic nostalgia. Josephus is predictably effusive with regard especially to the Valley’s northwest corner (*War* 3.516-519):

> There is not a plant which its fertile soil refuses to produce and its cultivators in fact grow every species; the air is so well-tempered (ἐὐκρατον) that it suits the most opposite varieties. The walnut, a tree which delights in the most wintry climate, here grows luxuriantly, beside palm-trees, which thrive on heat, and figs and olives, which require a milder atmosphere. One might say that Nature had taken pride in thus assembling the most discordant species in a single spot, and that, by a happy rivalry, each of her seasons wished to claim this region for her own.

As tends to be the case, Josephus’ account has been criticized. Gildas Hamel (1990), for example, has found Josephus’ vision indebted to the conventional idealization of the country life, complete with the standard elements of exceptional diversity (as per Pliny, *Letters* 5.67.7-13), year-round harvest (Homer, *Odyssey* 7.112-132) and the beneficent agency of “Nature herself” (Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 5.1261-1278). In Hamel’s opinion, Josephus adopts the trope of the bountiful countryside: his account is more indebted to the interests of a leisured class dependent on the continued extraction of an agricultural ‘surplus’ and committed to the imperial project than it is reflective of any particular reality.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is especially evident in Virgil’s *Georgics*, where nostalgia for an agricultural golden age serves to legitimize a new imperial circumstance. If Josephus’ concern is at least in part an apology for the Flavian dynasty, might not his eulogy for the once-upon-a-time grandeur of the Galilean landscape function similarly as regards the place of the Jewish people in the newly-Flavian world?
Mendel Nun (Nun 1996, 13) is even more blunt, with specific reference to the bounty of the water:

Josephus’ entire description may be questioned. After all, he had lived on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and sailed on its waters during the first revolt of the Jews against the Romans. But when he sat down to write his works in Rome more than a decade later, he apparently no longer remembered the form of the Sea of Galilee, its characteristics and its fish.

More often, though, it is primarily Josephus’ lyricism that is found difficult: “Josephus doubtless exaggerates,” Martin Goodman (1983, 22) begins, representatively, “but the picture is essentially correct.”

In actual fact, it may be that soil variety in the northwest is sufficient to support something of Josephus’ vision of verticality, at least ideally. Arieh Singer (2007) finds in the Gennesar valley a combination of soils which are potentially fertile. In particular, the combination here of Terra Rossa soil with the alluvial soils of the littoral plain is among the most productive soil complexes in the region, though the former (Terra Rossa) tends to be particularly shallow, and thus susceptible to drought (Singer 2007, 94,97), while the latter (alluvial deposits) tend to be poorly aerated and drained, and so easily water-logged in the rainy season (Singer 2007, 152,160). The basalt-derived soils predominant in the remainder of the region are prime grain (Zohary, D. 1969; Renfrew 1973, 67; Applebaum 1976, 639) and/or vine (Applebaum 1976, 654; Reed 2007, 57) growing stock; but their productivity in the Valley, in actual fact, will have depended quite heavily on intensive clearing and terracing.

18 Following Ravikovitch (1970); compare Zohary (1962, 8–9) and Dan, et al (1975).
19 So, for instance, Applebaum (1976, 639) and Reed (2001, 144). Singer (2007, 92,152,187) makes quite plain the difficult connection between typical soil characteristics and real productivity by emphasising repeatedly the contingencies of soil composition, slope, depth, temperature, moisture, exposure and erosion. Horden and Purcell (2000, 231) are even more acute: “Fertility, productive opportunity, and the soil itself are all of human construction. . . There is no absolute quality of land anywhere: its value and potential depend on the choices and perceptions [and here especially labour intensive management] of those who make use of it.”
Mean annual temperatures in the northwest as immediately around the whole lake are also well above those in the lower Galilee—again making Josephus’ vision of productivity a theoretical possibility. When the daily Mediterranean sea breeze which cools the region of the lower Galilee reaches the steep descent of the lake valley, however, it is compressed and warmed, tending to insulate the Valley floor rather than to rejuvenate its air mass (Karmon 1971, 170). The same temperature inversion means that annual rainfall in the Valley (in the range of 350–450 mm/year) is actually lower than it is either to the west (500–800 mm/year in the lower Galilee) or to the east (700–1000 mm/year on the Golan plateau). Precipitation in the Valley is further affected (again adversely) by its distance from the Mediterranean, its elevation and its position in the rain shadow of the lower Galilean highlands (Rubin 1978, 69–70; Goldreich 2003, 56–62; Katsnelson 2007). Nonetheless, the lake receives sufficient rainfall, on average, and enjoys warm enough temperatures, again on average, to sponsor an impression of agricultural fertility, at least in theory, and this is enough for most to follow Josephus, hyperbole aside.

The practical conditions of the Lake Region and in particular the severe relief which gives to this particular place its distinctive topographical profile—what Horden and Purcell (2000, 308) call in another context “the tyranny of the gradient”—give more reason for pause. The gradient—by which I mean the dramatic vertical decline to the Valley floor from the elevated scarp of the lower Galilee in the west and the high plateau of the Transjordan in the east—means rainfall in the Valley tends to be convective (owing to the upsurge of warm air) and thus particularly local, intense and brief. Rainfall throughout the Galilee is highly variable from

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20 Compare, for instance, the mean annual temperatures of Tiberias (21--23°C) and Nazareth (17--19°C), their average temperatures in August (Tiberias: 30--32°C; Nazareth: 24--26°C) and January (Tiberias: 14--16°C; Nazareth: 8--10°C) and the average frequency in days/year that the temperature rises above 35°C (Tiberias: 26--50; Nazareth 0--10) and falls below 10°C (Tiberias: 0--50; Nazareth: 101--125) (Atlas of Israel, 1985).

year to year and the surround of the lake is already more susceptible to chronic drought than even
the lower Galilee, the eastern shore in particular.\textsuperscript{22} It is true that average annual rainfall in the
Valley remains above the minimum necessary for un-irrigated agriculture, more often than not, but
this is not necessarily to say that rainfall in the Valley is particularly effective for agricultural
purposes.\textsuperscript{23} Higher temperatures in the Valley, for instance, even as regards the lower Galilee,
lead to higher evaporation levels which mitigate the water available for agricultural use.\textsuperscript{24}
Sudden cloudbursts do less good agriculturally than average annual figures first suggest (Orni, et
al. 1971 [1964], 156; Karmon 1971, 170; Goldreich 2003, 55). And on the “fertile” alluvial
valleys, in particular (in both west and east; cf. Singer 2007, 150), rainfall of high intensity tends
to make of the deep and clayey plains a “clinging mud” difficult to cultivate and especially
susceptible to severe flooding (Karmon 1971, 170; Rubin 1978, 83; Goldreich 2003, 79).

On the steep valley walls the same rainfall pattern joins with the notably strong and
regular winds from especially the Mediterranean (Goldreich 2003, 139–141) to steadily erode the
basaltic soil cover, which is already thin by nature and without the protection of significant forest
vegetation (Singer 2007, 184,187). If Rabbinic pressure against the practice provides accurate
recall, such was only made worse in antiquity by the local rearing of sheep and goats.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} On variability as a general characteristic of the Galilee, see Karmon (1971, 24,28), Rubin (1978, 74) and
Katsnelson (1985, 19). On the disadvantage of the lake region in particular vis-à-vis the lower Galilee, see
receives on average 50 to 75 mm less rainfall per year than the western shore.
\textsuperscript{23} Goldreich (2003, 55), for instance, notes that mean annual rainfall in most of Europe (> 600 mm) falls well
within the average of most Mediterranean climates (400--700 mm), modern Israel included. But the temporal
concentration of rainfall in Israel (50 precipitation days compared to 151 in London), its particular characteristics
(cold and intense) and the effect of higher air temperatures mean the same amount of rainfall is considerably less
efficient agriculturally in one place than it is in another.
\textsuperscript{24} Goldreich (2003, 120) puts the amount of evaporation in the Kinneret vicinity (measured by evaporation pans)
at 240 cm / year, compared to 150 cm on the Mediterranean coast, 186 cm in the Hulah basin, 221 cm in the Beth
Shean valley and 234 cm at Jericho. Again, Goldreich (2003, 118) cautions that the relationship between
theoretical measurement and real effect is “most complicated,” depending on crop type and age, method of
\textsuperscript{25} So Martin Goodman (1983, 23–24,104), who finds in the Rabbinic literature “thorough disapproval” of the
practice (\textit{t. Baba Qamma} 8.14; cf. \textit{m. Baba Qamma} 7.7; \textit{t. Baba Qamma} 8.11,12) coupled with a steady stream of
complaints “from one generation to the next” (as per \textit{m. Baba Qamma} 6.1,2), laxity towards those who did raise
sheep and goats (\textit{t. Baba Mesia} 2.33) and outright disregard of the regulation (\textit{t. Baba Mesia} 5.7; \textit{t. Shebiit} 3.13).
The tropical temperatures and rainfall pattern conditioned by the topography of the Lake Region have actually been as notable for malaria, on occasion, as they have been notorious for agriculture. Such was very clearly the case in the early twentieth century,\textsuperscript{26} and Reed (2008, 19) suggests that the same be applied to the first: “we should expect much higher rates of malaria at villages like Capernaum or Magdala near the Gennosaur Plain than, say, Nazareth or Cana, which were on a slope and atop a hill. . . And surely Sepphoris. . . was better off than hot and humid Tiberias right on the lake, at least in terms of malaria.” Presumably the same would have extended to the estuaries of the Jordan at Bethsaida and the Yarmouk at Hammat Gader.\textsuperscript{27}

To be sure, evidence of morbidity and mortality rates specific to the Lake Region is necessarily limited. Reed (2008, 17–18) argues by analogy to the Egyptian Fayum, where rates are more forthcoming (Scheidel 2001, 16–19), that the hydrological situation in the Valley of stagnant water and marshland would have likewise meant substandard health in general and more specifically the seasonal incidence of the tertian and quartan fevers now associated with malaria. Such was evidently well attested in the medical corpus of the Roman empire, where it was diagnosed by the periodicity of intense fever, and clearly associated with wetland environments, though not yet with mosquitoes (Sallares 2002, 7–22, 55–64; Retief and Cilliers 2004). The possibility, at least, that this will have applied well to the Lake Region and considerably less so to an environment such as Nazareth’s makes the fevers Jesus is remembered to have encountered

\textsuperscript{26}Israel Kligler (1930, 48) calls the hydrological conditions of the Jordan valley “undoubtedly the worst in Palestine” for the incidence of malaria and notes the classification already in 1919 of Migdal (adjacent to Tarichaea/Magdala), Kinnereth (in the Gennesar valley) and Degania (on the southwest shore) as “intensely malarious.” (1930, 88, cited in Reed 2008, 19) So, more recently, Margalit and Tahori (1978).

\textsuperscript{27}E.W.G. Masterman (1908, 41) accounts for the remove of Bethsaida / et-Tell from the lakeshore in precisely this way: “There is no need whatsoever to suppose that this place [i.e., Bethsaida] was necessarily, because of its name, on the shore itself. This intensely malarious plain could never have been a suitable place for a Roman city. Every modern analogy would lead us to suppose that the fishermen would live in the healthier site, raised above the marshes, and go to their work even as to-day (sic) the Tiberias fishermen do.” (emphasis mine)
in Capernaum (Matt 8:14-15//Mark 1:29-31//Luke 4:38-39; John 4:46-54), as apparently nowhere else, particularly interesting.\footnote{Reed (2008, 18) also notes three amulets from late antique Galilee, one from Sepphoris and two from Horvat Kanaf (northeast of the lake), said to protect against “great fevers,” which he thinks “probably” malarial. See further Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked (1985, 44–55) and C. Thomas McCollough and Beth Glazier-McDonald (1997).

28 Hippocrates (\textit{Airs, Waters, Places} 7, 24), Cato (\textit{De Agricultura} 1.3), Varro (\textit{Re Rustica} 1.12.1-3), Vitruvius (1.4.1), Columella (\textit{Re Rustica} 1.5.6) and Pliny the Elder (\textit{Natural History} 18.7.33), cited in Sallares (2002, 55–64), all advise against situating farms on low-lying river and/or marsh land, notwithstanding the advantages of a water and transportation source.

29 If there is an exception it may be Josephus’ recall of date palm cultivation in the Gennesar valley (\textit{War} 3.517). That Tiberias is later remembered to have imported dates from Jericho (\textit{p. Demai} 2.22c; cf. discussion in Safrai 1994, 139), however, suggests that even here caution is necessary.}

The possibility also directs us back to Josephus (\textit{War} 4.455-456), now apparently in a more pessimistic mood, describing the whole Rift valley as “burnt up,” “excessively dry,” and chronically “pestilential.” Roman agronomists were well aware of the futility of agriculture in such places, no matter how fertile the soil.\footnote{If there is an exception it may be Josephus’ recall of date palm cultivation in the Gennesar valley (\textit{War} 3.517). That Tiberias is later remembered to have imported dates from Jericho (\textit{p. Demai} 2.22c; cf. discussion in Safrai 1994, 139), however, suggests that even here caution is necessary.} Varro, for instance, injects an important note of realism into the discourse: “In an unhealthy location farming is a lottery” (\textit{Re Rustica} 1.4.3, cited in Reed 2008). Were we to add the unpredictability of rainfall and the effects of progressive soil decline resulting from the gradient, Varro’s warning may provide the most fitting response to an initial impression (re. Josephus) of the Valley’s fertility.

In fact, the weight of literary evidence for notable agricultural production in Galilee points consistently to places other than the Lake Region and periods other than the first century CE—olives from Gischala (\textit{War} 2.591-592//\textit{Life} 73-73; \textit{Sifre Deut} 355), for instance, grain from the Jezreel (\textit{Life} 24, 118f) and Netofa valleys (\textit{Num Rab} 18.22; though note \textit{p. Peah} 1.20), and flax from second century CE Tiberias (Pausanias 5.5.2; \textit{b. Moed Qatan} 18b).\footnote{If there is an exception it may be Josephus’ recall of date palm cultivation in the Gennesar valley (\textit{War} 3.517). That Tiberias is later remembered to have imported dates from Jericho (\textit{p. Demai} 2.22c; cf. discussion in Safrai 1994, 139), however, suggests that even here caution is necessary.}

It would be unwise to imply from any of this the absence of intensive cultivation in the region, but I do not need to go this far to make my point. It is not even necessary to dispute the occasional pocket of relative productivity, as perhaps was found in the Gennesar valley, though Josephus’ vision is clearly too irenic. My argument is emphatically not with the practice of
intensive agriculture in the Valley—which I presume pervasive there as it was throughout the inhabited Mediterranean, notwithstanding the prevailing complications of soil, topography and climate.

My argument to this point is with the rhetoric of fertility, as per Josephus et al, which has us waxing eloquent about the agricultural prosperity of the Valley on the basis of a non-resident aristocrat’s recollection, the law of averages (but averages are just that) and a selection of ideal soil types (which are never so simple, in actual fact, having everything to do with substructure, slope, depth, temperature, moisture, exposure and erosion, as those who collect them know well). The picture of the region’s agricultural regimen inspired by Josephus is impressionistic. It is abstract—what exactly does “fertile soil” mean in a situation of localized drought, flash flood or chronic labour shortage? And it tells us considerably less than advertised about real productivity, if and when we are interested in the lived experience of the Valley.

Polycropping and verticality were presumably part of the agricultural world of the Lake Region, in short, as was occasional and localized glut. But to judge from the specific, local conditions of life in the Valley, so was the unpredictability of rainfall, the risk of localized flood or drought and, as a result, the reality of recurrent dearth.

**Fishing and Ferrying**

To the challenge of production in a place of agricultural uncertainty—by which I mean a situation of high relief, volatile rainfall, regular flooding, progressive soil deterioration and perhaps also chronic disease—the diversity of the lake environment supplies at least a partial response: the tyranny of the gradient is met in the Valley, at least in part, by the productive opportunities presented by the lake. Throughout the Mediterranean, agriculturally marginal wetlands provide diverse opportunities for gathering, grazing and even limited irrigation (Horden
and Purcell 2000, 186–190), and I see no reason why this should not apply as well to certain locales around the lake, despite the silence of the literati.\textsuperscript{31} These are rather more interested in the supply of hot water endemic to the region;\textsuperscript{32} in fact, it may even be, as Freyne has recently suggested (2007b, 158), that the region proves attractive to urban development for precisely this reason.\textsuperscript{33}

When it comes to the productive opportunities presented by the lake, however, modern historians have been more impressed by the opportunity of the Kinneret fishery. From Strabo’s notice of a fish saltery at Tarichaea (\textit{Geographica} 16.2.45) to Josephus’ recall of a lake heavily traversed (with an alleged fishing boat per family at Tarichaea, \textit{Life} 163; cf. \textit{War} 2.635) and rich in fish (including one resembling the Egyptian \textit{coracin}, \textit{War} 3.520, though see Mendel Nun’s caution, above), the Valley has been made a place of industry—“synonymous with prosperity” (Wuellner 1967, 52,53), “of great importance” to at least the Jewish population of ancient Palestine (Safrai 1994, 163), and even allegedly linked by international trade to “world markets” beyond (Rousseau and Arav 1995, 247; Sawicki 2000, 27–29,92; Freyne 2004, 51). Freyne’s conclusion (2004, 52) that lake fishing in first century CE Galilee was an occupation “relatively lucrative” and fishermen “far from the bottom rung of the social ladder” imparts to the region a rather optimistic profile of a piece with recent suggestions that fish and fish sauce played a role in the ancient consumer economy as important even as olive oil.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Topography aside, the relative salinity of the lake water (in the range of 250 to 400 mg/litre, depending on precipitation levels; cf. Orni and Efrat 1971 [1964], 451; Karmon 1971, 124; Serruya 1978, 186–7) makes heavy irrigation in the lake basin problematic (cf. Reifenberg 1947 and Singer 2007, 19), though this does not apply to the freshwater springs which feed the Gennesar and Buteiha valleys (Mero 1978, 93–94).

\textsuperscript{32} Thus especially Eunapius (\textit{Vita Sophistarum} 459) on Hammat Gader: “a place that has warm baths in Syria, inferior only to those at Baiae in Italy, with which no other baths can be compared.” But also Josephus (\textit{Ant} 18.36; \textit{War} 2.614; \textit{Life} 85) on Hammat Tiberias. See further Dvorjetski (1992) and Weber (1997; 1999).

\textsuperscript{33} Freyne (2007b, 158) would have the reputed properties of the thermal springs at especially Hammat Tiberias, Hammat Gader and Callirhoe account for an apparent Herodian predilection “for the whole rift region” (emphasis mine). Cf. Dvorjetski (1992) and Weber (1997; 1999).

Nonetheless, the argument as it relates to the Lake Region is almost entirely inferential. An impressive collection of fishing implements at et-Tell (which I take to be Bethsaida) evenly distributed across the excavated area and dated by archaeological context to Hellenistic and Early Roman periods suggests the importance of fishing to the local population.\(^{35}\) The place names of the Valley—Tarichaea (“Fish Salting Place,” Josephus, *Life* 32; Pliny, *Natural History* 5.15), Migdal Nunya (“Fish Tower,” *b. Pesah* 46), Beth Sayda (“House of Fish”) or Beth Sayyada (“House of Fishermen”)—and the various literary traditions of the New Testament suggest as much. Circumstantial observation of what appear to be ancient harbours around the lake suggests broad based and well-organised investment at some point in the history of the region (Nun 1989b), likely to include the Hellenistic and early Roman periods,\(^{36}\) though, to be sure, harbours do not equal a fishery nor a fishery demand harbours. It may be that renewed excavations at Tarichaea/Magdala will deliver a clearer material indication of a locale “rich from fish” (Zangenberg 2003). But it is difficult without stamped amphorae, for instance, or fresh water fish bones to estimate the economic or geographical extent of the lake effect in this regard.\(^{37}\)

Even if we grant this material description, namely, that the lake was the scene of intensive fishing in the first century CE, the usual social conclusion that the lake supported a thriving industry of entrepreneurial fishermen does not necessarily follow. Much the same has been alleged of pottery production in the lower Galilee in an oft-cited study by David Adan-Bayewitz

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\(^{35}\) The collection includes lead weights, iron hooks, a sail needle, two basalt sinkers, several basalt anchors and a fisherman’s seal (Rousseau and Arav 1995, 19–24; Fortner 1999). The seal, in particular, dated “no later than 67 CE” (Rousseau and Arav 1995, 96) substantiates the possibility of fishing collectives like the one alluded to in Luke 5:10.

\(^{36}\) So especially Nun (1989a; 1989b; 1999). To my knowledge, none of these has been securely dated, or published as such, at the time of writing, though at least at Tarichaea, Rousseau and Arav (1995, 189), Aviam (1997, 399–400) and Galili, et al (1991, 161) note that the wharf and breakwater seem to be associated with materials dating to the first century CE.

\(^{37}\) The archaeological evidence is summarized in Rousseau and Arav (1995, 96): “Lead weights for nets have been discovered near Magdala and at Bethsaida, fish hooks at Capernaum and Bethsaida, a sail needle at Bethsaida and a net needle at Magdala, two line sinkers at Bethsaida, and several stone anchors and mooring stones in various places around the lake. . . The most significant find has been the fisherman’s seal of Bethsaida, found in 1989, and dated no later than 67 C.E.” Clearly fishing was an activity of some concentration in the lake basin in the first century, but this catalog hardly demands the usual narrative of a thriving export economy.

But as John Dominic Crossan has noted (1998, 223–230), increased concentration and economic dependence on pottery manufacture might just as well denote agricultural necessity as economic speculation. The sudden appearance of a potters’ “industry,” in other words, might just as well reflect the desperate situation of landless farmers left with no other recourse: “When a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its available land,” Adan-Bayewitz himself admits (1993, 235), “there is movement into other occupations,” even if these occupations prove invariably in the first century CE less satisfying (literally) than agriculture. According to Adan-Bayewitz, pottery making, in several areas of lower Galilee (especially Kfar Hananiah), was one such occupation.

I suspect fishing, in the Valley, was another. On the analogy of pottery making, the fishing “industry” of the first century CE had more to do with a land base insufficient in quality and quantity to support the region’s immediate population, which was evidently growing (Reed 2008), than it did with the fish market, even in Sepphoris, where excavations show a predilection for salt water fish from the Mediterranean in any case (Reed 2007, 24).

38 Compare Fiensy (2007, 70): “Would we... assume that the potters of Kefar Hananya and Shikhin or the stoneware vessel makers of Reina and Bethlehem were former farmers who had, after immigrating, quickly lost their land, taken up a craft and become so successful that their wares were marketed all over Galilee? It seems improbable.” But Fiensy argues from silence. My point, and Crossan’s, is that the evidence of “successful” pottery distribution (whatever this means) does not actually demand as a precondition a lucrative industry. So also Arnal (2000, 126): “we have no grounds for concluding that this trade was especially profitable for its producers; in fact, a continued focus on agriculture in Kefar Hananya, along with a failure to develop this industry in urban locations, would suggest that it was not.”

39 Purcell (1995, 135–136) is even more categorical: “Dependence on the desolate world of the sea is a potent sign of need, and in both Greek and Roman thought the fisherman is a classic type of poverty. Not only is he not engaged in the activities which provide normal food and the acceptable kind of wealth that derives from the soil; his work consists of hunting and gathering and is more prone to chance than even the production of the semi-arid agriculturalist. . . Baked by the sun, semi-naked, emaciated, the fisherman lives in a hut and ekes out a precarious existence on his catch.”
To be sure, the tendency throughout the Mediterranean may have been toward professionalization (Purcell 1995, 135). But this does not yet make of lake fishing in the first century CE a regional windfall, except perhaps occasionally, and even then the papyrological evidence of Roman Egypt indicates plainly that the resources of the water were as highly regulated and taxed in the empire as the resources of the land (P.Tebt. II 329, 359; P.Wisc. I 6; P.Oslo II 47; PSI 901; cf. Hanson 1997). In other words, even this intensive exploitation of the lake’s resources is no indication of prosperous commercial enterprise.\(^{40}\)

Tarichaea notwithstanding, the humble remains of the fishing village of Capernaum suggest that lake fishing was a poor substitute for agriculture; that it was not often pursued as an independent subsistence strategy (as was the rule throughout the Mediterranean, according to Horden and Purcell 2000, 365); and that it was brought about, at least in part, “by the poverty of the land,” to invoke Strabo’s incisive explanation of the fishery and the fish salteries of Lucania (Geog 6.1.1).\(^{41}\)

Let me be clear: I do not dispute the economic importance of fishing to the local population of the Lake Region, any more than I dispute the possibility of occasional, localized agricultural success. But I do not find big business, lucrative employment or international trade. I see an example of risk management, or localized diversification, of the sort that made life in the surround of the lake more livable to varying degrees.

What seems more to complicate the picture of marginality typical of the Mediterranean environment, and to make of the Lake Region of Galilee a place capable of carrying its

\(^{40}\) Morten Jensen (2006, 175) equates “intensive skilled fishing” with “large-scale” economic opportunity but this simply begs the question. Reed (2000, 165) is closer to the mark: “For every family engaged in fishing or drying fish, there was a tax collector or official who sold the rights to fish and demanded a hefty return. The fact that Zebedee, the father of James and John, worked with hired hands (µισθωτοι) in no way indicates wealth on his part or a significant entrepreneurial enterprise (Mark 1:20). Rather, it points to the common practice of seasonal, daily, or hourly hiring of peasants dispossessed from their land who sought to eke out a living in the larger villages and cities.”

\(^{41}\) So Purcell (1995, 143–144) on what he calls “the accidental and unpredictable” nature of fishing in even the Sea of Galilee: “I suspect that it is this that encourages the preoccupation with scale and detail witnessed in the number of fish caught by St Peter and the others in the miraculous draught - 153 fish, all specified as great.”
population, is the mobility and the interdependence sponsored by the surface of the lake. Focus on Roman roads and the “glitter” of high commerce (Horden and Purcell 2000, 365) is more typical in scholarship of the period. John Rousseau and Rami Arav (1995, 248), for instance, are almost as effusive as Josephus: “In the time of Jesus, the Sea of Galilee was the most important economic centre of northeastern Palestine and was connected by roads with Syria and Mesopotamia through the Via Maris linking Damascus to Ptolemais, Caesarea Maritima, and Joppa. It offered easy access to Phoenicia, Asia Minor, Samaria, Judea, and the rest of the Mediterranean world.”

More telling for the imprint of the Lake Region, however, because more repetitive and more routine, is the pattern of local redistribution which Horden and Purcell (2000, 140–142, 365) articulate in the name of cabotage—that small scale, ill-documented harbour jumping by which goods and services (and people) pass almost incidentally from one community to the next. In the Valley, this sort of casual connectivity will have been sponsored especially by the density of settlement focused on the lake—the lake is virtually ringed with urban centres, after all, many of which will have been plainly visible to each other. And if the evidence of Tarichaea/Magdala is at all telling, most of them will have had harbour installations of some sort, facilitating access to the resources of the water but also to the other communities at water’s edge.

Josephus makes the interaction of these communities even more explicit when he describes the hostilities between the populations of at least the major centres in the Valley. But it

42 Reed (2000, 146–148) disputes the association of the via maris with Capernaum. But his conclusion that Capernaum benefited from a regional and interregional road network points in the same direction, if considerably more cautiously.
43 Hippos and Tiberias are visible from almost any point on their opposite shores. See further Rousseau and Arav (1995, 101, 127–8) and Jensen (2006, 179).
44 A harbour at Tarichaea/Magdala is archaeologically attested, though at the time of writing only tentatively dated (Galili, Dahari and Sharvit 1991, 161; Rousseau and Arav 1995, 189; Aviam 1997, 399–400). That Hippos and Gadara had associated harbours is suggested, variously, by Epstein (1993, 635), Rousseau and Arav (1995, 127), Zangenberg and Busch (2003, 119) and Reed (2000, 163). Nun (1989b; 1999) has compiled the most extensive map of ancient harbours around the lake, though his observations have yet to be tested as thoroughly as they might.
is the prior assumption of mobility that is telling in Josephus’ narrative. Granted, relations in the
Valley were strained, sometimes to excess: Josephus notes an assault on the eastern districts of
Hippos and Gadara by the Tiberians (led by Justus) at the outset of the first Jewish revolt (*Life*
42; *War* 2.459); a reprisal by the residents of Hippos and Gadara against those Jews already
living on the eastern shore (*War* 2.478); and the flight of at least some of those Jews from the
east to the western town of Tarichaea (*War* 3.542).

But precisely this show of hostility presumes a degree of mobility within the region
habitual enough, on the one hand, to account for a significant Jewish population resident on the
eastern shore by mid-first century CE, and robust enough, on the other, to explain spontaneous
fight or flight from one side to the other.\(^{45}\) If nothing else, in other words, Josephus’ account
presumes a people “linked by warfare,” to adopt a phrase that William Harris (2005, 24) uses of
the Mediterranean.

Rabbinic literature attests a more productive association across the water involving these
same communities. Hippos and Tiberias, in particular, interact with a regularity that appears
almost formulaic: the Palestinian Talmud, for instance, recalls the agricultural commerce
between the two as the embodiment of international trade.\(^{46}\) And *Genesis Rabbah* 31.13
considers the passage back and forth between Tiberias and Hippos so well travelled as to be
marked by metaphoric “furrows” ploughed in the water.

Such commercial symbiosis evidently did not exclude hostility. Tiberias and Hippos are
also remembered in the Midrashim as stereotyped rivals after the pattern of “Jerusalem” and “the
nations” (*Lev Rab* 23.5; *Lam Rab* 1.17; *Songs Rab* 2.5). But this should not cast their connection

\(^{45}\) The latter is especially evident in Josephus’ account of repeated escape by lake from angry populations (*War*
2.619; *Life* 96,153,304) and frequent troop movement by water (*Life* 327,406). Josephus (*Ant* 19.36-38; *Life* 33;
cited in Freyne 2004) also allows that at least some higher class residents of Tiberias own land “across the Jordan.”

\(^{46}\) *y. Sheb.* 8.38a. For wheat to Sepphoris and, by implication, Tiberias, cf. *y. Bava Kama* 9,6d (cited in Safrai
into doubt. Quite the contrary, it speaks to an interaction between east and west that was enduring in time, if not always uniformly benign.

To be sure, the material tale of this interaction depends upon further archaeological excavation in both west and east. But the discovery of Kfar Hananiah ware, which was typically manufactured in the west, on the eastern shore of the lake—at Gamla (Adan-Bayewitz 1993), Hippos (Adan-Bayewitz 1993, 209,219–220) and Gadara (Weber 2007, 460)—as well as further inland (at Tel Nov Weksler-Bdolah 1998;), points already in the same direction, that is, to the more pervasive and protracted “background noise” of mundane interaction brought about by local supply and demand.47

The lake will not have been the only medium of such interaction. Thomas Weber (2007) finds the “mutual initiative” of the citizens of Tiberias and Gadara architecturally attested in the so-called “Tiberiade” gates in each locale and the road that apparently stretched between them.

But the lake’s surface was evidently more highway than hindrance. A deposit of unused Kfar Hananiah ware discovered on the floor of the lake bound for market in the east, according to its excavators, suggests as much (though it also reminds us that lake crossing was not without its perils).48 And if Josephus’ story of his own frequent to-ing and fro-ing between Tiberias, Tarichaea, Capernaum and Bethsaida can be trusted, at least in outline, this network will have extended all the more to the communities up and down both shorelines. The only craft to have been extricated from the Kinneret (Wachsmann 1990a) has such a shallow draft as to make this entirely feasible even for those communities which may not have had the sort of harbour installations uncovered at Tarichaea.

My point in all of this is to notice for the Valley something that Horden and Purcell (2000, 133) call an “inside-out” geography—in which the water of the Kinneret gathers around

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47 The term is Horden and Purcell’s (for instance 2000, 150). They use it to privilege the complex and hard-to-document web of casual, local and small-scale interactions, “more or less constant” in the history of Mediterranean exchange, and always more substantial than typical narrative implies.

48 Fritsch and Ben-Dor (1961); Edwards (1992, 57); Adan-Bayewitz (1993, 214).
itself a dense network of connectivity. Opposite shores are brought together in functional proximity by the ease of contact; they are effectively inside. The distance between them is collapsed while the land around (i.e., outside) becomes increasingly peripheral. Josephus (Life 349) corroborates just this point, without so many words, when he measures the trip to the east across the lake, not around it, and then puts Tiberias in the immediate vicinity of Hippos and Gadara, not despite the water but because of it.

This is not to presume homogeneity within the lake basin, from one side to the other. It does not preclude association with locales further inland either, the association of Capernaum with Sepphoris, for instance, or of Hippos and Gadara with Gerasa or Damascus. The point, in other words, is not to reify the Lake Region or to isolate it from its wider geographical surround.

The point to notice and to carry forward in our discussion of the historical Jesus is the way in which the peculiar geography of the Valley (in terms of geology, topography, climate, etc.) is met with equally particular, locally-specific environmental opportunism. For the Lake Region this evidently includes vertical farming, seasonal fishing, and the regular and recurrent circulation of people and goods across the surface of the lake—ferrying, if you will. Here are the markers of the Lake Region as a definite place; and thus for Jesus, who is remembered there as nowhere else, a lived environment, with all that this entails.

**Definitely Placed**

If this is the local place of Jesus, his “centre,” “hub” and “headquarters,” to recall the scholarly wager which has led us to this point, the pertinent question for the historical description of the man changes. It is no longer a simple matter of describing Galilee, as though this were sufficiently local to say very much in particular about a sometime resident of Capernaum, or expecting the evident differences between the Upper and the Lower Galilees to speak for themselves (with Jesus assumed somewhere under the guise of the latter).
If the historical Jesus is located in the lived environment of the Valley, the question becomes the way in which the very local details which pertain there, in a way or to a degree which they do not pertain simply anywhere and everywhere, make a difference to the enterprise of historical description. What will this magnification look like historiographically? What will it mean methodologically for the quest to shift its terrain in this manner?

To be sure, a shift in terrain will make an immediate difference to the context (background) within which we remember Jesus:

• If Jesus is to be located in the Lake Region of Galilee, for instance, his distinction as a peasant, without further ado (as per Horsley and Hanson 1985, Horsley 1987, and Crossan 1991), becomes problematic. Those oriented toward the resources of the Kinneret in the first century CE would not have been immune to the experience of political and economic exploitation which is usually taken to define the peasant existence; to this extent they might resemble the peasant farmer of rural Galilee. But neither did they derive their status or their sustenance directly or exclusively from the land. If the historical Jesus is to be relocated within precisely this segment of the Galilean population—more fisherman than peasant to overstate the case with Rousseau and Arav (1995, 248)—the peasant typology will require considerable refinement at very least.

• Locating Jesus at the interface of the Kinneret also places him in an environment in which the traditional disjuncture of town and country is largely overcome (so Zangenberg and Fassbeck 2003). Precisely this contrast has often been considered paramount to a description of Jesus’ Galilee—typically, albeit implicitly, in terms of Sepphoris and Nazareth (compare Edwards 1988; Overman 1988; Freyne 1992; 1995b; 1997c; Richardson 2006).

But there is little room around the lake for an enclave community, literally or metaphorically, and the evidence on the lake for commercial interaction suggests quite the opposite. That much of this commercial interaction was focussed on the urban locales of Hippos

and Gadara, moreover, suggests that they deserve as much attention vis-à-vis Jesus’ lived environment as Tiberias and Sepphoris.

- Taking seriously the Valley as an interface between east and west, not a cultural barrier, also challenges the isolation of “Jesus’ Galilee” from the (Hellenistic) cities of the east, and in this way it undermines one of the rhetorically privileged arguments against the so-called Cynic hypothesis. In a word, Jesus in the Lake Region cannot be insulated from the other side, at least not without considerable argument. To the contrary, the apparent ease and regularity of commercial contact suggest that he is a priori as likely to have experienced the cultural climate of Gadara and Hippos, immediately across the lake from his Capernaum, as he is to have participated in the cultural ethos of Qumran or Jerusalem, considerably further to the south.\(^{50}\)

Of course, putting Jesus in the Lake Region does not make him a Cynic. It says nothing of the dating of sources or the cogency of individual, textual parallels (see Tuckett 1989; Betz 1994; Eddy 1996; Aune 1997; and in reply Vaage 1995 and 2011), which is where the real discussion begins. But it should at least put to rest one of the oft-repeated objections to this particular comparison.

These are interesting adjustments to be sure; but they are only that. They have more to do with Jesus’ context (background) than they do with the particular memory of the historical figure himself. They change the way we look at Jesus’ background, in other words, which is obviously helpful for a certain purpose. Articulating an appropriate setting for the person Jesus helps to discipline the imagination and raise interpretive possibilities. But this does not go far enough, or as far as it might, if and when our interest is the particular way in which the historical person who was Jesus of Capernaum inhabited his specific geographical context.

\(^{50}\) When Hans Dieter Betz (1994, 471) “limits” the evidence of Cynicism to Gadara, in other words, he implicitly admits its relevance to one who is remembered to have lived and worked in the Lake Region.
Merely to adjust the context of choice for Jesus is to beg the fundamental question of the quest, namely: which textual memories, of those assembled in his name, recollect Jesus as an identifiable, “historical” figure and which not. If the geographical description of Capernaum and environs that has occupied us in this chapter is to make a significant difference in this regard, that is, to an historical description of Jesus, it needs to address this exegetical question. Granted the shift in geographical terrain, in other words, with all the local detail which this implies, the primary issue of our concern going forward is how we shift our exegetical focus accordingly.

**Conclusion**

If there is every reason to think Jesus in Capernaum and environs, then there is every reason to take the peculiarity of the Lake Region of Galilee seriously for the description of Jesus, whether or not my articulation of this place be found convincing in its every detail. It may be, for example, that the diversity of productive opportunity peculiar to the Lake Region deserves more stress than I have given it, or, perhaps, that the constellation of environmental conditions ought to meet with more optimism. But it should be clear, nonetheless, that Capernaum-by-the-sea, as Matthew calls it (4:13), is not Nazareth (by-the-great plain, according to Josephus). Said otherwise, the definite place of Jesus’ “headquarters” (at the bottom of the Rift Valley in a field of vision shared with Hippos and Gadara) is clearly not the place of his reputed home town (which is nestled between the Jezreel and Beth Netofa valleys some 25 km in- and up-land from the lake). Putting Jesus in and around Capernaum implies precisely this sort of concrete and tangible shift in terrain.

In saying this I do not say anything new. It is the methodological implication that deserves attention. For, as Vaage already suggests (2011, 121), it means that the historical description of Jesus, if it is to achieve its object, ought likewise to privilege the geographical
“fringe” and “border region” of the Galilee otherwise known as the Lake Region, and, by extension, the textual memories of the man located precisely there. This is the purpose of Chapter Three.
**Chapter 3**

**Text in Place, Part I: A Preliminary Database**

**Introduction**

Having attempted in Chapters One and Two to decipher what it is that the datum of Capernaum actually does in the discourse of the quest and to elaborate as thickly as possible the material detail which is routinely announced in its name but subsequently forgotten—I mean the sort of geographical data which defines this place by any account but is nonetheless uniformly neglected when it comes to describing its most famous, sometime inhabitant—I turn now in Chapter Three to the exegetical implication of the commonplace with which we began. This is the methodological heart of the project. Granted the scholarly wager that the local place meticulously materialized in the name of Capernaum and environs matters for the quest, how does this routine conviction reshape the textual database from which we finally describe Jesus as an historical figure? That is the challenge of Chapter Three.

It is true, of course, that putting Jesus in and around Capernaum has changed the way the quest addresses the question of context, with more attention dedicated to the eastern so-called “border region” of Lower Galilee than previously (cf. Reed 2000; Crossan and Reed 2001; Freyne 2004; etc.). Jesus scholars understand that the realia of the lake bear upon Jesus in a way that the realia of Qumran, to the south, or Caesarea Maritima, to the west, do not.

The question is whether this geographical concentration has actually changed the way in which the same scholars sort or otherwise test the collected textual memories of Jesus—from which all description of Jesus as an historical (isolable) individual necessarily follows; in other words, whether the conventional wager that place matters, historically, has actually produced a textual effect, just as, for example, the wager that what really matters, historically, are memories
judged “dissimilar,” or memories judged “earliest.” In either of these cases, in the name of the conventional criteria of dissimilarity and multiple attestation, what begins as an historiographical wager—i.e., that this or that characteristic equals “historicity”—issues directly in an exegetical consequence—i.e., that this or that text, because it shares the characteristic in question, also equals “historicity.” In either case, the historiographical wager reshapes the exegetical database from which Jesus is subsequently described.

This is what it would mean for local place to make a significant difference to the discourse, namely, to address the textual footing on which the conversation proceeds from the prior conviction that Jesus’ local place in Capernaum and environs matters to his historical description. Here would be the beginning of a redescription of Jesus which takes seriously the geographical datum on which we all agree, and which takes that datum seriously as a matter of method. But this is precisely what is lacking in the discourse.

To address this blind spot is the purpose of Chapter Three: Granted the scholarly commonplace that Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum, which is to say in the Lake Region of Galilee, how does this conviction affect the way in which we test and otherwise sort the textual memories of the early Jesus tradition? How do we get from a statement of local geography, in other words, on which we all appear to agree, to a textual memory of Jesus, or even more acutely, to a preliminary database on the basis of which we might describe Jesus with some modicum of methodological discipline and scholarly transparency?¹

To be sure, this is a preliminary question. It has to do with where we begin, exegetically, once we have agreed in principle that Capernaum and environs matter to an historical description of Jesus. If it is preliminary, however, it is also pressing. For the fact is, scholars who say

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¹ Crossan (1988, 6) makes the point *apropos* the quest in general: “After a good or even a very good opening section of background there is an immediate jump into some selected Christian text about Jesus. But why precisely that text?” Without answering this question we are left without the means to adjudicate the debate.
Capernaum routinely begin elsewhere in the memories which comprise the Jesus tradition—be it, for example, with the temple incident, the baptism by John, or Jesus’ engagement with Israel’s scriptures. Saying Capernaum, in other words and to repeat, has carried no exegetical implication.

This would not be a problem if there was a way to talk about Jesus as an historical (isolable) figure without a critical appraisal of these documents, that is, if we could rest assured of particular knowledge about the individual Jesus simply by “bumping into” pre-seventy Palestinian phenomena, as per James Charlesworth (1986). But as long as the quest remains the quest of an historical (isolable) individual, “bumping into” background is not a sufficient answer, no matter how religiously particular or geographically local the data be. If and when the quest pursues a description of Jesus as an historical individual, in other words, and not simply a conversation about generic “pre-seventy Palestinian [or even Galilean] phenomena,” it depends upon a reading strategy which prioritizes some textual memories of the individual Jesus over others as more likely pertinent to his historical description. In short, it requires that we sort text,

2 Sanders (1985, 11–12,61): “I have chosen to begin with the temple controversy. . . which offers almost as good a point of entry for the study of Jesus’ intention and his relationship to his contemporaries as would a truly eyewitness account of the trial.”
3 Meier (1994, 7,9): “one of the most certain things we know about Jesus is that he voluntarily submitted himself to John’s baptism for the remission of sins. . . Hence, not to understand the Baptist is not to understand Jesus”; “No matter how much Jesus moved beyond John, he always carried a great deal of his former master with him. In a sense, Jesus never was without John.”
4 Freyne (2004, 22): “Once the immediacy of the Biblical stories for the concerns and difficulties facing Jews in the Greek and Roman periods is recognized, there seems to be little good reason to deny to Jesus, as a reforming prophet endowed with the Spirit, a familiarity and engagement with those stories in whatever form they reached him.” But how do we decide in the first place that Jesus was, for instance, “a reforming prophet endowed with the Spirit?”
5 According to Charlesworth (1986, 224–225), “Jesus research” is emphatically not about Jesus as an historical individual: “Jesus research is not a search for the historical Jesus. It is a response to many stimuli, some deriving from the intracanonical writings, including Paul’s letters, others from the extracanonical documents, others still from amazingly unexpected archaeological discoveries, which are both literary and non-literary,” presumably with the intention of understanding what we can about Jesus by means of his context. But the effect of this “response,” even when it assumes the considerably more helpful perspective of cross-cultural anthropology, as per Pieter Craffert (2008), is typically to reinstate the canonical Christ in the name of history.
which is where the memories of Jesus as an isolable individual are deposited; it depends upon the disciplined isolation of a critical database of textual memories which “count,” historically, in a way in which other textual memories do not, historically. The intention of the present chapter is to articulate a reading strategy to this end, disciplined methodologically by the historiographical wager that Jesus’ place in Capernaum and environs matters.

Three Promising Starts (In the Name of Gerd Theissen)

In this regard, Gerd Theissen’s contribution to the quest is particularly promising. Theissen, of course, is better known as an old-fashioned form critic than as a quester; but his approach to the conversation about Jesus is significant, especially in terms of local place, even if he fails in the end to follow his own advice (cf. Vaage’s discussion of the same, re. Cynicism, in 2008). For my purposes, Theissen poses three promising starts:

1. As a form critic, Theissen makes the point that at least some texts of the Synoptic tradition reflect the “down-to-earth” and “not religious” conditions of lived behaviour.

Take, for instance, the itinerancy hypothesis first announced in his 1973 article, “Wanderradikalismus” (1973 ET 1992). This is Theissen’s famous argument that (a) the ethical radicalism of the sayings tradition is too extreme for a setting in congregational life, (b) that the renunciation of home, family and possessions, in particular, is “absolutely impracticable” where everyday behaviour is at all in view, and, thus, (c) that this ethical outlook must be located, concretely—which is to say historically—elsewhere.

Theissen posits as an alternative *Sitz im Leben* a movement of itinerant radicals (1992, 40):

It is only the person who has left home and possessions, wife and child, who lets the dead bury their dead, and takes the birds and the lilies of the field as his model- it is only a person like this who can consistently preach renunciation of a settled home, a family, possessions and the protection of the law, and his own
defense. It is only in this context that the ethical precepts which match this way of life can be passed on without being unconvincing. This ethic only has a chance on the fringes of society; this is the only real-life situation it can have.

Theissen develops this alternative considerably in his *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung* (1977 ET 1978). In fact, his elaboration goes too far (so Arnal 2000, 67–95 and Vaage 2008). But it is not necessary to agree with Theissen’s explanatory model, which he elaborates in terms of “radical itinerants” and “sedentary sympathizers,” to grant the exegetical issue which he raises, which has to do essentially with the concrete reference of the sayings tradition. As far as I am concerned, the point is not whether or not Theissen’s sociological elaboration holds; the point to notice, at least for my purposes, is Theissen’s impulse to connect texts such as these, and what they claim concretely to be about, with a social reality similarly concrete; in other words, with a *Sitz im Leben* more local than generic. This exegetical sensitivity to “real-life situation” is the first point at which Theissen is instructive.

 Granted, the connection between text and real-life situation is not self-evident. I do not doubt William Arnal’s point (2000, 183–193) that the uprootedness, poverty and loss of status evident in the sayings tradition, in particular, also function as “loci” for other issues of social and cultural identity. But it does not follow that such texts are for this reason entirely rhetorical, which is to say, entirely without reference at all to life (or a life) outside of themselves. As a form critic, Theissen reminds us of this possibility, namely, that at least some texts are underwritten by concrete social realities.

2. As a conventional historian, Theissen also notices that some texts of the Synoptic tradition are also localizable—which means that some texts of the Synoptic tradition, as well as reflecting “real-life situation,” are also marked by local place (esp. 1984; 1985a; 1985b; 1989 ET 1991).
Three texts are especially exemplary in this regard for Theissen, all of them from the Gospel of Mark: the calming of the storm (Mark 4:35-51), the exorcism on the other side (Mark 5:1-20), and the walking on water (Mark 6:45-52). Theissen notices that each of these texts uses language which might be described as parochial—I mean by this vocabulary which is severely restricted, or local, in scope or application.

In particular, each of these texts uses the term θάλασσα (sea) for what is by any other description a λίμνη (lake), and a rather small one at that. Any author who knows the wider world, so the argument goes, who knows the Mediterranean Sea, for example, would apply the latter (i.e., would call the Kinneret a λίμνη or lake). Luke does (5:1, 2; 8:22, 23, 33). So do Josephus (War 2.573; 3.57, 463, 506, 515-516; 4.456) and Pliny (NH 5.71). From the perspective of a world which includes the Mediterranean Sea, the term θάλασσα (sea) simply does not apply to the λίμνη (lake) on the eastern edge of the Galilee.

This being the case, the use of θάλασσα (sea), entirely without embarrassment, in precisely those stories in the Gospel of Mark which are set there, on or around the λίμνη (lake) on the eastern edge of the Galilee, is noteworthy. According to Theissen this peculiar habit—θάλασσα for what anyone who knows better would call a λίμνη—speaks to the local setting within which these memories arise. It marks these three memories in particular (though not exclusively) as local phenomena, whatever else they also are.

Of course, it is conventional by now in Christian tradition to call the Kinneret the “Sea” of Galilee, following the Gospel of Mark. To a certain extent this picks up the Hebrew הים, which the LXX translates more or less consistently with θάλασσα (e.g., for the Sea of Kinnereth: Num 34:11; Josh 12:3; 13:27). In Theissen’s opinion, however, the incongruity in Mark’s Gospel implies as well or in addition a local connection. Namely (1991, 107):

The designation of a lake as a ‘sea’ can be taken as an indication of a limited horizon of life. For small farmers and fisherfolk in Galilee, Lake Gennesaret could simply be ‘the sea.’
The case of the Dead Sea is analogous. Long known by the inhabitants of Judea as a “sea” (for example: Gen 14:3; Deut 3:17; 4:49; Num 34:3, 12; Josh 3:16; 2 Kgs 14:25; Joel 2:20; Ezek 47:18; Zech 14:8; even without further designation, as per 2 Chr 20:2), for most (Greek and Roman) authors of the ancient world, the Dead Sea was explicitly and obviously a lake. Even more to the point, however, as Theissen notes, those who decide to follow the traditional (local) designation (θαλασσα) do so only as an afterthought—as the received name for the desert lake in the Jordan Valley—or with certain reservation—“which some now call a sea.”

In either case, and this is the point, distance tends to resolve the idiosyncrasy of local perspective, such that the obvious (local) incongruity of using θαλασσα for a λιμνη is avoided or resolved at a certain remove, notwithstanding the consequent loss of local perspective, or knowledge. This is the same tendency that sees the particular lived reality of Capernaum obscured by the category of Galilee, for instance, or the peculiar cultural imprint of a fishing village located more accessibly to “the other side” than to the Galilean heartland nonetheless branded “Jewish,” without remainder. The price, again, is the loss of that perspective which might be called local, or particular, which seems incongruous or parochial from the outside, and thus in need of apology, but which in reality has everything to do with the complications and exceptional circumstances of life lived inside, in this or that local place.

The three texts in the Gospel of Mark which use θαλασσα for what is clearly a λιμνη to anyone with experience of the outside world reflect by this incongruity a lived (local) reality, one


7 Thus, according to Thiessen (1991, 107): Pompeius Trogus; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.6.2; Pausanius *Descriprio Graeciae* 5.7.4-5; Aelius Aristides *Oratio* 36.82.88; Galen *De simplicium Medicamentorum Temperamentis ac Factulatibus* 4.20; and Dio Chrysostom *Vita Dionis* 2.317. Aristotle (*Meteorologica* 1.13.351a) likewise speaks of a lake (λιμνη) in the Caucasus “which the inhabitants call a sea,” but which he, evidently, knows to be otherwise.
which applies in the locally limited world oriented around the lake, and really only there. They admit thereby their local embededness.

Theissen calls this sort of local perspective *Lokalkolorit* (local colour); and on this basis he mounts an argument for provenance (1991, 108):

when the three Markan miracle stories (as well as the rest of Mark’s Gospel) speak of the ‘sea’ when they mean the lake of Galilee, we can conclude that these stories were formed in the proximity of that lake. Their tellers live in a world in which the great sea is a faraway phenomenon.

But what is important for present purposes is the more basic point—namely, the exegetical observation that some texts, or aspects of them, are underwritten or imbued not only by lived reality but by lived reality in very concrete, local place, however obscured or otherwise encumbered that particular place proves to be on reflection. Some texts are place-specific. No less than fishing implements or harbours, they serve as artifacts of lived experience in definite place. This is the second point on which Theissen is instructive. He notices the way in which some texts in the Synoptic tradition (e.g., Mark’s “sea” stories) are constituted (marked) by local place and he registers the importance of these indications for the historical enterprise.

3. Not surprisingly, Theissen prioritizes precisely this sort of localizable data for an historical description of Jesus (1996 ET 1998 and 1997 ET 2002). This is the point at which his exegetical instinct promises a return in terms of the quest.

In his own words (2002, 182):

every historical figure is to be understood fundamentally within the context of his or her world. Anything else would be an unhistorical procedure.

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Applied to the quest, this means (2002, 211):

Historical Jesus study that perceives Jesus as a historical figure in his own time begins with his Jewish and Galilean world of the first century.

Or, to say it more precisely (2002, 246):

How else can a fictitious figure be distinguished from a historical personage except by localizing him in a particular time and place and relating him to other historical figures?

Here is the announcement, as clearly articulated as we could hope to find it, that local place matters to the way in which we describe the historical Jesus. How else is the historical to be distinguished from the fictional except by the concrete parameters of specific time and particular place, the latter being precisely what it takes to constitute an “historical” figure?

The implication for the quest is straightforward: To describe Jesus historically is to begin with specific time and particular place. That is what it means to be historical, according to Theissen, whatever else is also implied. As a result, an historical description of Jesus which is worthy of the name will begin with data that address the fundamental questions of when and where.

It only follows logically, then, from Theissen’s construction of the historical enterprise, that a properly historical description of Jesus will begin with localizable data—textual memories which can be located in specific time and particular place—which means, at least in part, texts of the sort Theissen has already identified in the name of Lokalkolorit. To begin here, with text in local place, is simply good history, in Theissen’s opinion (1991, 9), which makes him completely conventional, at least in this regard.

The problem is that Theissen does not take his own announcement seriously enough. Having articulated methodologically the importance of the more local data in the Jesus tradition to an historical description of the man, he privileges instead a religious construct. To wit (2002, 212):
What we know of Jesus as a whole must allow him to be recognized within his contemporary Jewish context and must be compatible with the Christian (canonical and noncanonical) history of his effects.

This is hard to dispute as a statement of historiographical intent, but only or primarily because it is so general; it is hardly sufficient as an historical description of Jesus, especially if and when it is specific time and local place which actually distinguish the historical personage from the fictitious figure, as Theissen himself makes plain. “Christian history” and “Jewish context” are hardly specific enough to fit the historical bill, in other words, though they are both interesting for any number of other reasons in terms of religious context.

To be fair, Theissen does attempt on occasion to narrow Jesus’ religious context in time and place. Thus, what matters most turns out to be Judaism “of the first half of the first century in Galilee” (2002, 211). But this rhetorical distinction is nowhere filled with material content. In fact, it is not at all clear what “the first half of the first century in Galilee” finally brings to Theissen’s description of Judaism, which remains entirely ideal—a matter of Shabbat, kashruth, and temple cult ostensibly—no matter in Jerusalem or Galilee.

In the end, what begins with the promise of old-fashioned attention to concrete, local place ends up, when it comes to Jesus, in another essentialist and atopical statement of religious identity, little different in this regard from Sanders’ alternative, for instance. It is not that such a statement is necessarily wrong; when the question is historical description, as Theissen defines it for us, it is simply insufficient.

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9 As per Dale Allison in reply (2011, 8): “No one would deny that a reconstructed Jesus should be plausible within his Galilean environment and not look too much like a Christian.”

10 Not surprisingly, against this monolithic concept Theissen (2002, 180–181) would have Jesus “evoke conflict” and otherwise “express a fundamental skepticism”. This is even more patent in Theissen’s Jesus book (1998, 367): vis-à-vis Mark 7:15, for instance, and the issue of purity, “Jesus was and remained a Jew. . . But he was a radical Jew.” Here is nicely embodied something of Theissen’s latent concern with religious identity—precisely the sort of (Orientalist) tendency which Crossley (2008, 173–194) otherwise interrogates so incisively.
A Reading Strategy (In the Name of Local Place)

Precisely because he goes so far, but only so far, Theissen is an instructive sponsor. He establishes the conditions for what follows, in other words, even as he fails to pursue them in the end. He alerts us exegetically to the local valence of text, the Gospel of Mark in particular. He underlines the importance of this kind of data for the sort of description which claims itself to be historical. And he announces the methodological implication vis-à-vis the historical description of Jesus—namely, that we privilege text in particular time and local place as more likely pertinent to his description than text out of time and place.

This is simply good history, in Theissen’s opinion, history being a matter of particular time and place—someone, sometime, somewhere, in particular. In terms of the quest, however, Theissen’s intuition is also the start of a reading strategy more attuned to text in local place. Brought to bear on the historical description of Jesus, in other words, Theissen’s intuition means quite simply that those materials which are marked geographically by the definite place where scholarship otherwise agrees Jesus lived and worked and deposited whatever legacy he left behind will be more likely pertinent to an historical description of the man than those which pertain simply anywhere and everywhere, all other things being equal. In terms of method, this means beginning with those texts thus indicated or marked, that is, by the proper names and/or regional perspectives of the Lake Region of Capernaum and environs.

To be clear, this is a statement of methodological discipline. I do not imagine that every text marked by the Lake Region is for that reason alone evidence of the historical Jesus, any more than those who follow the logic of multiple attestation or dissimilarity imagine that every text which meets their criterion is necessarily evidence of the historical Jesus. As Ben Meyer (1979, 86) notes: “no factor proposed by the critics as a ‘criterion’ is invariably requisite to the inference of historicity. . . What is really at stake. . . is not what is uniquely sufficient and so
invariably necessary to establish historicity but rather what tends to make historicity more likely than non-historicity.

To repeat, the point is one of method—namely, that we define the textual database with which we begin, from which we decide subsequently what might be said historically about Jesus and what not, according to the prior conviction that historical description is a function of local place no less than it is a matter of specific time. If material that is closest chronologically is more likely historical, in other words, and for this reason a priori deserves a hearing, the same applies to material geographically closest, that is, material in local place.

This is Theissen’s historiographical contention. In Meyer’s terms, it is what makes historicity more likely than non-historicity. As long as we agree with this, those textual materials which are marked by the proper names and/or regional perspectives of the Lake Region (which is the local place we all agree that Jesus belongs) deserve our attention.

This is a point which John Dominic Crossan underlines helpfully in the opening pages of his Jesus book (1991)—with one important difference. Crossan proceeds on the historiographical wager that what matters historically are the earliest traditions, i.e., what matters is chronology. He reasons that the way to define the preliminary database from which to describe Jesus will be stratigraphically (according to the indicators of specific time), with the result that the material considered most pertinent in his Jesus book is the earliest stratum of the corpus and, within that, especially those materials which are multiply attested, which means, by Crossan’s logic, 

11 According to Crossan (1991, 427–429): Paul’s letters (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians and Romans), the Gospel of Thomas, the Egerton Gospel, P. Vindobondensis Greek 2325 (the Fayum Fragment), P. Oxyrhynchus 1224, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Sayings Gospel Q, a miracles collection embedded in Mark and John, an apocalyptic “scenario” shared by the Didache and Matthew 24 and the Cross Gospel.
even earlier. This is how Crossan decides where to begin, textually.

The virtue of this procedure, as Kloppenborg (2011, 272–275) notes, is that it controls the ingenuity and disciplines the imagination of the historian. It requires Crossan to face materials which are numerically well-attested (and thus logically early) quite apart from any prior construction of Jesus, however possible (or not) this sort of methodological discipline turns out to be in practice.

If it disciplines his textual point of departure, however, Crossan’s historiographical wager does not predetermine his conclusion. In other words, the methodological isolation of a preliminary database of textual materials deemed “earliest” does not actually decide the question of authenticity. This is the point of method where Crossan’s reading strategy is instructive. Facing materials which are marked chronologically as a matter of methodological discipline does not mean accepting them at face value. In Crossan’s words (2011, 162): “Earliest means earliest, no more and no less.” It simply declares what is more likely relevant to an historical description.

Take, for example, the three best attested motifs in the first stratum of Crossan’s database (Appendix 1; 1991, 434–450;): “Mission and Message,” “Jesus’ Apocalyptic Return” and “Bread and Fish.” According to Crossan’s methodological principle, these are the materials most likely pertinent to an historical description of Jesus. They are earliest; thus they form part of his preliminary database.

On further consideration, however, they are judged, respectively, “from Jesus himself,” “from the later Jesus tradition,” and somewhere in between (1991, 434–435). In terms of method, ————————————————————

12 Thus explicitly (Crossan 1991, xxxii-xxxiii): “Something found in at least two independent sources from the primary stratum cannot have been created by either of them. . . Plural attestation in the first stratum pushes the trajectory back as far as it can go with at least formal objectivity.” Reviewers of Crossan’s project disagree on the particulars, but on the principle that the material which is earliest (or closest chronologically) really does matter most, commentators from N. T. Wright (1996, 44–65) to Dale Allison (1998, 10–33) to Christopher Tuckett (1999) have tended to agree. To this extent, in other words, Crossan has made his case.
in other words, “earliest,” for Crossan, or chronologically closest, does not mean *ipso facto* authentic. It simply indicates which materials of the Jesus corpus are more likely to be pertinent—a preliminary database or initial textual site from which to decide on further consideration, with more careful spade work, what might or might not be said, historically, about the person Jesus.  

13 This is also the methodological intent of reading for local place.

**Exegetical Implications (In the Name of Mark)**

When we sort the Jesus tradition analogously, in the interest of those materials geographically closest to the local place where scholarship otherwise is wont to remember Jesus, which means more specifically in the interest of those materials marked by the proper names and regional perspectives of the Valley, the textual terrain of the quest shifts dramatically.

- In the first place, the parables tradition appears notably under-indicated. If anything, in fact, it would seem to be characterized by a concern to avoid attachment to particular place.

  Take, for instance, the special parables of Luke. These are the most elaborate of the canonical parables in terms of character development and plot and thus, at least potentially, the most developed in terms of attachment to place as well. By convention these are also among the parables most closely associated with the historical Jesus.  

14 And the most well known of Luke’s special parables, arguably, of the Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35), does appear to be a function of

13 Thus “the book’s basic database” in Appendix 1 (1991, 434–450) is nonetheless marked as Crossan says (1991, 434) “according as I judge them to be from the historical Jesus or from the later Jesus tradition.”

particular place, namely, of the particular 20 km descent “from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10:30) which Strabo (Geog 16.2.40) makes a haunt of “robbers” and “tyrants” (though it may be that he has in view the imposing presence of Herod himself in the form of the twin fortresses at the road’s entrance to Jericho) and Josephus (War 2.8.4) depicts as particularly dangerous (which would have meant something in an Empire in which interfectus a latronibus—killed by bandits—became a formulaic epitaph) (Shaw 1984, 10).

Still, I would suggest that the parable of the Samaritan is exceptional. Quite in contrast, Luke’s special parables are more characteristically set in country estates (12:16-21; 13:6-9; 15:11-32; 16:1-8), wealthy households (12:35-40; 14:16-24; 16:19-31), villages (11:5-8; 15:8-9) and “certain” cities (18:2-8; 19:11-27). Better said, because each of these turns out to be more generically representative than specifically singular, Luke’s parables are more characteristically set in the typical country estate, the generic household and the average village, or the city, without specification. None of these places is any more articulated or further refined than this. None is named, for instance, or otherwise made contingent on local knowledge. The household is the place of masters and middle men and slaves. The village is the scene of status display and dispute, albeit sometimes with unexpected results. The city denotes the discourse of power and privilege and occasionally its ideological undoing.¹⁵

I can agree with William Herzog (1994) that the parables coincide, more or less, with the political economy of first century CE Galilee. But this is not saying very much at all if and when

¹⁵ This accounts for the popularity of Luke’s special parables, for instance in Herzog (1994), Gowler (2000) or Bailey (1976; 1980; 2008): they evoke the ideological discourse of honour and shame, for example, or status display or reciprocity or retaliatory violence so incisively and interrogate it so creatively that their apparent relevance and even “universal appeal” (Hultgren 2000, 11) goes almost without saying.
the same applies, to one degree or another, anywhere and everywhere in the eastern Empire.\textsuperscript{16}

That is the point. The fact that the parables trade in the common currency of this world makes them an instructive site of social scientific inquiry; but this is also what makes them difficult as particular evidence of the Lake Region and its often resident Jesus.

To be sure, the parable tradition is not for this reason inauthentic. It is simply not the best place to begin, from a geographic perspective, when the indices that matter are the proper names and/or regional perspectives of the Valley. Said otherwise, the parables are simply more interested in socio-economic location than they are in geographic place; or as Moxnes has it (2003b, 17), they are simply more concerned with “typical places” by which to inscribe what turns out to be an atypical ideology.

\textbullet{} From the perspective of local place, Q is a more likely site of inquiry. After all, the proper names of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum focus attention on the north shore of the lake, at least by archaeological convention. What is more, these three villages stand at odds with the more storied proper names that surface in the document—Israel (7:9, 22:30), Sodom (10:12), Tyre (10:13, 14), Sidon (10:13, 14), Nineveh (11:32) and Jerusalem (13:34)—with Capernaum, in particular, singled out for special critique (10:12, 13-15), even compared to Chorazin and Bethsaida. Elsewhere in Q (7:1; Jesus’ encounter with the \textit{ἐκατόνταρχος}) Capernaum becomes the only explicit setting for an act or saying of Jesus.

These factors have led Jonathan Reed (1995) to make Capernaum the centre of Q’s mental map. John Kloppenborg (2000, 174) finds a similar focus in the progression of Q’s geographical markers from the “region/circuit of the Jordan” in 3:3a, to the wilderness in 4:1, to

\textend{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{16} But this is the case by definition when the macrosociological models of Gerhard Lenski (1966), on “agrarian societies,” and John Kautsky (1982), on “traditional aristocratic empires,” are allowed to set the terms of inquiry, as they do for Herzog. Craig Keener (2009, 194) is only the most recent to admit as much when he allows that what “fits” rural life in Galilee also “fits” rural life throughout the Empire.
“Nazara” in 4:16, and finally to Capernaum in 7:1, where attention remains at least until the town’s explicit rebuke in 10:15.

Yet Capernaum also remains discursively nondescript in Q, which means that when Capernaum figures in Q, it figures in passing: as the setting for a discourse on authority (in 7:1ff), or a negative example of what Q calls elsewhere “this generation.”\(^\text{17}\) This does not actually leave Q without local resonance. As Kloppenborg argues (2000, 214–261), the document clearly attests certain typical features of first century CE Galilee.\(^\text{18}\) But for this reason alone it is also not obviously evidence of the historical person of Jesus, at least not from a geographical point of view.

• By comparison, Mark’s textual terrain is littered with the traces of the Lake Region. In Mark 1-8 alone we are met, by proper name, with the minor fishing villages of Capernaum (1:21; 2:1), Gennesaret (6:53) and Bethsaida (6:45; 8:22), on the lake’s north shore (by archaeological convention); the Decapolis to the east (5:20; 7:31)—which means at least the cities of Hippos (directly across the lake from Tiberias) and Gadara (atop the escarpment overlooking the southeast corner of the lake), though instead of these it is Gerasa, or rather “the region of the Gerasenes,” that finds explicit mention (5:1); and a place on the western shoreline, presumably, which the Gospel of Mark (and only the Gospel of Mark) knows as Dalmanoutha (8:10).

\(^\text{17}\) The same applies to Q’s double reference to the “sea.” In 17:2 it is a place of destruction—better to be destroyed by means of the sea than to cause trouble for Q’s “little ones”—and in 17:6 it becomes witness to the sort of faith that defies natural expectation. In either case the language is so symbolic as to completely obscure any reference to the small lake on the eastern edge of the Galilee. Luke’s reception of these verses suggests as much: where his sources have in mind the material reality of the Kinneret, Luke consistently prefers the more accurate λίμνη (thus, for instance, Luke 5:1-2, 8:22-25; 8:33); but in Luke 17:2 and 6 (parr. Q 17:2,6), and only in Luke 17:2 and 6, he retains the mythical θάλασσα. This is proverbial trope, not local place.

\(^\text{18}\) By Kloppenborg’s account (2000, 215–255), these include especially a population “largely” or “essentially” Israelite (with Aviam 1993; 2004b, 9–21; 2007; and Chancey 2009), an ambivalent attitude toward Temple and (at least Judean) Torah (pace Freyne 1981; 1988b), and a broadly based resistance to the political and economic ethos represented in the urban centres of Sepphoris and Tiberias (with Arnal 2000).
In Mark 4-8, in particular, we encounter precisely the sort of regional perspective which Theissen otherwise signals in the name of *Lokalkolorit*. I mean by this the striking detail of a small lake which is labeled incongruously a “sea” fully nine times in these four chapters and, in addition, is evidently well traveled in Mark 4-8 (by “other boats” in 4:36) and actually “crossed” so routinely (five times: 4:35//5:1; 5:21; 6:45//6:53; 8:10; 8:13) that the reasons for doing so go without saying (only the “crossings” in 4:35/5:1 and 6:45 warrant particular comment). The description in these chapters (contrast Mark 1-3) of a shoreline occasionally contested for economic and/or political reasons (in 5:10 and 17) but more often easily accessible (despite the steep mountainside in the east, in 5:11 and 13) and readily traversed by the inhabitants of “the city” (5:14), in the east, which needs no proper name, and the villages “round about” (6:36), speaks just as clearly to the geographical reality of the Valley.

If we can assume the Two Document Hypothesis, for a moment, the degree to which this perspective disappears in Matthew and Luke’s deployments of the same material is striking. In Matthew 8 and 9, for instance, the cluster of stories which is structured in Mark by the first two lake crossings (Mark 4:35-5:43) is broken apart. Six additional miracle stories are introduced (including material derived from Mark 1:29-30, 40-45; 2:1-12; and Q 7:1-10). Didactic material is interspersed (on discipleship: 8:18-22; 9:9; on table fellowship: 9:10-13; and on fasting, 9:14-17); and the elaborated unit is organized thematically into a series of triads (three healing stories; three responses from onlookers; three comments on faith). In all of this, Matthew seems primarily concerned to complement Jesus’ teaching, which he has only just presented in Matthew...

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19 So Davies and Allison (1991, 1–4). The first triad contains three healing stories, set explicitly under the rubric of Is 53:4 (Matt 8:17): “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases”. The second triad catalogues the reactions of the onlookers (οἱ ἄνθρωποι ambiguously in 8:27; πᾶσα ἡ πόλις unfavourably in 8:34; and οἱ ἄγαλμα favourably in 9:8). The third triad underlines the issue of faith (9:22, 28, 29; by contrast 9:34).
5-7, and to anticipate Jesus’ subsequent self-revelation to John (in Matt 11:4-6). In any case, the effect is largely to obscure the detail of the local place which structures at least some of his source material.

Matthew’s performance of this material, which is so closely tied to the Lake Region in Mark, is even more telling than the way he has arranged it. In the stilling of the storm (Matt 8:23-27 // Mark 4:35-41), for instance, the interesting notice in Mark 4:36b that “other boats” were also present on the water is replaced with the typical language of discipleship (8:23b: “and the disciples followed him”). The focus effectively shifts from the reality of lake travel to the mental state of the following but little-trusting disciples, as is Matthew’s wont (so also 8:25, 26).

Mark’s wind (α’νεµος; Mark 4:37,39 and 41) is likewise replaced: In Matthew 8:24 it becomes a σεισµός µέγας—literally a great shaking—which elsewhere is used to designate nothing less than the close of the age (Matt 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; compare Matt 27:54 and 28:2). And in 8:26 and 27, it becomes the more abstract “winds” (in the plural), of precisely the sort which symbolically threaten those who hear the words of Jesus already in Matt 7:25 and 27.

In the other sea miracle, the walking on water (Matt 14:22-35 // Mark 6:45-52), Matthew drops Mark’s confusing reference to Bethsaida (Mark 6:45), underlines the symbolism of Jesus’ location on the mountain (ἀναβαίνω and κατ’ Ἰδιαν in 14:23 recall, respectively 5:1-2 and 17:1-8), and idealises both the crisis in which the disciples find themselves, again, (by adding the danger of the waves in 14:24 from 8:24) and their (now appropriate) response of worship (14:33, 35).

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20 The leper is cleansed, 8:1-4; the lame walk, 8:5-13; 9:1-8; the dead are raised, 9:18-26; the blind see, 9:27-31; and the deaf hear, 9:32-34; in fulfilment of Is 29:19; 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:7,18; 61:1; all the more so if Matt 9:27-31 and 32-34 are redactional creations, as Davies and Allison (1991, 133, 138) suggest.

21 So Bornkamm (1963, 55): “Matthew is not only a hander-on of the narrative, but also its oldest exegete, and in fact the first to interpret the journey of the disciples with Jesus in the storm and the stilling of the storm with reference to discipleship, and that means with reference to the little ship of the Church.”
albeit awkwardly, “in the boat”; cf. 2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; contrast Mark 6:52).

Most notably, when Matthew inserts Peter’s attempt to walk to Jesus, he describes the lake not as ή θάλασσα (as per 14:22-27, following Mark) but as τά οδηγά (14:28,29; likewise in 8:32 parr. Mark 5:13). This is a significant indication of Matthew’s own preference. It means that when he is composing freely, at least from his Markan source, he avoids the incongruity which he otherwise accepts from Mark. In a word, in Mark 4-8 the lake is a sea, and worthy of the name; but from Matthew’s perspective, the lake and its waters are simply that.

All of this applies, mutatis mutandis, to Luke, who omits Mark 6:45-52, 53-56, 7:24-30, 31-37, 8:1-10 and 8:22-26 as part of the so-called “great omission” (whether for this reason alone, the obvious repetition in at least Mark 6:45-56 or the less savory elements of 7:31-37 and 8:22-26) and otherwise simply eliminates Mark’s θάλασσα from the story. At any rate, where Mark writes θάλασσα, Luke repeatedly prefers λίμνη (5:1, 2; 8:33). Twice he goes out of his way to avoid the incongruity (in 8:22 and 23 by specifying that it is a λίμνη that is involved) and twice he substitutes the generic οδηγός (8:24,25). In the abstract, θάλασσα is evidently appropriate from Luke’s perspective; thus it is an archetypal place of destruction in 17:2, 6, parallel with τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν in Acts 4:24 and 14:15. Otherwise, however, Luke applies to the inland lake the term which anyone who knows the wider Mediterranean world would.

To be sure, Luke also elaborates Mark’s storm-stilling with precisely the sort of nautical vocabulary one would expect of a sea story—he uses ἀνάγω (in 8:22) in the passive as per Acts 13:13; 16:11; 18:21; 20:3,13; 21:1,2; 27:2,4,12,21; 28:10,11 and πλέω (in 8:23) as per Acts 21:3; 27:2,6,24. But the introduction in Luke vis-à-vis Mark of the sort of vocabulary to be expected in a good sea story simply underlines the more basic point: What is parochial in the miracle stories of Mark 4-8 (θάλασσα for what is obviously and by all other accounts a λίμνη), circumstantial
(noticing the other boats though they play no role whatsoever in the story), or simply mundane (Mark’s wind), is resolved, idealised or otherwise freighted in Matthew and Luke.\footnote{Matthew’s deployment of the miracle stories in Mark ends, tellingly, with 9:33: “and the crowds were amazed and said, ‘Never has anything like this been seen in Israel.’” and 9:34: “But the Pharisees said, ‘By the ruler of demons he casts out the demons.” Luke’s interest also has more to do with the history of salvation than it does with any particular locale: Jesus spends most of his time in Luke on the road toward Jerusalem, which itself is significant primarily as the place from which salvation spreads, in Acts, to the ends of the earth. See Fitzmyer (1981, 164–171).}

To be sure, Mark’s landscape is also freighted theologically. Ernst Lohmeyer (1936) and R. H. Lightfoot (1938) first announce this argument on the basis of Mark 14:28 and 16:7, which they think establish a clear distinction between Jerusalem (which Jesus decisively departs) and Galilee (to which Jesus expects to return in 14:28; where the disciples can expect to see him again in 16:7). The former is allegedly the place of sin and death, for the Gospel, and the latter is the “holy land” of eschatological fulfillment (Lohmeyer 1936, 13, 29, 31, 33).\footnote{Although Matthew evidently understands Mark 16:7 to imply the appearance of the risen Jesus (as per 28:16-20), Lohmeyer thinks Mark intends the site of the parousia. Lohmeyer (1936, 11–12) allows that the vocabulary of 16:7 is used elsewhere on occasion to denote an appearance of the risen Jesus (1 Cor 9:1; John 20:18,25); but argues that the particular expression- ὄψεσθε αὐτόν- with the verb (ὁράω) in the future active indicative is so consistently associated with the parousia, in Mark (13:26; 14:62) and beyond (John 16:16; 1 John 3:2; Rev 1:7), as to be something of a technical designation. Thus, like the Testament of Zebulun 9:8, Mark 16:7 looks forward to the eschatological parousia, “only it is no longer the parousia of God, but of Jesus, and it happens not in Jerusalem, but in Galilee.”}

When Lohmeyer and Lightfoot read the rest of Mark’s Gospel through this lens, they find Galilee immediately and often (always?) set apart: It is there that Jesus first announces the coming near of the eschatological Kingdom (1:14-15) and there that he establishes a following (1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:7-13). Galilee is the place where Jesus’ true identity as Son of Man is made known, on the argument that the transfiguration occurs “in the remote north of Galilee” (Lightfoot 1938, 122), and, according to Loymeyer and Lightfoot, Galilee is the only place where Jesus is explicitly said to preach. All of this makes Galilee something of a “\textit{terra christiana},” in
Lohmeyer’s opinion (1936, 28), namely, a place almost entirely symbolic of the Christian movement; Jerusalem, of course, becomes Christianity’s stereotyped opponent.24

Willi Marxsen (1956 ET 1969) is responsible for rooting this assessment more explicitly in Mark’s redactional program—by drawing attention in particular to Mark’s deployment of the proper name of Galilee. Twelve times this name occurs in Mark’s Gospel (1:9, 14, 16, 28, 39; 3:7; 6:21; 7:31; 9:30; 14:28; 15:41; 16:7; not including the designation of Peter as “Galilean” in 14:70; 1:16 and 7:31 qualify τὴν θαλασσαν; and all but two of these (6:21; 15:41) Marxsen thinks redactional. In other words, according to Marxsen (1969, 64), it is Mark who makes Galilee the place of Jesus (in 1:9), as he makes the wilderness the place of the Baptist (in 1:4), Mark who ensures that the paradigmatic announcement of the Kingdom coincides with Jesus’ re-entry into Galilee (1:14-15), and Mark who locates Jesus’ community of followers explicitly in Galilee (in 1:16 and, proleptically, in 3:7).

Even when Mark’s tradition seems to point in the opposite direction, Marxsen finds Mark at pains to designate Galilee as the special sphere of Jesus’ activity. Thus, for instance, 1:28 and 38 seem to Marxsen “to open wide the doors of Jesus’ ministry” (1969, 62), that is, more or less explicitly to “the surrounding region,” “elsewhere.” Significantly, in Marxsen’s opinion, Mark constrains the implication by qualifying both verses in the name of Galilee: that Jesus’ fame spreads everywhere (in 1:28; compare Luke 4:37), for instance, means actually “the whole

24 Thus even the resistance Jesus meets in Galilee is uniformly inspired “from Jerusalem” (on the strength of Mark 3:22 and 7:1). So Lightfoot (1938, 124–125), in conclusion: “Galilee and Jerusalem therefore stand in opposition to each other, as the story of the gospel runs in St. Mark. The despised and more or less outlawed Galilee is shewn (sic) to have been chosen by God as the seat of the gospel and of the revelation of the Son of man, while the sacred city of Jerusalem, home of Jewish (sic) piety and patriotism, has become the centre of relentless hostility and sin. Galilee is the sphere of revelation, Jerusalem the scene only of rejection. Galilee is the scene of the beginning and middle of the Lord’s ministry; Jerusalem only of its end.” But neither Lohmeyer nor Lightfoot goes so far as to say that Galilee is for Mark simply a rhetorical convention.
surrounding region of Galilee”; that he intends to preach “elsewhere” (in 1:38) is likewise immediately limited in 1:39 to “all Galilee.”

Marxsen (1969, 70) explains the strained itinerary in 7:31 similarly: Mark has forced traditional material (including the proper names Tyre, Sidon and Decapolis) into his chosen framework, which demands that Galilee remain Jesus’ home place. It only stands to reason, in the end, that Mark would also redirect his audience’s attention from Jerusalem back to Galilee as the privileged sphere of revelation (14:28 and especially 16:7).25

This seems to me an important assessment of the Gospel, as far as it goes. Günter Stemberger (1974, 434) thinks Marxsen is too confident regarding the redactional origin of Galilee in 1:9, 14 and 16. He also denies any special emphasis on Galilee in 1:28, which in his opinion simply makes Mark’s story “more concrete” (1974, 432), in 7:31, which he thinks serves merely to accent the Sea, not Galilee per se, and in 9:30, which he concludes does nothing to emphasize Galilee over Jerusalem (1974, 433). But even Stemberger (1974, 432–433) allows that Mark has used Galilee to construct both the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (especially in 1:39) and its end (in 14:28 and 16:7, both of which he admits were “probably inserted” by the Evangelist).

While he is right to be suspicious of too stereotyped an opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem, even Stemberger cannot avoid the obvious, in other words, which is that the Gospel’s geographical framework, in broad strokes, serves its theological intent. Marxsen may exaggerate the weight which Mark lays on Galilee, but it is difficult to deny outright the structural significance of this place to Mark’s story, especially by contrast with Luke’s narrative, for

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25 Pace Lohmeyer and Lightfoot, Marxsen (1969, 75–92) thinks that both 14:28 and 16:7 reflect the hand of the Markan redactor.
instance, where Galilee is but the beginning of a journey to Jerusalem and beyond. Galilee is part of Mark’s theological landscape; to this extent, the critical reading of Mark is indispensable.

Still, it is not at all clear that what applies so evidently in the name of Galilee at the Gospel’s beginning and end also applies to the more local place names collected in between. To be sure, Marxsen’s point holds in Mark 1-3 and Mark 11-16: Galilee is closely connected with the introduction of Jesus in 1:9, whether or not the name is actually redactional there, and it remains the consistent locale of Jesus’ subsequent activity in 1:14, 16, 28 and 39, with no apparent interest in any more specific detail, though Capernaum emerges, nonetheless, as the more local node of Jesus’ activity (twice by name: 1:21; 2:1; more often implicitly: 1:33; 2:15; 3:1,19). At the Gospel’s climax, of course, “Galilee” signals both a better time in Jesus’ life (15:41) and his return, of sorts, “as he told you” (14:28; 16:7).

Between introduction and climax, however, even before the Jerusalem narrative begins in Mark 11, the proper name of Galilee disappears almost entirely but for 6:21 where it functions to clarify Herod’s guest list (τοῖς πρῶτοις τῆς Ἰαλιλαίας), 7:31 where it names the lake (εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Ἰαλιλαίας), and 9:30 where it is simply in between the villages of Caesarea Philippi (8:27) in the north and the region of Judea and Jerusalem (10:1; 11:1) to the south. What was from the start quite emphatically the principal site of Jesus’ activity, in other words, and in the end comes to embody the hope of the disciples, is remarkably absent in between. In its place, in between, and especially in Mark 4-8, the Gospel is characterized by a different geographical

26 So especially Lightfoot (1938, 143): “Whereas in St. Mark and to some extent also in St. Matthew Galilee is the beginning and end, as the sphere of revelation, and Judea and Jerusalem are as it were only a dark passage which must be traversed before the end is reached, for St. Luke on the other hand Galilee is only the beginning; Jerusalem is the goal and the culminating scene of the Lord’s activity.” In Luke, Jesus departs Galilee in 9:51, never to return (even post-mortem). The progression in Luke 23:5 (“from Galilee even to this place [i.e., Jerusalem]”) and Acts 10:36-38 seems paradigmatic of Luke’s interest.

27 Mark 1:35-39 seems positioned precisely to extricate Jesus from an implicit and/or underlying association with Capernaum in favour of a ministry of preaching intended for “all Galilee.”
imprint—namely, a concentration of more local place names. What is more, unlike Galilee, these local place names play no obvious role in the Gospel’s theological architecture.

Take, for example, Dalmanoutha, in Mark 8:10, which hardly embodies Mark’s interest in “all of Galilee” (as per 1:28,39), not least because no one seems to know exactly where it was; or Gennesaret (6:53), which only creates a narrative problem in the Gospel (compare Jesus’ instruction in 6:45; Matthew 14:22 simply omits mention of Bethsaida as the original destination). Neither of these peculiar place names is strategically placed in the Gospel, other than occurring before the Jerusalem narrative (Mark 11-16) shifts the scene from the north to the south, and neither supports the Gospel’s theological structure or moves its plot forward in any overt manner. It is not even clear that Mark always knows exactly where each of these places is. This makes it especially difficult to imagine that he has added them purposefully in the interest of his literary or theological design.

To be sure, Bethsaida is marked twice as “the other side” (6:45; 8:22a following 8:13)—which some have taken to signal Jesus’ passage into gentile territory (as per especially Kelber 1974 and Myers 1988). The problem is that the same phrase (εἰς τὸ πέραν) has already marked Jesus’ return to the western shore in 5:21 to what is evidently a Jewish community. And there is nothing in the only narrative that actually takes place in Bethsaida (8:22b-26) to suggest a Gentile association, compared, for instance, to the peculiar and, by most accounts, peculiarly “Gentile”

28 The only attempt I know of to make Dalmanoutha significant is Andreas Bedebender’s suggestion (2000) that Mark intends it symbolically (as something like “Doubts-City”) in order to characterize the Pharisees in the pericope that immediately ensues (8:11-13). Matthew 15:39 substitutes “the region of Magadan” for the district of Dalmanoutha (Sinaiticus; Vaticanus; Bezae), but this is no clearer, unless Magadan is to be identified with Magdala/Tarichaea, as per a number of textual variants (Ephraemi; Washington; Regius; Koridethi; the Lake group; the Ferrar group; the Majority text; etc.)
language and livelihood encountered in Mark 5:1-20. Even Capernaum, which is so clearly associated in Mark’s programmatic first chapter with the beginnings of Jesus’ activity (1:21, 29, 33; 2:1), and perhaps for that reason not mentioned at all in Mark 4-8, serves more to interrupt Mark’s summarizing interest in “all Galilee” (in 1:14, 28 and 39) than it does to extend or to embody it.

In this regard, the Gospel of John supplies an interesting parallel. According to C. H. Dodd (1963, 233–247), at any rate, the local place names in John (for instance: Capernaum, 2:12; Aenon-by-Salim, 3:23; Ephraim, 11:54) stand no less “undigested” vis-à-vis the logical development of the Gospel than those we encounter in Mark. In fact, Aenon-by-Salim and Ephraim are just as obscure, geographically, as Dalmanoutha, in Mark, and arguably as aloof to the design of the Gospel.

Granted, Dodd’s explanation of these geographical “scraps” leaves something to be desired. He thinks they attest a more original tradition concerned to record in “bald outline” the topographical trajectory of Jesus’ ministry and associated with the reputed circle of disciples in Judea and Jerusalem (re. John 7:1-9) and perhaps even with an early Passion narrative. Nonetheless, Dodd’s exegetical observation (1963, 243) regarding the local place names in the Gospel of John underlines the situation as I find it in Mark 4-8:

The names have no particular interest in themselves; there seems to be no discernible reason why they should have been introduced except that they came down as an integral part of an historical tradition, and were preserved as such.

29 The title with which the demoniac addresses Jesus (υιος του θεου του ψιτου) echoes the typical language of Gentiles in the LXX (cf. Gen 14:18-20; Num 24:16; Is 14:14; Dan 3:26,42). It is precisely the way an inscription in Gerasa addresses Zeus (Kraeling 1938, 373–374; cf. Marcus 2000, 343 and Yarbro Collins 2007, 268). That the citizens maintain a herd of pigs is generally enough to suggest a Gentile setting.

30 In 1:28, Mark is at pains to demonstrate the reach of Jesus’ fame beyond Capernaum. The entire episode in 1:35-39, or at least the Markan Jesus’ reply in v 38 and the implication in v 39, seems designed to move Jesus out of Capernaum, programatically, in favour of a ministry “throughout all Galilee.”
Obviously the same cannot be said of Galilee and Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark, which are place names clearly freighted, theologically, or even of Tyre and Sidon (7:31), which appear in Mark 4-8 but only after Mark has earlier and rather schematically numbered them among the places from which the crowds typically come to Jesus (in 3:8; together with Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea and “beyond the Jordan”; cf. Mark 1:5-6). But it should be clear by now that what applies to Galilee and Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark is in no way a sufficient explanation of the Gospel’s geographical data.

In other words, and to sum up: I suggest that Mark’s Gospel contains at least two different kinds of geographical notice—the programmatic and the particular. Not only that, but we have barely begun to explain the latter, even when we grant the usual assessment of Mark’s theological landscape, which I do. Marxsen would agree, in fact, and Karl Ludwig Schmidt (1919) as well, who is remembered for his devastating critique of Mark’s geographical “framework” but admits quite explicitly that the same does not apply everywhere in the Gospel without qualification.\(^{31}\)

Marxsen has occasionally been taken to sponsor an entirely mythical reading of the Gospel’s geography. Werner Kelber (1974), for instance, makes much of Galilee’s theological potential: ““all of Galilee,” he concludes (1974, 63), “is where Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians live together in the newness of the Kingdom.” But even the lake, which is particularly important for Kelber, is important in the end primarily as a theological symbol: its repeated crossing allegedly dramatizes the ethnic \textit{rapprochement} of (Jewish) west and (Gentile) east in the name of Jesus’ newly inclusive Kingdom.

The problem is that Kelber’s reading presupposes both that the lake was experienced as a barrier—something which the to-ing and fro-ing in Mark 4-8 alone makes extremely doubtful, to

\(^{31}\) For instance, Schmidt 1919, 209 (cited in Marxsen 1969, 72): “Topographical notices, which casually appear in the individual narratives, cannot be the invention of the evangelist.”
say nothing of the evidence of Josephus’ experience in the Valley—and that the crossing of the lake in Mark is sufficiently elaborated to carry the symbolic weight assigned it—which is simply not the case. Kelber’s “crossing motif,” which he finds signalled linguistically in Mark’s narrative with εἰς τὸ πέραν (4:35; 5:1; 6:45; 8:13) and/or διαπεράσαντες (6:53) actually leaves him with Gennesaret and Dalmanoutha on the eastern shore and Bethsaida on the west—which is to say, unable to account for the particularity of Mark’s geography.32

Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (1984; 1986) fares no better in this regard. Taking Marxsen’s reading of Galilee to the extreme, she makes of the Gospel’s topography in its entirety a mythological schema which reduces eventually to the basic opposition of “promise” and “threat,” whatever this means exactly. Heaven and earth inscribe (“concretize”) this polarity in the Gospel, as do land and sea; and Jesus mediates it—re-establishing communication between heaven and earth, for instance, and treating the sea as if it were land. In his person, threat becomes promise (1984, 377; 1986, 101): “The divine promise of security and the threat of human danger meet in Jesus and are transformed.”

Significantly, however, Struthers Malbon has nothing to say about the concrete geography assumed within the Gospel—her point of reference is the narrative itself, or, at best, the “system of relationships” which underlies it. But this means that the lake once again (and once again without argument) plays the role of barrier, a symbol of “traditional limits” (1986, 76–79, 99–101), while the local place names in Mark 4-8 simply do not figure. In fact, they appear to matter in Struthers Malbon’s reading only insofar as they connote more representative (“mythic”) categories: “Jewish homeland” for those which belong inside of Galilee, and “foreign lands” for those which belong without (Figs. 15-16 1986, 153–154).33

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33 Ernest Van Eck (1995) and Eric Stewart (2009) offer only slightly less schematic readings of Mark’s narrative presentation.
Clearly this is not Marxsen’s reading. He does not rescind from the historical. Nor does he suggest that Mark has elaborated the geographical data of the Gospel with uniform theological intent. Quite the contrary. In Marxsen’s opinion, Galilee is the exception (1969, 73) within Mark’s landscape. Galilee is the device by which Mark consolidates the tradition; it is the means by which he addresses his own community. But this is very much by contrast to the more particular geographical notices which emerge undigested in the course of the Gospel. According to Marxsen (1969, 93), these are “more or less accidental” and “furnished by the tradition,” which is simply to say, not compassed by the usual (theological) explanation (1969, 64, 68–69, 72–73, 92).

The point is straightforward: even when we grant the usual assessment of Mark’s theological landscape, with Marxsen, for instance, in the name of Galilee, there remains more to say about the residual traces of local geography which we encounter scattered across the terrain of the Gospel—especially the local place names in Mark 4-8. These traces are not accounted for or explained away by the theological assessment of Mark’s landscape, which holds, to a point, but only to a point. In Mark 4-8, where local place names come to the fore as nowhere else in the Gospel and Galilee, by contrast, virtually disappears, the theological assessment falters. This makes Mark 4-8 a promising test case or site of further inquiry.

**Conclusion**

To return to Mark and especially to Mark 4:35-8:26 as an exegetical starting point or preliminary database for the historical description of Jesus does not by any means imply that everything contained therein is necessarily evidence of the historical Jesus. I assume with Vaage (1989, 174) that every text with any possible significance for the historical description of Jesus comes to us as a function of early Christian memory—which means, at least, that any and every text of
interest, whatever the criteria, must still be read critically. A criterion of local geography, if we were to call it that, does not escape this truism any more than the criteria of multiple attestation or embarrassment or even dissimilarity, if we pressed the matter. In every case, and local geography is no different, only further consideration will determine what might be said of Jesus, historically, on the basis of the preliminary database, and what not. This is why it is not a sufficient answer to the question of the historical Jesus simply to list the materials which appear multiply attested or embarrassing or dissimilar.

Local geography, again, is no different. Mark 4:35-8:26 is no more sufficient an answer to the question of the historical Jesus than is Crossan’s first stratum. It is a promising site of further inquiry. Paying attention to the proper names and local perspective of the Lake Region concentrated at this textual site simply indicates more precisely where the testing of the memories we otherwise call the Jesus tradition might profitably begin.

This is not an insignificant result, make no mistake. It represents, at last, the exegetical implication of the wager that Jesus’ local place matters, historically, and the first step toward an historical description which finally takes this datum seriously. As a first step, however, it

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34 Vaage (1989, 174): “Nothing of Jesus got simply ‘transmitted’.” This is not a novel point. Thus: Ernst Käsemann (1964, 18): “History is only accessible to us through tradition and only comprehensible to us through interpretation.” Nils Dahl (1991, 94): “In no case can any distinct separation be achieved between the genuine words of Jesus and the constructions of the community. We do not escape the fact that we know Jesus only as the disciples remembered him.” Morna Hooker (1970–71, 486): “All the material comes to us at the hands of the believing community, and probably it all bears its mark to a lesser or greater extent.” Halvor Moxnes (2003b, 17): “To say that this material will take us back to the earliest layers of the Jesus tradition means that this is as far as we can come. We are not attempting to find the ‘real’ historical Jesus, independent of any context.” James Dunn (2005, 31): “The historical Jesus can be none other than the Jesus-who-made-the-impact-which-is-the-beginning-of-the-Jesus-tradition. We can see Jesus of Nazareth only through the eyes and ears of these first disciples, only through the impressions embodied in the teaching and stories of Jesus that they put unto their enduring forms.” Dale Allison (2010, 436): “Our sources are complex artifacts, the collaboration of, among other things, fallible perceptions, imperfect memories, linguistic conventions, cultural assumptions, and personal and communal agendas. Differentiating an original event or saying from all that has mingled with it and been superimposed upon is often perhaps a bit like trying to separate streams after they have flowed into a river.”
immediately raises the question of how we sift the textual materials presented there, once we have decided to begin with Mark 4:35-8:26, and what we are left with in the end as evidence for the historical Jesus; hence, Chapters Four and Five. The latter presents a reading of Jesus in the thick of his local place. But this requires of us, first, to distinguish in more detail where precisely the materials we have isolated in the name of a preliminary database have to do with the editorial activity we typically assign to Mark and where not. Put too simply, it requires us to peel back the layers of accretion as best we can. To that we turn in Chapter Four.
Chapter 4
Text in Place, Part II: A Critical Database

Introduction

Taking seriously the geographical marker of Capernaum and environs as a primary indicator of possible historicity for an historical description of Jesus requires that we deal with the memories about Jesus collected in Mark 4:35-8:26. That was the argument elaborated in Chapter Three. This is the site in the textual memory of Jesus at which the local place names of the Valley protrude most dramatically (Decapolis (x2); Bethsaida (x2); Gennesaret; and Dalmanoutha; also, possibly, Gadara, viz. Gerasa). It is the site where the textual references to the region are most intensely scattered—traces of a “sea” routinely crossed, for example, and a shoreline readily accessed from east and west alike. When we sort out the Jesus tradition according to these indicators, or survey its terrain according to a geographical criterion, Mark 4:35-8:26 emerges as the most logical place at which to begin a closer analysis, or, to continue the archaeological metaphor, to begin to dig deeper.

Of course there will be other textual sites worthy of exploration. Beginning where we do (opening a test square) does not exclude continuing the dig elsewhere, for other reasons. That is a given. From the perspective of local place, however, which is to say, according to the indicators identified in Chapter Three—place names and the local perspective of the Lake Region—Mark 4:35-8:26 will be the most promising point of departure or test case. In terms of methodological discipline, it provides the most immediate exegetical implication of the historiographical conviction that Jesus’ local place in Capernaum and environs matters.

Let me, however, now change the analogy. Chapter Three provided a preliminary collection of materials (memories) of interest for an historical description of Jesus which takes
place seriously. This collection of materials is the exegetical consequence of the historiographical conviction with which the present project began, namely, that Jesus’ local place matters. It is the textual data that follow from the truism of the quest for the historical Jesus which routinely says Capernaum. Hence, Chapter Three.

But that is not the end of the investigation. The identification and collection of material that takes local place seriously and therefore is more likely pertinent to a description of the historical Jesus is only the beginning. It is preliminary. These materials still need to be assessed as critically as possible for the various projects (motives, interests, and undertakings) which they entail before they can be taken to count as “hard” evidence for an historical description of Jesus. They still need to be sorted according to their ability to speak to the question at hand, in other words. It is this careful exegetical work which is the purpose of Chapter Four.

Interestingly, scholarship has long suspected the presence of preMarkan material in Mark 4-8, though scholars have not agreed exactly where, or to what extent, nor why this is so:

- The pairing of Jesus’ feeding of the 5000 and his walking on water in both Mark 6:30-52 and John 6:1-21 has often given pause. The two feeding accounts (Mark 6:35-44 // John 6:5-14) share a numerical underpinning. The reports of Jesus on the water (Mark 6:45-52 // John 6:16-21) share a basic nautical vocabulary. But the agreement in sequence between Mark 6 and

2 Thus: 200 denarii to procure bread (though the disciples think this a sufficient sum in Mark 6:37 while Philip, in John 6:7, clearly does not), 5 loaves and 2 fish (albeit ἄρτους κριθινοὺς and ὠψάρια in John 6:9 compared to ἄρτους and ἵζθους in Mark 6:38; supplied by the disciples in Mark but a παιδαρίον in John), 5,000 men (Mark 6:44 // John 6:10 ) and 12 baskets of left over pieces (Mark 6:43 // John 6:13). So Barrett (1962, 229): “It seems unlikely that all the numbers should be accurately preserved in oral tradition, and probable therefore that John used a written account of the miracle, similar if not identical with Mark’s.”
3 The disciples embark in a boat in order to go across the sea and they encounter wind as they row. Their experience of Jesus περιπατώνει/περιπατοῦντα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης (Mark 6:48 // John 6:19) and his words ἐγὼ εἰμί, μὴ θοβεῖσθε (Mark 6:50 // John 6:20) are almost verbatim. The same might be said of the chronological setting (Mark 6:47a // John 6:16a) but the approach of
John 6 is probably most striking: What explains the fastening together of these two memories in this particular order?

For some, the situation speaks to the literary dependence of John on Mark. The differences between the two accounts are then explained by reference to John’s literary intention. The problem is that John’s account also agrees with Mark 8 against Mark 6, in both language and order, and, more occasionally, with the parallel accounts in Matthew 15 and Luke 9 against both Mark 6 and Mark 8. Because literary dependence, in such a situation, requires so elaborate a history, the presence of a preMarkan (and preJohannine) tradition is

evening is handled differently: in Mark evening falls only when the boat is already in the middle of the sea; in John it signals the departure of the disciples.

4 So Mendner (1957–58) and Barrett (1962).

5 Thus, John intended the following discourse (6:25-59) to be explicitly associated with the Passover (6:4; so Barrett 1962, 228). He preferred Jesus to take the initiative (6:5). He added 6:14-15 in order to explain the ambiguity left by Mark 6:45. But on this explanation it is unclear why John would omit the desert location (from Mark 6:31), given his intention (in John 6:31 and following) to invoke the epic tradition of the manna in the wilderness; all the more if the entire chapter is an exposition of this OT text, as Lindars (1972, 234) suggests. Likewise, it is difficult to imagine John omitting the breaking of the bread from both Mark 6 and 8, if he was otherwise alert to the eucharistic resonance of the feeding, as seems to have been the case in vv 11 (where Jesus himself distributes the bread) and 12-13 (compare Didache 9:4; cf. Moule 1955; Brown 1966, 248). Even the Passover reference is not necessarily redactional, according to Dodd (1936, 211) and Brown (1966, 245).

6 Jesus takes the initiative in John, as in Mark 8, with a question that mirrors the disciples’ question in Mark 8:4: “How are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?” Jesus directs the people to sit down in similar language: with ἀναπεσεῖν in both Mark 8:6 and John 6:10. In both cases, Jesus gives thanks with the liturgical εὐχαριστέω.

7 According to Brown (1966, 238), the report of Jesus walking on the sea is followed in both John 6 and Mark 8 by a request for a sign (John 6:25-34 / Mark 8:11-13), remarks on bread (John 6:35-59 / Mark 8:14-21), a confession of Peter (John 6: 60-69 / Mark 8:27-30) and the introduction of the passion theme (John 6:70-71 / Mark 8:31-33).

usually considered the more likely option, whether that tradition was literary (something like a Signs Gospel)\(^9\) or not.\(^{10}\)

- Lucien Cerf\(\text{aux}\) (1953), C. H. Dod\(\text{d}\) (1963, 196–222) and John Meier (1994, 905–906) notice a double cycle of stories in Mark 6-8 (Cerfaux’s “\textit{section des pains}”) including, in each case, a miraculous feeding, a sea crossing which is followed by a dispute with Jewish leaders, a miracle of healing (or several, in the first case), and Peter’s confession of faith (only in the latter). By comparison with John 6:1-71—which also includes a miraculous feeding, a sea crossing followed by a dispute (with the crowd a.k.a “the Jews”), the demand for a sign (though no direct parallel to the miracles in Mark 6:53-56, 7:24-37 or 8:22-26) and Peter’s confession (though differently)—they argue for something of a traditional sequence (Dodd) or “early catechetical pattern” (Meier) which Mark has subsequently elaborated.\(^{11}\)

- Leander Keck (1965), Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn (1971, 191–213) and Rudolph Pesch (1977, 198) suggest a cycle of miracle stories framed by the summary statements in Mark 3:7-12 and 6:53-56.\(^{12}\) These are characterized formally by the mention of a boat (Keck and Pesch) and the desire to touch Jesus (Keck). The fact that each of the miracle stories in between these summaries (thus 4:35-5:43 and 6:30-52) is likewise marked by one or the other of these features is enough to posit an original (preMarkan) unity, at least for Keck and Pesch,\(^{13}\) a conclusion only further confirmed for Keck and Kuhn by the apparent presentation of Jesus in these stories in the guise of the Hellenistic θεός ὁνήμ.

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\(^9\) So Fortna (1970), following Bultmann, under the rubric of a signs gospel. See also Marcus (2000, 415).

\(^{10}\) So Dodd (1963) and Brown (1966).

\(^{11}\) Contrast Taylor (1966, 628–632).

\(^{12}\) Also Guelich (1989, 142–144, 261–263).

\(^{13}\) Kuhn actually identifies the cycle on the basis of a common form critical genre (the \textit{Novelle}), though he admits that such applies equally well to Mark 1:40-45, 7:32-37, 8:22-26 and 9:14-29.
K. L. Schmidt (1919, 150), Martin Dibelius (1971, 73), Vincent Taylor (1966, 272) and Rudolph Bultmann (1963, 210) propose a preMarkan collection in 4:35-5:43 on the basis of narrative style and theological tone.\textsuperscript{14} These stories, according to Taylor, are “vivid” and “picturesque,” quite in contrast to the stories previously encountered in Mark, “with a wealth of detail,” which would suggest that they are told “for their own sake.” Dibelius (1971, 80) explains: “It is not Jesus as the herald of the Kingdom of God with His signs, demands, threats and promises, who stands in the centre of these stories, but Jesus the miracle worker.” In other words: “Jesus dem Thaumaturgen.”

Without saying anything in particular about any one of these alternatives, my point here is simply to highlight the considerable interest which Mark 4-8 has occasioned in the history of interpretation. Scholars have repeatedly found something going on in Mark 4-8 which they have not been able to explain satisfactorily in terms of Markan literary invention or rhetorical design. As often as not, this suspicion has implicated the miracle stories deposited here. Chapter Four effectively presses this trajectory, or tests this suspicion, vis-à-vis Mark 4:35-8:26, given that this is also the textual site to which a geographical criterion leads. But the purpose of the chapter is to distinguish as critically as possible where it is that the material contained here, in Mark 4:35-8:26, has to do with identifiable interests of the sort scholarship typically assigns to the redactor of the Gospel and where not.

To be sure, this sort of distinction is not at all obvious or self-evident. All of the materials in Mark 4:35-8:26 are “told by Mark,” which means that each might be considered “Markan,” as such. But this is effectively a tautology. When this label means something more specific, analytically, it refers to the sort of verbal expression, literary style or thematic concern which is part of a wider pattern of editorial activity in the Gospel—for instance, expressions which are

unusually prevalent vis-à-vis the other synoptic gospels (καὶ εὖθος 25 times in Mark; once in Matthew and once in Luke), or strategically located in the Gospel of Mark (σχίζω in 1:10 and 15:38; υἱὸς θεοῦ in 1:1 and 15:39), or both (thus the motif of secrecy at the beginning of the Galilean ministry and at its climax; or the misunderstanding of the disciples throughout).  

“Galilee” is one of these devices, as Chapter Three suggests, following Marxsen. It occurs strategically, at the beginning and the end of the Gospel, in a way and to a degree that it does not occur in either Matthew or Luke. It undergirds the architectural frame of the Gospel. It participates in the Gospel’s rhetorical intent. “Galilee” is a fine (conventional) example of what I mean when I call something Markan redaction.

The question in what follows is the degree to which this sort of explanation also applies to the materials contained in Mark 4:35-8:26. This is the site at which we would open a test square, according to Chapter Three, when we are concerned to take our exegetical lead from the memory of Jesus in local place. These are the exegetical materials (memories) of interest, when we say Jesus in Capernaum. But it remains to distinguish, again, as critically as possible, when and where these memories can be explained in terms of Mark, which is to say, in the conventional language of redaction. That is the point of Chapter Four. When and where Mark is not a sufficient explanation, another will be required.

Particularly interesting in this regard is Paul Achtemeier’s reply to the complexity of Mark 4:35-8:26 (1970). Achtemeier, it will be recalled, proposed that Mark has here appropriated two parallel sets of miracle stories (or catenae). Each of these consisted originally of five episodes organized in the same sequence: a miraculous sea crossing followed by three healing miracles and a miracle of feeding.

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Achtemeier explained their current arrangement in terms of Mark. Thus: In the first chain, Mark has inserted the story of the hemorrhaging woman (5:25-34) into the story of Jairus’ daughter (5:21-23, 35-43). This is entirely characteristic of the way he uses his material elsewhere (cf. 3:21-31; 6:7-30; 9:2-14; 11:12-20). In the second chain, Mark has moved the miracle set in Bethsaida (8:22-26) from its original location after 6:45-51, where it followed naturally on the itinerary anticipated there (πρὸς Βηθσαϊδα), to a position in the Gospel (immediately prior to Peter’s confession) where it functions to articulate the blindness of the disciples.\(^\text{16}\)

Into both cycles Mark has interpolated a large collection of didactic material: 6:1-33 and 7:1-23. But, according to Achtemeier, both of these “blocks” show every sign of having been “composed,” “collected” or “combined” by Mark. Thus, regarding Mark 6:1-33 (1970, 269):

The Markan editorial hand has fallen heavily on this material, to the extent that not only the order, but the material itself, owes more to his literary activity than to traditions at his disposal.

And regarding Mark 7:1-23 (1970, 271):

The indications of Markan editorial activity in this passage are so numerous and clear that the verses represent in almost paradigmatic form the way in which Mark has assembled his material.


\(^{16}\) In this Achtemeier follows Snoy (1968).
This is obviously too terse. Just as obviously, however, because this material is explained more or less well in terms of Mark, following Achtemeier’s lead, it does not need to be explained otherwise. Not to say it is entirely Markan composition, but simply this: by the conventional reading of critical scholarship, which Achtemeier represents in this case, the material in Mark 6:1-33, 7:1-23 and 8:11-21 is encompassed and adequately explained under the heading of Markan editorial design.

That is very much not the case for the miracle stories in the remainder of Mark 4:35-8:26. Quite the contrary. As we have seen above, the miracle stories in Mark 4:35-8:26 are often taken to evince something else, other than Mark, in one form or another. Achtemeier agrees (1970, 291). In his opinion, Mark has reproduced these episodes essentially as he has received them.

This is the point to be pressed in what follows: Where are these stories adequately explained in terms of Mark and where not, which is to say, where do they need to be explained otherwise? Achtemeier does us the favour of an uncommonly transparent answer. It may not be the most convincing answer, as we will see; but the way in which it frames the question, methodologically, as a matter of “stripping away” the layers (1970, 266), beginning with what we know (which is Mark) in the interest of what we do not know (which remains to be seen), is instructive precisely because it places a certain degree of control on the historian’s imagination (so Kloppenborg 2000, 117 and Vaage 1991, 104–105). Achtemeier begins with Mark 4:35-8:26 in its “final form” (which we know) in the interest of uncovering its constituent components (“pre-Mark”). For this reason, if for no other, Achtemeier makes a helpful conversation partner.

I would be clear: Achtemeier is useful at this juncture because he frames our agenda, in what follows, in the conventional language of critical scholarship, not because he gets it right. He sets our (methodological) task in bold relief. He is, in the technical sense of the term, a heuristic
(from the Greek εὑρίσκω: to find or discover). He is valuable for opening the eyes or otherwise stimulating further research. In any case, the point in what follows is not to prove or disprove his thesis re. miracle catenae in Mark 4-8. The point is to distinguish, as critically as possible, which means with careful exegetical argument, where the memories which surface in the name of local place in Mark 4:35-8:26, which Achtemeier also addresses, can be explained in terms of Mark and where they will require another kind of explanation, which might be the historical Jesus.

Of course, in theory there could be any number of other explanations. As we will see in Chapter Five, Achtemeier himself proposes that we read the preMarkan material contained in Mark 4-8 in the name of early Christian liturgy, i.e., as reflecting an intermediate stage of transmission between what we know to have been the Evangelist “Mark” and what we imagine to have been “Jesus.” This sort of (other) explanation could easily be multiplied. But in terms of method, which is to say, of analytical logic, the multiplication of hypotheses (or sources) to account for the materials encountered in between the Gospel of Mark, which we put at the end of the process of transmission, and “Jesus,” which we put at the beginning, is not particularly helpful, any more than, for instance, the multiplication of sources vis-à-vis the Synoptic Problem.\(^{17}\) In either case, the more complex an explanation, however likely as a description of what actually happened, the more secondary hypotheses are required, at a similar level of complexity, the less that explanation is able to speak analytically, or incisively, to the question at hand, which, in this case, is the historical Jesus. Put otherwise, there is a point to parsimony, i.e., proceeding in the name of the simplest explanation, which relies on the fewest assumptions, in the name of the 2 Document Hypothesis, for instance, or the historical Jesus, until argued (proven) otherwise.

\(^{17}\) So John Kloppenborg’s discussion (2000, 50–54) re. the proposals of Vaganay (1954) and Boismard (1972).
4:35-41, Stilling a Storm

To look for historical testimony in place, by the criterion of local geography, is first of all to face the memory of Jesus on the sea. Much ink has been spilt on the question of historicity. (Did he or didn’t he?) But the question is poorly put, given the nature of the “data” (memories) and the best hopes of the historian (to interpret interpretations). I begin more modestly: How much of this account is demonstrably Markan?

Achtemeier’s answer to this question is conservative (1970, 275): What is Markan, he suggests, is only the attachment of the story to the parables discourse beforehand, i.e., v 35. The formulaic καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς is typical of the Gospel; the temporal setting (ἐν ἑκεῖνη τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) looks back explicitly to 4:1-2; and the disjuncture between v 35, where Jesus is already in the boat (following 4:1: εἰς πλοίον ἐμβαντα καθῆσαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ), and v 36, which seems to have Jesus received into the boat again, for the first time (παραλαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸν ὡς ἂν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ), suggests what Achtemeier calls conventionally a literary seam (1970, 275).

Scholarship has tended to agree. The introductory formula in 4:35 occurs elsewhere in Mark’s gospel 16 times (5 times in Matthew; never in Luke), though not always or necessarily in redactional contexts.¹⁸ The temporal expression that follows is a fine example of Markan duality (so Neirynck 1972; as per 1:32, 35; 10:30; 13:24; 14:12, 30, 43; 15:42; 16:2), in which at least part of the double expression, if not all of it, is typically associated with the intervention or clarification of the redactor.¹⁹ Mention of “that day” clearly invokes the literary context of 4:1-2

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¹⁸ So, for instance, van Iersel and Linmans (1978, 18).
¹⁹ Neirynck (1972, 46) suggests, vis-à-vis 1:32, that Mark has added the more definite expression (“at sundown”) in the interest of refinement and precision. But Neirynck (1972, 49–50) actually resists any attempt to distribute Mark’s double expressions mechanically between tradition and redaction. What Meier (1994, 1005) says may be best: “we should remember that opsias genomenēs is a vague phrase, simply indicating that it was late in the day; in itself the phrase does not tell us whether sunset had occurred yet. Hence I do not see here a basis for deciding which part of the double temporal expression comes from Mark and which part from the tradition.”
(by contrast with the apocalyptic overtones in 2:20; 13:19, 24, 32; 14:25), though as Achtemeier notices (1970, 67; following Schmidt 1919, 135), the language itself is not always or necessarily characteristic of Mark. Nonetheless, the introduction to the storm stilling is as clear an example of Markan design as we might expect to find. The only phrase in v 35 not compassed by this explanation is Jesus’ statement of intent: διέλθωµεν εις το πέραν.

But Achtemeier’s suggestion that the remainder of the episode (vv 36-41) is otherwise uniformly traditional does not follow. The presence of the crowd in v 36 presumes the previous discourse (Cotter 2010, 199; Gnilka 1978, 193). Likewise, the fragment ως ην (“as he was”) looks back to 4:1-2, whether it means that the disciples took Jesus “immediately” into the boat or simply “without going ashore” (Cotter 2010, 199; Guelich 1989, 265). In either case, the separation of Jesus and the disciples from the crowds serves to focus the episode exclusively on Jesus and his inner circle, as elsewhere in Mark (1:35, 36, 45; 3:9, 13; 4:1, 10, 34), even though the clear indication in 4:36b (και άλλα πλοία ην μετ’ αυτού) is that their voyage was anything but a private affair. The explanatory clause in v 37b (ὁστε ήδη γεμίζεσθαι το πλοῖον) is characteristically Markan in vocabulary (ὁστε followed by the infinitive and the adverb ήδη) and style (repetition of the word πλοῖον and the content of the previous clause); it serves to heighten

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20 The phrase, “when evening had come,” occurs also in Mark 1:32, 6:47, 14:17 and 15:42; “in those days” occurs in Mark 1:9 and 8:1. The two expressions appear together in Mark only in 4:35.
21 By most accounts, this note is oddly put. Cotter (2010, 199) thinks its “sheer awkwardness” signals a Markan attempt to “supply some kind of realism.” Dennis MacDonald (2000, 58–61) suggests that it echoes Homer’s *Odyssey*, on which the whole account is modeled, and in particular the twelve ships which accompany Odysseus as he leaves the island of Aeolus. Adela Yarbro Collins (2007, 258) thinks it may be inspired by Ps 107:23a (“those who go down to the sea in boats. . .”), “if” the miracle story is otherwise based on Ps 107:23-32. Meier’s suggestion (1994, 926; following Bultmann 1963, 215–216 and Theissen 1983, 102, 180; cf. Boring 2006, 145) that we have here a “relic” or a “fragment” is more convincing, given that the “other boats” disappear as soon as they are mentioned. It is actually our imagination of the event, informed by Mark’s careful concentration on Jesus and the disciples, that makes the phrase peculiar. Why should we be surprised to find “other boats” on the lake?
the drama, though, as Wendy Cotter points out, quite unnecessarily. And it goes almost without saying that the disciples’ desperate address (διδάσκαλε) in v 38 reflects Mark’s particular christology (Mark 4:38; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1).

John Meier (1994, 929–930) goes even further. He thinks the rhetorical “question-plus-rebuke” in v 40 so typical of the Gospel’s depiction of Jesus as to be redactional, at least in the way that Mark has phrased it (so Gnilka 1978, 194). This conclusion applies also to the disciples’ set-up in v 38, in Meier’s opinion, and even casts in doubt their rhetorical conclusion, in v 41 (1994, 930):

Since Mark’s contribution to this story apparently took the form of rhetorical questions—first by the disciples, then by Jesus—one wonders whether the quasi-acclamation of the disciples at the end of the story is also Mark’s formulation, since it too takes the form of a rhetorical question that the disciples ask themselves.

This would mean that the entire exchange between Jesus and the disciples in vv 38, 40 and 41 is at least Mark’s “formulation.” The problem with this line of reasoning is that it relies expressly on a decision regarding v 40 (Is the question-plus-rebuke redactional?), which, in turn, relies essentially on the evidence of the adverb οὐ ψω in v 40b: οὐ ψω ἔχετε πίστιν; Scholars agree that οὐ ψω is typical of Mark (so Cotter 2010, 202). In this regard 8:17 and 21 are telling: The disciples in Mark are those who do “not yet” understand. But this does not impute the whole of v 40. Cotter, for instance, concludes that Mark has simply added οὐ ψω to Jesus’ response in v 40b to underline his characteristic concern with the not-yet-understanding disciples (2010, 204). The remainder of v 40 is preMarkan in her opinion (cf. Van Iersel and Linmans 1978, 19; Hendrickx 1987, 178–180; Guelich 1989, 269), all the more given the appearance of the noun πίστις, which she restricts to pre-Markan material (following Trocmé 1975, 150). In any case, as even Meier

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22 Cotter (2010, 201): “telling a first-century person that the waves were beating into the boat is, on its own, sufficient to signal impending doom.”
recognizes, once v 40 is ascribed to the preMarkan account (with or without οὐ πω), there is no reason to deny the same to vv 38 and 41.

In sum: the foregoing would suggest that Mark has introduced the storm stilling in such a way as to tie it to the foregoing discourse: in the very boat from which he first teaches all and sundry in parables, Jesus, the Teacher *par excellence*, now addresses his inner circle. But if Mark makes of what happens next a charged encounter between numinous Teacher and obdurate disciples—even if he raises the rhetorical tension as Meier suggests—he also presumes the predicament which occasions the text, which is the plight of a small flotilla of fishing boats caught in the open sea in a sudden storm. In other words: here is a memory, however mundane, which exceeds Markan design.

### 5:1-20, The Gerasene Demoniac

The episode that follows begins where it should not, namely, “in the region of the Gerasenes” (εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν), which by any explanation is not immediately “on the other side,” Gerasa (modern Jerash) being located some 50 kilometres inland (east) of the lake. The country of the Gadarenes, as Mt 8:28 and some variants of Mark would have it, fits more nicely. But the region of the Gerasenes is the more likely reading in Mark—on the basis of external evidence and by an argument from *lectio difficilior*. It is difficult to imagine why

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23 But the manuscript tradition is confused in Mt 8:28 as well: Gadarenes (Vaticanus; Ephraemi; Koridethi; Sinaïtic Syriac; Peshitta; Harclean Syriac; etc.); Gergesenes (corrected Sinaïticus; Regius; Washington; Lake group; Ferrar group; Majority text; Bohairic; etc.); and Gerasenes (Vulgate and Old Latin; marginal Harclean Syriac; Sahidic; Middle Egyptian).

24 So Metzger (1971, 84) on the basis of “(a) superior textual evidence (early representatives of both the Alexandrian and Western types of text), and (b) the probability that Γαδαρηνῶν is a scribal assimilation to the prevailing text of Matthew (8:28), and that Γεργεσηνῶν is a correction, perhaps originally proposed by Origen.” Still, the reading receives only a {C}, which means (xxviii) “that there is a considerable degree of doubt whether the text or the apparatus contains the superior reading.”
Gerasa would have entered the manuscript tradition were it not there originally—and considerably easier to imagine why Gadara, overlooking the lake, or Gergesa, purportedly on the eastern shore, might have been preferred by later copyists, given what follows in 5:11-13.

This is an interesting anomaly in a text which is otherwise steeped in the detail of the Lake Region, all the more because it potentially takes the (original) episode out of the Lake Region, that is, if the reference to Gerasa is not simply an element of Markan redaction. This, in fact, is Meier’s argument (1994, 651): an “original” connection with Gerasa means the setting by the sea, in the Lake Region, and the story of the pigs, in particular, can only have entered the tradition at a later stage, “since presumably the native storyteller would have known that Gerasa was nowhere near the Sea of Galilee,” and so would not have tolerated their literary association. But clearly someone, at some point in the tradition, has done just that. More commonly, as a result, the geographic incongruence is assigned to the Evangelist.

By the end of the episode in Mark 5, “the region of the Gerasenes” has given way to what would become the proper nomenclature for the territory beyond the eastern bank, including the regions of Gerasa and Gadara, namely, “the Decapolis”—which is used here for perhaps the first time in ancient literature (Parker 1975, 438). This is a significant clarification of what is meant earlier by the region of the Gerasenes. It is also exactly what one would expect on the other side of the lake.

In any case, the episode which comes between these two geographical markers—Jesus’ encounter with Λεγιων—is one of the more dramatic and memorable stories told in the name of Jesus. It is also “confused” (Boring 2006, 149), “chauvinistic” (Marcus 2000, 347), and “sometimes incoherent” (Meier 1994, 650). Still, as it appears in the Gospel of Mark, it is closely linked with the foregoing. Thus, the journey in 5:1 εἰς τὸ πέραν continues the trajectory established, with the same phrase, in 4:35. The movement into the boat in 4:36 (ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ), at
the outset of the storm stilling, anticipates its reverse in 5:2 (ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου). Achtemeier thinks these links are pre-Markan. In fact, Achtemeier (1970, 275) finds no obvious indications of Markan editorial work at all, “whatever the origin of the story may have been.”

This is a view widely held. The episode is striking for a number of reasons. According to Rudolph Pesch (1971, 351; cf. Boring 2006, 149):

**Doublets and repetitions** in vv. 2 and 6 (Jesus’ meeting with the demoniac), vv. 3 and 5 (the demoniac’s home in the tombs), vv. 10 and 12 (the request of the demons), vv. 14 and 16 (the swineherds’ account of the incident); **Afterthoughts** in v. 6 (the demoniac had seen Jesus from a distance), v. 8 (Jesus had ordered the demon to leave the man), v. 15 c. (the reminder that the demoniac had had the legion), v. 16 b. (the swine are mentioned as an afterthought); **Discrepancies** between v. 2 and v. 6 (Jesus met the demoniac immediately on leaving the boat/the demoniac saw Jesus from a distance and ran towards him); and **the use of a different vocabulary** (v. 2 μνημείον, v. 3 and v. 5 μνήμα; vv. 15, 16 δαιμονιζόμενος and v. 18 δαιμονισθείς). (emphasis original)

But it is not clear how many of these idiosyncrasies should be assigned to the Evangelist Mark. Likely at least the explanatory γὰρ clause in v 8.25 This reflects Mark’s style elsewhere (so 11:13; 16:4, 8) and it serves to return the initiative for the exorcism to Jesus, though it also implies that Jesus’ first attempt in this case was less than successful.26 So too some part of the episode’s conclusion. For instance, v 20a includes both an element of Markan vocabulary (especially ἥρξατο κηρύσσειν; compare 1:45) and Mark’s characteristic interest in the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles (ἐν τῇ Δεκαπόλει; so Guelich 1989, 286–287; Schweitzer 1977, 113; Craghan 1968, 535). Likewise, in vv 18-19, the ex-demoniac’s request (ἵνα μετ’

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26 Thus, because it is in the imperfect: “For he had been saying to him. . .” i.e., repeatedly. Boring (2006, 149) suggests that it is intended as the equivalent to the pluperfect: “For he was already saying to him. . .”
αὐτοῦ Ἡ) and Jesus’ charge to him to announce (with ἀπαγγέλλω) what had been done for him (Ὁσα ὁ κύριός σου) recall Mark’s depiction of the disciples—in 3:14 the Twelve are called ἵνα ὡσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ and in 6:30 they return to Jesus announcing (with ἀπαγγέλλω) what they had done (Ὁσα ἐποίησαν),27—though, interestingly, the ex-demoniac is rather more successful than they (with the result that πάντες ὤθαυμαζον). All things considered, this looks very much like Mark presenting this (Gentile) man as a positive foil to the disciples’ deepening failure.

In fact, the question of Markan design deserves to be pressed even further. Matthias Klinghardt (2007), for instance, attributes the entire episode to Markan composition on the basis that it actually reflects the military situation in southern Syria post-70 CE, i.e., in Mark’s day, not Jesus’. Archaeological evidence— in the form of three grave inscriptions (Klinghardt 2007, 33)— supports his contention, attesting the permanent presence of the Roman military (the ala I Thracum Augusta) in Gerasa by the late first century CE but not before, and, just as significantly, nowhere else, at the time, in southern Syria, this owing to the strategic importance of Gerasa on the eastern trade route between Philadelphia, in the north, and Bosra and Palmyra, to the south and southeast. Even more to the point, however, it was only after the Jewish War that Gerasa and its trade routes came under the direct protection of the Legio X Fretensis, which, if not actually stationed in Gerasa, was “certainly” the nearest legion to the city (Klinghardt 2007, 37), again, post-70 CE. As all of Rome’s legions, the X Fretensis declared its presence quite tangibly through its signa militaria, which carried the imprint of a wild boar; and it is this that accounts for Mark’s introduction of the pigs to the episode in Mark 5, in Klinghardt’s opinion. The fact that the same legion included in its signa also warships and dolphins, in effect staking a claim to triumph over land and sea, makes what ensues in Mark 5 all the more

27 So Craghan (1968, 534). But note that ἀπαγγέλλω occurs as well in 5:14 with a meaning decidedly more mundane. According to Craghan (1968, 535), Lk draws the implication even more carefully by depicting the former demoniac not only clothed and in his right mind (so Mark) but also “sitting at the feet of Jesus” (8:35).
germane. The drowning pigs, Klinghardt concludes (2007, 45), caricature the pretension of the *Legio X Fretensis*; Mark is composing out of his own historical situation.

This is certainly enough to give pause. But it also goes too far. Klinghardt explains certain aspects of the episode on the basis of Mark’s historical situation—its putative setting in Gerasa, in particular, and the connection in this regard of the pigs and their demise in the sea (thus vv 1b, 10-13, 16). But he does not explain everything. In particular, for our purposes, it bears noting that λεγιων is actually explained quite differently in Mark 5:9: simply put, “for we are many.” Granted that Mark may elaborate the “name” in the direction of its military embodiment—with the company/cohort (ἀγέλη) of pigs charging (with ὁρμάω) into the sea, (just) following orders (with ἐπιτρέπω)—in 5:9 λεγιων remains, quite by contrast, strikingly vague and even evasive (Bonner 1943, 44; cf. *Testament of Solomon* 11). Indeed, Klinghardt is also at pains to explain the subsequent reference, in 5:13, to a troop numbering “about 2,000” (ως δισχίλιοι), which is wrong, by any account, if the *X Fretensis* is at all in view. In either case, the “name” λεγιων means something other than what it comes to connote, on Mark’s elaboration, though it clearly contains the potential for what Mark has subsequently made of it. But this is just the point. Mark enacts a particular reading which makes sense in his context, post-70 CE; but he does not create it out of whole cloth.

This needs to be underlined. Even here, in Mark 5:1-20, where so much arguably depends on Mark’s historical situation, the glimmer of another memory remains, however thin or tenuous it is in the face of Mark’s masterful act of reception: Jesus is on the eastern shore to deal with the difficulty of an uncontrollable, otherworldly force, which looms on the horizon, but only indistinctly, called Legion. That is enough for present purposes.
Achtemeier (1970, 277; cf. Gnilka 1978, 210) thinks it likely that the next two stories, of Jairus’ daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage, were joined together by Mark:

It is of course possible that Mark could have gotten them already interwoven and placed them in their present spot in his narrative [cf. Bultmann 1963, 214; Meier 1994, 708, 778]. But this is to raise the question of why they should have been combined in the tradition. . . The alternative would be their combination by Mark. While such combination was not necessary for the preservation of either of the stories, such combination is surely characteristic of Mark, and he may well have desired to create a space within the one narrative by the insertion of another, as he did, for example in the narrative of the sending out and return of the twelve (6:14-29 within 6:6-13 and 6:30-33).

In fact, Achtemeier (1970, 278) suggests that the story of the hemorrhaging woman had already been connected to the previous episode in Mark’s "Vorlage." Hence, v 21ab. What Mark does is to insert it into the story of Jairus’ daughter. This required only two additions: v 21c (και ἦν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν; cf. 1:16; 2:13; 4:1), which is already known but “helpful” nonetheless given that Jairus was to come from his house to the lakeshore; and v 24 “to reintroduce the crowds necessary for the story of the woman.” Otherwise, however, according to Achtemeier (1970, 278–279), there is little that can be identified as redactional design.

Meier (1994, 777–780) presses this conclusion. He thinks v 21 is a “bridge-verse” and “therefore” entirely redactional (pace Bultmann). The same applies to v 24—which reintroduces the crowd that is necessary to the account of the hemorrhaging woman. This has the effect of changing the subject in v 35 (“While he was still speaking. . .”), which would originally have referred to Jairus speaking to Jesus, but now, in Mark’s arrangement, refers to Jesus speaking to the woman. “Peter, James and John” (in v 37) are Mark’s “favourite” trio of disciples (as per 9:2 and 14:33; cf. Gnilka 1978, 210). The explanatory γὰρ clause in v 42 (“for she was twelve years old) is typical of Mark’s style elsewhere (see above). And, most obviously, the nonsensical
command to silence in v 43a reflects Mark’s theological framework (Meier 1994, 780; cf. Bultmann 1963, 214; Marcus 2000, 364): “Clearly, Mark is so intent on his theological theme of secrecy and ‘secret epiphanies’ that he does not care about the narrative’s verisimilitude at this point,” which Meier, just as clearly, thinks too stretched.28

Nonetheless, Meier also draws the point that matters for present purposes (1994, 780):

The meshing of two different miracle stories that probably once enjoyed independent existence, the need to create a bridge between the two stories in 5:24, the awkward insertion by Mark of his beloved theme of secrecy into a story where it makes no sense—plus Jesus’ Aramaic command, talitha koum, which must be translated into Greek for Mark’s audience—all indicate a previous tradition Mark has inherited and edited.

There is actually reason to be more cautious. Guelich (1989, 294), for instance, notices that the genitive absolute with which v 21 opens is actually more characteristic of Mark’s miracle stories than it is typical of the Gospel per se, at least to this point in the narrative (cf. 4:35; 5:2, 18, 21, 35; the only other occurrence is 1:32). Likewise the vocabulary in v 21 (which primarily reflects the context of 4:35-5:43), the trio of disciples in v 37 (whose importance ostensibly antedates the Gospel), the γάρ clause in v 42 (which informs the reader that the girl was old enough to walk on her own) and even the command to secrecy in v 43a (which corresponds to the exclusion of the public in v 40).

Even if we choose to explain these elements in terms of Mark, however, the obvious implication is that he has not composed either story in its entirety: Jesus is remembered, from one side of the lake to the other, as someone who could help when all other recourse failed.

28 But compare Cotter (2001, 55): “With respect to Markan interventions, the evidence would suggest only two additions: Mark 5.37, where the disciples are included in the story of Jairus (as they are not in the first account), and Mark 5.43a, ‘and he gave orders that no one should know this,’ an obvious example of the ‘Messianic Secret’ theme. Aside from these, the stories themselves do not hold any particular Markan theme that could support the conclusion that it was he who created them.”
6:34-44, Feeding the 5,000

With Mark 6:30-44 we come (finally) to the feeding which plays so central a role in Achtemeier’s catenae. That said, Achtemeier (1970, 280) is quick to attribute the context (vv 30-34) entirely to Mark. Thus: The withdrawal of the disciples with Jesus in order to rest (in vv 31-32) is typical (so 3:7-8). The “wilderness place” (in vv 31, 32, 35) is contradicted by the account itself, which presumes in v 37b the possibility of finding enough food in the country and villages round about. (The disciples’ ἀγοράσωμεν is meaningless without nearby ἀγοραῖ.) The teaching motif in v 34 is especially characteristic of Mark29 and the reference to the crowd as “sheep without a shepherd” (v 34a) points in a similar direction.30

Beginning in v 35, however, and the demand of the disciples to Jesus, (“Send them away.”), this changes. From this point on, according to Achtemeier (1970, 279), the story has come to Mark “in essentially the form in which he reproduces it.”

Again, this decision deserves to be pressed. Robert Fowler (1981, 68–90), for instance, actually argues that the story is a Markan creation “from beginning to end.” According to Fowler: Verse 35 is typical of Markan “double-step” construction (καὶ ἡδή ὄρας πολλῆς γενοµένης // καὶ ἡδή ὄρα πολλῆ), as are vv 31-32 before it. Verses 36-37 develop the misunderstanding of the disciples in typically stark terms (with the imperative, ἀπόλυσον, from the disciples, and δότε from Jesus in reply; and the adversative ὃς and emphatic pronoun ὑµεῖς to introduce Jesus’ response, compared to the conversation in 8:3-4). Verse 38 (ὑπάγετε ἰδεῖτε) is characteristically asyndetic. The distributive doubling in vv 39-40 (συµπόσια συµπόσια; πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ; κατὰ ἐκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πεντηκοντα) is typical of the Gospel (cf. 6:7 and 14:19) and in Fowler’s opinion intended to recall (by contrast) the exclusive banquet of Herod (“for his courtiers and officers and

29 So Guelich (1989, 338): “The typically Markan use of ἀρχεσθαί with the infinitive and the emphasis on Jesus’ teaching point to Mark’s hand.”
30 So Bultmann (1963, 217).
the leading men of Galilee”) immediately beforehand. Verse 41 rewrites 8:6-7 in order to integrate more fully the fish that is mentioned there only in passing, verse 42 repeats 8:8a with the addition of the Markan πᾶς (as also in 6:30,33,39 and 41) and verse 43 follows 8:8 but with different vocabulary and altered numbers. Indeed, by Fowler’s account, the vocabulary throughout is thoroughly Markan.31

This is an important reply to Achtemeier’s optimism. But it goes too far in the opposite direction. Much of the time, Fowler is at pains to explain why Mark has altered the vocabulary of the traditional account in precisely the ways that he thinks he has. To take only one example: by Fowler’s account Mark 6:41 (the division of the two fish) is a rewriting of 8:7a (the few small fish). It results in an “unavoidable awkwardness” and “a certain loss of elegance,” according to Fowler (1981, 87), but it “preserves” the duality of the bread and the fish (i.e., from the “original” account in Mark 8). But by Fowler’s account (1981, 53–54), the fish in 8:7a is already a Markan addition. It is already “awkward” there and, in fact, it is already explained by Fowler as a “harmonizing” of Mark 8 with Mark 6. So which is it?32 According to Fowler, Mark (in 6:41) is forced to deal proactively with a problem (which only becomes clear in 8:7a) which is entirely of his own making. That Mark would do this “to make his narrative distinctive” (1981, 88), or otherwise “for the sake of variety” (1981, 211n.117), simply begs the question.

The parallels with John 6:1-15 are much more telling (on the assumption that John is independent of the Synoptics at this point; cf. Brown 1966, 231–250; Dodd 1963, 196–222;

31 For example, in verse 35: λέγω; ὅτι recitative; ἔρεμος τόπος; in verse 36: ἄπέρχομαι; κύκλῳ; ἐσθίω; in verse 37: εἴπεται. This is part of Fowler’s thesis that Mark has duplicated, developed and transformed the second feeding (8:1-10) in the narrative of the first (6:35-44), at least in part so as to heighten the evident misunderstanding of the disciples.

32 Thus, Gundry (1993, 398): “Fowler’s position that Mark rewrites tradition in the feeding of the four thousand but composes the feeding of the five thousand after the pattern of the other feeding leaves one wondering why despite the absence of the fish from the tradition behind the feeding of the four thousand he fabricated the fish in his composition of the earlier feeding and thus led himself to insert them into the tradition that he now rewrites.”
These include most significantly, against even Mark 8, what we might call the numerical substratum of the episode: 5,000 people (Mark 6:44 // John 6:10); 200 denarii to procure bread (though the disciples think this a sufficient sum in Mark 6:37 while Philip, in John 6:7, clearly does not); 5 loaves and 2 fish (albeit ἀρτοὺς κριθίνους and ὀψάρια in John 6:9 compared to ἀρτοὺς and ἰχθύας in Mark 6:38); and 12 baskets of left-over pieces (Mark 6:43 // John 6:13), collected, incidentally, in κόφινοι (Mark 6:43 // John 6:13).

These details make it very plain that Mark is not creating ex nihilo. If he elaborates or develops this substratum in order to say something about the person of Jesus (in vv 30-34), or to reflect the deepening resistance of the disciples (in their cynical interaction with Jesus), he nonetheless works with(in) a basic storyline, which is to say, a memory, which has Jesus supplying food in excess to those who need it. This is an interesting memory. Like the others, which also escape Mark’s intent, it will need to be explained otherwise.

If we pause for a moment, the results of our excavation to this point might be classified as follows: We have found considerable evidence of Markan design. For instance, Mark concentrates on the identity of Jesus—he is Teacher par excellence, even on the sea (4:38); but he commands the following of a miracle worker (5:21-22, 24), despite himself (5:43). Mark develops the misunderstanding of the disciples—their private audience with the one who commands “even wind and sea” results in bewilderment (4:41); Jesus’ invitation to them to join

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33 This is the strongest argument against Fowler. As Meier (1994, 958) puts it, “How is it that Mark accidentally manufactures a redactional creation that just happens to coincide with John 6 and not with Mark 8 at key points in the story?”

34 So Meier (1994, 958), for instance, and Masuda (1982, 196), who includes among the traditional elements in Mark precisely those that in comparison with John would suggest: “ἐρήμος or ἐρήμια, five loaves of bread and two fish, that they ate enough, and, with less probability, that there were twelve basketfuls of leftovers, and that the number of men who ate were (sic) five thousand.”
his work meets mounting resistance (6:37). And so Mark begins to develop another set of
typically peripheral) characters who will “get it” when the disciples do not—the demoniac on
the other side with the pigs among the tombs (multiply disadvantaged) who nonetheless wants to
“be with” Jesus (5:18-20) is the most obvious example (but cf. Peter’s mother-in-law, 1:29-31;
the leper, 1:40-45; Levi the tax collector, 2:13-14). So far, then, Achtemeier has been helpful,
methodologically, in turning up Markan design, even as he has often pointed beyond his own
conclusions.

Still, in each case we have also found something which is not Mark, i.e., another,
different textual memory which is not explained in terms of the Gospel’s characteristic style or
interest. Let us say, provisionally, pending further discussion in Chapter Five: a fleet of fishing
boats in a dangerous spot; an encounter with an otherworldly, uncontrollable force named Legion
in a place called Decapolis; a man with status and a woman without, who nonetheless both come
looking for what Jesus can offer; and a hungry crowd. Here is a set of textual traces which
deserves more attention, a critical database from which to speak about Jesus, again, in the interest
of saying something more, or something more precise, about the man as an historical figure, if
and when it is the local place of Capernaum and environs that concerns us.

6:45-52, Walking on Water
The text of Mark continues “immediately” with the memory of Jesus on the sea, again, as if he
and the disciples can’t quite stay away. This time, however, the disciples are alone on the water,
bound for Bethsaida, and the “trouble” in which they find themselves is only compounded by
Jesus’ approach. That is to say, what is called “torment” in the countervailing wind (6:48)
becomes sheer “terror” (6:50) before the ghost/Jesus identifies himself to them. The question,
again, is relatively straightforward: How much of this account is demonstrably Markan?
When we return to Achtemeier, who is now at the start of his second catena, we find that he explains almost the entire episode in terms of Mark’s design (1970, 281–284). Predictably, this applies to Mark’s introduction: Achtemeier thinks the presence of the crowd in v 45 is a Markan attempt to link the sea walking to the feeding beforehand. It is unnecessary to the sea walking, creates its own difficulty for the account that follows (Why does Jesus need to be alone in order to dismiss the crowd?), and leaves the object of ἀποτάξαµενος in v 46 ambiguous (Who is dismissed? The crowd or the disciples?). According to Achtemeier (1970, 283):

The elimination of the phrase concerning the crowds thus gives a clear introduction to the story: Jesus, desiring to pray alone, compels his disciples to go without him, intending to meet them again in Bethsaida.

But that is not all. The “attachment-formula” in v 50 (καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς) is Markan and, against most commentators, Achtemeier (1970, 283) thinks this might indicate that the following words of Jesus have been added by Mark as well.35 On the basis of Jesus’ intention to pass by in v 48, Achtemeier suggests that the motif of rescue in v 51 was not an “original” piece of the episode. And the similarity of v 50e (Jesus’ words of encouragement: ἐγὼ εἰμί· μη φοβεῖσθε) and v 51b (the stilling of the wind) with the account of the stilling (4:40-41 and 4:39) makes it at least possible that Mark has added these as well (1970, 283).36 The disciples’ concluding obduracy is so typical of Mark’s style, vocabulary and characterization—besides serving rather transparently to cement the present attachment of the sea walking to the feeding—as to be clearly redactional.37

35 Compare Cotter (2010, 238): “This response by Jesus belongs to the core of the story and holds no redaction.”
37 The same might be said of 6:50a. Most commentators have considered this a Markan γὰρ clause intended to increase the drama. So Cotter (2010, 238) with references.
In other words: by Achtemeier’s account, the “original” or “traditional” account which Mark has received encompasses (securely) only v 45ab, 46-47 (the separation of Jesus and disciples in the name of Bethsaida), v 48 (the plight of the disciples and the intention of Jesus “to pass by”), and v 49 (the disciples’ reaction: “seeing him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost; and they cried out”).

Again, the Johannine parallel makes for an instructive comparison. On the argument that Mark 6:45-51 and John 6:16-21 are independent (cf. Brown 1966, 236–250, 252–254), John’s version of the story supplies a kind of control on the attempt to move behind Markan redaction. What the two canonical accounts share ought to suggest the common outline or basic content of an earlier memory with which both are otherwise familiar. Meier (1994, 913–914) summarizes the agreement of Mark and John as follows:

After the feeding of the five thousand, and in response to some initial action of Jesus, the disciples get into the boat and start to cross the Sea of Galilee without him. As darkness comes on, they are rowing in distress on the sea, making little headway because of the strong wind against them, while Jesus is alone on the land on a mountain. Suddenly the disciples see Jesus walking toward them on the sea. They are frightened, but Jesus tells them: ‘It is I [egō eimi], fear not [mē phobeisthe].’ Jesus is reunited with his disciples, who now reach the far shore without difficulty.38

When we compare this to Achtemeier’s conclusion, three points stand out. First, the version in John attests the words of Jesus: ἐγὼ εἰμί· μὴ φοβεῖσθε. This is a strong argument for the presence of these words in a preMarkan substratum, whether or not Mark is responsible for

38 Meier evidently thinks the sea walking is already connected to the feeding at this stage in its history. Elements of Mark’s narrative which do not appear in John’s narrative but which Achtemeier nonetheless assigns to the preMarkan version include: Jesus’ intention to pray (v 46), Jesus’ ability to see the disciples in trouble (v 48a), the time of Jesus’ approach (v 48b), Jesus’ intention “to pass by” the disciples (v 48c) and the γαρ clause confirming that “all” saw him (v 50a; contra Cotter et al). Marcus (2000, 428–429) thinks these attributable to Markan editing, and concludes: “Mark’s reworking of the story that has come down to him... seems to have been substantial.” I am not sure that Achtemeier would actually disagree in this regard.
the attachment formula in 6:50. Second, the version in John does not include any suggestion that Jesus intended to “pass by” the disciples. It does, however, support the notion that the episode had more to do, “originally,” with the presence (appearance) of Jesus, on/above the waves, than it did with a rescue from the sea (cf. Lohmeyer 1934; Heil 1981, 69–72). John describes the conditions on the water more dramatically than Mark (a “strong” wind instead of simply an adverse wind), but there is no suggestion in either case that the disciples are concerned. In Mark, they are exhausted.

Third, in John the disciples are headed for Capernaum. In Mark they are bound for Bethsaida, 4 km up the coast. Capernaum, in John, follows from the literary context. The feeding of the 5000 happens on the other (northeast) side of the lake, which makes Capernaum, in the northwest, a natural destination for the disciples after Jesus has apparently abandoned them (and the crowd) for the mountains (John 6:15), whether or not they intended to stay there or continue on to Cana (which is where Jesus is last located in the Galilee in John’s account; John 4:46-54). Capernaum, or rather the synagogue in Capernaum, also turns out to be the setting for the discourse that follows on the bread of life (John 6:25-59).

Bethsaida is even more securely rooted in the preMarkan substratum. This is so not only because Bethsaida is no place of interest for the Gospel; it turns up again in 8:22 (see below), but only in passing, again, and nowhere else. Bethsaida can be confidently located within a preMarkan memory because of the difficulty which it introduces to the narrative, namely: in 6:45 the disciples set out for (πρὸς) Bethsaida but in 6:53 they arrive, without another word, but with Jesus now on board, in (the plain of) Gennesaret. In other words (Achtemeier 1970, 282): “Jesus, who has just proved himself master of the sea, is nevertheless unable to bring the boat to its intended landing.” It may not be “grotesque” (Achtemeier 1970, 283) to think that an author could create such incongruity. Kelber (1974, 57–62) has argued that Mark uses this juncture quite
intentionally to articulate the scope of Jesus’ (inclusive) kingdom. In 6:45 the disciples are not ready to imagine a mission on the other, viz. Gentile, side symbolized by Bethsaida. Only after Jesus has led by example (on what defiles a person in 7:1-23; on giving crumbs to the dogs in 7:24-30; and on feeding those who have come “from afar” in 8:1-10) do the disciples get there, in 8:22, that is, to Bethsaida. Whether they ever come to share Jesus’ particular vision is more doubtful; what follows, in 8:27-33, would suggest that they are still blind. But even on this reading, Bethsaida is a given, which is to say, part of the memory with which Mark is working.

In any case, this is the most important point to arise from a comparison with John; namely, that there is something else behind Mark’s creative telling of the sea walking, which is not encompassed by the usual explanations of Markan characterization or plot development, which has (everything) to do with a routine trip to/toward a place called Bethsaida. This trace will require another kind of explanation in Chapter Five once the critical database is complete.

6:53-56, In and Around Gennesaret

What follows Jesus’ appearance on the sea is the sort of summary statement usually assigned to Mark. Joachim Gnilka (1978, 272 n.2), for instance, finds elements of Markan style (the genitive absolute; ἀρχεσθαι with the infinitive) and vocabulary (εὐθυς; κράβαττος; κόμη; ὁσος; οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντος). Achtemeier (1970, 284–285) agrees, at least as far as 6:54-56 is concerned:

Although there is no command to silence as in similar summaries at 1:32-34 and 3:7-12, and despite the absence of the characteristic verb θεραπεύω (1:34; 3:10; in

39 As Gundry (1993, 374) notes, Mark gives them credit for a “yeomanly” effort to reach Bethsaida. But once they do arrive, in 8:22, they are “equally inactive”; i.e., even in Bethsaida the disciples do not engage in a Gentile mission. In the text of Mark, at least, Bethsaida is also hardly as representative of the Gentile other as Kelber, et al, would like. For what it is worth, this seems to cohere with recent archaeological evidence; cf. Savage (2007).
v.56 the corresponding verb is σόζω), there is little reason to question that consensus.\textsuperscript{40}

But 6:53 calls for particular comment. It begins awkwardly (καὶ διαπεράσαντες ἔπι τὴν γῆν ἤλθον εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ), almost as though the disciples’ “crossing over” was “on land.” Matthew changes the word order in his parallel in 14:34 (on the 2 Document Hypothesis), bringing ἦλθον forward in order to make it clearer that “ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν” goes with what follows, which is “εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ.” The next phrase (καὶ προσωρμίσθησαν) employs a verb which occurs only here in the New Testament; but it is typical “boat language” (Gundry 1993, 344; cf. PTebt 802), which is to say, exactly what might be expected in the Lake Region. If it refers to beaching, as E. F. F. Bishop (1955, 146) suggests, it is all the more appropriate given the shoreline at the northern end of the lake (which is gradual, due to the silting action of the Jordan) and the shallow-hulled fishing boats which were typically employed there (as per the vessel discovered off the coast of Magdala/Tarichaea; cf. Wachsmann 1990b; 1995).

More to the point, however, the indication that Jesus and the disciples beach at Gennesaret (εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ) conflicts with their departure to/toward Bethsaida (πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν) only a few verses earlier. Following Snoy (1968, 234–236), Achtemeier (1970, 284) thinks it best to assign both elements to Mark’s Vorlage: Gennesaret (6:53) originally served to conclude the first feeding (6:30-44) in the same way that Dalmanoutha now concludes the second (8:1-10); Bethsaida (6:45), then, would have looked forward without interruption to the arrival

\textsuperscript{40} But any agreement should not be overstated: Guelich (1989, 355), for instance, thinks the absence of any reference to Jesus teaching or actively exorcising in 6:54-56 makes his depiction here “uncharacteristic.” Guelich also notes that a number of “Markan” characteristics, according to Gnîlka, are actually characteristic of Mark’s miracle material (for instance: διαπεράν occurs elsewhere only in 5:21; and the genitive absolute (ἐξελθόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου) is exactly what appears in 5:2). In Guelich’s opinion, these might as well be explained by reference to a preMarkan miracle collection. Marcus (2000, 437) suggests similarly, though he also thinks the passage “heavily reworked” by Mark to the point that its “original contours” are “impossible to discern.”
there of the disciples in 8:22. Mark has intercalated the two stories, as he is wont elsewhere, in
the interest of highlighting the misunderstanding of the disciples. They do not understand the
significance of the feeding even after Jesus identifies himself as the “I Am.” Mark “tolerates” the
geographical incongruence that results, in Achtemeier’s opinion (1970, 284), but he does not
create it from whole cloth.

Whether or not 6:53 should be relocated to the first feeding would require more
argument. Doing so at least potentially disconnects the feeding (6:30-44) from the sea walking
(6:45-52), which would fly in the face of the parallel in John (6:1-21), where the two are clearly
linked. Achtemeier conveniently ignores this (counter)evidence. At the same time, however,
Gennesaret in 6:53 sits so awkwardly in its current context that some explanation is required,
beyond Mark’s design, by almost any account.41

Fowler disagrees, and his disagreement is fundamental enough to the proposal being
argued here that it deserves to be quoted in full. Fowler thinks the sort of “concreteness” implied
by proper place names such as Gennesaret is simply artificial (“background”) scenery (1981, 66):

Mark’s use of the names of towns and cities throughout the gospel lends a certain
concreteness and verisimilitude to the narrative, which may be the reason why the
author scatters such references among his otherwise vague references. Although
the place names [like Bethsaida in 6:45 and Gennesaret in 6:53] sound more
precise and authentic than the indefinite allusions to ‘the other side,’ ‘a lonely
place,’ ‘the house,’ and ‘the mountain,’ we are forced to conclude that both the
concrete place names and the indefinite localizations are on a par with each
other—all function merely to provide artificial background scenery for the
episodes in the narrative.

But I am not sure why we are “forced” to this conclusion. What Fowler contends, in his
analysis of Mark’s “boat motif” (1981, 57–68), is simply that the geographical references which

41 So Gundry (1993, 346), with typical overstatement: “The discrepancy between setting out for
Bethsaida (v 45) and arriving at Gennesaret (v 53) is so glaring that to regard either location as
a redactional intrusion is to make the redactor almost unbelievably inept.”
Mark includes in 4:1-5:21, 6:32-55 and 8:9-22 are variously “vague” and sometimes “confusing.” Granted. But to assign all and sundry to the Markan redactor for that reason alone, as Fowler does, means that “Markan” denotes sometimes one thing (an interest in vague and unspecified locales) and sometimes precisely its opposite (an interest in specific detail; as per Galilee or Tyre and Sidon). In this case the term loses all analytical effect. It becomes a catch-all for what we cannot otherwise explain. Fowler thinks the common point is Mark’s complete indifference to geographical consistency but this simply begs the question

At any rate, the difficulty in the manuscript tradition with a proper name which occurs nowhere else of a specific settlement until perhaps the mid-second century CE suggests that verisimilitude, if that was Mark’s intent, was far from the effect. It is a simpler solution to allow that what almost every exegete admits in principle, which is that Mark is involved in transmitting and/or interpreting early memories of Jesus which are not entirely or exclusively his own, applies in practice to the boat’s beaching “in Gennesaret” in Mark 6:53. In other words: “in Gennesaret” is another geographical trace which, like “to/toward Bethsaida,” escapes Mark’s editorial brush.

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42 Fowler does not bother to explain why either indefiniteness or concreteness should be classed as particularly “Markan.” The strongest argument for the former (i.e., that “Mark” prefers broad geographical designations) is the role of Galilee in especially 1:28 and 39. So Fowler (1981, 64): “Even when a specific geographical location is named, the author has a tendency to detract from its specificity by speaking broadly of the entire region.” But this is also a clear argument against “Mark’s” insertion of concrete, local place names. Why insert proper names if he prefers to speak in generalities?

43 Gennesar is attested in Bezae, the Latin versions, the Old Syriac, the Peshitta and the Bohairic. Gennesareth is attested in Vaticanus, Koridethi, the Lake group, the Ferrar group, etc.

44 According to Uzi Leibner (2006, 231), the first indication of a settlement by this name comes in comments associated with R. Yossi in Tosefta Kelim 5.6 and Talmud Yerushalmi, Tractate Ma’asrot 1.1 [48d], where a certain “Jonathan ben Harsha” is presented as “a man of Gennesar.” Contra Lagrange 177. Of course, the lake is called “of Gennesar” well beforehand: in 1 Maccabees 11.67; Pliny NH 5.71; Strabo Geography 16.2.16 (Gennesaritis); and Josephus War 2.573; 3.463,506,510,516; Ant 5.84; 13.158; 18.28,36; Life 349. Josephus also speaks lyrically of the “valley of Gennesar” in War 3.506-521.
It also requires another kind of explanation, which could be Jesus, though that remains very much to be seen.

**7:24-30, The Syrophoenician Woman**

Mark’s memory of the journey that follows, “into the region of Tyre” is more complex, largely for one reason: Tyre (or “Tyre and Sidon” in most manuscripts)\(^{45}\) brings to bear something which “Gennesaret” and “Bethsaida” do not, namely, the weight (or freight) of collective memory. In the collective memory of Israel, Tyre (often with Sidon) figures as stereotyped opponent and cultural other (thus: Ps 83:5-10; Isa 23; Ezek 26-28; Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10; Zech 9:2-4; but see also 1 Kgs 5:1; 7:13; 9:11). In a word, Tyre is remembered (figured or troped) as traditional oppressor, destined for divine retribution. The Tyrians are “our most bitter enemies” says Josephus (Apion 1.70), rather grandly; but according to Theissen (1991, 66–79), this was especially the case in northern Galilee in the first century CE.\(^{46}\) This is not at all the case with the more or less incidental place names of the Valley we have encountered to this point, which means that what applied to Bethsaida and Gennesaret may not apply in this case.

Achtemeier, in fact, begins accordingly (1970, 287): “The reference to the journey εις τὰ ὄρια Τύρου with which this story begins is generally recognized as redactional, its purpose being to create a Gentile framework for the stories that follow.” It may be that the traditional identification of the woman as Συροφοινικίσσα suggested this geographical setting to Mark. But

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\(^{45}\) The reading “into the region of Tyre” seems assured on external and internal (*lectio brevior*) grounds. So Metzger (1971, 95), who ranks it as “virtually certain”: “The words καὶ Σιδῶνος seem to be an assimilation to Mt 15.21 and Mark 7.31. If they had been present originally, there is no reason why they should have been deleted. The witnesses in support of the shorter text include representatives of the Western and the Caesarean types of text.”

\(^{46}\) Cf. Reed (2000, 186–187): “to Galileans, these cities were not merely relics in their epic imagination; they were still real cities in close proximity to Lower Galilee. . . and as best we can tell, resented for economic and cultural reasons.”
Achtemeier thinks the story is actually more instructive if it was originally set in (Jewish) Galilee, or, as it turns out, at least nearby. In other words (1970, 287): “if Jesus himself is on foreign soil, then he himself is not in fact limiting the ‘bread’ to the ‘children.’” If he remains in Galilee, or at least in nearby Bethsaida (following 8:22-26 which comes immediately beforehand in Achtemeier’s second catena), then the “careful” identification of the Syrophoenician woman makes sense and so does Jesus’ (reasonable) expectation of privacy. In any case, in Achtemeier’s opinion (1970, 287) the story is “rather clearly” a unity after this introduction, except for v 27a (ἀφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα), which aligns Jesus’ response with an early Christian view of salvation history.

This time Achtemeier does not go nearly far enough. Not only 7:24a but also the first half of 7:24b attests characteristic Markan motifs, “a house” being the typical setting for instruction in Mark (compare 2:1,15; 3:20; 7:17; 9:28). Jesus’ inevitably unsuccessful desire for secrecy is likewise not unusual in Mark (especially 9:30; cf. Burkill 1966, 24; Marcus 2000, 466; Cotter 2010, 139; contra Guelich 1989, 384), though the memory of what Jesus is able and not able to do, in 7:24c, is interesting, as we will see. Much the same applies to Mark 7:25 (cf. Cotter 2010, 140): The encounter between Jesus and the woman presumes the situation introduced in v 24b (i.e., that Jesus is in the house in hopes of not being bothered). The daughter’s ailment (which is called a πνεῦμα ἀκώθαρτου in v 25) recalls the preceding discussion (on uncleanness, 7:1-23; in vv 26, 29 and 30 the problem is a δαμόνιον). The woman’s approach to Jesus recalls the approach of the hemorrhaging woman in 5:25-34 who also hears of Jesus (5:27) and falls down before him (5:33), as seems proper in Mark (cf. 3:11).

In fact, the entire episode fits Mark’s literary context (meaning the dispute about clean and unclean which immediately precedes, in 7:1-23) and his theological intent (meaning the
relationship of Jew and Gentile) so closely as almost to follow directly from it.\footnote{This is T. A. Burkill’s conclusion (1966, 35): “Mark 7 24-31 follows directly from the design of the evangelist: he wishes to demonstrate the Lord’s freedom from the purity regulations and to demonstrate that the apostolic mission to the Gentiles was prefigured in the earthly ministry [of Jesus].” Still, Burkill (1967) subsequently proposes four stages of development: (i) that the story begins as a dramatization of the early Christian belief that Jesus was appointed to minister exclusively to the Jews (thus especially v 27b); (ii) that by the woman’s witty reply (v 28) and Jesus’ commendation (vv 29-30), the story was turned subsequently to prefigure the inclusion of both Jew and Gentile; (iii) that Mark has made this more explicit by providing an appropriate geographical setting and adding v 27a; and (iv) that Mt has further adapted the story in view of Q 7:1-10, Mark 10:46-52 and Mt 10:6.} In Meier’s formulation (1994, 660): “Having just declared all food clean, Jesus now acts out the breaking down of the religious barrier separating Jew from Gentile.”

Meier (1994, 660) goes even further:

\[E\]ven apart from Mark’s redactional framework, the story of the Syrophoenician woman carries the heavy freight of later Christian theology. . . Indeed, in Jesus’ affirmation (7:27) that it is only right that the children (= the Jews) first be fed to the full with the bread (= the gospel message of salvation), we seem to hear a variation on the theme of Paul’s dictum, ‘first to the Jews’ (Rom 1:16), a dictum turned into narrative in the Acts of the Apostles. Granted this theological allegory of salvation history, which lies at the very heart of the story of Syrophoenician woman (i.e., in the dialogue with Jesus), it becomes difficult to maintain that this story’s core is historical.”

Nonetheless, the disagreement between the introduction of the woman (\(\gammaυνη\)), her daughter (\(\tauθυγατριων\)) and her daughter’s problem (\(\piνε\ομα \alphaκαθαρτον\)) in v 25 with what follows in vv 26-30 suggests something of a “seam” between Mark’s appropriation and a preMarkan memory (in vv 26-30 the woman is \(\Ελλη\νις, \Sigmaυροφοινικισσα\ \tau\ο\ γε\νει\); her daughter is \(\tau\η\ς \θυγατρος\); and her problem is a \(\deltaαι\μ\ο\νιον\); cf. Cotter 2010, 140). More to the point, the characterization of Jesus in v 27b has usually been found too offensive to have been created \textit{de novo}. This leaves for our purposes, in only bare outline, a memory of an encounter between Jesus and a woman (“a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth”), in the interest of a demon-possessed
daughter, marked by Jesus’ caustic assertion (“it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”), the woman’s sharp retort (“even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs”) and Jesus’ (chastened) assent (“Go, on account of this word; the demon has come out of your daughter.”). To say very much beyond this would amount to special pleading.

7:31-37, A Deaf-Mute Man

Achtemeier (1970, 287) thinks the itinerary that follows in 7:31—from (ἐκ) the region of Tyre, through (διὰ) Sidon, to/toward (εἰς) the lake, “in the midst of” (αὐναμέσον) the region called Decapolis—likewise of a piece with Mark’s theological intent. He calls it “torturous at best” and “all but impossible to imagine,” which is intended to make the point all the more vigorously, namely, that this is Mark’s (imagined) itinerary. For Achtemeier, the result is not only that Tyre is redactional (which follows from 7:24a), but also “Sidon,” “the Sea of Galilee” and “the region of the Decapolis.” The geographical frame for the episode that follows (v 31) is entirely Mark’s. Otherwise, however, except for the Markan Jesus’ typical concern with secrecy in v 36, Achtemeier thinks that the episode is unaffected by Markan design (1970, 288–289).

This is a not an unreasonable conclusion. It is likely that κατ’ ἰδίαν, in v 33, is also Markan. The expression appears frequently in the Gospel (7x in Mark; only twice in special Matthean material and once in special Luke), though elsewhere in Mark it is used only of the disciples (either as a group or a select trio; cf. 4:34; 6:31,32; 9:2,28; 13:3). Theissen (1983, 68–69) suggests that the concern for privacy expressed here and in 8:23 (see below) echoes the concern in the magical papyri that magic formulas not be disseminated. This explains why Jesus is remembered to have taken the deaf-mute man aside, in 7:33a; but the emphatic κατ’ ἰδίαν which follows and the similarity of 7:36 with 1:44-45 is simply too striking to avoid. Mark has “enhanced” the secrecy motif, at very least (Guelich 1989, 394–395, 396–397). The “choral
conclusion,” which interprets Jesus in the light of Isaiah’s prophecy (7:37b = Is 35:5-6), is also quite clearly characteristic of Mark (cf. 1:1-15).

But the remainder of the episode is actually characterized by vocabulary which occurs only here in Mark’s Gospel: that a man is brought to Jesus who “speaks with difficulty” (κωφόν καὶ μογιλάλον; though cf. LXX Is 35:6); that Jesus “took him aside” (καὶ ἀπολαβόμενος), applied “fingers” (ἐβάλεν τοὺς δακτύλους), “spit” (πτύσας; also in 8:23), “sighed” (ἔστέξασεν), and spoke elliptically “εφαφθα”; with the result that the man’s eyes were “opened” (ηνοίγησαν αὖτοι αἱ ἁκοι) and his tongue was released from its “bond” (καὶ ἔλυθη ὁ δεσµὸς) so that he could speak “correctly” (καὶ ἔλαλε ῥηθὼς); to a reaction of astonishment “beyond measure” (καὶ ὑπερπερισσῶς ἔξεπλήσσοντα). This is telling.

The question of 7:31 is more difficult. That Mark is involved in what scholarship routinely calls a confusing (“indirect”; “roundabout”; “improbable if not nonsensical”) itinerary is clear enough (cf. Guelich 1989, 391; Boring 2006, 217; Yarbro Collins 2007, 269). Thus, Theissen (1991, 244) thinks the tour of southern Syria is Mark’s attempt to lead Jesus into the neighbourhood of his own audience (or rather “to bring the home of his communities into the picture”). F. G. Lang (1978) concludes that Mark intends to bring Jesus into contact with the “Gentile” lands to the north (Damascus) and east of Galilee (Dium, Abila, Gadara and Hippos). Dean Chapman (1995) suggests that the itinerary reflects Mark’s “peasant” geography of meaning within which Tyre and Sidon and (the further shore of) the sea of Galilee mark out the boundary between Jewish and Gentile worlds. Meier (1994, 712) predictably draws the theological implication:

[H]aving declared all foods clean (and therefore having torn down a major barrier between Jews and Gentiles in 7:19), the Marcan Jesus now passes through various
Gentile regions, bringing healing and food (symbolically, the salvation proclaimed by the gospel) to pagans and thus foreshadowing the Christian mission.  

Still, the degree of Mark’s involvement in the itinerary remains at issue. Clearly Tyre is part of Mark’s geographical repertoire. He has used it only verses earlier, in 7:24, to signal Jesus’ interaction with the Gentile other. It follows logically in 7:31. Sidon is to be expected alongside Tyre. The textual variants to 7:24 (which supply Sidon; cf. Mt 15:21) suggest as much. But Mark has also named Tyre and Sidon together, in 3:7-8, as one of the locations from which Jesus first occasioned a following. Paired stereotypically with “Judea and Jerusalem” (to the south) and “Idumean and beyond the Jordan” (to the east), “Tyre and Sidon” (to the north) are clearly redactional. Marxsen (1969, 70) says the same of “the sea of Galilee” (cf. 1:16): it serves to refocus the narrative at this juncture by bringing Jesus full circle.

That leaves the final phrase, ἀνά μέσων τῶν ὅριων Δικαστολής, which rather obviously complicates matters in its current context. Is the sea of Galilee, where Jesus ends up, “in the middle” of the Decapolis? Or does Jesus arrive at the sea of Galilee “through the middle” of the Decapolis? Markan design does not explain. But that, in itself, is a significant point. A literary explanation (i.e., on the basis of Mark’s literary intent) does not alleviate the awkwardness with which Decapolis is here appended. As a result, I take it to signal something else, which Mark found fastened to the episode that follows (cf. Marxsen 1969, 70; Theissen 1983, 127; Guelich 1989, 392).

48 Just as predictably, Gundry (1993, 382) disagrees: “it outruns the text to think that Mark is setting forth a dominical anticipation of world-wide evangelism.”
49 This much is clear from even a cursory glance at English translations. Thus, to name only the most attentive: the KJV: “through the midst of the coasts of the Decapolis”; the NAS: “within the region of the Decapolis”; the NIV: “down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis”; the RSV: “through the region of the Decapolis”; the NRSV: “in the region of the Decapolis”; and the NJB: “right through the Decapolis territory.” Gundry (1993, 382) suggests “between the borders of the Decapolis.”
Like an unconsidered afterthought, in other words, “in the middle of a region [called] Decapolis” marks another memory in 7:32-37. Mark has framed this memory vis-à-vis the places that matter, those being, in this case, Tyre and Sidon, on the one hand, and Galilee, on the other. These are “sites” (topoi) in Mark’s theological landscape which make a difference (i.e., by means of the former, Jesus engages the stereotypical other; in the latter he is found as nowhere else, initially and climactically; cf. 14:28; 16:7). Mark has also turned the encounter toward typical (christological) ends: the more Jesus “charged them” to be quiet, i.e., not to spread the word, the more they “preached” it (with κηρύσσω; cf. 1:44-45). But Mark alone is not a sufficient explanation of this memory. Mark has not completely obscured what is still remembered in the name of the Decapolis, which is Jesus (though he is not even named in vv 32-37) acting very much like a conventional holy man or thaumaturge.

**8:1-10, Feeding the 4,000**

What follows, in Mark 8:1-10, has the sense of déjà vu to all but the disciples, which of course occasions the requisite questions: Is 8:1-10 a Markan variation on the first account (6:30-44)?

Is 8:1-10 in fact the source of the (first) account in 6:30-44? Does 8:1-10 (along with 6:30-44)

50 Donfried (1980). This theory runs aground of the evidence. As Meier (1994, 957) puts it: “While Mark 8:1-10 is the shorter and sparer of the two stories, it also contains a surprising number of words and phrases that occur only here in Mark. This is the opposite of what one would expect if Mark were creating in chap. 8 his own abbreviated version of the traditional story he inherited and placed in chap. 6.”

51 So Fowler (1981). But this flies in the face of the pattern of agreement and disagreement between Mark 6, John 6 and Mark 8. Meier (1994, 958) summarizes well: “If one admits that John 6:1-15 is not literarily dependent on Mark, and if one tries to claim that Mark 6:32-44 is simply Mark’s redactional reworking of Mark 8:1-10, one runs into massive problems in trying to explain all the agreements that Mark 6:32-44 shares with John 6:1-15 as opposed to Mark 8:1-10.”
reflect a single memory which Mark has bifurcated for his own purposes? Or does 8:1-10 inscribe in Mark another version of an early memory which circulated in the name of Jesus?

Achtemeier (1970, 290) takes the last option. In fact, he thinks Mark 8:1-10 entirely traditional (the reflection of an early Christian memory) with the singular exception of 8:1a: ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις πάλιν. This phrase reminds the reader of the Gospel that what follows (8:1b-10) is now the second miraculous feeding, even though or precisely because the account itself and especially the response of the disciples in v 4 plainly assumes no such awareness (1970, 290): “We should want to argue, therefore, that the form in which Mark got this story from his catena comprised 8:1b-10, thus paralleling the form of the first feeding (6:35-44, 53).”

Fowler again extends this conclusion (1981, 43–54; see above on 6:33-40). The (double) genitive absolute at the outset of the episode (πολλοὶ ὄχλοι ὄντος καὶ μὴ ἔχοντων τί φάγωσιν) is “definitely” Markan, in his opinion (following Neirynck 1972); πάλιν appears characteristically; the crowd is described typically as an ὄχλος πολὺς (cf. 5:21,24; 6:34; 9:14; 12:37); and the verb with which Jesus summons the disciples (προσκαλέωμαι) is “from Mark’s preferred vocabulary.” The duplication in 8:1-2 (μὴ ἔχοντων τί φάγωσιν // οὐκ ἔχουσιν τί φάγωσιν) and the use of ἐπὶ plus the accusative with σπλαγχνίζομαι (as per 6:34; instead of περὶ with the genitive) and ἦδη with a reference to time (as per 6:35; 11:2; 15:42) means Mark has also composed v 2. According to Fowler (1981, 55) the same applies to v 7 (which he thinks a

52 But as long as history is a matter of memory, which is already a matter of interpretation, which I take to be given, and “history” is what we understand ourselves to be doing, the next question, i.e., whether Mark 6:30-44 and 8:1-10 “remember” a single, historical event or two is simply out of bounds, which is to say beyond the reach of the historian qua historian. Contra Gundry (1993, 398–401).


“clumsy” insertion intended to harmonize the account with the earlier feeding)⁵⁵ and to v 10 (which he concludes is designed together with 8:13 in order to frame the encounter with the Pharisees in 8:11-12), even as he allows that the difficulty of the destination in v 10 (τὰ μέρη Δαλµανουθά), which is both a hapax legomena and otherwise completely unknown, may be a “vestige” of the traditional story which Mark has rewritten.

Still, Fowler agrees that the remainder of Mark 8:1-10, which means 8:3-6 and 8-9, represents a preMarkan tradition (1981, 54–57). Even a few “sparse instances” of characteristically Markan language in vv 3 (ἐν τῇ ὀδῷ; ἀπὸ μακρόθεν),⁵⁶ 4 (ὁτι recitative), 5 (ἤχω) and 6 (the historical present) do not change this conclusion, namely, “that a story from Mark’s Vorlage lies beneath the present text of 8:1-10” (1981, 203 n.42).

Given the notable agreements with John’s version of the story against the account in Mark 6—which include: Jesus’ initiative; the disciples’ response with πόθεν; the direction to “sit down” with ἀναπίπτω; and the use of εὐχαριστέω in the participle (εὐχαριστήσας) for Jesus’ prayer (cf. Brown 1966, 231–250; Dodd 1963, 196–222)—this conclusion is particularly compelling. Mark has taken the opportunity to develop the deepening misunderstanding of the disciples. So it is no surprise that the (second) feeding issues directly in a stream of censure in

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⁵⁵ So Fowler (1981, 53–54): “It seems obvious that someone has added this verse solely to harmonize this story with the other story in which the fish have such a prominent place.” But then, on “the other story” in 6:41, Fowler (1981, 87) admits “a certain unavoidable awkwardness” which he thinks results from the need to include reference to the fish based on 8:7. Why this awkwardness should be “unavoidable,” if it is Mark that has introduced it in both cases, is not clear. Fowler (1981, 54) also thinks 8:7 demonstrates Markan “fondness for diminutives,” characteristic use of εἰπέω (“with the sense of ‘to command’”) and ἤχω (“where one might expect to find εἶπα with the dative”). But the diminutive in 8:7 (ἱθαδίω) is also included among those hapax legomena which indicate preMarkan tradition.

⁵⁶ Guelich (1989, 404) and Marcus (2000, 487) suggest that 8:3 implies Mark’s interest in a Gentile mission on the basis of the analagous description of non-Jewish nations in the OT as “far away” (Dt 28:49; 29:22; 1 Kgs 8:41). This is even clearer in Acts 2:39, 22:21 and Eph 2:13 and 17.
8:17-21: “Don’t you see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see? Having ears do you not hear? Don’t you remember?”  

Mark “remembers” this story in association with a place he calls “the district of Dalmanoutha” which is otherwise unknown and very much beside the point, when the point is the incredible failure of the disciples. If and when the point is the body of memory or memories with which Mark works, however, which he rephrases and amplifies as he is wont, which will require an explanation other than Markan design, which might be the historical Jesus, then the district of Dalmanoutha and the memory it inscribes in the Gospel is very much the point. Add this, therefore, to the geographical traces—of Bethsaida, Gennesaret and a place called Decapolis—which will require further comment.

8:22-26, A Blind Man in Bethsaida

There remains for consideration only Mark 8:22-26, which also happens to be the penultimate healing miracle in the Gospel. In fact, by Achtemeier’s account, the (re)location of the episode to precisely this penultimate position is its primary editorial feature (1970, 285–287). From here, it frames Jesus’ three climactic passion predictions (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34), each with the disciples’ unknowing reply (8:32-33; 9:32; 10:35-45), with the “ultimate” healing episode in Mark, that is, the healing of Bartimaeus in 10:46-52, which also turns out to be all about blindness. This has everything to do with Mark’s opinion of the (to this point blind) disciples. “Originally,” however, which is to say in Achtemeier’s “double cycle,” the episode in Bethsaida (8:22-26) followed the walking on water. There (in 6:45) the disciples set out for Bethsaida; here

57 The disciples do remember, more or less accurately (in 8:19-20). But according to the Markan Jesus, and this is Mark’s point, they do not understand.
58 Mark 9:14-29 is clearly an exorcism. Of course, the “penultimate” healing account (8:22-26) and the “ultimate” healing account (10:46-52) share considerably more than this.
(in 8:22) they arrive. So far as Achtemeier can tell, there are no other signs of the Evangelist “Mark” in 8:22-26.

This is also Meier’s conclusion (1994, 691):

Mark’s major contribution to the story’s message was the pivotal position he gave it within the overarching structure of his Gospel. Mark has endowed the healing of the blind man. . . with a Janus-like quality. On the one hand, the healing looks back. It marks the end of the two-part ‘bread section’ . . . that stretches from 6:30-8:21. . . At the same time, the healing at Bethsaida also looks forward. . . symboliz[ing] the two-stage healing of the spiritual vision of Jesus’ disciples. . .

To be sure, scholars disagree as regards the beginning and end of the episode, vv 22a and 26b. The latter (v 26b) is often assigned to Mark’s messianic secret, even though the command to secrecy is typically more explicit when Mark is responsible for it elsewhere in the Gospel (compare 1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36; cf. Johnson 1978–79, 373; Guelich 1989, 435). It is also possible that v 26b simply follows on v 23a—that is to say, having taken him out of the village Jesus sends him home, directly, which evidently was not in the village. But if v 23a anticipates the triumphant return of the healed man to the village, as Theissen (1983, 147) suggests, then the prohibition in v 26b stands at odds with the story—though very much in line with Mark’s christological purpose.

Bultmann (1963, 213) thinks that the same applies to the beginning of the story:

The first phrase in v. 22: καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν is part of the editorial matter, which puts individual stories into a geographical and chronological context; for originally the story took place in or near a κόμη (v. 23) which Bethsaida certainly is not.

So Wrede (1971 [1901], 35), Gninka (1978, 134), Theissen (1983, 148), and Marcus (2009, 596), on the basis that “home” (v 26a) is not in the village (of 26b). Thus Jesus sends the man home without letting him re-enter the village. This appears especially to be the case with the textual variants, all of which accentuate to various degrees Jesus’ command not to enter into the village. Cf. Metzger (1971, 98–99).
But the legal status of Bethsaida is really beside the point. Whether it was a κωμη at the turn of the century (so Theissen 1983, 127), had an associated κωμη on the waterfront (so Meier 1994, 693) or should have been called a πολις by rights (as per Bultmann), the distinction is not actually very instructive, at least not in the NT where Mark calls Capernaum a πολις (1:33), though it was anything but, and Luke does likewise of Nazareth (1:26, 2:4,39, 4:29; also Bethlehem in 2:4; Capernaum in 4:31; and Bethsaida in 9:10).

More representative on the question of Bethsaida is Guelich’s suggestion (1989, 431) that Mark has arranged Jesus’ entire itinerary, namely, “from Gennesaret (6:53) to the territory of Tyre (7:24), then through Sidon across to and down through the middle of the Decapolis (7:31) to the Sea of Galilee which he crosses to Dalmanutha (8:10) from where he crosses back to Bethsaida (8:13-22),” with theological intent. The point, ostensibly, is to demonstrate by means of the stories set in these locales precisely what Jesus has announced to the Pharisees in 7:1-23, which is in effect the setting aside of the social boundary between Jew and Gentile.

Still, this is hardly the function of Bethsaida in v 22a. At least no one in the Gospel (neither disciples nor Jewish leaders) understands it that way. Nor is the episode which occurs there otherwise (ethnically) marked, as, perhaps, 5:1-20, which is set “among the tombs,” where pigs are big business and the title for Jesus (οις τοθετο τοθο υψιστου) echoes both the typical language of Gentiles in the LXX (cf. Gen 14:18-20; Num 24:16; Is 14:14; Dan 3:26,42) and, in fact, a common title for Zeus (cf. Marcus 2000, 343; Yarbro Collins 2007, 268). Guelich (1989, 357, 413) himself allows that some of the place names in this “itinerary” are traditional—Gennesaret and Dalmanutha among them—“since,” and this bears underlining, “Mark does not create specific place names elsewhere in his redaction and since one is more likely to use a well-known rather than a rare place name when creating a scene.” But this applies just as well to
There is no question that Mark has turned the episode in Bethsaida toward his own ends. It is not by chance, in other words, that it occurs where it does in the narrative, bracketing what turns out to be the pivotal moment in Jesus’ relationship with the disciples, between Galilee, on the one hand, and Jerusalem, on the other, with the second and only other healing of blindness in the Gospel (interestingly, “εἰς Ἰεριχώ”) to follow. This is Mark’s interest. But this does not explain the geographical trace of a sometime village called Bethsaida (which after c. 30 CE was actually called Julia; cf. Josephus *Ant* 18.2.1). In the name of this place, or fastened to it, we notice another memory of a numinous figure (again unnamed; compare 7:32-37) who nonetheless gives every appearance of being your typical, neighbourhood thaumaturge. This memory—which coheres remarkably with that which is remembered in the name of Decapolis in Mark 7:32-37—still needs to be explained. It is the final piece which constitutes our critical database.

**Conclusion**

A critical reading of Mark 4:35-8:26 suggests that Achtemeier does not actually go far enough in distinguishing Mark from not-Mark. That is to say, while he has set the agenda, methodologically, or enacted it, conventionally, as a matter peeling back the layers beginning with what we claim to know (which is the redactional work of Mark) in the interest of what we do not know (whose specific character remains to be determined), we have found Achtemeier repeatedly not to be critical enough.

Mark’s characteristic interests are more evident than Achtemeier allows, even in the miracle stories of Mark 4:35-8:26—for instance, in the depiction of the disciples as

60 So Theissen (1983, 127): “There are no compelling grounds for deleting. Since it is hardly possible to explain Jesus’ complicated travels as the result of a coherent process of editing, in my view the arguments for a traditional origin prevail.”
simultaneously set apart and obtuse (Mark 4:40-41; 5:51-52); in Jesus’ concern to shroud his activity in secrecy (Mark 5:43; 7:24; 8:26, 36-37); or in a nascent Gentile “mission” (Mark 5:18-20). The style in Mark 4:35-8:26 is frequently more typical of the Gospel than he admits; and the vocabulary is often demonstrably Markan. Achtemeier frames our question—How much of the material collected in Mark 4:35-8:26 can be explained in terms of Mark? But it turns out that his answer (“Not much.”) is too optimistic, which is to say prematurely concluded. In other words: we find more of the Evangelist at work in Mark 4:35-8:26 than originally advertised by Achtemeier.61

What this means, in effect, is that a good amount of the material which we first identified in Chapter Three, under the heading of a preliminary database for the purpose of discovering the historical Jesus, turns out not to be so, at least not when our interest is the historical description of Jesus. To return to the archaeological metaphor with which we began, it turns out that our test square in Mark 4:35-8:26 turns up an assortment of artifactual and structural “data,” all of which may be interesting in its own right, but only some of which proves useful for the task at hand, when the task at hand is the historical description of Jesus.

Put it this way: most of what we have unearthed in our test square has something to do with the structure that is the Gospel of Mark, as such. Most of what we have learned reflects the architecture (organizing principles; building techniques; etc.) of the literary monument we conventionally call the Gospel of Mark. Most of what we encounter in our test square is thus beside the point, when the point is the historical description of Jesus.

61 Note that it has not been my intention to prove or disprove Achtemeier’s underlying hypothesis, that what is not-Mark in Mark 4:35-8:26 is also a double cycle of miracle material, “identical in arrangement” (1972a, 290), which Mark received in written form. This would be another argument. But our conclusion, based on John 6, that the feeding and the sea walking were likely connected suggest against Achtemeier’s proposal. That the stories are “identical in arrangement” is also far from clear.
This only stands to reason. It is the Evangelist “Mark” of course who is ultimately responsible for the stories as such in Mark 4-8. They have been arranged, rephrased and amplified accordingly, which means that they are deployed in the interests of his Gospel—in the same way that the remains of previous structures are often deployed in subsequent construction. There is no facile separation between Mark and not-Mark—which is why the notion of “peeling back” layers, though it may help, methodologically, to discipline the imagination, is ultimately unsatisfactory (cf. Kloppenborg 2000, 117–118). There is no way around this: the memories gathered in Mark 4:35-8:26 are set in the service of a later edifice.

But Mark is not a sufficient explanation for everything that we find in this section of the Gospel. That is the pertinent point in this context. The edifice called Mark does not suffice to explain many of the details which we encounter in Mark 4:35-8:26. Indeed, quite the contrary. A significant part of the miracle stories collected and combined (remembered) there cannot be explained in any straightforward fashion as being simply due to Markan literary design or rhetorical intent. That is the conclusion when we peel away as resolutely as possible everything which can be accounted for in terms of the work of the Evangelist Mark.

In fact, when we peel away or otherwise set aside what looks like the work of this “Mark,” we are left with something else—a cluster of textual traces whose distinguishing features include first, the local place names of the Valley (like Bethsaida, Gennesaret and Dalmanoutha) and then, also, the sort of local perspective which, for example, calls the lake a sea and makes the other side routinely accessible, the occasional storm notwithstanding.

Just to be clear, this cluster of traces includes at least the following texts:

4:36b-41;
5:1a, 2-9; 5:21, 25-34; 5:22-23, 35-43;
6:35-44; 6:45-51a, 53;
7:24b, 26-30; 7:31e-35, 37a;
8:2-10; 8:22-26\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{62}

In summary, therefore, when we say Jesus in and around Capernaum, this would be the textual evidence that such a truism demands as its primary critically established exegetical database.

Excavating further the textual site which seemed most likely pertinent at the end of Chapter Three, namely, Mark 4:35-8:26, now leaves us, at the end of Chapter Four, with a set of local memories of Jesus on and around the lake: stilling the eastern wind and walking on the sea; facing down “Legion” on the other side; confronting disease and death when all the medical care that money can buy is to no avail; feeding so that all are satisfied; in a word, managing the various vicissitudes of life on and around the lake.

This is a pattern of memory which exceeds Mark’s literary design and rhetorical intent. It has yet to be accounted for by modern biblical scholarship. But that means it still requires an explanation, which might be the historical Jesus. To inquire about this possibility is, therefore, the purpose of Chapter Five.

\textsuperscript{62} See Appendix 1.
Chapter 5
Jesus in Place

*Beings surround themselves with the places where they find themselves, the way one wraps oneself up in a garment that is one and the same time a disguise and a characterization. Without places, beings would be only abstractions. It is places that make their image precise and that give them the necessary support thanks to which we can assign them a place in our mental space, dream of them, and remember them.*

Georges Poulet (1977, 26; cited in Malpas 1999, 176)

Introduction

The intent of this thesis has been to press the scholarly discourse of the quest for the historical Jesus on a point at which no one takes issue, namely, that the historical Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum, at the bottom of the Valley on the eastern edge of the Galilee, otherwise known as the Lake Region. This is a datum which is nowhere disputed, so far as I can tell; no one involved in the quest denies the importance of this particular place for the historical description of Jesus.

But this does not mean that the fact of Capernaum and environs has been brought to bear in any significant or sustained fashion on the way in which scholars of Jesus go about their designated task of speaking, historically, about the man, certainly not on the way in which scholars of Jesus evaluate (sort through) the earliest memories of Jesus’ first followers. To the contrary, the material (geographical) conditions which make Capernaum what it was in the first century CE, have been consistently neglected. In the interest of pursuing other, more contemporary (ideological) concerns, the fact of Capernaum has been forgotten, or displaced.

My purpose has been to address this inconsistency. Chapter One set the stage for the project by deciphering what it is the quest actually does, conceptually, in the name of
Capernaum, when local geography proves not to be of primary, or governing, concern. Chapter Two then set out to recover the collection of material data which make of Jesus’ “hub” and “headquarters” in Capernaum a (geographical) datum of interest in the first place. Chapter Three raised the exegetical implication of the scholarly commonplace that Capernaum and environs matter, namely, that the textual memories which are most likely pertinent to an historical description of Jesus are the ones which are marked, first, by the place names and, also, by the local perspective of the Valley, since this is where scholarship otherwise agrees that Jesus lived and worked and left behind whatever legacy remained in his name. This (geographical) criterion implicated Mak 4:35-8:26 as the most logical textual site at which to begin a closer analysis in the interest of exposing the earliest memories of Jesus’ first followers.

Chapter Four set out to delineate as closely as possible the critical database that follows from this kind of analysis, which is to say, that collection of critically established exegetical data which remains when we set aside everything else in Mark 4:35-8:26 which can be adequately explained in terms of the work of the Evangelist “Mark” and focus instead on those details (textual traces) which cannot be explained in the same way. The result of this exercise is a preMarkan substratum, beneath or within Mark 4:35-8:26, in need of another, further explanation, which, as we said at the close of Chapter Four, “might be” the historical Jesus. It remains to explore that possibility—namely, that the textual traces identified in Mark 4:35-8:26 which are not otherwise able to be explained in terms of the Evangelist Mark, which moreover constitute our best estimation of text in place, might be explained (re-read) in terms of the historical Jesus, who we all agree belongs precisely there. That re-reading is the purpose of the present chapter.

To be sure, the historical Jesus is not the only possible explanation for the exegetical data we thus uncover “in place,” contained or otherwise memorialized within the structure of Mark
4:35-8:26. As we will see, Paul Achtemeier (1972a) explains the same material in terms of a preMarkan cult tradition. Burton Mack (1988) calls it a preMarkan myth of origins. Richard Horsley (2001; 2008a) attempts to account for it in the name of “Moses-Elijah” as a kind of popular Israelite tradition. Again, however, the question is how far these formulae go toward a satisfactory explanation of the exegetical data in Mark 4:35-8:26: How much of the textual data(base) which we have isolated in Chapter Four, in the name of Jesus’ local place in Capernaum and environs, does a mythical or a typological reading à la Achtemeier, et al, encompass?

Fifty years ago Etienne Trocmé (1975, 53) explained almost exactly this set of textual material rather differently, in terms of local memory:

Events like those related in Mark 4.35-5.43, like that of the first multiplication of the loaves, like those of the healing of the sick in 7.32-7, 8.22-7, 9.14-29, were no doubt the subject of excited gossip among the village folk of north-east Galilee. That is how they collected their touches of legend and folklore while keeping the vivid and sometimes earthy quality that still strikes us today. They reflect the religious ideas of small groups of people living on the border of Jewish Palestine and Syria, in an area undergoing hellenization following the founding of the ‘Greek’ cities of Caesarea Philippi, Bethsaida Julias and Tiberias.

This is clearly not a sufficient alternative as it stands. It presumes (“no doubt”) that “events” among “village folk” should necessarily (inevitably) become “excited gossip,” or “legend and folklore,” which really means ahistorical accretion. It makes “religious ideas” (whatever this means concretely) the source of such excited accretion and it only alludes to the significance, in this connection, of local place (“north-east Galilee,” “on the border of Jewish Palestine and Syria,” “in an area undergoing hellenization”). The latter is enough, however, to sponsor another explanation of the material underlying Mark 4:35-8:26 which is more sensitive (attentive) to precisely that presence which Trocmé called “vivid” and “earthy,” and I would call “in place,” i.e., to the detail of life (or a life) lived precisely there (which means in “north-east
Galilee,” “on the border,” “in an area undergoing hellenization,” or, in other words, in the Lake Region of Galilee). This is what Achtemeier, et al, consistently overlook.

The possibility of this kind of further, more exacting or attentive explanation of the textual residue collected within Mark 4:35-8:26—namely, as an instance of the Lake Region and a recollection of one of its most memorable inhabitants named Jesus—is my aim in what follows. More than simply typological mythmaking, I suggest we re-read the exegetical data which we have turned up in Mark 4:35-8:26 as a kind of local history, or place memory, which construes and condenses (remembers) a number of incidents pertaining to life in the Valley associated with the figure of Jesus, under his aegis, as taking place in his name.

Remembered here, in other words, is not so much, or not in the first instance, a “son of God” (cf. Mark 1:1; 15:39; but see 5:7) or a “son of man” (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33), but a set of problems fairly conventional but hardly unique to this particular place—storms, some exorcism, hunger and disease—and the local wonderworker (thaumaturge) who knew what to do about them. This may communicate as much about the exigencies of life lived there, in the Lake Region of Galilee in the first century CE, as it does about the historical person (individual) of Jesus; but it may also be as close as the quest will come to describing the man himself with both feet planted definitely (finitely) on the ground, viz. water.

Detail is demanded, of course, though the particular details of the re-reading which follows will undoubtedly be disputed at this or that juncture. In any case, the point to underline, with regard to what follows, is methodological: here is where we begin, exegetically, when we say Jesus of Capernaum: namely, in Mark 4:35-8:26. Here is where that conversation begins which seeks to take seriously the textual imprint of Jesus’ local place for his historical description. What remains, in Chapter Five, is simply an instance, or an illustration, of what happens exegetically when we do just that.
Miracle Stories, In So Many Words

In order even to inquire about this possibility, however, we begin with another kind of explanation of the miracle stories contained in Mark 4-8, namely, that these episodes were “shaped by” (originated as reflections on) the foundational narrative of Israel (the Exodus story) and/or the formative character(s) of Israel’s collective memory (for example, Moses and/or Elijah and/or Elisha); that is, that the (critically established) exegetical data(base) which is “left over” in Mark 4-8 is actually entirely explicable in terms of (early Christian) mythology. If this is the case, then our work is done (cf. Occam’s razor). This bears repeating more fully: If the set of textual traces, or exegetical data, which underlies the structure of Mark 4-8, which we have turned up (unearthed) in Chapter Four in the name of a critical database, can be explained entirely by reference to the *mythos* of Israel’s formation or the *typos* of its heroes, in so many words, as “just discourse,” then another explanation, in the name of the historical Jesus, will be unnecessary.

Paul Achtemeier

Achtemeier himself, in an article which followed two years after his announcement of the miracle catenae (1972a), offers the most enduring explanation for the material he first isolated beneath Mark 4:35-8:26. He explains (reads) the miracles stories in Mark 4-8 in terms of Moses (1972a, 202):

> Any discussion of ‘signs and wonders’ related to Jewish traditions *must* begin with the figure of Moses. Such activity is already emphasized in the narrative of Israel’s exodus from Egypt and is then taken up and amplified in later traditions. The description of Moses in Josephus, and especially in Philo, indicates the attempt to make him appear a θειος ἄνηρ, complete with all the virtues of such a figure, and miracle-working is then also a part of the role of the expected ‘one like Moses.’ (emphasis added)

In other words, “signs and wonders,” in a context which is “Jewish,” necessarily lead to or, better yet, inevitably proceed from, the traditions which are elaborated around the figure of Moses (thus: in the narrative of the Exodus; as per Josephus; and “especially” in Philo) (1972a, 203):
In the light of this [literary] background, it is not surprising that a ‘Moses-Christology’ would become a significant trend in early Christian theology, related, because of ‘signs and wonders,’ to the earthly career of Jesus.

The catenae are for Achtemeier “a prime example” of this trend. Because they begin and end with precisely the sorts of miracles which characterize the Moses tradition, at least as it appears in the Exodus, i.e., sea miracles and feeding miracles, Achtemeier (1972a, 206, 208) decides that the catenae are intended to cloak (configure) Jesus similarly, which is to say, “as a kind of ‘deus praesens’,” according to the typos of the divine man Moses:¹

In the first catena, he shows himself Lord over demons (5:1-20), sickness (5:25-34), and death (5:21-23, 35-43; in the second as one who, in his healing presence, does ‘all things well’ (7:37, as the conclusion to the three preceding healings). In both catenae, he is Lord of creation, as shown in his mastery of the sea, and the wondrous provider of food.

Achtemeier actually goes further. The final (climactic) position of the feeding narratives in the catenae—and in particular their “eucharistic reflections”—implies not only for the feedings but for the entire miracle cycle (both catenae) a “cultic” setting within the “liturgy” accompanying an early Christian eucharistic celebration (1972a, 208):

[T]he epiphanic nature of the miracles attached to the account of the feeding would indicate that the liturgy was intended to call the participant’s attention to the presence of Christ himself at the meal. As he was revealed in his mighty acts as a deus praesens, so he is revealed in the meal as present among the participants. This would have the further implication that for the participants the eschatological

¹ Following Georgi (1964) and Meeks (1967). But compare Holladay (1977), whose argument on the whole θειός ἄνηρ construct Meier (1994, 597) summarizes trenchantly: “Josephus uses ‘divine man’ only once, when he describes Moses as a wise lawgiver who prescribed the arrangement of the tabernacle in the wilderness in order to give it cosmic significance. Despite his greater openness to recasting biblical narratives in Greek philosophical terms, even Philo uses ‘divine man’ only rarely and never of Moses or any other Jewish hero. More to the point, Philo never uses ‘divine man’ for a miracle-worker or in a context of miracle-working.” Achtemeier (1972a, 204) also refers to Elijah and Elisha; but as we will see he does not think these “parallels” explain very much of the catenae in Mark 4-8. What they do, in fact, is further attest the “Moses motif” which Achtemeier applies to the catenae.
age had already begun, that the Christ whose reality was seen in the miracles was now at hand in the celebration of the Eucharist.²

In other words, according to Achtemeier, the miracle stories which are contained in Mark 4-8 do not only reflect (inscribe in the Gospel of Mark) a “Moses motif,” they do so in the context of (in response to) one early Christian community’s experience of the resurrected Christ in their celebration of the Eucharist. What is preMarkan, then, which is shaped (configured) according to the typos of the holy man Moses, is also cult tradition.

**Burton Mack**

Burton Mack does not agree. In *A Myth of Innocence* (1988), Mack identifies the weak link in Achtemeier’s argument—the alleged “eucharistic overtones” of the feeding narratives—and replies that the feeding stories, on the contrary, are found “eucharistic” only by comparison with the ritual texts in Paul, Mark and the Didache (1988, 218–129):

The similarity [of the feeding narratives with the eucharistic tradition] is given with the sequence of Jesus’ actions in “blessing” (or “giving thanks”), “breaking,” and “giving” the bread and fish to the disciples to distribute to the crowd. These actions do portray meal practice. The emphasis placed upon them in the feeding stories indicates that the person responsible for the stories wanted the signs of meal practice to be clearly visible in them. . . Such a procedure, however, need not be understood as the product of a cult of spiritual presence at all.

It might, just as well, reflect what it seems ostensibly or explicitly to reflect, which is regular meal practice.

Mack (1988, 219) thinks that the composition of the miracle chain “as a set” (i.e., in which first and last stories go together) is more significant than Achtemeier allows, certainly more so than the alleged nuances of the feeding narratives. This, of course, is because the first

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and last stories of the two reputed cycles—the sea crossings and the feedings—bring to mind the foundational epic of Israel, the Exodus story (1988, 217):

A miraculous sea crossing and a miraculous feeding of the people in the wilderness [as per the set of miracle stories in Mark 4-8] were standard items in the Exodus story. Evidence was plentiful that the Exodus story was much in the minds of first-century Jews. Sea crossing and miraculous feeding had, in fact, becomes shorthand codes for the whole story when referred to in psalms, poems, and other types of writing.

In other words, according to Mack, what the set of miracle stories in Mark 4-8 does, in the language of the Exodus story, which is to say, by means of the “standard items” and “shorthand codes” for the “congregation” of Israel, is to portray the origins of another, different, congregation. It is a myth of origins. It envisions a movement in the making by reiterating the epic formation of Israel—only the congregation which it configures or inscribes, in the textual space between sea crossing and miraculous feeding, is “unlikely,” according to Mack, and “new” (1988, 223):

This congregation did not make its crossing en masse, but one by one. The boundaries crossed were social boundaries. . . The unlikely mixture of peoples is given profile in the selection of individuals portrayed: a Gerasene, a Syrophoenician, an official, women, children, the blind, lame, deaf, and dumb. These are socially incongruous, socially marginal, and from the Jewish point of view generally ‘unclean’ people, that is, in need of ritual purification or healing before (re)entering the ‘congregation’ and participating fully in the daily round of activities. The selection of extreme cases (blind, lame, deaf, incurable hemorrhage, etc.) accentuates the point that the new congregation was not formed by attention to Jewish rituals, for these people are impossible cases and need something more. They are figures chosen to represent the unthinkable aspect of the new social arrangement, its difference from the prevailing models.

Mack suggests that this new set of miracle stories is imagined and articulated in terms of sea crossing and miraculous feeding, according to the epic pattern of the Exodus, precisely in order to undergird the novelty of the new community. The miracle stories in Mark 4-8 “mark the
differences” between the new and the traditional, in order “to make a point” which has to do with “distinctiveness” (1988, 224). They are, in a word, “definitional,” which is to say, calculated mythmaking.

Richard Horsley

Richard Horsley offers a third explanation of the miracle collection in Mark 4-8 in his study of Mark’s Gospel, *Hearing the Whole Story* (2001; cf. 2008a, 143–144,159–161). Like Mack, his reading centres on the allusions of the miracle stories to the “formative traditions” of Israel (which now include not only formation by Moses but also renewal by Elijah). But where Mack invokes the language of novelty, Horsley prefers renewal and restoration (but cf. 2008a, 144). Thus, the Jesus of the miracle stories in Mark 4-8 is not establishing a new social order much less a new congregation. He is “spearheading” the renewal and revitalization of Israelite society as “the new Moses and Elijah” (2001, 106–107):

> Just as in the original liberation and formation of Israel, Moses had led the Israelites and exercised command over the storm in crossing the sea and fed the people in the wilderness, so now Jesus exercises command over the storm in sea crossings and feeds the people in the wilderness. And just as in a time of resistance to oppressive rule by Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah performed healings and multiplied food for people, so now Jesus is performing healings and multiplying food.

Jesus in these episodes is figured typologically (or remembered in the “frameworks” and by means of the “frame images” supplied by Israel’s collective memory; cf. 2008a, 144) as (all-in-

3 Mack (1988, 223): “Jesus, the founder and leader of the new movement, is like Moses (as leader) and like Elijah (as restorer). Likeness is not identity, however. The difference between Jesus and his prototypes is as great as the difference between the new congregation and the old. The Jesus movement is fully conscious of its novelty. . . It is not really ‘Israel’ that is being renewed or restored. Jesus does not stand in the office of Moses as a ‘new Moses.’ . . . Jesus is the founder of the new society. . .” But Mack is also clear that this does not imply an exodus from Judaism.
one) founder, prophetic liberator and “great hero” (2008a, 160). In a word, he is the new “Moses-Elijah” (2001, 108).

Again, by Horsley’s account (2001, 104–105), this is “most obvious” in the feeding stories:

[T]he twelve baskets of leftover pieces symbolize Israel in its twelve tribes. That the people ‘sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties’ refers clearly to the traditional organization of the people beginning with the exodus-wilderness narratives. . . That the crowd ‘were sheep without a shepherd’ not only alludes to Israel’s exodus-wilderness origins as a people under Moses’ leadership, it bluntly criticizes the high priests in Jerusalem and/or ‘king’ Herod Antipas.

The allusion of the sea crossings in Mark 4:35-41 and 6:45-52 to Moses’ leading of the people across the Red Sea is, however, “less clear.” Horsley (2001, 105) can suggest only the presentation of the lake as a sea and the (implied) command of Jesus over wind and water (cf. Ex 14:21-28 and 15:1-18). Nonetheless, in Horsley’s opinion (2001, 106), this first allusion is clear enough to sponsor a second, in the exorcism story that follows (Mark 5:1-20), to the liberation of the people from Pharaoh’s armies, which were drowned in the sea like the pigs a.k.a. Legion.4 Jesus’ next healing, of the (“seemingly”) dead daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43) parallels the acts of Elijah and Elisha, both of whom “brought back to life young people who appeared to have died” (2001, 106); and, together with the story of the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:24b-34), alludes to the revitalization of Israel (2001, 106):

These two women remain two individual persons in these episodes. But they also represent Israel. Israel, which has by implication been “hemorrhaging” due to its exploitation, is in the one woman’s initiative represented as being restored to wholeness by reaching out to touch Jesus in faith. And as represented by the twelve-year-old woman who appears to be virtually dead just as she is coming to childbearing age, Israel is brought to life again by Jesus, prepared to give birth to a new generation.

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4 Horsley (2001, 106): “Jesus’ exorcism is, like the exodus of old, a liberation from alien forces.” But here he is using “like” in a very loose fashion indeed.
Whatever may be said of the feedings and the crossings in Mark 4-8, however, the difficulty of so allegorical an explanation becomes patently obvious here: Why exactly, or how, is Israel “hemorrhaging”? What does the touching of Jesus’ clothes from behind in a crowd (5:27, 28, 30-31) intend if the touching woman is not a woman at all but really “Israel”? Why the proper name of Jairus (in 5:22)? Or the otherwise extraneous characters of the mocking mourners and the girl’s mother (in 5:40)? And what does it mean that “Israel” finds “wholeness” and “life” in Jesus? The same applies *mutatis mutandi* to Horsley’s reading of Mark 5:1-20. What is not explained in either case is the particular content (exegetical detail) of the text at least allegedly under discussion.

Horsley’s explanation of the miracle stories in Mark 4-8 goes so far, in other words; but only so far (after which it becomes patently allegorical). In other words, there may be merit to what he says about the importance of the figures of Moses and Elijah vis-à-vis the feedings and the “crossings.”\(^5\) But this does not even begin to explain the remainder of the miraculous material in Mark 4-8.

The point is telling—and it pertains no less to Achtemeier and Mack’s explanations—namely, that what applies more or less well to the feeding stories and the sea “crossings,” in the name of mythology or typology, evidently does not apply at all to the other events in the middle of the sequence.

It will be important to work this out more thoroughly, that is, to make this argument in as much exegetical detail as possible. I will take each element in turn (i.e., the feedings; the “crossings”; and the miracle stories “in between”).

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\(^5\) Though I am not sure what “Moses-Elijah” actually means, analytically, except that Horsley has his cake and eats it too. As will become clear, I also think the language of “crossings” a telling misnomer.
First, I can agree, for the sake of argument, that the feeding narratives “echo” (sound like) the wilderness feeding in Exodus 16. Achtemeier (1972a, 203) represents the consensus in this regard:

Mark 6:34a may be a reference to Num 27:16-18, with its leaderless masses; the ‘green grass’ of v. 39 may be an eschatological blooming of the desert as the ‘one like Moses’ repeats the manna miracle; the division into 100’s and 50’s in v. 40 may reflect the ordering of Israel in Exod. 18:13-27. (emphasis mine)

But are these “echoes” (each of which is qualified) precise enough or robust enough to designate Jesus a new Moses or his community the new congregation of Israel?

Achtemeier’s argument is even weaker than he allows, implicitly, by the language he uses. For instance: The image in Mark 6:34a (of the crowd “like sheep without a shepherd”) is a proverbial OT metaphor for the plight of the Jewish people suffering from leadership that is either absent or evil (so Marcus 2000, 406; thus 1 Kgs 22:17//2 Chr 18:6; Num 27:16-18; Jer 31:10; Ezek 34:5,8; Zech 10:2; Jdt 11:19). This means it is not only or even necessarily a reference to the people under Moses. What is more, by Achtemeier’s own account (1970, 280–281), it is actually an element of Mark’s redactional framing, which makes it an exceptionally poor candidate for explaining the preMarkan tradition.

Nor is the “green grass” of 6:39 much better. Green grass is not actually a part of the wilderness (Exodus) feeding at all. It is not mentioned explicitly in Isaiah’s eschatological vision (Is 35:1-2; cf. 2 Bar 29:5-8), “blooming” aside. At most it is implied in Isaiah’s imagery of (eschatological) abundance; but this is hardly exclusive to Isaiah. Dale Allison (1983) actually suggests that the green grass in Mark 6:39 alludes more closely to Ps 23.

Nor is the “organization of Israel” in Ex 18 (cf. Dt 1:15) actually analogous to Jesus’ direction to the crowd to “sit down” (Mark 6:39-40; 8:6). Moses’ “organization” of the people

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6 If the point were to allude to the “eschatological blooming” in Is 35, why not use the same language (or at least the same image) which Isaiah does?
(on his father-in-law’s advice) under rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens is not a physical division of the people at all, as seems to be the case in Mark 6:40. It is rather a delegation of authority: “Choose able men. . . and set the men over the people as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.” That this ordering of authority may have been reproduced at Qumran (in 1QS 2:21; CD 13:1; and 1QSa 1:14-15; cf. Marcus 2000, 408–409) does not actually change this.

Horsley (2001, 104) thinks that the twelve baskets full of broken pieces in Mark 6:43 (but not Mark 8:20) is the “most obvious” allusion of all; but this is telling. It should at least give pause that elsewhere, in precisely the text on which Horsley (2008a, 160) relies by analogy, which is 1 Kgs 18:31, such symbolic reference to the number of the tribes of Israel is made abundantly clear, very much by contrast with Mark 6:43. Guelich (1989, 343) offers a wiser word in this case:

Nothing in this account when taken by itself would lead necessarily to such a subtle reading beyond the obvious correlation between the number twelve and the same number of tribes and apostles. One could just as easily argue that the number devoid of any symbolism simply meant that each of the twelve disciples who had played such a prominent role in this story had received a basket of leftovers.

In any case, the story of the prophet Elisha miraculously feeding 100 men with 20 loaves in 2 Kgs 4:42-44 is at least as pertinent as any alleged allusion to the wilderness feeding, if not more so. Here the parallels include the prophet’s apparently impossible command (“twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain” for 100 men), the skepticism of the prophet’s assistant(s), the repetition of the command (overriding the stated objection), the distribution of

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bread plus either fish or ears of grain, and the confirmation of the miracle in terms of surplus
(Meier 1994, 960; Marcus 2000, 415–416; cf. Brown, R. E. 1971). It may be that Elisha’s
feeding also echoes an originary (Mosaic) feeding in the wilderness; but this means that the
ostensive “Moses motif” is applied to Jesus only through the medium of Elisha, which makes it
once removed at best.

In sum: If there is a textual allusion in the feeding stories in Mark 4-8, it is not
immediately obvious that it has to do primarily or even at all with the Exodus (wilderness)
feeding. Elisha’s miraculous feeding in 2 Kgs 4:42-44 is at least as relevant. Given that this is
Achtemeier, Mack and Horsley’s strongest argument, this should give pause.

• Second, if the echo of the wilderness feeding is difficult to discern, on closer
examination, the ostensive allusion of the lake crossings in Mark 4-8 to the epic crossing of the
Red Sea (as per Ex 14:21-22; Ps 77:20; Is 43:2,16; 51:10; Josh 3:7-17; 2 Kgs 2:8,14) is even less
clear. The sea waLuaking in Mark 6, for instance, is clearly and self-evidently remembered for
the events en route, not at all for the “crossing” itself, which is actually aborted mid-voyage. The
storm stilling in Mark 4 does effect safe crossing in a perilous situation, to be sure; but the
allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea is no more specific than this. What Gundry (1993, 243)
says in this regard applies to both episodes:

comes from a storm. There the wind enabled a crossing. Here it threatens a

8 Otto Betz (1972, 235–236) suggests more specific allusions: “The commandment of Jesus to
the disciples in Mark. 4.35 corresponds to God’s order to Moses in Ex. 14.15. In both stories,
the crossing and the miraculous salvation happens during the night (cf. Ex. 14.20), and the
response of the disciples to the epiphany of Jesus (Mark. 4.41) is quite similar to that of Israel
at the Red Sea (Ex. 14.31).” But these are extremely weak: Israel’s fear leads to belief; the
disciples remain dumbfounded. The crossing in Exodus happens after the night (during which
the pillar of cloud protects the people); in any case, the setting for the sea crossing in Mark is
redactional, by all accounts. And the word of the Lord to Moses in Ex 14:15 (“Why do you cry
to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.”) is hardly parallel to Jesus’ instruction to his
disciples (“Let’s go to the other side”).
crossing. There the crossing was by foot. Here it is by boat. There the water engulfed enemies. Here it engulfs no one (though boats beside Jesus’s have come along [in Mark 4:36b]). These differences are too pronounced for the parallel to stand.

There are actually (at least) three “crossings” (εἰς τὸ πέραν) in the preMarkan substratum (4:35/5:1; 5:21; 6:45/53); but it is not finally clear how the two celebrated “crossings” on which the allusion traditionally hangs are any more significant, as “crossings,” than the other, in 5:21, to say nothing of the routine to-ing and fro-ing otherwise attested in 6:53, 8:10 and 8:22.

Again, it is telling that the more immediate textual allusions, according to most Markan scholarship, direct attention away from the Exodus event to the story of Jonah, for instance, in the case of the storm stilling,\(^9\) or, in the case of the sea wakening, to the proverbial description of Yahweh/the gods.\(^10\) But this means in effect that the Exodus typology hangs by the narrowest of threads, namely, that the lake is called a sea (Horsley 2001, 105). If this “misnomer” can be explained otherwise, which I take Theissen (1991) to have done satisfactorily, in the name of the local perspective of those in the Valley, for whom the Mediterranean “sea” was a faraway phenomenon, then the allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea will need to be rethought, vis-à-vis the preMarkan miracles stories in Mark 4-8, at least when by this we mean anything more substantive or analytically instructive than simple reminiscence.

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\(^9\) See especially: Betz (1972, 235); Marcus (2000, 337–338); and Yarbro Collins (2007, 259–260). Typically noticed as parallels are: the predicament (Mark 4:37 // Jonah 1:4), the description of Jesus/Jonah sleeping in the boat (Mark 4:38 // Jonah 1:5), the desperate waking of the sleeper (Mark 4:38 // Jonah 1:6), the calming of the sea (Mark 4:39 // Jonah 1:15) and the reaction of the others on board (Mark 4:41 // Jonah 1:16).

Finally, even if we grant a mythological explanation of the two feedings and the two (ostensive) lake “crossings” in Mark 4-8, the same very clearly does not apply to the other miracle stories isolated in Mark 4-8. This is where Achtemeier, Mack and Horsley fail, that is, where it is most evident that their explanation does not account for (actually explain) the exegetical data (textual detail) in question.

Horsley, for instance, attempts to explain the miracle stories “in the middle of the sequence” (thus: 5:1-20; 5:25-34; 5:21-23, 35-43; 7:24b-30; 7:32-37; 8:22-26) by reference to the “popular traditions” surrounding Elijah and Elisha (2008a, 144):\textsuperscript{11}

Jesus’ exorcisms and healings in the middle of the sequence (including the raising of the [almost] dead, and perhaps also the multiplication of food) are reminiscent of Elijah’s (and Elisha’s) healings in renewal of a disintegrating Israel under the despotic foreign rule of Ahab and Jezebel.

But this is really only relevant to the raising of Jairus’ daughter, as Horsley himself acknowledges implicitly, and even this is not immediately clear. John Meier (1994, 783), for example, calls the apparent allusions of the episode of Jairus’ daughter to the Elijah and/or Elisha stories in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 and/or 2 Kgs 4:8-37 “unclear,” “indirect,” and, at crucial points, “not parallels at all.” Not very telling might be more accurate. In fact, the only similarities are structural (cf. Guijarro Oporto 2007b, 260): all three episodes have to do with the miraculous response of a “prophet” to the (apparent/approaching) death of a child. Jesus (in Mark 5) and Elisha (in 2 Kgs 4) are sought out, though Elisha has a previous relationship with the Shunamite woman, and both are brought to a private home whence the revivification of the child. For his

\textsuperscript{11} Santiago Guijarro Oporto (2007b, 259) points in the same direction, but Guijarro Oporto does not suggest explicit typology: “Between the miracles of the Elijah-Elisha cycle and those of the gospels there is an air of familiarity and a series of common elements which makes their relationship unmistakable.” These include at least the presence of an explicit group of witnessing disciples and the prophet’s response to very concrete need. According to Guijarro Oporto, Mark has integrated this popular tradition (thus especially Mark 6:14-16 and 8:27-30) but also attempted to reorient it in the shadow of the cross.
part, Elijah (in 1 Kgs 17) takes the initiative, rather brusquely, and removes the child in order to achieve the desired result in his own room.

Wendy Cotter (2001, 74) actually reduces the “echoes” to a single one: “it is only the private bedroom location in all three stories that is similar.” But at this level of detail (or its lack), the acts of Apollonius and Asclepiades are equally instructive—Apollonius likewise raises a girl with touch and word (in *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 4.45) and Asclepiades (according to Apuleius, *Florida* 19) actually interrupts a gathering of mourners and despite their mocking revivifies the one thought dead in the privacy of his own home. Far from assimilating Jesus to Elijah and Elisha, in other words, and in Cotter’s opinion (2001, 78), the miracle stories in Mark 5:21-43 might just as well remember an “‘Asclepian’ Jesus,” as they do a great Jewish prophet.

For his part, Mack (1988, 223) attempts to explain the miracle stories which come between the sea crossings and the miraculous feedings by reference to the “other miracles” which happen in the wilderness, namely: “quails, water from the rock, the serpent that saved, and many others including the recognition of Israel’s right to the ‘king’s way’ by other kings and peoples along the route.” Presumably Mack has in mind at least Exodus 16:12-13a (God’s provision of manna and quails), 17:4-7 (God’s provision of water at Horeb) and Numbers 21:6-9 (God’s provision of healing by means of the serpent).

But the analogy of these accounts to the healing and exorcism stories in Mark 4-8, individually or as a literary unit (which they are not), is too stretched to bear the weight Mack asks of it. The accounts which he musters (which do not include Elijah and Elisha) have almost no points of contact with the healing of a hemorrhage, the restoration to life of the twelve-year-old daughter, the casting out of a demon, the healing of blindness, etc., in Mark 4-8, either in form (the miracle stories behind Mark are discrete narratives whereas the “story” of the wilderness is not) or in function (the stories behind Mark have to do with the power of the holy
wonder worker, whatever else, but the story of the wilderness wandering has everything to do with God’s provision).

To his credit, Achtemeier simply admits as much. On the Exodus typology he is quite clear (1972a, 203 n.32):

Five miracles are reported from Egypt to Sinai in Exodus 13-17, but they are of somewhat different content than those in the catenae—there are no healings in the Exodus account—so that the sheer fact of five miracles in the wilderness account and in the catenae does not indicate any clear relationship.

His opinion as regards the “rough parallelism” of Mark 4:35-8:26 with the accounts of Elisha’s wonders (1972a, 204) is much the same:

Since such a parallelism requires considerable re-interpretation of the obvious point either of the Elisha or the Jesus tradition, along with some re-arranging, it has not found widespread acceptance.¹²

My point in the foregoing is this: If, perhaps, there are Biblical “parallels” in the Exodus story or otherwise in the name of Moses or Elijah or Elisha to the miraculous feedings in Mark 6 and 8 (which is possible) and to the sea crossings in Mark 4 and 6 (which is considerably less likely), even so, this still accounts for less than half of the exegetical material (miracle stories) which underlie Mark 4-8 (cf. Blackburn 1994, 363). Analogy to Moses/Elijah/Elisha simply does not account for the better part of the textual detail which comes between feeding and crossing, as Achtemeier, Mack and Horlsey actually admit, i.e., lest we forget: the demoniac in the

¹² Interestingly, when Raymond Brown (1971) attempts to draw the parallel between Elisha and Jesus he relies exclusively on texts outside of Mark 4-8 (thus, especially, Mark 1:40-45; John 6:1-15; Luke 7:11-17). He is “very dubious” about other alleged parallels and he concludes with the sort of caveat which undermines any attempt at easy explanation (1971, 92): “to be honest, one would have to note that there are numerous miracles of Jesus for which there are no parallels in the Elisha cycle, e.g., the exorcisms, and the healings of the blind and paralytic. Also, there are anecdotes in the Elisha cycle for which there are no real parallels in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ ministry, e.g., the floating axehead, and the purification of Jericho’s contaminated water.”
neighbourhood of the Gerasenes; the woman with the hemorrhage; Jairus’ daughter; the Deaf-Mute in the midst of the Decapolis; and the blind man in Bethsaida.

At their best, in other words, or as a result, the sort of (mythological) explanations which Achtemeier and Mack and Horsley invoke in the name of Moses or Elijah or Elisha (or some composite thereof) only go so far, which is to say: they do not explain very much at all of the miracle stories in Mark 4-8. This means we have work remaining; we are in need of another, more sensitive register, if we wish more fully to explain the textual material deposited in Mark 4-8.

Miracle Stories, In the Idiom of the Valley

What the mythological explanation of these stories fails to account for is a set of fairly (but not completely) conventional problems, at least as far as life in the Valley is concerned, every bit as characteristic of this collection of material as any allusion to Moses or to Elijah, if not more so: i.e., storms, some exorcism, hunger and the problem of disease. Here is the start of a more sensitive reading of the materials uncovered in Mark 4-8, a second register in the interest not of mythmaking but of local place.

Storms

Take, for instance, the episode remembered in Mark 4. It begins typically, as “sea” stories go, with a routine crossing of the Kinneret, at least as far as the text seems to be concerned:

διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν. . .
καὶ παραλαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καὶ ἄλλα πλοῖα ἦν μετ’ αὐτοῦ.

Of course there was nothing routine about “sea” travel in the ancient world, except perhaps the need to do whatever possible to avoid the sort of difficulties which soon engulf the
fishing boat in Mark 4. Lionel Casson’s famous catalogue (1974, 155–156) serves well enough to make the point, though it is obviously impressionistic:

[A] sneeze as you went up the gangplank was bad (although if you had sneezed to the right during the [pre-sailing] sacrifice, that was good), a crow or a magpie sitting, croaking, in the rigging was bad, a glimpse of some wreckage on the shore was bad, the uttering of certain words or expressions were bad. . . According to an ancient book on the subject, to dream of turbid waters or a key or an anchor was an unmistakable veto on travel by sea. Goats presaged big waves or storm- and terribly big, if the goats were black. Wild boars meant violent storms. So did bulls, and shipwreck if they gored. Owls and other night birds meant storm or pirate attack, gulls and other sea birds danger but not death.

“Seafaring” was risky business, in short, and evidently to be managed as such, all the more for those who made a living on the water as merchants or fishermen.  

Success was conspicuously celebrated (as per the merchant of Hierapolis, SIG 1229, and the first century CE fishing guild in Ephesus; cf. Horsley, G. H. R. 1989); but by implication it was never a sure thing.

The peculiar topography of the Lake Region brings this impression directly to bear on the boat in Mark 4. The “sea” in this case sits in a deep basin, fully 210 metres below sea level, which makes it 400-500 metres below the bluffs on the west and the dry TransJordanian plain on the other side. This means that the cool (gentle) sea breeze which arrives from the Mediterranean coast “on most days of the year” (Nun 1989b, 20) is funneled down into the Valley, in particular by way of the Arbel canyon and the Gennesar plain at the northern end of the lake, and onto the surface of the lake, stirring up the water regularly, if not always gently. In fact, because the Kinneret is relatively shallow, its waters are easily disturbed, even by what begins, normally, as a gentle sea breeze.

13 So Malina (2002, 359): “Given the structure of boats in the period, people who traveled over or worked on the sea literally put their lives in the hands of the spirit(s) or deity that revealed its moods in the varying movements of the sea.”
The wind that is more cause for concern comes from the east, from the slopes of Mt. Hermon to the northeast of the Lake Region. Because the air which enters the Valley from this direction is cooler and dryer than the breezes which enter the region from the Mediterranean, it is also forced down more sharply by the warm, stable air mass which normally sits above the water and because these cool, dry air currents meet the moist warm air of the Valley at its northern end, this also tends to be the locale of the most sudden storm activity. ¹⁴

These are the winds, at any rate, that cause the sudden and violent storms—*sharkiyeh* (easterlies) today—for which the region is known. They also help to explain the extraordinarily extensive harbour installations uncovered along the north by northwestern shorelines of Capernaum and Tarichaea/Magdala (cf. Nun 1989b; Nun 1999). This was a locale where protected harbours were particularly important for those who intended to make their living on the water, fishing or ferrying. In any case, this is the very peculiar geographical situation which makes the experience of sailing on the lake comparable to the otherwise rather incomparable experience of seafaring on the Mediterranean Sea, re. Lionel Casson.

It is no surprise, then, that the boats (cf. 4:36b) which depart routinely (as far as the text is concerned) in Mark 4 and again in Mark 6, from the northwestern shore, are soon in danger (or at least, in Mark 6, in adverse conditions). Those in the boat (in Mark 4, minus the sleeper a.k.a. “Teacher”) appear to understand full well the danger in which they find themselves. They know what is at stake when the sea “throws itself” (ἐπέβαλλεν; Mark 4:37) into their boat. Their cry: We are perishing! (ἀπολάμβανα) is exactly what we might expect in the face of shipwreck (cf. Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.19.16; *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 40; PPetrie 2.4).

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¹⁴ So Nun (1989c, 8) on the potential danger facing especially the Arab fishermen in the northeastern corner of the lake in the first quarter of the 20th century: “They had to be constantly alert for possible storms, which could suddenly appear and endanger both the boat and the catch; for the Arabs, unlike us, were far from their home port in Tiberias.” *Pace* George Adam Smith (1894, 144).
Once they have escaped the grasp of the “sea” in Mark 4, however, the group returns again to the water in short order (5:21), if not always of their own accord (at Jesus’ command in 6:45), or without misadventure (in 6:48). But the lake is never left behind. That is significant. The lake is not just an obstacle to be surmounted, metaphorically or otherwise. It is not treated in the text like a barrier or a boundary or a border, as though you could forget about it once you were beyond it; it is certainly not “crossed” once and for all (as, for example, the Red Sea in the Exodus narrative). To the contrary, in the textual material which constitutes our critical database, the disciples are in the boat (4:35-41; 6:35-44; 6:53; 8:10), just out of the boat (5:1-19; 21,25-34; 22-23,35-43; 8:22-26), or about to return to the boat (6:45-51a; 8:2-9) almost always, despite the danger of the water which they evidently know firsthand.

This pattern of movement (almost attraction) is telling, but not as regards the disciples per se. It is Mark who is interested in developing the character of the disciples, at least in part, by their demeanor on the water. The pattern of movement which converges always on the lake is telling as an expression of the Lake Region in the first century CE—where water was the centre of life and livelihood, for fish or ferrying, more highway than hindrance, in other words, even if on occasion, but not this occasion, it was also a place of swift destruction.

**Some Exorcism**

The boat’s destination in 5:1 has proven considerably more intriguing in the history of Markan scholarship than the uneasy reliance of its passengers on the water, that destination being “to the other side” (εἰς τὸ πέρας). Of course, it is actually also and equally “to the other side” (εἰς τὸ πέρας) that the boat returns, almost immediately, in 5:21, which makes it difficult to freight the expression itself with too much significance (*pace* Kelber 1974, 50 who calls it a “technical term”). Still, it is a commonplace of scholarship to find in the encounter that ensues under this
heading the “breakthrough” of at least the Markan Jesus to the Gentiles. Take Kelber (1974, 51–52), for instance:

Mark adopts this massive miracle because it underscores the extraordinary nature of what has happened. But for him the point of the miraculous happening does not lie in Jesus’ breaking of the demonic power, but in his breaking of the Gentile barrier. . . Similar to the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10, the Gerasene exorcism in Mark 5:1-20 constitutes the crucial watershed of the mission to the Gentiles.

It is all the more interesting, then, that Jesus encounters there (εἰς τὸ πέραν; 5:1) exactly what he has already encountered “at home” (εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ; 1:23), at least at first glance, namely, a person ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ (5:2//1:23) who cries out—τι ἐμοί/ἡμίν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ (5:7//1:24)—and is silenced by Jesus (though with greater difficulty in 5:7-13; cf. 1:25-26). The most notable difference on “the other side” is that the demon (or the crowd of demons) is associated by name with the spectre of Roman rule, literally: “My name is Legion” (5:9).15

To be sure, the Roman presence in the Valley in the first century CE is not a straightforward question. Rome (in the person of Pompey) annexed (Hasmonean controlled) Judaea in 63 BCE, the Lake Region included, and subsequently exerted its control in typical fashion, which is to say with as little cost in terms of money and men as possible. This seems to have meant administration by proxy at first; but the attempt to use the Hasmonean regime under the watchful eye (and military authority) of the consul of Syria (Aulus Gabinius from 57-55

15 Fergus Millar (1993, 32–33) makes the same point: in the early period in the Near East, the legionaries were the Roman empire, the Roman state was its military. The martial language in Mark 5:1-20, in which the Legion charges into the sea (with ὀρμάω), as a single company or cohort (ἀγέλη), (just) following orders, for Jesus had commanded it (with ἐπιτρέπω), makes this spectre an explicit part of the memory of Jesus in the Lake Region, according to Derrett (1979) and Dormandy (2000). The further suggestion, however, as per Hollenbach (1981), et al, that the man has internalized the oppression of the Roman occupiers, is unnecessarily allegorical.
BCE; Crassus from 54-53 BCE) soon gave way to a series of client-king designates, in the west and northwest, with only the occasional interlude of direct Roman rule. In the east, Gadara and Hippos, which had been included in the new Roman province of Syria after their “liberation” from Hasmonean rule in 63 BCE (Ant 14.74-76) were subsequently granted to Herod by Octavian (in c. 30 BCE), only to revert back to the province of Syria at Herod’s death in 4 BCE (Josephus, Ant 15.217; 17.320; War 1.396; 2.97; cf. Epstein 1993, 634; Weber 2007, 457).

In any case, three or four Roman legions are usually thought to have been resident (“stationed”) in Syria at the turn of the era, though all in the north, which puts them a long way from Galilee and the Lake Region: thus the III Gallica in Antioch; the VI Ferrata in Laodicea (on the coast); the X Fretensis in Cyrrhus (bordering Commangene) from as early as 6 CE (Theissen 1991, 110); and, after 23 CE, the XII Fulminata in Raphanaea (in the Orontes Valley) (cf. Josephus, Ant 17.286; War 2.40; 5.67; Tacitus Annals 4.5). Still, the evidence for their exact whereabouts is “very slight”; Fergus Millar (1993, 34) reasons simply that there were not very many other places in that part of Syria under direct Roman control suitable for its legions to be (cf. Farnum 2005, 81–89). After the Jewish revolt the X Fretensis was moved from Syria to Jerusalem and Caesarea Maritima. But not until c. 117 or 120 CE, when the VI Ferrata was brought to Legio in the Jezreel Valley, some 35 km from the lake, was a Roman legion actually, technically, “stationed” in Galilee (Safrai 1992; Chancey 2005, 43–70), at least so far as scholars can tell.

Chancey (2005, 53; following Sanders 2002b) makes of this silence an argument for the lack of any significant Roman presence at all in Galilee in the first century CE:

16 Herod (39-4 BCE); Herod Antipas (4 BCE - 39 CE; over Galilee, etc) and Herod Philip (4 BCE - 34 CE; over Gaulanitis, etc); Agrippa I (the territories of Philip from 37; those of Antipas from 40, until his death in 44 CE); and Agrippa II (the territories of Philip from 53; Tiberias, Tarichaea and Julias from c. 54/55, until 93 CE).
17 As in Gualanitis, etc, from 34-37 CE and in Galilee from 44-54 CE.
Roman troops were not regularly stationed in [Herod’s] territory. If his forces proved insufficient to deal with situations, he requested help from the governor in Syria, where four legions were typically stationed, mostly in the northern areas. Thus, there were apparently no Roman troops at Sepphoris in 4 BCE when rebels raided the armory after Herod’s death, and apparently none elsewhere in Galilee, since Varus had to bring down soldiers from Syria to quell the rebellions. Nor, apparently, were Roman soldiers in Antipas’s territory in the mid-30’s CE when hostilities broke out between him and the Nabateans; the nearest forces, once again, were in Syria.

Thus, we are assured (2005, 69) that:

In the time of Jesus, there were no Roman army units, no colonists, and probably few, if any, Roman administrators in Galilee. Jesus did not frequently interact with Roman soldiers there, nor did Galilee suffer the political and economic consequences of actual occupation.\(^{18}\)

But the implication of the data which Chancey marshals (i.e., that Syria’s legions were available “upon request”) is actually more instructive than he allows, and it points in quite the opposite direction: namely, that Roman legionaries were, in fact, unmistakably “in Galilee” at the turn of the era—“brought down” to Sepphoris and the surrounding area (under Varus) in 4 BCE, and again, in 37 CE, on their way to Perea (two legions, under Vitellius), which means at least in the Jezreel Valley, according to Josephus (Ant 18.120-125). Three years later, in 40 CE, we find the legate Petronius in command of half of Syria’s legionary force at the heart of the Lake Region, in Tiberias, confronted there by the populace while en route to Jerusalem at Gaius’ bidding (Ant 18.261-272)—which means that Roman troops did not always bypass the Valley on their way south, however typical or not the case may be. The fact that the Syrian legate (now Vibius Marsus) is once again in Tiberias some few years later (Ant 19.338-342), apparently

\(^{18}\) But compare Chancey’s conclusion (2005, 229): “The Romans did not occupy Galilee, but Jesus, growing up a few miles from Autocratoris, traveling extensively around what would become known as the Sea of Tiberias, would have had daily reminders of Rome nonetheless.”
unannounced but certainly not unaccompanied, suggests that this itinerary (through the middle of the Lake Region) was not all that exceptional.

In other words: it should be clear that Rome’s legions after 63 BCE were never far removed from the Valley and certainly not simply absent. Put otherwise, it is too much to assume their complete lack of influence simply because we have no evidence that they were regularly (permanently) “stationed” there. The lack of strong material evidence, one way or another, warrants a more cautious approach.

In fact, according to Millar (1993, 33–34), and effectively in reply to Chancey, it is not at all clear that Roman legions were regularly “stationed” anywhere at all in the early Roman Empire. At very least, they were not sedentary. The point bears repeating (as per Wheeler 2007, 241):

For the period between Augustus and Nero permanent legionary camps, except in Egypt, are unknown. Throughout Augustus’ reign (and the first century generally) *legions were still mobile*, dispatched as whole units when needed. (emphasis mine)

As regards the Valley, which of course included that part of the Roman province of Syria (with its four legions) which bordered on the lake, which is precisely (but not surprisingly) where Jesus encounters (the) Legion, Horsley’s conclusion (1995c, 115–116) is equally instructive:

Rome. . . did not run its empire by means of occupying troops. It had more- and less- subtle ways of deploying military violence. The ‘ forceful suasion’ of Roman military power functioned through the perceptions of its subject peoples. The Romans simply terrorized peoples into submission. . . The Roman legions were not (until much later) stationed evenly along the frontiers as occupying troops to defend the borders. Rather, *they were deployed as a mobile striking force.* (emphasis mine)

We know this much from Josephus, or at any rate we should have, for he describes (in graphic detail) the slaughter and enslavement of the people of Tarichaea in 54/53 BCE under Cassius (*Ant* 14.120; *War* 1.180), the routing of Herod’s (Hasmonean) opposition in 39-37 BCE.
around the lake (Ant 14.415-417, 421-430; War 1.304-307, 310-315), with the support of the usual two (!) Roman legions (Ant 14.448-456; War 1.330), the “expedition” into Galilee in 4 BCE under Varus (Ant 17.288-289; War 2.66), and eventually, in relation to the uprising in Jerusalem and its impact on the “Ten Cities,” including Hippos and Gadara (War 2.458-459; Life 341), the destruction, among many other settlements, of Tarichaea (War 3.445-505, 522-542) and Gamla (War 4.1-83), on either side of the lake basin.

The point, in other words, is amply demonstrated: “Legion,” when by this we mean the military apparatus of the early Roman Empire, is no stranger to those in the boat, who arrive on the other side with Jesus, in the territory of the Decapolis. Perhaps this is why, in the encounter that ensues, while Jesus steps out of the boat to confront the otherworldly force called Λεγιων (5:9), the disciples apparently do not. At any rate, they disappear from memory once the boat reaches the other side. Jesus is left to manage the problem of Λεγιων on his own.

**Hunger**

Hunger is on occasion more pressing a problem in the Valley—the Lake Region being at least in certain areas more “desert” (according to the disciples in Mark 8:4) than Josephus (War 3.516-519) would have his readers believe. Here again Markan scholarship has traditionally been fascinated by the (apparent) theological (ecclesiological) “symbolism” of Jesus’ response. The first feeding is “Jewish,” according to Kelber (1974, 48–57; cf. Myers 1988, 206–209; Boring 2006, 219; etc.); the second, because it allegedly takes place on the eastern side, is “Gentile” (Kelber 1974, 57–62; cf. Myers 1988, 209–210; Boring 2006, 218–221). To wit (Boring 2006, 219):

The second feeding story is clearly part of a larger pattern... Mark is developing the theme of the transition of the gospel from its Jewish origins to the Gentile context of his own time and place, with “bread” and “feeding” / “eating” as key symbols of this transition (cf. 6:31, 36, 41, 44, 52; 7:2-5, 28; 8:1, 4-6, 14-21). Both
the macrostructure and Mark’s general interest predispose the reader to think of one feeding as representing God’s provision for Jews, the biblical and traditional people of God, and the other feeding as the extension of God’s miraculous blessing to Gentiles, that is, a “feeding” of a group that is primarily Gentile but includes Jews, representing the integrated inclusive Christian community of Mark’s own time.

The Evangelist likewise appears to have directed the significance of the two feeding accounts away from the mundane, concrete exchange (feeding) which they seem to be about on the surface of things. For instance, he sets the first account under the heading of Mark 6:34—"And when Jesus went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” But this is not a “casual” description. Quite the contrary, it suggests that the issue, as far as Mark is concerned, is leadership: Who will “shepherd” God’s people? Jesus responds for precisely this reason, in Mark’s retelling, which is to say, he provides not because the people are hungry—in Mark’s introduction to the first feeding (6:30-34) there is no indication that this might be the case—but because he knows himself to be the (good) shepherd the people have been waiting for. Mark frames the second feeding similarly, with the terse (oblique) discussion in Mark 8:14-21: “We have no bread,” the disciples say. But the reader knows this is not true. They have “one bread” with them; to which Jesus replies with exasperation: “Do you not remember (i.e., the feedings)? Do you not yet understand?” I, for one, am not sure that I do understand. What is clear, however, is that Mark

19 So Boring (2006, 182–183): “‘Like sheep without a shepherd’ is not an ad hoc casual comment of the Markan Jesus as narrator, but echoes the phrase found explicitly in Num 27:17 (in the context of God appointing a new leader for Israel as Moses’ successor) and later in Israel’s history when human kingship had failed to represent God’s own rule over Israel (1 Kgs 22:17 // 2 Chron 18:16; Jdt 11:19). ‘Sheep’ is often a metaphor for the people of God (e.g., the familiar Ps 100:3; Isa 53:6), and ‘shepherd’ is not a soft, warm-fuzzy image but a royal one (e.g., 2 Sam 5:2; 7:7; 1 Chron 17:6; Ps 78:71).”

20 Nor does Markan scholarship: Thus GniLukea (1982, 304) and Boring (2006, 226) think the point is christological: the bread points to Jesus himself; Quesnell (1969, 230–239) and Marcus (2000, 510) assimilate the “one bread” to the eucharistic “bread of life”; and Kelber (1974, 61–62) and Donahue and Harrington (2002, 254) think the single loaf is emblematic of the unity of
intends an other than literal, symbolic, or metaphorical explanation of the feedings. Nonetheless, the hunger (i.e., for food) of the crowds is not so easily obscured (cf. 6:36, 37, 42; 8:2, 8).

To be clear, in the Lake Region the problem of food does not seem to have been a problem of regional production. However much Josephus might exaggerate or make representative the only agricultural land in the Valley worth mention, what he says of the Gennesar Valley (in War 3.516-519) is enough to make the point: The region was evidently not everywhere and always “a desert,” even if it experienced extreme climatological conditions, “pestilence,” where this means at least mosquito-born disease (Josephus, War 4.455-456), and the sort of population density that forced at least some of the elite of first century Tiberias to pursue estates beyond the Valley’s bounds. The potential of the lake to contribute in this regard is similarly clear—attested in the fishing implements recovered in Bethsaida/Julias (Rousseau and Arav 1995, 19–24; Fortner 1999) and the architectural remains being unearthed in Tarichaea/Magdala (Zangenberg 2001; 2003), whether we choose to make of this data a developed “industry” or not.

In the Lake Region, the problem of food is one of distribution. This much is implied by the way in which the disciples respond to Jesus in 6:36 and again in 6:37 in the name of the market economy: i.e., with money, they suggest, 200 denarii to be exact, the problem is solved.

In this regard, William Arnal (2000, 134–146) has argued convincingly that the use of money was on the rise in first century CE Galilee, especially in the Lake Region. It was in Tiberias, after all, that Antipas established the first mint in Galilee, coincident with the city’s foundation in c. 19/20 CE, which served to furnish at least the surround of the lake with the sort the Kingdom. Guelich (1989, 421) thinks “one bread” might simply be “a traditional splinter.”
of low-denomination copper coinage useful for local transactions but until then available only from Jerusalem or Tyre.\textsuperscript{21}

According to Arnal, Antipas’ attempt to urbanize the region (which is more easily documented) points in the same direction, i.e., toward a local economy which was increasingly monetized. Arnal’s argument (2000, 149–150) is significant enough to cite in full:

The foundation of Tiberias. . . should be seen as a deliberate part of Roman-Herodian policy and one that had a decisive and dramatic effect on the surrounding countryside, which had, prior to this foundation, lived in relative smallholder autonomy, protected by geography and the constraints on ancient transport from severe exploitation by Roman or Hellenistic powers based even as close by as Sephoris. The moment the brand-new city of Tiberias went up, however, there would have been a sudden and dramatic effect on the countryside around the lake. . . In particular, we would expect this region to experience a drift of goods toward the city (with attendant social effects at the village level), a (forcible) reorientation of agriculture toward urban consumption, progressive monetization of the economy, more frequent use of hired labor, greater efficacy in the extraction of taxes and other dues, incremental concentration of land with resultant tenancy and loss of smallholdings, cash cropping and specialization, greater trade, and a noticeable polarization of the divide between relatively wealthy and the very poor—in short, an incremental reduction, at a variety of levels, in the rural peasantry’s standard of living.

Such was clearly to the advantage of the local elite. For the majority of those who lived around the lake, however, Arnal suggests that the monetization of the economy was equally bad news and more or less unavoidable; that is to say, it was at one and the same time the catalyst for a whole series of changes which Arnal summarizes (albeit schematically) in terms of a declining

\textsuperscript{21} According to Meshorer (1982, 205 n.28), Antipas’ coins have been recovered in Tiberias, Arbel and Capernaum (in the Lake Region); but also in Meiron, Gush Halav and Nabratein. Dany Syon (2004; cited in Jensen 2006, 212–214, 299) adds to this list Paneas, Bethsaida, Gamla (61!), Hippos and Tarichaea/Magdala, among others. In view of their scarcity, compared to Hasmonean issue, Jensen (2006, 214–217) suggests that Antipas minted for political reasons, not market needs, and that he did so in such small numbers and with such modesty that the average Galilean would hardly have noticed. But Jensen still envisions an economy in the process of monetization.
“standard of living,” and simply part of the “new” (irreversible) reality in the Lake Region from the moment the city of Tiberias “went up.” It is not surprising, then, that in this geographical context the disciples would articulate their only apparent option when faced with the inevitable shortage of food in precisely these terms.

Jesus, notably, demurs, which is to say, he resists their terms of engagement. But at the moment the point to notice is the way in which the exegetical data in Mark 4-8 once again reflect with a certain degree of precision the historical coordinates of the Valley in the first quarter of the first century CE.

The Problem of Disease

Disease (and death) is evidently not so much, or exclusively, a problem of money or status—not directly, at least, or to the same degree. But, like the problem of hunger in Mark 6 and 8, in Mark 5 it is introduced in precisely these terms: the woman with the hemorrhage has neither money (“having spent all she had”) nor status (literally: “having had a flow of blood for twelve years”). She has no other recourse. But neither does the man who has name (literally: Ιατρος), which means status (as αρχισυναγώγος and pater familias) and evidently the means (τὸν οἶκον) to go with it.

It is striking that Sean Freyne (2007b, 158) describes the healing resources of the Valley likewise, which is to say, also in terms of their socio-economic and political ramifications:

[T]he Herodians and their elites [i.e., the wealthy and politically powerful] appear to have had a predilection for the whole rift region, north and south: Caesarea Philippi with its temple to Augustus and Roma, the new foundation of Tiberias, named after Augustus’ successor, Jericho’s royal palaces and the fortress palaces of Masada.

One particular advantage of this region [viz. of precisely the aforementioned locations] was the healing properties of its springs because of the volcanic nature of the rock formation. The Pool of Pan in Banias, the baths at Hamath Tiberias,
Hamath Gader and Calliroe, just 8 km from the Herodian fortress of Machaerus in the south are all mentioned by ancient writers. These places were frequented by the elites in antiquity because of the healing powers of the water. . . (emphasis mine)

Not only did the “healing powers” of the water characterize the Lake Region, however. Freyne (2007b, 158–159) suggests as well, as a consequence, the presence there of “professional healers,” namely, ιατροί:

There is evidence also of medical practitioners [i.e., professionals] in the region of the Lake. [For instance:] When Josephus was injured, he was brought to physicians (ιατροὶ) in Capernaum, he tells us (Life 403-4). And the proverb with which the Lukan Jesus assumes his audience in the Capernaum synagogue (sic) to be familiar—‘Physician heal yourself’ (Luke 4:23)- suggests peasant caution with regard to those operating as professional healers.

The latter were evidently not accessible (or even desirable) to everyone. John Scarborough’s summary (1969, 121) makes the point nicely, though it is obviously impressionistic:

Doctors’ fees became legends in their own time. Manilius Cornutus, ex-praetor and legate of Aquitania, agreed to a sum of 200,000 sesterces to be paid to a physician for treatment of a disease that left nasty scars [Pliny, 26.3.4]. Charmis of Massilia gained 200,000 sesterces by ‘selling’ one of his rich patients to a certain Alcon, the wound specialist [Pliny, 29.8.22]. Galen received 400 gold pieces from the consular, Boehus, for curing his wife [Galen, 14.647].” (cf. Cotter 1999, 202; Freyne 2007b, 159).

The association of Herodian interests with the healing springs of the region (manifest in terms of building projects: Caesarea Philippi with the springs at Banias, for instance, and Tiberias with Hamath Tiberias) suggests that the healing power of the region’s thermal water was also appropriated (controlled) by the elite and politicized by association. In either case, what seems on the surface merely a matter of biology—“between me, my doctor, and a bug” is how Crossan (1994, 81) puts it—is deeply implicated socially, economically and politically.
This would have been especially relevant to the Lake Region in the first century CE—which, while clearly a place of interest (construction) for the Herodians “and their elites,” was also a region known to have been especially susceptible to mosquito-born (especially malarial) infection. This was clearly so at the start of the twentieth century (Kligler 1930); but the hydrological situation in the Valley of stagnant water and marshland (especially at the estuaries of the Jordan, at Bethsaida, and the Yarmouk, on “the other side”) and the characteristic tropical temperatures, then as now, suggest that the same applied in the first (cf. especially Sallares 2002; Retief and Cilliers 2004; Reed 2008). In any case, aside from eulogizing its fertility, it bears remembering that Josephus also calls the Valley chronically “pestilential” (War 4.455-456).

In this light, what we find contained in Mark 4-8—which is debilitation (7:32-35, 37; 8:22-26), disease (5:21, 25-34), and death (5:22-23, 35-43)—is not surprising. The sick (5:23, 25-26), their families (5:22) and their nameless friends (7:32; 8:22) do what(ever) is required. That is not exceptional to the Lake Region. The woman with the hemorrhage essentially effects her own healing in a crowd, despite her status, behind Jesus’ back (5:27-29). The αρχισυναγώγος puts his reputation in the hands of a laughingstock (5:40). The man in the midst of the Decapolis who is deaf “with difficulty speaking” (κωφὸν καὶ μουγιλάλον) accepts the sort of technique (touch; spit and emotive “sigh”) and powerful word (“εφαφθα,” which the text is at pains to explain: “that is, ‘be opened’”) otherwise readily associated with magic (so Hull 1974, 76–78; Smith, M. 1978, 128; but see Theissen 1983, 63). Likewise the blind man (outside) of Bethsaida, but without the ρήσις βαρβαρικῆ.22

More significant, however, when we read these episodes for their historical coordinates, is what we do not find, which is any indication of the healing resources to which the elite of the

22 Mark 7:32-37 and 8:22-26 are evidently uncomfortable enough (or is it that they are clear enough?) that Matthew and Luke omit them (again, on the 2DH). Compare Matt 9:27-31 for a Matthean alternative.
Valley conventionally subscribed; i.e., what Josephus, for instance, who extols the “waters” (*War* 3.506,519) and attests the ιατροί (*Life* 403-404) in the Lake Region, would have led us to expect. The (one) exception in Mark 4-8 proves the rule; that is, when we do encounter (elite) “professional” practitioners in 5:26 (but only by implication), they are clearly insufficient (to the point of ridicule: the woman had grown “not better but worse”), typically (economically) out of reach, and, in any case, no competition for the healer who really matters, or “works,” namely, Jesus.

The contrast between what Josephus describes as evidently elite alternatives in the Lake Region and the option represented by Jesus deserves to be underlined. Josephus describes a region of “sweet waters” and temperate “airs,” according to Freyne, exactly in accord with the best (Greco-Roman) medical practice (cf. the Pseudo-Hippocratic: *Airs, Places and Waters*); and of course Josephus knows the region to be well staffed by medical professionals: he is treated promptly in Capernaum and then Tarichaea by doctors (ιατροί), not only for the injury sustained in his fall, but also, and notably, for fever (πυρεξίας). Mark 4-8, of course, contains nothing similar (but for 5:26). In fact, Jesus has very much the look of a last ditch hope, albeit a powerful one, as it turns out, at least for the woman with the hemorrhage and for Jairus. But the otherwise complete lack of involvement in these texts with “doctors” and the thermal “waters” belongs to the likely historical reality of “common people” in the Valley, for whom the resources which Josephus remembers were simply out of reach.

The foregoing can be summarized and focused as follows: What we find when we look past the usual (mythological/language-game) explanations of the miracle stories in Mark 4-8, which is to say, when we read this data again through a lens which allows us to register the sort of concrete exegetical (geographical) detail which Achtemeier and Mack and Horsley
prematurely resolve, or exclude, and allow this data, instead, to resonate (mean something)—is a local history of the Lake Region or a place memory.

The latter is Edward Casey’s term (2000 [1987], 181–215). He intends it to speak to the way in which memory is contained, preserved and stabilized in place, which is to say, fastened or fixed by the persistence and the particularity of concrete place. Because place endures, in other words, and is discrete and bounded, it shelters and sustains (contains) memories which would otherwise be dispersed and lost. Conversely, place presents us with “a plethora of cues” for remembering (2000 [1987], 186): “Thanks to its ‘distinct potencies,’ a place is at once internally diversified—full of protuberant features and forceful vectors—and distinct externally from other places. Both kinds of differentiation, internal and external, augment memorability.”

This is the sort of thing we find in the Lake Region of Galilee—“protuberant features” and “forceful vectors”—which I take to mean concrete material characteristics which apply precisely there and not elsewhere or simply everywhere, which make for definite place, like the lake or the gradient or the lines of connectivity across the water. It is also, on a second and more sensitive register, what structures (shelters and sustains) what we find in Mark 4-8.

So let us say this: Granted that the memory in question is magnified by the accomplishments of Jesus, i.e., that it is interpreted, as memory is wont to become, and framed by reference to Jesus’ “mighty deeds.” Granted that the “history” of this local place is dramatized, which is only to say that what might have been listed as a sequence of harbours (for instance, on the model of the contemporaneous Periplus Maris Erythraei; cf. Casson 1989) is told instead as a series of more or less contiguous narratives. Still, at its root, which is to say, in especially the geographical details by which it is composed or compressed and organized (remembered), it is a mostly mundane statement (memory) of a very particular place.
To wit, and in summary:

• The lake is pivotal. Jesus and the disciples have repeated, firsthand experience of the dangers it poses, but in Mark 4-8 they are nonetheless consistently on the lake (4:36b-41; 6:45-51a, 53), just off the lake (5:1-20; 21-43; 8:22-26a), or about to return to the lake (6:35-44; 8:2-10). The boat is often present (4:36 [x2], 37 [x2]; 5:2, 18, 21; 6:32, 45, 47, 51, 54; 8:10). But the lake is ubiquitous. It is the constant in the exegetical data(base) underlying Mark 4-8; which only stands to reason given what we otherwise know, now, about the importance of fishing and ferrying to the life and livelihoods of those living in the Valley.

• Legion of course is an issue; which is a way of underlining in the language of Mark 5 what is obvious from a reading of Josephus, namely, that the Roman military was not an unfamiliar presence in and around the Valley in the first century CE, on either side of the lake, even if not exactly typical or even regularly there until the end of the first century CE. But if Legion’s demise in Mark 5 is richly played out in the conventional language of exorcism, it is clear enough that this is a statement of desire not reality. Legion only vacates the land metaphorically.

• Food is a problem. The crowds in Mark 6 and Mark 8 are hungry; the story in either case is not finished until all have eaten, and been filled, even to excess. Just as telling, however, is the initial response of the disciples: when faced with the inevitable food shortage, they respond in the name of the market economy. But this is not surprising in the Lake Region in the first quarter of the first century CE, which is to say, in the “shadow” of the new city Tiberias.

• Healing is more complicated. In a place that is otherwise remembered for its thermal waters and, at least on one occasion (Josephus, *Life* 403-404), for its “doctors,” in Mark 4-8 it is a local healer/wonderworker that figures to the exclusion of all others (but for 5:26). Most striking, however, is the fact that this apparently applies equally to those with nothing left to lose
(like the woman with the hemorrhage) and those who evidently stand to lose it all (like the synagogue ruler).

Here is a set of (historical) coordinates which Achtemeier, et al, do not engage, much less explain, which are nonetheless contained within the miracle stories in Mark 4-8, the convergence of which expresses (displays) certain aspects of life in the Lake Region. With perhaps the exception of the story of Legion, which I take to relate the Roman military apparatus to the experience of life in the Valley, these stories do not merely “stand for” something else which is less literal than what they seem to be about, which is, just to be clear: danger at sea, Empire, food shortage, debilitation, disease and death. These stories are not entirely explained by recourse to Israel’s epic or by reference to its foundational heroes. They are not first of all symbolic episodes, however much the Evangelist Mark will subsequently elaborate or embellish them, with other interests in mind (as per Chapter Four). They are what they give every indication of being, which is an articulation or an expression of the exigencies of life lived at the bottom of the Lake basin, where water means life (and sometimes death), where Empire looms on the horizon, however indistinctly, in the presence of hunger, debilitation, disease and death. In other words: they are a memory of life in the particular place called the Lake Region.

Miracle Stories, In the Name of Jesus

Of course the miracle stories deposited in Mark 4-8 also claim to be the memory of a (particular) life, in the (particular) place of the Lake Region, in the (particular) name of Jesus. In other words, however much “at home” in the Lake Region these stories have proven to be, however much they express or display what it meant to live there, as a kind of local history of the Valley, or a place memory, which is how I have explained them to this point, they are also inhabited by the figure of Jesus. They are also “about” him, that is, as a Lake Regioner, to be sure, but also as a Lake Regioner of a peculiar, memorable sort.
Said otherwise, the clusters of material which underlie Mark 4-8 also remember the person Jesus, on and around the water, like everyone else in the Valley, but differently. Jesus in Mark 4-8 encounters the danger of the “sea,” the otherworldly force of “Legion,” hunger, debilitation, disease, death; in short, he is remembered in terms of life as it was lived (experienced) there, according to the exigencies which we have identified as having to do with that particular (local) place, which is to say, in the idiom of the Valley. But at the same time, and in each encounter, the possibility of life in the Lake Region is remembered differently in Jesus’ name. Under the aegis of Jesus, life in the Valley is made more manageable. Here is another register—a third reading in the interest not of myth nor of local place but of a particular life—which still needs to be parsed out.

**To the Other Side (and Back Again)**

The memory of Jesus in the Lake Region begins where one might expect, namely, on the water. Jesus has initiated a trip across the lake “to the other side” (4:35: εἰς τὸ πέραν). There is no particular reason given for the trip, which is a way of saying that a (quick) sail across the water was completely normal. Jesus and his companions participate like everyone else in the Valley in the routine movement of goods and people around and across the surface of the lake. Just to make this clear, Jesus’ boat is one of several (4:36b).

That Jesus is not your typical Lake Regioner, however, becomes clear in what follows. As any good sea story, this one involves a storm, “a great wind” (λαύλαψ μεγάλη), of the sort for which the Kinneret is notorious. But while the waves are trying to get into “into the boat,” Jesus, “in the boat,” is fast asleep. Commentators are quick to explain this detail away as indicating Jesus’ trust (Taylor 1966, 276), his “sovereignty and security” (Gnilka 1978, 195; Guelich 1989, 266), his divinity (Batto 1987, 175; Marcus 2000, 338), or his humanity (Boring
2006, 146); but it is difficult not to hear a note of burlesque in the contrast between the raging “sea” and the disciples (“We are perishing!”), on the one hand, and Jesus, on the other, who is sleeping, indeed “on a pillow” (ἐπὶ τὸ προσκεφαλίον). In any case, it could not be clearer that the passenger in Mark 4 is of a different stripe than your average “bear” in the Lake Region.

This is immediately confirmed: when his companions wake him (“and when he rouses himself”; the text draws this out), with the to-be-expected exclamation—We are perishing!—he knows immediately what to do about the trouble they’re in and does it, in short order, “rebuking” the sea23 and stilling the wind with two words: “Peace. Be still.” (σιῶπα, πεφιμωσό).

Jesus has considerably more to say to his companions, though: “Why are you cowardly?” first, which would seem to say that the “great storm” was actually no cause for commotion (much less for waking him up); and then, climactically, “Don’t you have faith?” (οὐχ ἔχετε πίστιν;)

Again, commentators struggle to know exactly what this term (πίστις) means here: perception of Jesus’ “cosmic stature” (Marcus 2000, 334); trust in God (“like that of Jesus”) (Beavis 2011, 92); or understanding (Guelich 1989, 268)? Theissen (1983, 130) tells us that it belongs with miracle in ancient thought but this only begs the question. If anything, it belongs more clearly to the lexicon of patronage, πίστις in the ancient world being the sort of (personal) loyalty (“commitment” or “solidarity”) which binds client to benefactor (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003, 359; Crook 2004, 201–214).

In any case, the distinct impression is that if the disciples had anything of this quality (πίστις), they too would have been able to solve their problem. Being without it, they are left, after the “great wind” and the “great calm,” in a state of “great fear” and, obviously, some confusion, if we take their concluding question at face value: “So who is this?”

If the disciples do not know (anymore) who their passenger (really) is, it is striking that the demon on the other side immediately does. No sooner has the boat landed “in the neighbourhood of the Gerasenes” (5:1), which is perhaps as much to say according to 5:20, “in the Decapolis,” than the man “in an unclean spirit” sees Jesus disembark “from afar,” runs up and throws himself down in front of him to address him by name (5:6): “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” This is a striking improvement on the disciples’ confusion. It is also the only time in Mark 4-8 that Jesus is addressed by name.

Not to be outdone, Jesus asks (!) him his name (5:9a). And with the man’s reply—My name is Legion (5:9b)—the power dynamic shifts, which is to say, once empowered of the unclean spirit’s name, the story becomes about Jesus’ successful negotiation of the possessed man’s release (5:10-13). Of course, there is the question of why Jesus, “Son of the Most High God,” who has just “rebuked” the sea (with the term connoting an exorcism) and flatly silenced the wind, could not simply dismiss this spirit as well.24 But that fact alone is interesting.

The man’s reply in the name of Legion, though it is interpreted initially in terms of amount (“for we are many”), also brings to bear on the account the spectre of the Roman legion(s), who like the unclean spirit, certainly did not plan on vacating the region. Saying this does not mean that the story is really about the latent desire to “drive them [the Romans] into the sea like pigs” (Theissen 1983, 255). It is “really” about the way in which Jesus confronts (has a conversation with) that which others (from “city and country” and from the boat) dare not approach, and manages it, conventionally as far as exorcisms go.25 But the political nuance on

24 Both Mark and Matthew seem to do something about this: Mark by adding mention in 5:8 that Jesus had already commanded him to come out, hence his agitation; and Matthew by replacing Jesus’ question (What is your name?) with his command, in 8:32: “Go!”

25 Thus, according to Campbell Bonner (1943), the exorcist’s work is “most thorough and effective” if (i) the demon is made to speak “in answer to the operator’s conjurations;” (ii) the demon is made to tell is name; and (iii) a visible proof is supplied, “in the form of some violent action,” that the demon has departed.
the eastern edge of the Valley, viz. in the Roman province of Syria—which is where Legio X Fretensis had been “stationed” (operating) since 6 CE, according to Theissen (1991, 110), albeit typically in the far north—is not to be missed if and when we read this memory as an artifact of the Lake Region.

As it turns out, the “price” for the return of the man to his “right mind”—a great “company” of pigs—is too high for the residents of “city and country”; or it may be that they are simply no more and, in fact, considerably less comfortable with the sort of δύναμις (5:30) with which Jesus is “possessed” (cf. Mark 1:10,12; etc.) than they were with the (“unclean”) spirit which possessed the man. This, I think, is the more likely explanation for their reaction as Mark elaborates it. In any case, like the disciples in the boat (4:41), they are afraid (5:15); so they ask Jesus to leave.

Jesus complies with their request. But on “the other side,” again, he is confronted almost as quickly by the desire for wellness. A woman “who had had a flow of blood (ρόσει αίματος) for twelve years” seeks it (σωθησομαι) for herself. An ἀρχισυναγωγος named Jairus seeks it (σωθησομαι) for his “little daughter.” The situations of these two Lake Regioners could not be more different. But they both believe quite naturally—unselfconsciously and even shamelessly—that “wellness” in the form of physical healing (to be clear, in the case of Jairus’ daughter, ζηση) is what Jesus does.

Both will find resolution to their problems in the presence, or at the hands, or through the mouth, of Jesus. But what is more interesting, for our purposes, is precisely what this presence and activity entails.

In the first story, of the woman with the hemorrhage, it is enough simply to touch Jesus’ clothes to discharge the δύναμις with which he is possessed (charged). The text makes quite a point of this: describing the act in 5:27 (“she touched. . .”); then the woman’s premeditation in
5:28 (“If only I touch. . .”); Jesus’ awareness in 5:30 that δύναμις had “come out of him” (“Who touched. . .?”); and the disciples’ misunderstanding in 5:31 (“You see the crowd pressing. . .”). Jesus, after the fact (compare Matt 9:22), credits her πίστις, which is precisely what the disciples did not have on the lake crossing.

In the second story, of Jairus and his daughter, πίστις is again at issue. But this time it is explicitly contrasted with the sort of fear which would seem to have meant, for Jairus, accepting the reality of life, and in the case of his daughter, of death. It is not clear whether Jairus should be taken as another example of πίστις though; for in the end, what “raises” his daughter, notably, in the face of the derision of the “professional experts” on death (Marcus 2000, 371; Boring 2006, 162; i.e., the customary mourners), is a combination of Jesus’ touch and foreign (Aramaic) word—ταλιθα κοµι (or Ταβιθα or ραββει θαβιτα κοµι) (cf. Metzger 1971, 87)—which gives every appearance of being a ρήσις βαρβαρική viz. “magic word” (cf. Lucian, False Philosopher 9; Theissen 1983, 64, 150). In other words, to Jairus’ benefit, this “Teacher” (5:35) is obviously also more than that.

In sum, before moving on to the next cluster of memory in Mark 4-8, several things are becoming clear about the one called Jesus. His identity, however, is not one of them. Only the demon on the other side knows his name. His closest associates are last heard in a state of confusion (4:41), from which point, in 5:1-20 and 21-43, he operates virtually on his own (but for 5:31). It is clear, though, that he works through word (4:39; 5:9, 13, 41) and touch (5:27-34, 41). The latter is associated with a certain δύναµις (power) about him which he (or he alone) does not completely control. He is begged to leave, on one side of the lake (5:17), and laughed at on the other (5:40), but it is also clear that he is (still) the one to turn to, on either side of the Valley, when all else has failed. The text presents this stance in the language of πίστις—which the disciples lack, to Jesus’ surprise, but the woman with the hemorrhage has clearly understood
(harnessed). The alternative, as always (4:41; 5:15, 36), is fear, which for Jairus meant accepting the reality of life, viz. death.

**Between Gennesaret and Bethsaida**

The memory of Jesus in the Lake Region continues, in a second cluster of material, beginning with a scene remembered, at least in part, in the language of a grand banquet (cf. the vocabulary of reclining as per a symposium in 6:39). The disciples are once again on stage, after Jesus had left most of them behind in 5:37, though it is not immediately clear that they have recovered from their initial “fear” (4:41). The problem which is now most pressing is the almost complete lack of food—five loaves and two fish is all that can be found—that is, before Jesus assumes the role of host and benefactor.

The disciples seem to recognize this reality before Jesus does. At any rate, they come to him and demand (in the imperative) that he take action (4:36): “Send them away in order that by going into the country and the villages round about they might buy themselves something to eat.” This is interesting. Commentators generally recognize and make a point of the disciples’ willingness to leave the people to fend “for themselves” (cf. Marcus 2000, 417–418; Boring 2006, 184). Jesus is then said to (re)call the disciples back to their “apostolic mission” in his response, i.e., with the emphatic pronoun: “Give them something to eat yourselves.”

To read this text in the Lake Region, however, is to notice something else, in addition, which has to do with the problem of food distribution, namely, the terms of the disciples’ response. In a word: the disciples’ answer to the problem of food security in Mark 6 not only shifts (shirks) the burden of responsibility, it also has everything to do with the market economy: “Send them away,” they reason, so that they can “buy” (ἀγοράσωσιν) something to eat. When Jesus demurs—“Give them (something) yourselves”—they become increasingly shrill: “Are we
to buy (ἀγοράσωμεν) bread to the tune of 200 denarius?” (Zerwick 1996; cf. Taylor 1966, 323; Myers 1988, 206; Marcus 2000, 407). Of course this is a considerable sum of money, but that is not the point; the pertinent point, which follows from the repetition of ἀγοράζω in 6:36 and 37, is that the disciples are only able to imagine one solution to the problem of hunger, namely, in terms of money, or commerce.

This is not altogether unexpected or illogical in the Valley in the first quarter of the first century CE. Sean Freyne, for instance, has championed a view of “Herodian economics” in which precisely the “marketization” of the Galilee was Antipas’ primary (economic) intent, at the turn of the century, with the decision to found Tiberias c. 19/20 CE, as Arnal also points out, and to establish a mint there, shortly after, as case in point (Freyne 1994; 1995a; Arnal 2000). But Jesus’ response is different. Jesus’ response, according to Ched Meyers (1988, 206) has “nothing to do” with the dominant economic order. Better, however, would be to say that it has everything to do with the emerging economic “order” of the Lake Region in the first century CE; simply by contrast.

Because the disciples cannot imagine another response to the reality before them, it falls to Jesus to show them what he means. So, according to Myers (1988, 206), “he determines the available resources, organizes the consumers into groups (6:39f.), pronounces the blessing (cf. 14.22), and distributes what is at hand (6:41).” But this is really only to say that he acts the (expected) role of benefactor and host. In other words, he throws a “banquet.” What ensues likewise has every appearance of a typical meal; with the exception, which is underlined by repetition, that when Jesus is the benefactor there is more food than first meets the eye—

 everybody eats (καὶ ἔφαγον πάντες); everyone is stuffed (lit. καὶ ἔχορτάσθησαν); even to excess

26 Myers is more attentive to this register than most. But he also goes too far when he suggests (1988, 206), because there is nothing supernatural “reported to have transpired,” that the only “miracle” in view is “the triumph of the economics of sharing.”
(καὶ ἠραν κλάσματα δώδεκα κοφίνων πληρώματα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ιχθύων). With the crowd taken care of, Jesus and the disciples are freed to resume their harbour-jumping along the north shore of the lake toward Gennesaret (on the argument, as per Chapter Four, that 6:53 belongs to the memory in 6:34, 35-44).

The boat is soon on the water again, though, bound for Bethsaida, further to the northeast. But, in what turns out to be an ominous departure from the norm, this time Jesus is not onboard. This is actually the first time in the body of memory collected in Mark 4-8 that the disciples are remembered on their own. So it is not surprising that their experience turns out to be a torturous one (with βασανίζω).

Indeed, it is more or less routine (cf. Marcus 2000, 430–431) to read into the verb which is used to describe their experience on the lake without Jesus the sort of (apocalyptic) baggage occasionally associated with it elsewhere, for instance, in the Apocalypse of John (9:5; 11:10; 12:2; etc); thus, the disciples’ distress (and even the contrary wind) is a sort of proleptic “eschatological tribulation.” But this goes too far. When the memory of the disciples straining at the oars (ἐν τῷ ἐλαύνειν) is read (remembered) in the Lake Region, it is also entirely unnecessary. A countervailing wind from the northeast is no small thing on the Kinneret, as we have seen, even if, in this case, the story gives no indication that the sailors experienced themselves in imminent danger, at least until they see what they think is a ghost (φάντασμα) approaching on the water.

More to the point, though, what is remembered as “torment” without Jesus, which is then compounded by his approach, to become sheer “terror,” is resolved summarily in his presence, on his arrival into the boat. Not that the sailors summarily reach their destination; but the memory in Mark does not (need to) go so far. With Jesus “in the boat,” life on the lake is made more manageable. That is the point, or the consequence, which is dramatized (remembered) in Jesus’
coming to the disciples over the water. Trouble on the lake, such as is bound to happen (even routinely: ἐν τῷ ἐλαύνειν), and “terror” at the unknown “in the midst of the sea” (ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης) are stayed (managed) by the presence of Jesus, who, in any case, if memory serves, is only a short walk away.

Jesus “on the sea,” however, is also part (and parcel) of this memory; in fact, Jesus “on the sea” is part of the problem, as far as the disciples are concerned, at least initially. Suffice it to say this for present purposes: Jesus on the sea is initially remembered in the guise of a φαντασμα, a sort of supernatural shape shifter. That is interesting given that the ones in the boat, more than anybody else, would have (should have) been the ones to recognize him. Jesus’ words on the sea talk back to this impression however: “Take heart. It’s me. Don’t fear.” They are intended at a literal level to disabuse the sailors of their (mistaken) suspicion. Insofar as once again, the sailors’ challenge is articulated as fear (and fear itself), Jesus’ words also serve to recall the first time they were on the sea (“in the boat”) together. But the question, which was earlier left hanging (“So who is this?”), is hardly answered any more directly here.

With Jesus in the boat (again), they appear at Bethsaida without further comment, and Jesus is immediately presented with another problem. One gets the clear impression that Jesus’ reputation precedes him. This time, however, the issue is blindness.

Commentators have been quick to make the blind man of Bethsaida emblematic of the Markan disciples, blindness also being one of the disciples’ primary problems according to Mark’s Jesus (cf. 8:18). Mark’s placement of the episode immediately before the confession of Peter is all the more interesting in this connection. The man’s halting cure ostensibly anticipates the disciples’ (Peter’s) equally halting confession. Recovery of sight in one case suggests, 27

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27 See above, Chapter Four, for the argument that the position of 8:22-26 in the Gospel of Mark is an element in Mark’s design, without, however, implying a written source, as per Achtemeier (1972a, 266 n.2, 288 n.89).
perhaps, that such remains a possibility in the other, despite the disciples’ record to this point (though what ensues in Mark 8:27-33 suggests otherwise.) But this allusion is entirely of Mark’s creation.

Without Mark’s frame, what is remembered here in connection with Bethsaida seems a bit dissonant—enough so, at any rate, for Matthew and Luke to have avoided it (on the assumption of the 2DH). Those who bring the man to Jesus think that what is required is touch (with the same verb used in Mark 5). Jesus evidently thinks that what is needed is privacy, which may suggest a magical connotation to what follows. Saliva, as is often noted (Theissen 1983, 63; Yarbro Collins 2007, 393), is a standard in the lexicon of healing substances, though in Pliny (NH 28.7), for instance, this has to do with saliva rubbed into the eyes; and at Epidaurus (4, 9) it is actually the saliva (lick) of various sacred snakes and dogs within the temple that is thought effective.28 In any case, Jesus simply spits “in” the man’s eyes. He also lays his hands on him, finally, and then again, when it turns out that the first “treatment” was not adequate, but this time “on his eyes.”

By any account, this is a dizzying mix (memory) of magical and therapeutic devices—more complicated but in some ways also more concrete than, for instance, the memories, in the first cluster, of Jesus’ powerful word (4:39; 5:41) and almost “electric” presence (5:27-31). Still, the result in the end, for the man who was blind, is the same as it was for the hungry crowd and the terrified sailors—well being—which may be just the point to notice about this second cluster of memory: Jesus the preternatural benefactor gets results, one way (as a folk healer) or another (as a magician).

28 Hull (1974, 76–78) argues, convincingly in my opinion, that spittle was recommended more for its efficacy “as healing magic” than for its “rational therapeutic value.”
From Decapolis to Dalmanoutha

Jesus appears at the start of a third cluster of memory “in (a) house,” which is to say, in a private setting. This is a first to this point (except for 5:39f, where he is taken into the synagogue ruler’s house). In fact, the “in house” memory that follows is different for a number of reasons. For one, the person whom Jesus encounters—or rather the person who “encounters” him, because he did not have the power (ηδονήθη) to be hidden—is identified not by her condition (as per 5:2; 5:25; 8:22) but by her ethnos: she is Ἐλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γένει (i.e., “Greek, Syrophoenician by birth”). She “asks” for help not for herself but for her daughter—which makes her at once like Jairus (as a parent) and not at all like Jairus, who, it will be recalled, falls down before Jesus and begs him to come (appropriately; cf. 5:22-23; cf. 5:10, 12, 17; 7:32; 8:22). Jesus’ response could also not be more different. With the ἀρχισύναγος, he wordlessly agrees (καὶ ἀπῆλθεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ); but with the Ἐλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γένει, he resists, in fact refuses, which is putting it nicely, whatever exactly he means by what he says (“it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”).

But the focal point of the memory seems to be the woman’s witty response or “rhetorical coup” (Marcus 2000, 469): “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” At any rate, this “saying” ends the encounter: Jesus dismisses her (υπαγε), as he is wont elsewhere (5:19, 34), and informs her that the demon (from that moment; in the perfect tense) has left her daughter. This is the only story where a healing or exorcism is announced (remembered) in the perfect, as already accomplished; but it is not the only time that Jesus gives credit where credit is due. In fact, he says much the same to the woman with the hemorrhage; i.e., both she and the Syrophoenician woman are sent away with ὑπάγω (cf. the Gerasene demoniac in 5:19), with what they came for accomplished, in the perfect tense, on account of some action on their part. Both of them stop Jesus in his tracks. In the first memory, this is called πίστις; it is, in any case, what
makes the woman well. In the latter, it is by the woman’s word (διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον) that her daughter is made well. It is only Matthew that cloaks (honours) the woman’s (speech) act in the language of πίστις (in Matt 15:28). But in either case, the point is fascinating: Jesus in the Valley, on either side, is as much a conduit (or a conductor) for the δύναμις which possesses him as he is in control of it.

In the next account, remembered “in the midst of the Decapolis,” which is to say, on the eastern side of the Valley, Jesus looks much more the conventional magician. Like the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida, the story opens tersely: this time “they” bring to him a man who is deaf “with difficulty speaking” (καὶ μογιλάλον). And again those who bring him, “beg” Jesus to cure him. Interestingly, however, they do not ask that Jesus simply to “touch” him (with αὐτῷ; as they did in Bethsaida in 8:22; cf. 5:27-31). They beg Jesus to “lay on his hand” (ἵνα ἐπιθῇ ἀντὶ τὴν χειρα)—which is precisely the language used to report (remember) what Jesus actually does with the blind man previously in 8:23 and 25. It is as if the memory of Jesus in the midst of the Decapolis presumes the memory of Jesus in Bethsaida; in other words, the petitioners, who have heard what Jesus did there, are asking for an encore.

Not being one to take advice, however, here anymore than in Bethsaida, Jesus takes the man away (as per 8:23) and proceeds to do what he is wont, which turns out to be a procedure thoroughly invested in the standard techniques of ancient Hellenistic magic: literally, “he thrust his fingers into his ears and having spit he touched his tongue and having looked up into the sky he sighed and he says to him: Ephaphtha.”

29 Is the man also possessed by a demon? Deissmann (1907, 88) thought that the “unbinding” of his tongue in 7:35 suggested as much.
30 On spittle, see now Eric Eve (2008).
31 On “sighing” as a “conventional feature” of the wonder worker’s behaviour, see Hull (1974, 84) and Bonner (1927, 172–174).
Commentators are at pains to undercut what seems the obvious implication of so extended a collection of “extraordinary” (thaumaturgical) traits. Take, for example, what Eugene Boring says (2006, 216–217):

[T]he use of touching with the fingers, application of saliva, sighing (either as groaning during the struggle with the demon causing the affliction or drawing in the breath / spirit as a means of charging the healer with charismatic power), and pronouncing strings of magic words are for Mark no longer merely the techniques of Hellenistic magic; there are overtones of Christian meaning as well. (emphasis mine)

The implication of course is that the actions described here, on the face of it, “before Mark,” are exactly what they look like, which is, “the techniques of Hellenistic magic.” Boring (2006, 217) attempts to explain them otherwise:

For a community steeped in biblical imagery, the healing touch of the finger is reminiscent of the “finger of God” that performed the exodus miracles, and is related to the power of the Holy Spirit in Christian tradition (Exod 8:19; cf. Q=Luke 11:20/Matt 12:28). Touching with saliva reminds the reader that ritual impurity was not communicated by bodily fluids (7:1-23). Christian readers would note that Jesus looks to heaven as a sign that the power at work in him comes from God, and that sighing is connected to the presence of the Spirit in prayer (cf. Rom 8:26). . . “Ephphatha” [sic] could have sounded like a magic word to the audience of the pre-Markan story (abracadabra, hocus pocus, open sesame), but Mark’s translation shows it is an ordinary word of Jesus’ native language. It is not magic, but authoritative command.

But the lengths to which Boring must go effectively illustrate the point. Jesus here is framed (remembered) in the standard language of Hellenistic magic. What he does, however, whatever we call it, is what he does elsewhere (always) in the Lake Region, which is to respond directly and, as it turns out, quite effectively to the problem set before him.

The cluster of memory begun “in (a) house” ends with a crowd, 4000 strong, on the side of the lake, with Jesus again in the (familiar) role of benefactor. Commentators are quick to locate this feeding on the other side of the lake, in a Gentile context, from which position it is
said to underlie Jesus’ inclusive kingdom (so Kelber 1974, et al), anticipate the future of Mark’s community (i.e., in the Gentile world), and otherwise underline Mark’s point that Jesus brings “good news” to both Jew and Gentile (Beavis 2011, 128). But the memory of Jesus in (throughout) the Lake Region, to say nothing of the geographic data collected in Chapter Two, make so neat and schematic a division of “east” and “west,” as though the lake were a wall in between them, too problematic to sustain. In any case, the only geographical trace which remains with this last memory—but it is an interesting one—is the final trip toward the district of Dalmanoutha, in 8:10, after the leftovers have been collected. I say this is an interesting datum because nobody knows, exactly, where Dalmanoutha was. Not even Mark’s earliest interpreters, represented in the manuscript tradition, or the author of the Gospel of Matthew, appear to have known, exactly, where the place named Dalmanoutha was.32 Dalmanoutha is so entirely local, viz. contingent, on the experience of life in the Lake Region that outside of the Valley’s rim it has seemed hardly worth remembering.

Evidently the event associated with this place name—the feeding of the 4000—was considered worth remembering, even though (or perhaps because) it clearly resonates with the other feeding (of the 5000). Both of these memories include a hungry crowd, though the implication is that the crowd in the second story is considerably more isolated (even επ’ ἑρηµίας). Both end with a demonstration of excess (i.e., leftovers, though of course the numbers differ). Both involve what Myers (1988, 206) called “determining the resources,” organizing the crowd, pronouncing the blessing and distributing the (suddenly plentiful) food—which is only to say that both follow the pattern of a more or less conventional meal.

There are at least two important ways, however, in which this last memory is different. First, in the feeding of the 5000 the disciples anticipate the shortage of food. On this occasion, in

32 The manuscript tradition already shows the difficulty (thus: Dalmounai; Magdala; Magada; Melegada). Matthew simply replaces the unknown location with Magdala (Matt 15:39).
the feeding of the 4000, it is Jesus that announces the problem, already full-blown. According to Jesus, who will be the host, this time it is an emergency: “If I send them home without eating, they will collapse.” It is also strikingly personal. Jesus’ name (reputation) is on the line.

Second, in earlier the feeding of the 5000, the disciples cannot imagine an alternative to buying food. When Jesus insists they “give,” they can only become indignant. On this occasion, in the feeding of the 4000, their “reply” to Jesus’ assessment of the situation (he has not actually asked a question) is more cautious. But it is also deeply ironic. Literally: “How (πόθεν) would anyone be able (δυνησεται; literally: have the power) to fill these [people] with bread here in the desert?”

Perhaps this is simply a statement of reality in the Lake Region. For if the Valley was a place of localized “fertility” (according to Josephus) and occasional glut, i.e., if things were good in some places and at some times, it was clearly not always, everywhere, or necessarily so. Rainfall was unpredictable. The soil was thin on the steep Valley walls. Localized flood and sporadic drought were also an inevitable part of life in the Valley.

At the same time, however, if there is a common impression in the memory of Jesus in the Lake Region it is that he, precisely, is able (has the power) to respond to the various exigencies of life lived at the bottom of the Lake basin, including, but not limited to, the problem of hunger. Jesus has the δυναμις (5:30) to provide for the crowd as a kind of preternatural benefactor, so he does, in short order, after the requisite arrangements. The effect, which is remembered, notably, compared to the multiplication itself, which is never explained, is “eschatological fullness” (Marcus 2000, 497), according to commentators, or “the breaking down of the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles” (Guelich 1989, 409), or some such; in the Lake Region by those who knew the spectre of hunger, however, it is remembered more simply and more immediately: food for all (και ἐφαγον), in abundance (και ἐχορτᾶσθησαν), with leftovers (και ἦσαν δὲ περισσεύματα κλασμάτων ἐπτα σπυρίδας).
The memory in Mark 4-8 leaves off at this juncture, which is to say, it reaches its “vanishing point,” with another crossing of the lake, to a place called Dalmanoutha.

**Jesus of Capernaum**

It will be important to summarize, at this point, in the interest of describing as clearly as possible the emerging profile of the figure who inhabits this tradition of memory. This is a delicate task, for a number of reasons, not least of which is the ambiguity of the memory itself. For instance, Jesus is only addressed explicitly three times: the demon knows his name (“Jesus, Son of the Most High;” 5:7), which is interesting; Jairus’ entourage “honours” him with the title of Teacher (5:35), though implicitly this suggests their doubt that he could have anything to say to the reality of death; and the Syrophoenician woman calls him κυρίε, before effectively putting him in his place. He is also asked to leave (5:17), sought out by a synagogue official, touched by an unknown woman, publicly ridiculed (5:40), and mistaken for a φαντασμα (6:49) by his own disciples.

Still, three points contribute to an emerging profile: First, there is an element of simplicity (directness) to the way in which this Jesus is remembered vis-à-vis the problems of life in the Lake Region: Two words are all that is required for safe passage across the lake. A simple question suffices to procure the release of the possessed man (Legion) in the Decapolis. His response to the hungry crowds proceeds largely on the model of a conventional meal. The “exorcism” of the Syrophoenician woman’s daughter entails a simple statement of fact, in the

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33 Dibelius (1971, 87): “Jesus is represented not as the benign Saviour who helps, but as the strange miracle man who terrifies.”

34 Bultmann (1963, 214; cf. Yarbro Collins 2007, 285) would have this an example of “heightening the effect by emphasizing the greatness of the task.” But the shaming implied by the very public ridicule cannot be overlooked.
perfect tense no less. Clearly Jesus in the Lake Region is remembered to have contained (possessed) within himself the authority, or wherewithal, sufficient to do what needed to be done.

Second: of course this is not the whole story (memory). Sometimes Jesus’ response to the challenges of ordinary life is remembered to have taken time and preparation, physical manipulation, therapeutic substances, magic pronouncements, in short, considerable trouble. To raise the daughter of Jairus, for instance, required a “foreign” language, which is to say, a magic/mighty word. To return “clear” sight to the blind man in (outside of) Bethsaida took two tries, and privacy, saliva and touch (“laying on hands”). To restore hearing and clarify speech required an even more conspicuous thaumaturgical procedure (privacy; physical manipulation; saliva; touch; gaze; breath; and a “magic” word). Evidently Jesus who is remembered to have had authority, or wherewithal, to do what needed to be done is also remembered via the considerably more involved repertoire of ancient Hellenistic magic. In other words, Jesus in the Lake Region also knew how to get results, even if and when if required a little extra effort and experimentation.

Finally, however, and most interesting, are those several occasions where the profile of Jesus in the Lake Region tends toward the unexplained or the unexplainable, that is, where it does not fit a conventional pattern, one way (as charismatic pronouncement) or the other (as magical manipulation). I am thinking especially of the memory of the two women—the one with the hemorrhage and the other with the possessed daughter—both of whom address the problem of their existence in the Lake Region by means of the δύναμις which is located in the person of Jesus.

It is perfectly clear in the first case that Jesus is not always in complete control of this quality. As it turns out, the woman with the hemorrhage takes it into her own hands, quite literally, after hearing about Jesus (5:27), and finds well-being. But I think the same applies in
the second case as well, to the woman with the demon-possessed daughter. She has also heard about Jesus (7:25). She also seems to grasp the δυναμίς by which he is possessed, which is too much for him to be hid (7:24). So she takes up (voices) her own cause (or her daughter’s as the case may be), like the woman with the hemorrhage who is distinctly alone (without representation) in the crowd, and is remembered to have occasioned (procured) much the same (dynamic) reaction.

These two traces, because they resist easy categorization, because, potentially, they help to explain what it was that made Jesus both sought-after and laughingstock, and occasionally otherworldly, or at least uncanny by way of recollection, bring us closest to a particular account of Jesus in the thick of the Lake Region. He had the authority to do what needed to be done when it came to the exigencies of life in the Valley and he knew how to do it, or was prepared to experiment. He was possessed of the δυναμίς to make a difference.

In every case, however, and this may be the most instructive point of all, Jesus is remembered vis-à-vis the business of day-to-day life in the Lake Region in the first century CE. He had the required power (δυναμίς) to respond, in one way or another, to the struggle for survival or endurance—on and around the lake; at home; or even in the face of “Legion”—in order to make the realities of existence then and there more manageable, which is to say, more livable.

Put it this way: Jesus of Capernaum is a local answer to the various, locally experienced, contingencies of life in the Valley. That is why he turns out to be memorable. He “sticks” (and thus sticks out) in local memory because he embodies or gathers in, by contrast, what it meant to live, or subsist, there, which is to say, locally. The volatility of the lake, the spectre of “Legion” somewhere on the other side, the reality of hunger and disease in a region known in elite circles, to judge from Josephus, for food of “every species” (War 3.516-519), healing “waters” (War
3.506,519) and “doctors” (*Life* 403-404)—these are local memories of the Valley. Jesus is remembered within them, or by means of them; in any case his memory is fastened to them, because he provided in each case a local response, which is to say, a home-grown alternative, easy to access and cost effective, by sharp contrast with the sort of thing signaled by Josephus.

This third approach to Mark 4-8 might be summarized, and the point helpfully focused, by reference to Peter Brown’s description of the “holy man” in late antique Syria (1971). To be sure, Brown’s discussion is premised on the conditions of the *late* Roman Empire; but the social role which he articulates for the holy man vis-à-vis his local community is telling nonetheless with regard to Jesus.

In a word, Brown (1971, 85) explains the part of the holy man by comparison to the role of the rural patron:

> What the patron could offer, was power on the spot. . . By means of such δόναμις he could help the villagers to conduct their relations with the outside world: he would forward their lawsuits; his protection might cover their feuds with other villages; he might arrange for them to meet tax demands, and not necessarily to evade them.

Within the village this meant attention to the “thorny affairs” of everyday village life:

> He would provide—and help distribute—the all-important water supply of the village. He would arrange the cancelling of debts. He could settle disputes among the villagers on the spot, and so save them the long trek to the local town to conduct their litigation.

In other words, the rural patron took care of the day to day affairs which made everyday life in a local setting tenuous (i.e., “water supply,” “debts,” and “disputes”), not least because of the inaccessibility (impracticality) of other, “institutional,” means of coping.

35 But the peculiarity of period is met by the correspondence of place, at least part of the Lake Region being included in the province and, more importantly, the geographical conditions of Syria (see Chapter Two above).
By Brown’s account, this is also the social role of the holy man. To wit (1971, 87): “what men (sic) expected of the holy man coincides with what they sought in the rural patron,” namely, “a man with sufficient power to ‘reach out a hand to those in distress’.” In other words, like the rural patron, the holy man provides a local mechanism to cope with the inevitable difficulties of life. He does this as “exorcist”—by furnishing a way for the local community to “admit” disruptive experiences, to control them and to “play them out,” as often as not in a sort of “controlled explosion” of violence (1971, 88–89). He does this as healer—by giving form or otherwise making intelligible what Brown (1971, 96) calls “life’s casuistry” (i.e., “the nebulous and intractable fact of suffering and misfortune”) and, with that, he delivers the hope of resolution. In short, according to Brown, on the model of the rural patron, the holy man makes the exigencies of life comprehensible; from disease to drought, “he knew what to do about it” (1971, 97).

Here we are close to the historical Jesus in the Lake Region according to Mark 4-8. That is my main point. As a regional holy man and local thaumaturge, which is to say, a rural patron of sorts (though apparently without much in the way of possessions), he too knows “what to do about it”: He condenses the problem of living in dependence on an unpredictable, or volatile, body of water (for fish or ferrying) and focuses (by enacting and enabling) the hope of safe return. He confronts the threat of Legion in the Valley, which is otherwise intractable, names it and controls it (or at least redirects it, albeit only imaginatively) when no one else can or will. He knows what to do in the face of hunger which is brought about by the climatological complications of the Lake Region; and he knows how to do it without appealing to the currency of the market economy. His δυναμις is such as to provide help “on the spot” for the various and sundry bodily hardships (debilitations) of life (and death) in a local place which is “pestilential,” at least occasionally, as surely as it is “fertile.” This is, after all, what the man is remembered for
in Mark 4-8: Jesus of Capernaum knew what to do locally, or how to “make do,” locally, regarding the delicate business of survival in the Lake Region and like any good (preternatural) patron he had the δόναµις to do it.

**Conclusion**

I have explained the set of data clustered in Mark 4:35-8:26, first, in the idiom of the Valley, as a local history or place memory, but also in the name of the historical Jesus, as a local memory of Jesus in place. I have argued that this memory reflects the thick experience of life in the Valley in the first century CE and the possibility of something else, more palatable, viz. more livable, embodied and enacted locally by the person (and the δόναµις) of Jesus. This makes Jesus of Capernaum something of a regional holy man, like Brown’s Syrian holy man but ahead of his time, or local thaumaturge who was exceptional (memorable) for reasons that were quite local, namely: he provided a locally embedded response to the problems inherent in life in the Lake Region.

This is only a beginning; but it is as properly historical a beginning as one might hope to have, versus those other modes of elaboration which tend to take their inquiry immediately to a higher level of abstraction and thus to describe Jesus less carefully in the key of specific time and place. It is also a required beginning, if, as I have shown, the sort of alternative (mythological) explanation which Achtemeier, Mack and Horsley propose for this material does not hold, which is to say, if the (mythological) alternative does not explain very much at all of the critically established exegetical data which we have found to be pertinent to a historical description of Jesus, when we say Jesus in Capernaum, which we (in the quest) seem to do quite readily. This is the point to be underlined. When Achtemeier, et al, cannot explain the pattern of memory in Mark 4:35-8:26 which exceeds Mark’s literary design and rhetorical intent, another, further
explanation is required. I have outlined above the contours of such an explanation, first, in the idiom of the Valley, but also in the name of the historical Jesus, fully aware that the textual traces in Mark 4:35-8:26 also admit of other interpretive explanations. The point, in any case, and in the end, is one of method: when we agree that place matters to an historical description of Jesus, Capernaum and environs in particular, Mark 4:35-8:26 demands more exacting explanation.

The effect of my explanation on the discourse of the quest is also interesting, given that it is precisely the memory of the historical Jesus as “miracle worker” in Mark 4:35-8:26 which has long been excluded as a category of properly historical description. The implication of the foregoing will need to be unpacked in the conclusion to this project. For the moment, however, in conclusion to this chapter, suffice it to say this: when we accept the historiographical wager that place matters to the historical description of Jesus, as per Chapter One, Capernaum and environs in particular, as per Chapter Two, and apply this wager methodologically (exegetically) to the earliest memories of Jesus’ first followers, as per Chapter Three, what we get as a critically established exegetical database for the historical description of Jesus is a cluster of memory in Mark 4:35-8:26, as per Chapter Four. When we read that cluster of memory in Mark 4:35-8:26 attentive to exactly those registers which Achtemeier, et al, ignore, as we have done in Chapter Five, what we get is the memory of a local thaumaturge.
Conclusion

*If there is any message in what I have been saying here, it is that the world is a various place... and much is to be gained, scientifically and otherwise, by confronting that grand actuality rather than wishing it away in a haze of forceless generalities and false comforts.*

Clifford Geertz (1983, 234)

I.
The purpose of this project has been to explore as rigorously and consistently as possible the scholarly conviction that Capernaum and environs matter for a properly historical description of Jesus. In other words, I have been concerned to make this historiographical wager, on which we all ostensibly agree, count exegetically toward an historical description of Jesus with a degree of methodological discipline which has been lacking to this point.

Toward this end, we began, in Chapter One, with the geographical datum on which all in the quest agree, namely, that the historical Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum if he belongs anywhere. This is not a controversial datum; in fact, it is a commonplace of Jesus scholarship. To my knowledge, it is nowhere disputed in the quest. It is also reasonably well supported in the Jesus tradition. But what made this datum an instructive point of departure was the fact that it did not appear to have significantly affected (instructed) the way in which the quest went about describing the historical Jesus. It was an “empty fact.” Scholarship agreed, in other words, but routinely failed to do anything (historical) about it.

Much the same applies to the Lake Region of Galilee. This is a routine geographical distinction, with obvious relevance to the historical Jesus, if and when we agree that he lived and worked in and around Capernaum, which is to say, in the “border region” of the Valley, on the eastern “fringe” of the Galilee. But, like Capernaum, when it came time to describe Jesus as an historical figure, in time and place, this datum was forgotten. After surveying the work of E. P. Sanders, Richard Horsley and Jonathan Reed, in particular, Chapter One decided that Capernaum
and environs had become something of a cipher in the quest—a screen on which to project contemporary concerns of religious, political and cultural identity.

Having explored in Chapter One the many and various ways in which scholars agree about the relevance of Capernaum and environs only to switch registers subsequently at the point of describing the historical Jesus, Chapter Two proposed to recover the collection of geographical data which made this place of particular interest to the quest in the first place. To be sure, much of this data had already been announced by Eric Meyers and his students in the name of Galilean regionalism. Most of the pieces for a robust, regional description of the Lake Region as Jesus’ local place were simply waiting to be assembled. The problem was that they were being ignored, at least vis-à-vis the historical description of Jesus. Chapter Two put these data back on the table, as densely as possible, in a way that resisted easy averages and facile generalizations. The result was a thick description of the Lake Region of the first century CE as the geographical (local) terrain of primary pertinence to an historical description of Jesus.

The question remained, however, how this shift in geographical terrain would reshape the textual terrain of the quest. How would putting Jesus in and around Capernaum, once we had decided more precisely what Capernaum and environs meant in the first century CE, instruct or inform the way in which the quest sorted out and otherwise tested the earliest memories of Jesus’ first followers? This methodological question would be the subject of Chapter Three.

Fortunately, Gerd Theissen had already suggested a way forward based on the exegetical observation that some texts of the Synoptic tradition come “marked” or “inscribed” by local perspective. (For example, Mark’s “sea” texts.) History being a matter of local place, as well as specific time, Theissen suggested that these texts would logically be “of interest,” historically, which is to say, more likely pertinent to historical description, all other things being equal.
This seemed a promising venture, even as Theissen was ultimately distracted by other theological or religious interests. On the basis of his proposal we decided to select those textual traditions which were marked (inscribed) by the geographical place of most immediate relevance to the memory of Jesus, by common consent; that is, we decided to prioritize those textual traditions marked (inscribed) first, by the place names and, also, by the local perspective of the Lake Region of Galilee. When we surveyed the textual tradition according to this (geographical) criterion, it became clear that Mark 4:35-8:26 was the (preliminary) textual site at which to begin a more critical analysis, i.e., the textual site at which the place names and local perspective of the Lake Region are sufficiently concentrated, at least on the surface, as to warrant further investigation. To continue the archaeological metaphor, this seemed the most favourable site at which to open a test square.

Once it was clear where to begin, exegetically, Chapter Four detailed the subsequent analysis, viz. excavation. With Paul Achtemeier as guide, we set out to delineate in as much exegetical detail as possible where the preliminary materials indicated in Mark 4:35-8:26 had to do with the sorts of literary interests and rhetorical design conventionally associated with Markan redaction and where not. In other words, we attempted to distinguish in as much detail as possible where the material in Mark 4:35-8:26 could be explained in terms of the Evangelist “Mark,” and where another, different kind of explanation would be necessary.

Most of what we exposed in this process, at the site of Mark 4:35-8:26, proved to belong to the structure that is the Gospel of Mark; but, just as clearly, the Evangelist “Mark” did not turn out to be a sufficient explanation for everything we found “buried” underneath the surface of Mark 4:35-8:26. As a result, we were left at the end of Chapter Four with a critically established exegetical database of textual material (memory) which exceeded Mark’s literary design and rhetorical intent, i.e., a set of textual traces which still required explanation.
Having arrived, in Chapter Four, at a critical database of materials beneath or within Mark 4:35-8:26, Chapter Five set out to explore the possibility that these textual traces, which were not otherwise explained in terms of the Evangelist “Mark,” which moreover constituted our best estimation of a text in the local place of Capernaum and environs, might be explained in terms of the historical Jesus—who we all agree belongs precisely there. This meant, first of all, attending to another (mythological) explanation of this material (as preMarkan cult tradition, myth of origins or popular tradition). Were this to be an adequate explanation of the traces beneath or within Mark 4:35-8:26, any further explanation, including in the name of the historical Jesus, would have been unnecessary.

But such was not to be the case. Paul Achtemeier, Burton Mack and Richard Horsley suggest several possible (mythological) allusions (principally involving the feeding episodes); but it was soon clear that these “explanations” did not actually explain very much at all of the exegetical data clustered in Mark 4:35-8:26. This result opened the way to another, more exacting explanation of this material (memory): first, in the idiom of the Valley—which is to say, as a local history of the Valley or a place memory—but also in the name of Jesus—as the memory of Jesus in place, as a regional holy man and local thaumaturge in the Valley, on the north shore, which is precisely where scholarship has always thought to locate him. This is what it means, exegetically, to say Jesus of Capernaum, namely, to begin here, whether or not our reading of this memory be accepted in all its details.

My purpose throughout, and my intention in moving methodically from the local geography of Jesus to the history of Jesus, has been to address a basic inconsistency in the quest, i.e., that the historical Jesus in and around Capernaum could be equally assured and ignored. I have attempted to address this paradox by filling the “empty fact” of Capernaum—that is, by addressing it ideologically (as a site of identity contest in the contemporary discourse of the
quest; in Chapter One), geographically (as a definite place of productive opportunity and environmental constraint; in Chapter Two), methodologically (as a criterion or analytical category for sorting out those memories most likely pertinent for an historical description of Jesus; in Chapter Three), exegetically (as a local history or place memory clustered beneath Mark 4:35-8:26; in Chapter Four) and historically (as the memory of a regional holy man or local thaumaturge named Jesus who made life in the Valley more livable; in Chapter Five). I think this datum is now full.

To be clear, that does not mean the reader has in hand a life of Jesus. This was never my intent. I have not tried to explain the death of Jesus—though I think it is telling that when Jesus leaves the Valley for Jerusalem, he meets the (stereo)typically tragic fate of the country boy in the big city, like a fish out of water. I have not been concerned with other, less obvious or less immediate textual traces of the Lake Region (though there are surely more to be found, for example, in Mark 1-3 or in Q 7:1-9 and 10:12,13-15), or with the possibility that other local places might, by a similar logic, also sponsor (historical) memories (like Bethany and its surround in the Gospel of John; but Bethany lacks the a priori connection with Jesus which makes Capernaum and environs an instructive point of departure), or with other means (criteria) of sorting out the early memory of Jesus.

Each of these avenues of inquiry would be necessary for a more comprehensive bios; and each of them, now, as a result of the previous five chapters, is possible in practice as well as in principle. But the previous five chapters have been more focused, viz. local: their aim, again, has been to play out as carefully as possible the historiographical wager that Capernaum and environs matter for a properly historical description of Jesus, i.e., to make this scholarly commonplace “count,” exegetically, in the way in which we decide where in the Jesus corpus to begin an historical description of the man, with a degree of methodological discipline which has been lacking to this point. With this accomplished, in the name of Mark 4:35-8:26, our work is done.
II.
Still in need of comment, however, is one particular implication, or added benefit, of this result, which is this: having applied the geographical premise on which we all agree (i.e., that Jesus lived and worked and deposited whatever legacy he left behind in and around Capernaum) as rigorously or consistently as possible to the textual memory of Jesus, what we are left with, in terms of history, is miracle. This is striking. To make this statement at one point in the quest would have meant the height of controversy; in fact, it is precisely this memory (Jesus and miracle, on the basis of Mark no less) which the quest sought to discipline from its outset, as a project of the Enlightenment, beginning with Reimarus (1970 [1774–78]). Today, however, this result actually points in the direction of another, emerging “trend” in the (so-called “third”) quest.

Take, for example, E. P. Sanders, once again, as an instance of what is increasingly “mainstream” (1985, 157):

There is agreement on the basic facts: Jesus performed miracles, drew crowds and promised the kingdom to sinners. It is a natural assumption that miracles and the inclusion of sinners are intimately tied to Jesus’ conception of the kingdom and of his own mission. Thus far most scholars will agree.

It is significant, as we will see, that for Sanders the fact of the miracles is premised on their “intimate” connection with something else, which he calls Jesus’ “conception” of the kingdom; but for the moment, take him as an instance of the emerging trend.

For John Meier, likewise, the “global” assertion that the historical Jesus “performed” miracles is never in doubt (1994, 619,630–631):

Every Gospel source (Mark, Q, M, L, and John), every evangelist in his redactional summaries, and Josephus to boot affirm the miracle-working activity of Jesus. Indeed, each Gospel source does so more than once, and some do it

repeatedly... Put dramatically but with not too much exaggeration: if the miracle tradition from Jesus’ public ministry were to be rejected in toto as unhistorical, so should every other Gospel tradition about him. For if the criteria of historicity do not work in the case of the miracle tradition, where multiple attestation is so massive and coherence so impressive, there is no reason to expect them to work elsewhere. The quest would simply have to be abandoned.

Meier of course admits that what looks massively attested at first glance, before each of the various miracle reports is assessed individually for signs of historicity, appears considerably less impressive afterward. The final, “historical,” tally, in the second volume of his Jesus series, turns out to be a more modest “at least some,” which means (1999, 482): “two or three exorcisms, various healings of blind, deaf, and generally sick people, and sayings of Jesus that affirm that he performed exorcisms and healings.” Meier also thinks it “likely” that Jesus “claimed” to have raised the dead.² But this is still sufficient, in Meier’s opinion, for considerable confidence (1999, 482):

Not only the global argument but also the probing of all the individual miracle stories and sayings point to a historical Jesus who claimed and was believed by his disciples to have worked miracles during his public ministry.

Even John Dominic Crossan agrees (1991, 332):

Jesus was both an exorcist and a healer: I take 121 Beelzebul Controversy [1/2], 110 A Leper Cured [1/2], 127 Sickness and Sin [1/2], and 129 Blind Man Healed [1/2] as not only typically but actually historical. His vision of the Kingdom was but an ecstatic dream without immediate social repercussions were it not for those exorcisms and healings. Those latter were what the kingdom looked like at the level of political reality.

Again, it is not exactly clear what Crossan takes to be “actually historical” here, since, apart from the Beelzebul controversy, what is multiply attested is only “in general” Jesus’ healing

² In fact, it is not clear what a “global” argument actually does for Meier, except perhaps to lessen the burden of proof. His attempt to “test” each individual miracle story separately suggests that he actually decides historicity on a case by case basis.
of leprosy, association of sickness and sin, and healing of blindness. By his own account, Crossan’s decision to work with “complexes,” which amount more or less to textual impressions, means that his method is not actually about asking if Jesus “said it or did it” (1991, xxxiii). This makes “actually historical” a rather difficult benchmark. Still, in his inventory of Jesus’ miracles (Appendix 6; 1991, 461), Crossan assigns eight multiply attested complexes to his first stratum, which is, as he says, the place to begin. Evidently, then, miracle (in the name of magic) is even a part of Crossan’s answer to the historical Jesus.

The problem, however, is that this emerging “trend,” which Sanders, Meier and Crossan enact, turns out not actually to tell us very much (yet), at least not very much about the historical figure of Jesus. That is to say, the “fact” of miracles, what Meier calls tellingly the “global” question, has not actually meant, in practice, a description of the historical Jesus more sensitive or attentive to a particular textual memory. It has not implied a specific exegetical content. This is where the implication of the present analysis bears weight in the discourse; i.e., this is where the foregoing analysis makes a difference. What I mean by this can be clarified if we look again, in this regard, but more carefully, at Sanders, Meier and Crossan.

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3 Crossan (1991, 321) includes the story of the leper (Mark 1:40-45 and Egerton Gospel 2b [35-47]) on the completely unargued assumption that the two are independent of each other at this point.

4 Crossan (1991, 232–234) takes Mark 2:1-12 and John 5:1-7,14 to reflect a single, traditional event: “The overriding similarities are, for me: the malady; the mention of the sufferer’s getting or not getting somebody to carry him; the injunction to rise, carry his pallet, walk; and, finally, and most especially, the conjunction of sickness and sin.”

5 Crossan (1991, 325): “As with the preceding miracle, so here also there might be two quite separate events behind 129 Blind Man Healed [1/2] in Mark 8:22-26 and John 9:1-7. Once again, but even more tentatively, I take them as independent versions of the same source primarily because of the conjunction of blindness and spittle.” Is it the “conjunction of blindness and spittle” that is “actually historical” then?

Sanders, to begin with, evidently agrees on the basic “fact” of the miracles; but it is also immediately clear when he first raises the topic in *Jesus and Judaism* (1985, 157) that the “fact” of the miracles is actually of a piece with another, more essential (or abstract) fact, namely, “Jesus’ conception of the kingdom.” In fact, the miracles are interesting precisely in this connection, or precisely for this reason. They effectively “extend” Sanders’ study of the kingdom. His question, in this regard, is simple: Do the miracles explain (extend) this concept? When he decides that they do not—because they turn out not to be significantly different (unique) vis-à-vis the assorted collection of first century CE holy men, messianic pretenders and magicians who behaved similarly—Sanders sets them aside. Thus (1985, 172): “The miracles constitute a fact about Jesus’ career, *but they do not tell as much as could have been desired*” (emphasis mine), i.e., just to be clear, about the “concept” of the kingdom.

That the miracle tradition is interesting to Sanders primarily (only) in relation to Jesus’ “conception” (thought) is even clearer, subsequently, in *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993a). Here Sanders (1993a, 159) describes his purpose vis-à-vis the miracle tradition in telling fashion, as: “to know more particularly what Jesus’ followers *thought* of his miracles, and as much about what he himself *thought* [of his miracles] as is possible.” In other words, Sanders’ question remains the same: Do the miracles tell us about Jesus’ thought, viz. theological outlook, which of course in Sanders’ opinion has everything to do with “restoration eschatology”?

Again Sanders answers in the negative (1993a, 168): “Miracles, as such, would not convey eschatological hope. They did so only to those who understood—who were close enough to [Jesus] to put his miracles into the context of his teaching.” “As such,” which is really to say, without immediate or obvious connection to Jesus’ theological (eschatological) “teaching,” the miracles do not carry content (meaning) worth mentioning. They are interesting only as a reflection of Jesus’ “thought,” though it is never clear (but of course completely characteristic of
the “second” quest beginning, latently, with Albert Schweitzer 1948 [1906]) why Jesus’
teachings (thought) would tell the measure of the man, historically, any more adequately or
thoroughly than his actions.

In any case, the result is that the miracle tradition, and the considerable exegetical content
implied, is simply written out of Sanders’ account. It finds no place at all (!) in his list of things
that are “certain” or “probable” or even “possible” about the historical Jesus (1985, 326–327; cf.
1993a, 10–11). If Jesus’ message is “accompanied by healings and exorcisms,” as Sanders
(1985, 340) insists to the end, paradoxically, these are so mundane, “as such,” which means
again so unremarkable without the theological (eschatological) overlay of Jesus’ teaching, that
they amount to very little, in Sanders’ opinion. The miracle stories, in short, “prove nothing”
(1993a, 163). 7

Meier (1994) addresses the individual miracle stories at considerably more length than
Sanders. He is also much more attentive to the detail of each. So the degree to which he (also)
completely overlays (effaces) this detail, in the end, with the sayings material and in particular
with the theme of “God’s rule” or “God’s future kingdom” is astonishing (1994, 1043):

Jesus himself emphasized that the presence of God’s rule was especially
experienced in the exorcisms and healings he performed. With an allusion to the
absence of miracles in the Baptist’s ministry, Jesus pointed out to John’s inquiring
envoys the stunning difference in his own ministry. Now at last Isaiah’s
prophecies of Israel’s healing in the end time were being fulfilled (Matt 11:5 par.).
. . all as part of Jesus’ larger program of proclaiming the good news of salvation to
Israel’s poor. In particular, Jesus saw his exorcisms as a striking sign that even
now, in the lives of individual Israelites, Satan’s hold over God’s people was
being broken. Even now, on the limited turf of concrete Israelite lives, God’s rule
was triumphant (Luke 11:20). . . Thus, in both word and deed, Jesus made God’s
future kingdom a present experience, at least in some partial or proleptic sense.

7 The alternative, namely, that Jesus was exactly what the miracle stories make him appear to
be, which is, by Sanders’ account (1993a, 164), “a holy man, on intimate terms with God,” is
apparently for Sanders too prosaic a possibility to be thinkable.
Jesus was not just another prophet uttering more prophecies about the future. He was the prophet who was accomplishing what the prophets had foretold (Matt 13:16-17 // Luke 10:23-24).

This is a telling paragraph, in a number of ways. According to Meier, Jesus “himself” interprets his exorcisms and healings as “part” (and parcel) of a “larger program;” i.e., he points them away from what they seem actually to be about (which is disease, death, etc.) toward something else, which proceeds variously under the heading of “good news,” “salvation,” “fulfillment,” “God’s rule,” or “God’s future rule.” But this has everything to do with Q 7:22-23, Q 10:23-24 and Q 11:20 (and, as below, Mark 3:24-27). In the name of these texts, which Meier thinks explicitly connect miracle and “kingdom,” (though only the latter two contain the word), the actual miracle stories which Meier has just spent the better part of 500 pages assessing in detail, which do not explicitly connect miracle and kingdom, are reduced (simplified) to an eschatological sign. They are contained. They are quite effectively detached from the “limited turf” of “concrete” life (which is, after all, limiting) and deferred to God’s eschatological, limitless “rule,” where they make (theological) sense.

Likewise, Jesus, who gives every indication in the miracle stories of being involved quite pragmatically in the day-to-day contingencies of survival in the Lake Region (for instance: storms; Legion; hunger; and disease) is reduced (disciplined) to a more seemly role, namely, “accomplishing what the prophets had foretold.” Whatever this means as a theological (christological) statement, it is clear that it does not actually remember (require) the exegetical details of, for instance, Mark 4-8.

Meier actually says as much (1999, 482):

As a number of sayings from different sources (like Mark 3,24-27; Matt 1,5-6 par.; Luke 11,20 par.) make clear, Jesus’ exorcisms and healings are not just kind deeds to distressed individuals but signs and partial realizations of God’s final victory over sin, illness, death, and Satan as he liberates and rules his people Israel ‘in the last days.’ (emphasis mine)
In other words, the particular content of these stories—“kind deeds” and “distressed individuals”—which is precisely what makes them what they are, is finally important only insofar as it implies something else which is less limiting, viz. local, and more theologically instructive, namely: “God’s final victory over sin.”

Even Crossan, though he declares himself “forced” by his method to include miracle in his profile of Jesus as “healer and Cynic” (1991, 421), is finally more interested in the way in which these elements signal (point beyond themselves to) a “brokerless” kingdom of God. Thus, in the very sentence after admitting the need to keep healing in the picture, it begins to disappear (1991, 421–422):

The historical Jesus was, then, a peasant Jewish Cynic. . . His strategy, implicitly for himself and explicitly for his followers, was the combination of free healing and common eating, a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power. . . Miracle and parable, healing and eating were calculated to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God and unmediated physical and spiritual contact with one another. He announced, in other words, the brokerless kingdom of God.8

In other words, Cynic trumps healer. Healing becomes “free healing,” exorcism now either lumped into this catch-all or forgotten, which then becomes a “calculated,” political move, i.e., to “announce” a kingdom which was not “Jewish religion” or “Roman power.”

This may be why, in the end, only one of these “free” healings ranks in Crossan’s “reconstructed inventory” (1991, xiii-xxvi)—and that one, the Beelzebul controversy, turns out to be the only miracle story which is explicitly interpreted in terms of the kingdom. Crossan (1991, 332) actually includes eight miracle “complexes” in his multiply attested first stratum, as

8 In the beginning, as in the end (1991, xii): “The deliberate conjunction of magic and meal, miracle and table, free compassion and open commensality, was a challenge launched not just at Judaism’ strictest purity regulations, or even at the Mediterranean’s patriarchal combination of honor and shame, patronage and clientage, but at civilization’s eternal inclination to draw lines, invoke boundaries, establish hierarchies, and maintain discriminations.”
mentioned above, at least several of which he thinks “actually historical.” So where have they gone?

To be sure, this may have as much to do with Crossan’s concern, in his reconstructed inventory, for “words”; his interest is, after all, to decipher “which of all the words placed on his lips actually go back to the historical Jesus” (1991, xiii). But this simply demonstrates where Crossan’s interests (exegetical and otherwise) lie. The exegetical content of the miracle stories, which, incidentally, also include words, indeed, words which were evidently remembered at least some of the time to have been quite powerful (dynamic), is excluded.

My point in the foregoing is this: Sanders, Meier and Crossan, who each agree that Jesus “performed miracles,” nonetheless summarily reduce (efface) the exegetical memory of these actions, and the considerable local detail which they imply, in favour of abstract, theological formulae: “Jewish restoration eschatology,” “God’s final victory over sin” or “the brokerless kingdom of God.” Each would have the historical Jesus to be a worker of miracles, to be sure, in one way or another; in this regard they faithfully enact the emerging “trend” in scholarship.

But the “miracle worker” whom they describe is left almost entirely without particular exegetical content, viz. miracles. This is also typical.9 Thus: Jesus was an eschatological

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9 See, for instance, only the two most recent full-length English language treatments of the “historical” Jesus: Craig Keener’s *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (2009) and Maurice Casey’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (2010). Keener (2009, 241–245) alludes to Jesus’ healings and exorcisms under the heading of “Jesus the Prophet.” He says what is to be expected (2009, 241): “The evidence for Jesus as a miracle-worker is stronger. . . than for most other specific historical claims”; “miracles characterized Jesus’ historical activity no less than his teaching and prophetic activities did.” But he does not treat a single (!) incident, viz. exegetical example. He prefers to devote a separate book to the matter. But the fact that he thinks he can plausibly describe the historical Jesus without further reference to miracle is telling. Keener, rather incredibly, also thinks Jesus’ healing and exorcism “fairly distinctive” in his environment (2009, 242). Casey’s discussion is much more nuanced. But he demonstrates the same paradox: On the one hand, Casey begins (2010, 278): “Exorcism and healing were central to Jesus’ ministry.” But on the other, he continues (2010, 278–279): “There was however more than that to his ministry. That is why he is never labelled ‘exorcist’ or ‘healer’ in the Gospels. . . The term ‘prophet’ is in this respect the most important term to be used during the historic ministry.”
“prophet” who did that sort of thing (i.e., miracles), though just what (or which), exactly, matters less than what he “thought” he was up to or why, which, in any case, had essentially to do with announcing God’s kingdom or fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecies; or he was a counter-cultural critic who announced a strategy/program (to undermine nothing less than “civilization’s eternal inclination” to divide and discriminate) which included “magic,” to be sure, but was actually “enacted” (realized) in word. In any case, the particular, exegetical memory of Jesus on and around the lake, addressing the day-to-day concerns of life lived there, but also “limited” to the day-to-day concerns of life lived there, is passed over and largely forgotten.

This is what we learn as an implication of our analysis. It is what becomes possible to observe when we apply as rigorously and consistently as possible the geographical premise with which we began, namely, that the historical Jesus belongs in and around Capernaum if he belongs anywhere in particular, when we translate this premise methodologically, and subsequently apply it exegetically to the memory of Jesus’ first followers. Paying attention to the fact of Capernaum and environs brings an added, unexpected benefit, i.e., it brings to light another anomaly (inconsistency) in the discourse of the quest, namely, that the emerging scholarly discourse on the miracles has been little more concrete or embodied than the scholarly discourse on Capernaum. In other words, and this is the pertinent implication: filling one empty fact (vis-à-vis Capernaum) brings another to light (vis-à-vis the miracles).

Taking Capernaum and environs seriously replies to this second empty fact in two ways, which may in fact be two sides of the same coin. On the one hand: paying attention to the local place of Jesus acts as an historical corrective, effectively forcing the historian who would talk about Jesus and miracle to engage an exegetical content, embedded in Mark 4-8, where pre-fabricated formulae (like “eschatological prophet,” “God’s victory over sin,” or “brokerless kingdom”) have more often been the norm. It is not that these formulae are necessarily wrong;
but until they have engaged (learned from) the exegetical content of Mark 4-8, they are premature, which is to say, out of order. They put the cart before the horse. Saying Jesus in Capernaum, insofar as it implicates an exegetical content in Mark 4-8, which is what we have shown, disciplines the (theological) imagination. It challenges the quest, especially where it is given to flights of theological fancy, to bring its discourse down to (a rather particular patch of) earth, viz. water.

On the other hand, however, exposing or otherwise laying bare the memory which is clustered in Mark 4-8 also raises the distinct possibility of advancing, along an exegetical avenue, the argument, which is evidently widely-affirmed, that an historical description of Jesus demands an account of miracle. Saying Jesus in Capernaum points in the same direction as the emerging trend; it agrees with Sanders, Meier and Crossan. But it contributes an exegetical content. Where Sanders, Meier and Crossan suggest a theological formulae, saying Jesus in Capernaum suggests a cluster of miracle stories remembered in Mark 4-8 and a local thaumaturge very much in the thick of life in the Lake Region, as we have shown. In other words: here is a textual site at which to (re)start or otherwise to ground the discussion of Jesus and miracle.

This is the most pressing implication of the present analysis, namely, that a local history or place memory such as we find clustered beneath or within Mark 4-8, of a local thaumaturge, would merit such a stature in the discourse (though it did, or close to it, at a certain point in the history of the quest). But this is what follows when we not only say that the historical Jesus lived and worked in and around Capernaum, as we do routinely, but actually make this wager exegetically operative in as methodologically disciplined and transparent a manner as possible. Put it this way: if the quest would continue to talk about Jesus and miracle, something which it gives every impression of doing if Sanders, Meier and Crossan are any indication, and if it intends to do this historically, which means at least in terms of specific time and particular place,
then the memory in Mark 4-8 is the place to begin. This holds whether or not our reading of this memory is found convincing in its every detail.

III.
Placing Jesus in Capernaum and environs has always been about pressing the quest for the historical Jesus on a point at which it seemed rather glaringly inconsistent, namely, that scholarship could routinely agree that the historical Jesus belongs in place, agree that the place which mattered most in his connection was the local place of Capernaum and environs, agree that this local place deserved particular attention, for any number of geographical reasons, in the name of the Lake Region, and, then, promptly or summarily carry on with business as usual, i.e., describing the historical Jesus in terms of the Galilee, or the Roman Empire, or the ancient Mediterranean. Of course these categories apply, at a progressive level of abstraction; but that is just the point. If, as Clifford Geertz (1983, 234) says, “the world is a various place,” which is to say, filled with (many) various (local) places, why not take our historical lead from the local place where we otherwise routinely put the historical Jesus rather than a “haze” of progressively less forceful generalizations? Here was a seam in the discourse, at any rate, which is to say, a promising point of order.

But what began as a point of order quickly became more than that. It became clear, for instance, that scholarship was doing another sort of conceptual (identity) work in the name of Capernaum and environs (Chapter One). It became clear that we knew a good deal about Capernaum and environs; we simply had yet to connect the dots (Chapter Two). It became clear that we did not have the methodological language, or criteria, to turn what we otherwise claimed to be the case, geographically, to exegetical effect (Chapter Three). And it became clear, in the end, that doing so—bringing the local place of Capernaum and environs to bear on the earliest memories of Jesus’ first followers—would lead us to a textual site (Chapter Four) and an historical profile (Chapter Five) routinely overlooked in the discourse.
In other words, what began as a point of order, in the interest of consistency, became an exercise in the historical methodology of the quest in the key of place. To this point we have been concerned with the results of this exercise for an historical description of Jesus. But it is only appropriate to conclude where we began, i.e., with three reflections on the effect of this exercise on the discourse.

First, what we learn when we engage the quest in the key of local place, Capernaum and environs in particular, turns out to have as much to do with the daily, material exigencies of life in this local place as it does with the individual Jesus. We do not learn first of all what Jesus “thought” or how he related to the scriptural tradition of Israel or what he envisioned in the name of the kingdom. We learn, for instance, that he participated in the routine movement of people and goods back and forth across the lake; or that he experienced the difficulty of existence in a place that was at least occasionally “pestilential,” and did what he could to deal with it. But this is not a failure of method; I would suggest it is exactly what happens when we take the historiographical wager that place matters to historical description seriously enough to change our research questions. It is what the quest for the historical Jesus turns out to look like, or sound like, when it attends carefully and conspicuously, or self-consciously, to its self-stated, historical objective.

Second, this challenges us to be aware of what it is we attempt to do, in the name of history, when we attempt an historical description of Jesus. Put it this way: as long as history conventionally told is a matter of specific time and particular place, which is to say, in effect, of different times and other places, whatever else it also is, and I agree that it is surely emplotted and troped, it has less to do with drawing grand schemas or deducing abstract commonalities than it does with managing (talking about) difference (i.e., what happened “then” and “there” as opposed to “here” and “now”). Placing Jesus in and around Capernaum in the first quarter of the
first century CE makes this clear; it is, after all, a statement of difference (“then” and “there”), Capernaum of the first century CE being “uncompromisingly itself,” whatever else we have said about it. To paraphrase Clifford Geertz again (1996, 259): Jesus in and around Capernaum in the first quarter of the first century CE makes a poor abstraction. But for this reason Jesus in and around Capernaum also makes an instructive point of historical departure, which may be simply to say that it reminds us of the significant limits of a properly historical inquiry.

Finally, to pursue Jesus in place is to allow as a distinct possibility an answer to the question of Jesus which does not simply tell us what we already know, i.e., an answer which is conditioned by the contingencies of life lived elsewhere (in a place called the Lake Region of Galilee). The quest has traditionally been unable to imagine such possibilities, that is, which rest or roost beyond its own social location. The classic instance of this is of course the refusal, by and large, even to consider as a possibility the proposed analogy of the historical Jesus with ancient Cynicism. But the difficulty which the quest has had imagining the historical Jesus in the local place of Capernaum and environs, possessed of a δύναμις which he does not (always) control, which makes him both laughing-stock and sought-after last resort, is of a kind. Jesus has made most sense in the quest without the pallor of miracle, which is to say, without the accompanying exegetical content.

Placing Jesus in and around Capernaum turns out to contest this scholarly tendency. To the contrary, it has provided good reason to include under the possibilities imagined in the name of the historical Jesus precisely what is uncomfortably down-to-earth, “unbecoming,” and even unnerving, viz. outright terrifying. Insofar as this has meant remembering (testifying to) a different material existence, where such a figure (as regional holy man and local thaumaturge) would prove to be a necessary element of daily survival, or endurance, in the face of an unpredictable and volatile body of water, the otherworldly force of “Legion,” hunger,
debilitation, disease and death, placing Jesus in and around Capernaum has also expanded the 
limits of our historical imagination. I think this makes it worth our while.
Appendix One

Mark 4:35-41

35 “Let us go across to the other side.” 36 And... they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” 41 And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?”

Mark 5:1-20

Καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης... 2 καὶ ἐξελθόντος αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου εὐθὺς ὑπηνίστησαν αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν μνημείων ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ, 3 δὲ τὴν κατοίκησιν εἶχεν ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν, καὶ οὐδὲ ἄλλος οὐκέτι οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο αὐτὸν δῆσαι 4 διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν πολλάκις πέδας καὶ ἀλύσειν δεδέσθαι καὶ διεσπάσθαι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τὰς ἄλυσεις καὶ τὰς πέδας συντετρήθαι, καὶ οὐδὲς ἤσχησαν αὐτὸν δαμάσαι: 5 καὶ διὰ παντὸς νυκτός καὶ ἡμέρας ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὀρέσιν ἦν κράζων καὶ κατακόπτον ἐαυτὸν λίθος. 6 καὶ ἴδου τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπὸ μακράθεν ἔδραμεν καὶ προσκύνησεν αὐτῷ. 7 καὶ κράζας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγει· τί ἐμοί καὶ σοι, Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ υἱοτότου; ὡρκίζω σε τὸν θεόν, μὴ με βασανίσης... 9 καὶ ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν· τί δονάμος σοι; καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· λεγών ὅνομά μοι, ὅτι πολλοὶ ἐσμέν... [14] Καὶ... ἦλθον ἴδεν τί ἐστίν τὸ γεγονός 15 καὶ... θεωροῦσιν τὸν δαμονιζόμενον καθήμενον ἤματισμένον καὶ σωφρονύστα, τὸν ἐσηκώτα τὸν λεγόντα, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν... 17 καὶ ἠρέσατο παρακάλει τὸν ἀπελθέντα ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρίων αὐτῶν. 18 Καὶ ἐμβαίνοντος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ πλοίον παρεκάλει αὐτὸν ὁ δαιμονισθεὶς... 19 καὶ οὐκ ἀφήκεν αὐτὸν, ἀλλὰ λέγει αὐτῷ· ὑπαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκον σου πρὸς τοὺς σου... 20 καὶ ἀπῆλθεν. 21... ἐν τῇ Δεκαπόλει... ].

1 They came to the other side of the sea. ... 2 And when he had come out of the boat, there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 who lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, even with a chain; 4 for he had often been bound with fetters and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the fetters he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out, and bruising himself with stones. 6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him; 7 and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."... 9 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many."... [14] And... people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 And... they saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. ... 17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their neighborhood. 18 And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him... 19 But he refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends."... 20 And he went away... in the Decapolis. ...]

Mark 5:21, 25-34

21 And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him... 25 And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. 26 She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.

Mark 5:22-23, 35-43

22 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." 34 And he looked around to see who had done it. 35 But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."
Mark 6:35-44

35 And... his disciples came to him and said... 36 send them away, to go into the country and villages... and buy themselves something to eat. 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How many loaves have you?"... And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, 40 and they... were terrified. But... 41 And he got into the boat with them and the wind... 42 And they sat down in groups... and he divided the two fish among them all. 43 And... took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate... were five thousand men.

Mark 6:45-51a,53

45 And... went up on the mountain to pray. 46 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 47 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 48 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; 49 for they... were terrified. But... he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." 51 And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased...

53 And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore.
Mark 7:24c, 26-30

24 [Καὶ εἰσῆλθον εἰς οἶκον οὐδένα ἰθελεν γνώναι, καὶ οὐκ ἦδυνήθη λαβεῖν·]. . . 26 ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἱλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γένει· καὶ ἤρωτα αὐτόν ἵνα τὸ δαμασίον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρός αὐτῆς. 27 καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῇ· ἀλλὰ... ἐστὶν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ τῶν κυναρίων βαλεῖν. 28 ἡ δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε· καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίον ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν παιδίων. 29 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· διὰ τούτον τὸν λόγον ὠπαγε, ἐξέληλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρός σου τὸ δαμασίον. 30 καὶ ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην καὶ τὸ δαμασίον ἐξέληλυθος.

24 [He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he was not able to escape notice]. . .
26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.
27 He said to her... it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go-- the demon has left your daughter." 30 So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Mark 7:31c-35

31 . . . ἀνειμένων τῶν ὅριων Δεκαπόλεως. 32 Καὶ φεροῦσιν αὐτῷ κορφὸν καὶ μογιλάλον καὶ παρακαλοῦσαν αὐτὸν ἵνα ἐπιθῇ αὐτῷ τὴν χείρα. 33 καὶ ἀπολαμβάνεις αὐτῶν ἑκάστου ὃς ὶς ὑπερήφανος. . . ἐβάλεν τὸς Δακτύλους αὐτῶν εἰς τὰ ὅσα αὐτῶν καὶ πτύσας ἤματο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτῶν, 34 καὶ ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν ὑμνῶν ἐπιστέαζεν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Εφφαθα, ὦ ἐστιν διανοίξῃτε. 35 καὶ . . . ἠνοίγησαν αὐτῷ αἰ ἀκοι, καὶ ἐλύθη ὃ δεσμὸς τῆς γλώσσης αὐτῶν καὶ ἐλάλει ὅρθως. . .

31 . . . through the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to lay his hand upon him. 33 And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; 34 and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. . .
Mark 8:2-10

2 [. . . prosoménon... . ] 3 καὶ ἕνα ἀπολύει αὐτοῦς νήστεις εἰς ὦκον αὐτῶν, ἐκλυθῆσονται... 4 καὶ ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι πόθεν τούτος δύνηται τις ὄφει χορτάσαι ἄρτων ἐπ ἑρημίας; 5 καὶ ἱρώτα αὐτοῦς: πόσους ἔχετε ἄρτους; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· ἐπτά. 6 καὶ παραγγέλλει τῷ ὀχλῷ ἀναπεσεῖν ἑπὶ τῆς γῆς· καὶ λαβὼν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ἵνα παρατίθοιν· καὶ παρέθηκαν τῷ ὀχλῳ. 7 [. . . ἵθελα. . . ] 8 καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν, καὶ ἔμειναν περισσεύματα κλασμάτων ἑπτὰ σπυρίδας. 9 ἦσαν δὲ γὰς τετρακισχίλιοι... 10Καὶ . . [ἐμβάς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ] ἤλθεν εἰς τὰ μέρη Δαλμανουθᾶ.

Mark 8:22-26a

22 Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδᾶν. Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ τυφλὸν καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτόν ἵνα αὐτὸν ἄψηται. 23 καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χειρός τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἐζητεῖκεν αὐτῶν ἐξω τῆς κόμης καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὦματα αὐτοῦ, ἐπιθέεις τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν· εἰ τι βλέπεις; 24 καὶ ἀναβλέψας ἐλέγει· βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅτι ὡς δένδρα ὅρω περιπατοῦντας. 25 εἶτα πάλιν ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, καὶ διέβλεπεν καὶ ἀπεκατέστη καὶ ἐνέβλεπεν τὴναν ἅπαντα. 26 καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς ὦκον αὐτοῦ. . .

22 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” 24 And he looked up and said, “I see men; but they look like trees, walking.” 25 Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly. 26 And he sent him away to his home...
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