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# JESUS “AT HOME”

## Did Jesus Have a House in Capernaum?

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**Abstract:** There is an observable tension among sayings and traditions in the canonical gospels that paint a positive image of family life and those which appeal to the breakdown of traditional family ties. The same tension may be seen between passages which describe a homeless Jesus and those which speak of Jesus “at home”. The site of apparently early Christian significance in Capernaum is needlessly associated with Peter (and Andrew), on the assumption that “the house” in the village where Jesus is to be found must be that of his first disciples. There is however much evidence in the gospels which would lead one to conclude that the earliest days of the Jesus-movement were based for the most part in Jesus’ house in Capernaum.

**Keywords:** Historical Jesus; Homelessness; Capernaum; House; Gospels

### 1. Introduction

There is an obvious tension in the canonical gospels concerning Jesus’ attitude to family life.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand he appears to call his disciples and demand they leave everything to join him (Mk 10:28 par), forsaking loved ones and the comforts of domestic life (Mk 10:29–30 par). Jesus himself leaves home (Mt 4:13/Lk 4:31) and disowns his family (Mk 3:33–34), and expects disputes among the families of his followers (Mt 10:35–36/Lk 12:52–53).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand we have positive statements of filial piety (Mk 7:10/Mt 15:4; Mk 10:19

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Morten Hørning Jensen, *Conflicting Calls? Family and Discipleship in Mark and Matthew in the Light of First-Century Galilean Village Life*, in: Eve-Marie Becker/Anders Runesson (eds.), *Mark and Matthew comparative readings. I Understanding the earliest gospels in their first-century settings* (WUNT 271), Tübingen 2011, 205–231; Santiago Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family in Conflict: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, in: John Pilch (ed.), *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina* (BiInS 53), Leiden 2001, 210–238.

<sup>2</sup> In Jn 7:53–8:11 Jesus refuses to condemn “a woman caught in adultery”, disrespecting marital law and ideals of family harmony.

par) and evidence of continued contact and interaction with family members (Mk 1:29–31 par; Mt 20:20–21, 27:56). Attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction can of course appeal to different traditions, different stages, or different communities in earliest Christian life.

It is my contention here that the same may equally be said of the idea that Jesus was a homeless itinerant, wandering from village to village. This is the image of Jesus which has won the day in the Christian subconscious. Nevertheless, there is an evident tension in the canonical gospels with evidence pointing in contradictory directions. Jesus claims to be homeless (Mt 8:20/Lk 9:58), wanders all over Galilee and to the north, west and east (Mk 4:35–10:31), and takes his followers on a journey to the metropolis (Mk 10:32 par). At the same time, there is a wealth of evidence, often neglected in discussion of the issue, that Jesus did indeed have a home, apparently in Capernaum. I will examine the evidence for Jesus “at home” to see what it might tell us about an early understanding of Jesus’ life and work in Galilee.

## 2. Jesus and Family Life

The evident tension between pro- and anti-family material in the earliest Jesus traditions is perhaps best exemplified by the figure of James. Paul knows the Lord’s brother (Gal 1:19) to have been a witness to the resurrection (1 Cor 15:7) and to have been an important figure in the Jerusalem Christian community (Gal 2:9) with influence extending at least to Antioch (Gal 2:12). Yet this leading authority in the Christian movement receives hardly any mention in the gospels, save for his identification in Nazareth (Mk 6:3/Mt 13:55) and presumed anonymous inclusion in the attempt to approach Jesus in Capernaum (Mk 3:31–35 par). Luke does not name him at all in his gospel,<sup>3</sup> and he appears out of the blue in Acts (Acts 12:17) to become an important voice in community decision-making on Gentile believers (Acts 15:13–21, 21:17–25), again having presumably been implied anonymously in Acts 1:14. John includes Jesus’ anonymous family members at a couple of points in his narrative (Jn 2:1,12, 6:42, 7:3–4,10, 19:25–27), but the brothers, if James is among them, are not a positive influence (Jn 7:5) and are ultimately replaced as brothers by the disciples (Jn 20:17). So there is clearly an ambiguity or a variance in the early traditions about the importance of Jesus’ own family and their status both before and after the crucifixion in Jerusalem.

This ambiguous nature of Jesus’ family circle is reflected in traditions concerning the disciples. In 1994 David Sim published an excellent and thoughtful

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<sup>3</sup> Unless Lk 24:10 is understood to refer to this James.

article on the cost of discipleship, arguing on behalf of the wives and children abandoned by those whom Jesus called to follow him.<sup>4</sup> The problem arises when one assumes that an itinerant lifestyle and the forsaking of family and home were standard aspects of the Jesus group: “Like Jesus himself, the disciples were expected to renounce everything – family and possessions, and the comfort and security which these bring – in order to devote themselves utterly to Jesus and his mission.”<sup>5</sup> The example of Jesus is key: he left his home town of Nazareth to undertake an itinerant lifestyle, living in poverty and dependent upon the charity of others.<sup>6</sup> Mk 10:29–30 par reflects the blessedness of this abandonment of family:

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.”<sup>7</sup>

Mt 10:37 declares that a disciple is not worthy of Jesus if he loves his father and mother, or son and daughter, more than he loves Jesus; Lk 14:26 provides an even more extreme version of this tradition in demanding of the disciples that they *hate* father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters.<sup>8</sup> So it can be argued that, “Jesus expected of those who followed him no less than he demanded of himself. [...] His disciples were to follow his example in renouncing all previous attachments and commit themselves fully to their new vocation.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David Sim, What about the Wives and Children of the Disciples?: The Cost of Discipleship from another Perspective, *HeyJ* 35 (1994) 373–390.

<sup>5</sup> Sim, Wives and Children (Fn. 4) 373.

<sup>6</sup> Sim, Wives and Children (Fn. 4) 374.

<sup>7</sup> All NT citations in English are from the NRSV.

<sup>8</sup> Sim, Wives and Children (Fn. 4) 378. Sim also interestingly points out (381) that the lack of a reference to grandchildren may be a reflection of the age-group of the disciples chosen. Cf. also GTh 55 (“Whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be my disciple, and whoever does not hate brothers and sisters, and carry the cross as I do, will not be worthy of me.”), and the more cryptic Gos. Thom. 101 (“Whoever does not hate [father] and mother as I do cannot be my [disciple], and whoever does [not] love [father and] mother as I do cannot be my [disciple].”), which suggest that the breaking of family ties remains a prominent theme in Jesus traditions.

<sup>9</sup> Sim, Wives and Children (Fn. 4) 376. Cf. also (379): “Jesus expected of his disciples no less than he was himself prepared to do. Just as he embraced a life of homelessness, poverty and celibacy, so were the disciples expected to follow suit. And just as Jesus renounced his family and lived with conflict, rejection and the ever-present danger that his mission might lead to his death, so were his followers expected to do likewise.” Furthermore (382), because Jesus was apparently unmarried, “the disciples were asked to give up more than Jesus himself was required to relinquish”!

Yet is this really the case? Jesus repeatedly returns to Capernaum, so the disciples he called there do not have to forsake their village as he had done.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, there is a grave ambiguity concerning to what extent the disciples abandoned everything to follow Jesus. The first stop for the first disciples is the home of two of them, where they stay at least that night. The family is not abandoned, rather Simon's mother-in-law is healed (Mk 1:29–31 par). The call of the tax-collector in Capernaum is particularly interesting, and warrants detailed consideration below. Especially peculiar beside Simon and Andrew's link to their home is that of James and John, who one day abandon their father in the boat with the day-workers (Mk 1:20 par),<sup>11</sup> but whose mother appears late in Matthew's gospel and speaks to Jesus on behalf of her sons (Mt 20:20–21). Sim's observation that “the Gospels [...] are neither interested in nor do they seek to convey information about the families of the disciples after they had left their homes to follow Jesus”,<sup>12</sup> may indicate that, rather than being abandoned by these irresponsible young men, the families maintained contact; certainly their lifestyle was affected by the actions of this man from Nazareth, but they were not completely neglected, abandoned and forgotten. Therefore the claim of Sim that “the decision of the disciples to follow Jesus would have met with stern disapproval in their family circles”,<sup>13</sup> is not supported by the texts, such as Peter's wife in 1 Cor 9:5, his mother-in-law in Mk 1:29–31 par, and the mother of James and John in Mt 20:20–21 and 27:56; certainly none of these family members appears to have had a problem with the disciples' association with this man from Nazareth.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps they are not prophets, and therefore unlike Jesus are not rejected by their hometown and their own homes (Mk 6:4 par).

<sup>11</sup> Is this not in violation of the commandment to honour one's father and mother (Mk 7:10/Mt 15:4; Mk 10:19 par)? See Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom*, Louisville 2003, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 382.

<sup>13</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 382

<sup>14</sup> As Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 383 admits: “[I]t is entirely reasonable to speculate that [Peter's mother-in-law] and her daughter formed a positive view of Jesus and Peter's involvement with him.” The gospels and other early texts provide, to my knowledge, no evidence to suggest a particular hardship for the family as proposed by Sim (*ibid.*), but it remains of course a credible possibility, if indeed complete abandonment was standard for a follower of Jesus. Hørning Jensen, *Conflicting Calls?* (Fn. 1) 208, also speaks of “the amount of animosity against the Jesus movement encountered in Mark and Matthew”, in my opinion against the evidence of the gospels for a generally positive reaction to Jesus' Capernaum ministry (Nazareth, Bethsaida and Chorazin prove different). Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family* (Fn. 1) 234, asserts without any evidence that the accusation of Lk 11:15 (“He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”) comes from parents of Jesus' disciples.

The claim Peter makes in Mk 10:28 is a key reference to which one may appeal for the idea that the disciples left everything: “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” One might also consider Jn 6:66–69, at which point many “turn back” and no longer accompany Jesus, and Peter speaks on behalf of the Twelve to declare that they have nowhere else to go. This of course is called into question by Mk 1:29 (Simon and Andrew’s house) and Jn 19:26–27 (the house of the disciple whom Jesus loved) respectively. Yet by Mk 10:28 Jesus is starting on his way to Jerusalem and therefore the timing of this claim of Peter must be taken into account; this is not necessarily a summary of discipleship under Jesus *per se*.<sup>15</sup>

The mission of the disciples is also given as evidence of poverty and itinerancy.<sup>16</sup> The disciples are to undertake a mission with the bare minimum (Mk 6:8–9; Mt 10:9–10; Lk 9:3, 10:4). But once again it is overlooked that this mission is temporary; Jesus remains alone while the disciples head off to different areas, before returning whence they departed, returning, so to speak, “home” to Jesus (Mk 6:30; Lk 9:10, 10:17). Furthermore, the instructions given do not indicate that the disciples are expected to sleep rough during this mission, rather they are to find a house that will take them in, a tradition found in both triple-tradition (Mk 6:10/Mt 10:11/Lk 9:4) and double-tradition (Mt 10:12/Lk 10:5).

Similarly we have the impression that the disciples left their employment.<sup>17</sup> This certainly appears to be the case for the tax-collector.<sup>18</sup> Yet Jesus has constant access to “the boat” (not “a” boat), which he can use for preaching (Mk 4:1/Mt 13:2) or for crossing the lake (Mk 4:36 etc.).<sup>19</sup> The disciples may have stopped fishing, but they certainly continued sailing.<sup>20</sup>

A further thought that might bear consideration is the (unconscious) connection between the idea of itinerant, male disciples, journeying as a group and living ‘rough’, a lifestyle inappropriate for women at the time. While there is of course much to indicate that Jesus called men to be his followers, there is

<sup>15</sup> Moxnes, *Putting Jesus* (Fn. 11) 57: “Mark has preserved the radical call to leave everything, but it is modified by the stories he tells.”

<sup>16</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 377.

<sup>17</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 377.

<sup>18</sup> According to John it is Judas Iscariot, not a former tax-collector, who is the group’s treasurer, having the *γλωσσόκομον* (Jn 12:6, 13:29).

<sup>19</sup> Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family* (Fn. 1) 236–237: “the references to the boat which Jesus and his disciples used to get about the lake [...] could be an indication that not all of his disciples had abandoned their trade.”

<sup>20</sup> Yet even the idea that the disciples stopped fishing is one which must be qualified. In Mt 17:27 Jesus sends Peter out to catch a fish, albeit only one, and John 21:1–8, the only reference to the disciples’ fishing in the fourth gospel, has them engaged in this activity after the resurrection and appearance of Jesus.

strong evidence in the canonical gospels, not to mention other Christian literature, that women were among his students (e.g. Lk 10:39; Jn 11:28, 20:16). It is difficult to see how the argument for young bread-winners abandoning their dependents fits with the evidence for rich women playing important roles in the Jesus movement (Lk 8:1–3). Yet the idea of a homeless Jesus and homeless followers forsaking wives and children and homes plays well into the male-oriented image of a group of men as disciples of Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise the traditions of Jesus' teaching on divorce (Mk 10:2–12 par; 1 Cor 7:10) would either mean that, as Sim observes, he was particularly heartless with regard to abandoned wives,<sup>22</sup> or indeed indicate that these were perhaps not as abandoned and neglected as Sim believes.<sup>23</sup>

Sim concludes that there was a sudden turn in fortune for the wives and families of the disciples, and that the difficult situation “only” lasted for the duration of Jesus' ministry, therefore two years.<sup>24</sup> After this, “attachment to Jesus no longer necessitated a permanent state of homelessness. Nor did it entail at this time the practice of celibacy and the rejection of the family.”<sup>25</sup> Thus the young men in question are imagined to have abandoned wives and children to shame and starvation for two years, only to return to form good, Christian homes.

Guijarro Oporto provides an alternative solution to the tension between pro- and anti-family rhetoric in the gospels:

“This conflict did not inevitably arise. When all the family accepted the message of Jesus, there were no divisions created because of him. In those cases, the disciples continued living in their houses with their relatives but they formed a fictive kinship group with Jesus and his disciples, while those who had to abandon their homes and family found hospitality, support and solidarity in these households which had accepted the message of Jesus.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf., e.g., Gerd Theißen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung: ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums* (TEH 194), Munich 1977, 17: “Wahrscheinlich haben viele Familien über ihre Söhne, die sich der Jesusbewegung angeschlossen hatten, nicht anders geurteilt als die Familie Jesu über ihren ‘verlorenen Sohn’: Sie hielt ihn schlicht für verrückt.” Cf. also Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family* (Fn. 1) 221, for a similar train of thought.

<sup>22</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 386: “By obeying this ruling, the disciples would have deprived their wives and children of any opportunity to regain their social and financial independence.”

<sup>23</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 385 argues: “[A]s unattractive as the conclusion might be, it is more likely than not that in answering the call to follow Jesus the disciples did not attempt to provide for their families.”

<sup>24</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 387.

<sup>25</sup> Sim, *Wives and Children* (Fn. 4) 387.

<sup>26</sup> Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family* (Fn. 1) 238.

He thus sees a two-tier discipleship: one for those who are to follow closely, and thus must abandon their families, and one for those who can remain at home and provide hospitality for itinerant disciples.<sup>27</sup> The division is based not on Jesus' choice, however, but on the reaction of the families to Jesus' call. The difference is therefore not pre- and post-Easter, but households which accept Jesus and those which reject him. Only members of the latter are forced (NB Guijarro Oporto's "had to abandon") to leave home to join the Jesus movement. This is again – however – not what the evidence of the gospels suggests. There is for example no indication that Zebedee had rejected Jesus and that is why his sons abandon him.

The claim of Jesus in Mt 8:20/Lk 9:58 is the key text in explaining the portrait of Jesus as a wandering radical:

αἱ ἀλώπεκες φωλεοῦς ἔχουσιν καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνώσεις, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει.

The verse is word-for-word in Matthew and Luke, and thus usually attributed to Q. The study of Q and the role of Wanderradikale in this hypothetical early Christian text may reveal more about the ideal missionary than the ideal Son of Man.<sup>28</sup> The question that concerns us, however, is whether the evidence provided in the gospels would indicate that Jesus is here, in answering the young would-be disciple, being completely honest.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. Peter's House in Capernaum

In 1982 the Biblical Archaeology Review published a report on the claims of a team of Italian archaeologists claiming to have discovered Peter's house in Capernaum.<sup>30</sup> It speaks of "the house where Jesus stayed in Capernaum"<sup>31</sup>, on the

<sup>27</sup> Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family* (Fn. 1) 238.

<sup>28</sup> A comprehensive study of itinerant preachers is Markus Tiwald, *Wanderradikalismus. Jesu erste Jünger – ein Anfang und was davon bleibt* (ÖBS 20), Frankfurt 2002, who deals with Q throughout but especially 69–175. Cf. Theißen, *Soziologie* (Fn. 21) 14–21. It is then Q therefore which provides us with the most extreme neglect of family, in Jesus' refusal to allow a disciple to bury his father (Mt 8:21–22/Lk 9:59–60) and with the direct claim of Jesus to have come to bring conflict among members of a household (Mt 10:34–35/Lk 12:51–53).

<sup>29</sup> It is perhaps fortunate that Matthew and Luke provide no reference to "the cushion" on which Jesus is to be found sleeping in Mk 4:38.

<sup>30</sup> James P. Strange/Hershel Shanks, *Has the House where Jesus stayed in Capernaum been found?*, *BArR* 8,6 (1982) 26–37.

<sup>31</sup> Strange/Shanks, *House* (Fn. 30) 26.

assumption that Jesus – of Nazareth – used Simon Peter’s house as his home base in the village on the lakeside.<sup>32</sup>

“Capernaum was not only the center of Jesus’s Galilean ministry, but it was also the place of his longest residence. Where did Jesus live in Capernaum? While we are not told specifically, the fair inference seems to be that he lived in Peter’s house.”<sup>33</sup>

The reason for this assumption is of course the account of Jesus’ healing of Simon’s mother-in-law (Mk 1:29–31 par). There is then however a bit of a leap to the proposal that the “at home” of Mk 2:1, where the roof will soon be taken apart (Mk 2:4 par), is again Simon’s house.<sup>34</sup> We may have a case here of a harmonisation of archaeology and commentary.

The site, “84 feet south of the synagogue”,<sup>35</sup> contains an octagonal building, and, “Local guides invariably pointed it out to gullible tourists as the house of St. Peter.”<sup>36</sup> Comparison with an octagonal structure in Bethlehem does indeed lead to the conclusion that, “Presumably the octagonal church at Capernaum was intended to mark some other site of special importance in Christian history.”<sup>37</sup> Everything begins to fit into place for biblical archaeologists with discovery that the walls would not have been strong enough to support a masonry roof, and therefore the account of the paralytic can be located.<sup>38</sup> A further comment adds, “Curiously enough, several fishhooks were found beneath one of the upper pavements from the later house-church, although this does not prove that the inhabitants of the original house were fishermen.”<sup>39</sup> A fair summary of the layout of the building is given:

“For all intents and purposes, this house as originally built is indistinguishable from all other houses of ancient Capernaum. Its indoor living area is somewhat larger than usual, but overall it is about the same size as other houses. Its building materials are the usual ones. It was built with no more sophistication than the others in the region.

<sup>32</sup> Reference is made to Mt 4:13: “Jesus left Nazareth and ‘settled’ in Capernaum (to render the verb literally)” (Strange/Shanks, House [Fn. 30] 28), but the issue this raises is not discussed. See 4.2. The Gospel of Matthew for discussion of this verse.

<sup>33</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 28.

<sup>34</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 28.

<sup>35</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 26, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 31.

<sup>37</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 33.

<sup>38</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 34. Similarly, the floor comprised (ibid.) “unworked black basalt stones with large spaces between”, which is said to allow an insight into the plight of the woman who loses a coin in Lk 15:8–9(!).

<sup>39</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 34.

In short, there is nothing to distinguish this house from its neighbors, except perhaps the events that transpired there and what happened to it later.”<sup>40</sup>

The changes observed are first of all the plastering and then re-plasterings of both the floor and the walls of the central room,<sup>41</sup> and an apparent change in the activity within the building, as, for example, “people were no longer eating on the premises”.<sup>42</sup> Thus “the room, previously part of a private home, was now devoted to some kind of public use”.<sup>43</sup> It has been argued that graffiti found on the site make reference to Peter, though this seems very questionable.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the article concludes: “a considerable body of circumstantial evidence does point to its identification as St. Peter’s house.”<sup>45</sup>

However, the archaeological evidence only points to a site of sudden importance in early Christianity, a normal, everyday dwelling that soon became an important meeting place and eventual pilgrimage site. A combination of a certain understanding of Jesus’ lifestyle and a single reference from early in the gospel tradition to a visit Jesus made to Simon’s house leads to this conclusion. Without this particular reading of Mark and perhaps the influence of itinerancy traditions in the gospels, one could equally conclude that the site excavated in Capernaum, if indeed an authentic site of Jesus’ lifetime, may well have been Jesus’ house.

## 4. Jesus “at home” in the Gospels

### 4.1. *The Gospel of Mark*

It is to Mark that I am turning for the earliest account of the life of Jesus, simply because Markan priority commands majority opinion, whereas the status of the double-tradition remains a subject of lively debate.

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<sup>40</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 34. Also, 37: “When it was built, it was indistinguishable from all other houses in the ancient seaside town.” Hørning Jensen, *Conflicting Calls?* (Fn. 1) 224 summarizes: “The excavations at Capernaum have painted a picture of a medium- to large-sized village consisting primarily of large living units.” See *ibid.*, n. 71 for references to the archaeological studies.

<sup>41</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 34.

<sup>42</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 34.

<sup>43</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 35.

<sup>44</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 35–36.

<sup>45</sup> Strange/Shanks, House (Fn. 30) 37.

#### 4.1.1. The οἶκος/οἰκία Motif in Mark

The οἶκος/οἰκία vocabulary in Mark<sup>46</sup> is the subject of David May's doctoral dissertation.<sup>47</sup> He observes: "House and household language are features that could easily be overlooked in Mark for the simple reason that they blend quietly and unassumedly into the setting of the Markan narrative structure."<sup>48</sup>

A neat contrast may be drawn to Luke: While for Luke "Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal",<sup>49</sup> for Mark, "Jesus is either going to a house, at a house, or talking about a house."<sup>50</sup> There are of course scholars who note the use of "house" in Mark but deny any historical relevance, seeing it merely as a literary motif.<sup>51</sup> This kind of thinking can lead to comments such as that of Stemberger on Mk 9:28: "the house which Jesus and his disciples enter [...] is more a literary-theological idea than a real house."<sup>52</sup> Surely only a modern exegete can think in such abstract terms. Nonetheless, it is therefore surely necessary to examine Mark's literary use of "house" and the

<sup>46</sup> George D. Kilpatrick, Some Notes on Markan Usage, *BiTr* 7 (1956) 2–9, argues that οἶκος and οἰκία in Mark mean "house" and "home" respectively. For the purposes of this study I see no reason to differentiate between the terms οἶκος and οἰκία, the nuances being for the most part negligible, and the syntax of each context indicating that an architectural dwelling is in mind. The interchangeable nature of these terms is seen in Lk 15:6,8, where the shepherd returns "home" (οἶκος) and the woman is at "home" (οἰκία). To argue for an important idiomatic difference in these terms seems unnecessary.

<sup>47</sup> David M. May, *The Role of House and Household Language in the Markan Social World*, Doctoral Dissertation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1987). [unpublished]

<sup>48</sup> May, *House and Household Language* (Fn. 47) 3. He argues, (3, n. 7): "With the exception of chapter 4, household imagery is found in every chapter." Yet even Mk 4 contains a hint of spatial separation, perhaps linked to idea of a "house". In Mk 4:10–12 Jesus speaks of "those outside". Jon Coutts, "Those Outside" (Mark 4,10–12), in: F. L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Evangelica* 2.1. (TU 87) Berlin 1964, 155–157: 155, explains that while οἱ ἔξω in Paul is a metaphorical designation for non-Christians (1 Thess 4:12; 1 Cor 5:12–13; cf. Col 5:5), the term ἔξω is always spatial in Mark, unless this proves the sole exception. He therefore proposes a link to Mk 3:20–35 (where there is the first mention of "parables", Mk 3:23), so that Mk 4:1–9 is out of place (155–157). This would mean that the οἱ ἔξω referred to in Mk 4 can equally be understood as those "outside" the house of Mk 3:19b.

<sup>49</sup> Robert J. Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian. Luke's Passion Account as Literature*, New York 1985, 47.

<sup>50</sup> May, *House* (Fn. 47) 5.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. David M. Rhoads/Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Philadelphia 1982, 67; cf. Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTS 4), Sheffield 1981, 226–229. Johannes Schreiber, *Theologie des Vertrauens. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums*, Hamburg 1969, 162–164, sees the house within the framework of the Messianic secret.

<sup>52</sup> Günter Stemberger, *Galilee – Land of Salvation?*, appendix IV in William D. Davies (ed.), *The Gospel and the Land. Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*, Berkeley 1974, 419.

early community's understanding of Jesus' lifestyle before asking if it is possible that older, historical traditions of a Jesus "at home" lie behind the gospel.

The house that dissolves invisibly into the narrative is of particular significance when one considers the spatiality of Mark. In the house: "The scribes, the disciples, the sick, those in need, and others gathered around for a chance to interact [...] with Jesus."<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, "Mark portrays the house as a setting for pronouncements related to reorientation of norms and new styles of life."<sup>54</sup> Jesus can use the language of a house in illustrative teaching: a house divided (Mk 3:25), a strong man's house (Mk 3:27), a home-owner going on a journey (Mk 13:34–36). The sick come or are brought to Jesus – as everyone somehow knows where he is to be found – and he sends them all to their homes healed (Mk 2:11–12, 5:19–20; 7:30, 8:3, 8:26 etc.).<sup>55</sup>

Comparison with the theme of family is again surely appropriate. In particular, it is perhaps interesting that the "house" appears in Mark long before any indication of Jesus' family background. "While Matthew places Jesus within a traceable family record, Mark limits himself to mentioning that Jesus came from Nazareth (1:9), and it is not until chapter three that he introduces Jesus' relatives (3:21, 31–35) and in chapter six provides us with details on Jesus' upbringing, profession and hometown (6:1–6a)."<sup>56</sup> In these two episodes we learn that Jesus disowns his family (Mk 3:33–35)<sup>57</sup> and considers himself "without

<sup>53</sup> May, House (Fn. 47) 184.

<sup>54</sup> May, House (Fn. 47) 184. Cf. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless. A Sociological Exegesis of I Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, Philadelphia 1981, 193: "'House,' 'household' and 'family' function not only as link words for the combination of the separate sayings; more importantly, they are parts of a unifying theme for treating the issues of social division, demonic opposition and faithful obedience to the will of God as factors effecting membership in the household of Jesus."

<sup>55</sup> Elisabeth Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA AYTOY: Mark 2.15 in Context*, NTS 31 (1985) 282–292: 286.

<sup>56</sup> Hørning Jensen, *Conflicting Calls?* (Fn. 1) 210. Luke of course similarly provides a family background for Jesus, indeed in even more detail than Matthew (Lk 1–2), whereas John brings Jesus' mother and brothers into the narrative without much of an introduction, let alone names (Jn 2:1, 2:12, 6:42, 7:3).

<sup>57</sup> David M. May, *Mark 3:20–35 from the Perspective of Shame/Honor*, BTB 17, 3 (1987) 83–87: 86, argues that, "[T]hey wait outside of the house because to approach Jesus publicly over an internal family matter (v. 31) would have been dishonourable. Furthermore, in order not to create a scene, the family has the mediating crowd indicate to Jesus its presence outside of the house." However, if one were to connect these verses with Mk 3:20–21 one would naturally assume that it is the presence of the crowds that prevents the family from coming close to Jesus, and so they "call" to him, not necessarily an indication that they asked the crowd to mediate on their behalf.

honour” in his home (Mk 6:4).<sup>58</sup> So it seems that the assumed “house” of Jesus cannot be a family home. Jesus has clearly left this behind in Nazareth when he left his family.<sup>59</sup>

Elizabeth Struthers Malbon examined the spatial aspects of Mark specifically with regard to the buildings: house, synagogue, temple.<sup>60</sup> The house may reflect a Christian opposition to both synagogue and temple, with the house church being the best option available.<sup>61</sup> She notes, “the actions enclosed by a house parallel those enclosed by a synagogue: healing, teaching or preaching, controversy.”<sup>62</sup> The comparison may be reflected in a play-on-words in Mk 2:1–2: many gather at the house (“συνήχθησαν”, from συνάγω).<sup>63</sup> Scribes are condemned for their behaviour at both locations, as they seek honour not only in synagogues but also in private homes (Mk 12:38–39).<sup>64</sup> When Jesus sends out his disciples, he sends them to houses (Mk 6:7–13)<sup>65</sup> while warning that they will be beaten in synagogues (Mk 13:9).<sup>66</sup> The raising of a girl from the dead takes place in the house of a ruler of the synagogue (Mk 5:22–24, 38–

<sup>58</sup> May, *Shame/Honor* (Fn. 57) 84, notes the difference between “ascribed honor”, being born into a good family, and “acquired honor”, which is earned or won at a social level. Mk 6:4 and Mt 13:57 both have Jesus speak of prophets as “without honour” in their homeland and in their homes. Lk 4:24 and GTh 31 do not refer to the home specifically.

<sup>59</sup> Douglas F. Oakman, *Was Jesus a Peasant? Implications for Reading the Samaritan Story* (Luke 10:30–35), *BTB* 22,3 (1992) 117–125, takes up the question of Jesus’ social and geographical milieu by asking *Was Jesus a Peasant?* In poor households “surplus children” are forced to leave home to find work (118); thus (120), “Occupationally, Jesus is best understood as a peasant child forced to leave the village in search of livelihood.” Nonetheless (121), “[W]hile Jesus could and did move beyond the village during his life, his fundamental world of values and his fundamental interests and loyalties were shaped within and oriented to the village.” This serves as an important reminder that Jesus is never to be found in Galilean cities, and that the content of his teaching was for the most part based on rural imagery.

<sup>60</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 285.

<sup>61</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 288. Cf. *idem*, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, New York 1986, 118–119, and the connection with sacredness and profanity, 140.

<sup>62</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 285. She points out (*ibid.*) that Jesus, following his rejection in that of Nazareth, is never again to be found in a synagogue. However, she also argues that following the episode(s) of Mk 3:19–35 Jesus is never again to be found “in his own home” (*ibid.*). This is a difficult claim to make in light of Mk 7:17, 9:28, 9:33, 10:10, references however which are not unproblematic (see 4.1.3. in this article and also *Other Houses? Tradition and Redaction in Dialogue*).

<sup>63</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 290, n. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 290, n. 17. To this could be added that the scribes devour widows’ houses (Mk 12:40aα / [Mt 23:14]/Lk 20:47)

<sup>65</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 285. May, *House* (Fn. 47) 190, sees one of the very few early pseudo-rituals of the Jesus movement in Mark in the command to shake the dust from one’s feet (Mk 6:11).

<sup>66</sup> Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 286.

43).<sup>67</sup> Jesus is anointed by a woman in a house, a ritual more appropriately conducted by a man in a temple.<sup>68</sup> This action is to become famous “wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world” (Mk 14:9), that is in houses all over the world.<sup>69</sup>

Struthers Malbon comments that, “The house is not a place of withdrawal from the people.”<sup>70</sup> Yet the “house” as a topos reflects privacy, not only in the references to private instruction<sup>71</sup> but also in the case of Jairus’ daughter.<sup>72</sup> Against this, however, is the evidence of Jesus at home with crowds (Mk 2:1–2; 3:19b–20; cf. also Mk 2:15, discussed below). So we can see an obvious tension between the house as a place of privacy and a place of crowds. None of this however would lead one to conclude that the house in question is not Jesus’ house.

#### 4.1.2. The House(s) in Capernaum

The idea that the house discovered in Capernaum is that of Peter is based on a reading of Mark that assumes that all mentions of “home” or “house” that follow Mk 1:29 must refer to Peter’s house, which has now become a base for Jesus’ mission.<sup>73</sup> We are somehow to assume this despite the fact that Jesus abandons this house secretly in the early morning (Mk 1:35–37). We are then asked to understand Jesus as sending Peter and Andrew off on a mission, and remaining in their house with the mother-in-law, and possibly others (Although it is never explained where Jesus is while the apostles are away two-by-two, one must locate him somewhere). While this is not inconceivable, it is also not

<sup>67</sup> Struthers Malbon, TH OIKIA (Fn. 55) 287.

<sup>68</sup> Struthers Malbon, TH OIKIA (Fn. 55) 286.

<sup>69</sup> Struthers Malbon, TH OIKIA (Fn. 55) 289, sees a possible play on words in Markan Christians’ post-70 eschatology: “The Christian community may well know of the destruction of the οἶκος κυρίου, and awaits the return of the κύριος τῆς οἰκίας (Mk 13:35).” The concept of a “house of God” only appears twice in Mark (Mk 2:26, 11:17), in both instances a reference to the temple using the terminology of the Hebrew scriptures.

<sup>70</sup> Struthers Malbon, TH OIKIA (Fn. 55) 285.

<sup>71</sup> Mk 7:17, 9:28, 9:33, 10:10 (see 4.1.3. in this article: Other Houses? Tradition and Redaction in Dialogue).

<sup>72</sup> Mk 5:37: He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John; Mk 5:40: He put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was; Mk 5:43: He strictly ordered them that no one should know this.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie vor der Diachronie als Grundaxiom der Literarkritik. Methodische Erwägungen an Hand von Mk 2,13–17/Mt 9,9–13*, BZ.NF 22 (1978) 161–186: 169, says of Peter’s house: “Es ist das Haus, von dem er ausgeht und in das er zurückkehrt. In ihm ist er Gastgeber.” Moxnes, *Putting Jesus* (Fn. 11) 57, suggests: “Maybe this is a conscious ambiguity in Mark’s narrative.” The Gospel of the Ebionites (according to Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 30.13.2–3), has Jesus appoint eight disciples – whom he then calls the twelve apostles – while in Peter’s house in Capernaum.

necessary. Matthew was one of the earliest readers of Mark, and he does not appear to understand the house as that of Peter and make an effort to clarify this.<sup>74</sup> Mark (and subsequently Matthew and Luke) only mentions Peter’s house once and briefly.

Soon after this episode, Jesus is unable to enter any town in Galilee due to his increased fame (Mk 1:45). Yet after a few days there must be a certain lull, as Jesus returns to Capernaum and is to be found ἐν οἴκῳ (Mk 2:1). As with Peter’s house (Mk 1:33) we again see the motif of crowding at the door (Mk 2:2). Is this evidence that it is the same house, the same door? We could note that the removal of the roof above Jesus (Mk 2:4) gives no cause for protest from Simon or Andrew. This first mention of a house since Jesus’ last time in Capernaum gives us no clear reason to associate it with the first disciples.

Jesus then goes out for a walk by the lake (Mk 2:13). On his way (back home?) he spots a tax-or toll-collector. Levi, just like Simon and Andrew, “follows” Jesus when called.<sup>75</sup> If Levi also brings Jesus to his home at this stage, then Jesus now has at least two houses in Capernaum of which he can make use.<sup>76</sup> However, the question as to whose house Jesus visits following the call of the tax-collector is far from clear. The ambiguity arises with the use of personal pronouns in Mk 2:15: Who is dining in whose house?

- This very ambiguity may incline one to the idea that they must refer to Jesus.
- Furthermore, they follow directly on αὐτῷ, which certainly refers to Jesus.
- The verb ἠκολούθησεν also depicts Jesus as leading the way, as he must have done with the first four disciples (though admittedly they end up later in the house of two of these).
- Jesus had been “going along” (παράγων) when he saw Levi, so he was already on his way somewhere.
- A great many (tax-collectors and sinners) have followed Jesus, and he eats with them, reclining possibly as host.
- The scribes of the Pharisees arrive and witness this scandal.

<sup>74</sup> See 4.2. The Gospel of Matthew.

<sup>75</sup> Levi, of course, does not make it into the list of the Twelve in Mk 3:13–19. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus* (Fn. 11) 56, suggests that these call stories emerged as examples of the radical call of Jesus preserved in Lk 9:59–60.

<sup>76</sup> We might even, on this understanding, posit that James and John would equally have offered their home as a further house for Jesus to use. Yet there is no mention of the property of the brothers following their departure from the boat. A canonical and patristic reading of the gospels would however have to note the house of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in Jn 19:26–27, a figure traditionally associated with John the son of Zebedee.

- The episode concludes with Jesus saying he has come “to call”, possibly a synonym for “to invite”.

All of this suggests that Levi has followed Jesus home. Yet still a majority of commentaries and articles favour the view that Jesus is seated in *Levi’s* house.<sup>77</sup> Ernest Best argues, “[T]here is no evidence that Jesus possessed a house and since he is regularly found in the houses of others we must assume that the house is Levi’s.”<sup>78</sup> Many reach this conclusion about the redactional level of the gospel despite claiming that there are two independent traditions here, one call and one dispute, which would naturally distance the meal from Levi.<sup>79</sup> There are, however, many who argue for the house as *Jesus’* house.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Of the commentators, for example Erich Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3), Tübingen <sup>5</sup>1971, 25; Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross*, Grand Rapids 1993, 124; Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids 2002, 132–133; Adele Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2009, 191; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markus-Evangelium* (HTKNT 2,1), Freiburg 1980, 162 and 164–165; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (EKK 2,1), Zürich and Neukirchen-Vluyn <sup>6</sup>2008, 106; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT), Grand Rapids 1974, 103; John R. Donahue/Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Sacra Pagina 2), Collegeville 2002, 100; Peter Dschulnigg, *Das Markusevangelium* (Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 2), Stuttgart: 2007, 96; Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (RNT), Regensburg <sup>5</sup>1963, 95; Philip Carrington, *According to Mark*, Cambridge 1960, 63; Mark L. Strauss, *Mark* (Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 2), Grand Rapids 2014, 130–131. Cf. also Hørning Jensen, *Conflicting Calls?* (Fn. 1), 210. David M. May, *Mark 2.15: The Home of Jesus or Levi?*, NTS 39 (1993) 147–149, also concludes that the house was that of Levi, who has “a social obligation to reciprocate” within “a dyadic relationship” (149). While he sees a parallel in the calling of Simon and Andrew (149), there appears to be no evidence for, for example, James and John reciprocating Jesus’ call with some sort of immediate fellowship. The comparison with Simon and Andrew continues (149, n. 13) with Jesus reciprocating by healing Simon’s mother-in-law. Thus a never-ending cycle of reciprocity becomes possible.

<sup>78</sup> Best, *Following Jesus* (Fn. 51) 175.

<sup>79</sup> See especially Bastiaan M. F. van Iersel, *La vocation de Lévi* (Mc II, 13–17, Mt IX, 7–13, Lc V, 27–32), in: Ignace de la Potterie (ed.), *De Jésus aux Evangiles 2. Traditions et Rédactions dans les Évangiles synoptiques* (BETL 25), Leuven 1967, 212–232.

<sup>80</sup> Of the commentators, for example Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (KEK 2), Göttingen <sup>17</sup>1967, 55; Simon Légasse, *L’Évangile de Marc* (LeDiv 5,1), Paris 1997, 180; Paul Lamarche, *Evangile de Marc – commentaire* (EBib 33), Paris 1996, 103; Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (ICC 48), Edinburgh 1896, 41; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary), Grand Rapids 2002, 85; John Bowman, *The Gospel of Mark: The New Christian Jewish Passover Haggadah* (Studia Post-Biblica 8), Leiden 1965, 115. This is the position of Struthers Malbon, *TH OIKIA* (Fn. 55) 282–283, who notices “the overall position of the ‘house’ as an architectural space in Mark’s gospel” and also draws attention the “follow” motif and the appearance of Jesus as host. Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie* (Fn. 73) 175, notes “die Nähe von 2,15 zu anderen Einleitungsversen der näheren Umgebung wie 2,1 und 3,20”, which would all indicate “ein bestimmtes Haus in Kafarnaum”. Again however, he prefers to see this as

The most interesting divergence in interpretation surely comes from our first two readers of Mark, Matthew and Luke. Matthew does little if anything to smooth over the ambiguity,<sup>81</sup> with the result that it appears even more likely to be Jesus' house (Mt 9:10).<sup>82</sup> Luke is of the opinion however that the house – and thus the hosting of the banquet – belongs to Levi (Lk 5:29), despite being alone in detailing that the tax-collector “leaves everything”, *καταλιπὼν πάντα* (Lk 5:28);<sup>83</sup> the episode finds itself almost paralleled later in Luke in the call of the that Luke has a programme for making Jesus a travelling guest, than that he has the correct understanding of Mark and it is Matthew who is mistaken.

If we can rule out Levi's house as the location of the meal in Mk 2:15–16, then we are left with one house in Capernaum, and the tendency is still to see this as that of Simon Peter (and Andrew, although the brother is often forgotten).<sup>84</sup> The visit to Simon's house in Mk 1:29–31 was however a necessary prelude to the healing of his mother-in-law. The connection to further healings and teachings in the course of the gospel is made already in Mk 1:32–34, the first instance of “many gathered at the door”. But again, there is a strong but simple argument that may be made for two different traditions brought together at this point: one of Peter's mother-in-law, and one in which *ὄλη ἡ πόλις*<sup>85</sup> was “gathered at the door”.

When Jesus then decides to appoint twelve he does so up a mountain (Mk 3:13–14). He then goes home (Mk 3:19b *καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς οἶκον*). Once again

Peter's house (ibid.). May, Mark 2.15: The Home of Jesus or Levi? (Fn. 77) 147, n. 1, notes that there are some who prefer “not to choose an option”.

<sup>81</sup> Struthers Malbon, TH OIKIA (Fn. 55) 284, argues that “Matthew's redaction is less extensive.” It should of course be noted that Matthew does not speak of Levi, but of “Matthew”, thus making this disciple one of the Twelve and inadvertently giving us the title for his gospel. Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie* (Fn. 73) 168: “die Definition mit dem Art. zeigt, daß der Evangelist keine neue Lokalität einführen will, sondern die Bekanntschaft des Hörers mit diesem Haus voraussetzen kann.” However, (ibid., 178): “Von einer ‘stylistischen Verbesserung’ durch Mt kann nicht die Rede sein.”

<sup>82</sup> Pesch, *Das Markus-Evangelium* (Fn. 77) 45, Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (ThHK 2), Leipzig <sup>10</sup>1989, 270, and Karl L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, Darmstadt <sup>2</sup>1969, 86, all understand Matthew as referring to Jesus' house.

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g. Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AncB 27), New York 2000, 225; Lamarche, *Evangile* (Fn. 80) 103. Indeed, it is the contention of Struthers Malbon, TH OIKIA (Fn. 55) 284, that “Luke realized Mark's intention all too well and went considerably out of his way to change it.” Luke, for example, also adds that Jesus is calling sinners “to repentance” (Lk 5:32).

<sup>84</sup> E.g. Lamarche, *Evangile* (Fn. 80) 103; Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie* (Fn. 73) 169: “Es ist anzunehmen, daß der Evangelist an allen drei Stellen (8,14; 9,10 und 28) ein und dasselbe Haus im Auge hat, das nur beim erstenmal näher, u. z. als „Haus des Petrus“ bezeichnet wird.”

<sup>85</sup> An interesting term for Capernaum in this instance; cf. Mk 1:45; otherwise only a *πόλις* of the country of the Gerasenes (Mk 5:14) and the *πόλις* Jerusalem (Mk 14:13,16).

there is nothing to indicate that this house belongs to Peter and Andrew or to any of the other ten, or to another follower, such as Levi. And for the third time we have a problem with overcrowding (Mk 3:20: καὶ συνέρχεται πάλιν [ὁ] ὄχλος, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι αὐτοὺς μηδὲ ἄρτον φαγεῖν). At this point in Mark, Jesus is approached by:

(a) οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ who think he is mad (Mk 3:21)

(b) οἱ γραμματεῖς οἱ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων who think he has Beelzebul (Mk 3:22)

(c) ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ who “send for”, “call” and reportedly “seek” him (Mk 3:31–32)

That these groups know where to locate Jesus at this point – unless they are simply following the crowds – is surely another indication that Jesus was indeed, as it says in Mk 3:19b, “at home”.<sup>86</sup>

#### 4.1.3. Private Space? Tradition and Redaction in Dialogue

In Mk 6 we once more have a problem with crowds, which prevent the disciples from being able even to eat in peace (Mk 6:31). This continues despite their brief retreat (Mk 6:53–56). It is from this point that “the house” becomes a refuge for private discussions between Jesus and the disciples in Mark.<sup>87</sup> In Mk 7:17 the disciples approach Jesus in the house to ask him what he meant about purity and defilement, a detail which indicates only retrospectively that the food the disciples were seen to be eating with unwashed hands (Mk 7:2) must have been a picnic. The reference to a “house” in Mk 9:28 is the one which really supports the proposal of a purely redactional Markan motif, as the group has not yet reached Capernaum (they will do in Mk 9:33, where again they enter “the house”).<sup>88</sup> Clearly Mark likes the idea of the disciples receiving private instruction in a house, away from “those outside” (cf. Mk 4:10–12). Thus in *Judea* and/or *Transjordan*, Jesus can once again teach in public and answer the disciples’ questions in private “in the house” (Mk 10:10). For Mark it seems “the house” in Capernaum he knows from his traditions is so deeply impressed into his vision of Jesus that it pops up elsewhere in Galilee and Judea when the disciples need to ask Jesus to explain his public message to them in private.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> A similar phenomenon occurs in Mt 9, see 4.2. The Gospel of Matthew.

<sup>87</sup> Perhaps implied in Mk 4:10, as Coutts, *Those Outside* (Fn. 48) argues.

<sup>88</sup> This is also the best possible evidence of a semantic difference between οἶκος and οἰκία in Mark, as Mk 9:28, somewhere in Galilee near a mountain, has εἰς οἶκον (“into a house”), whereas Mk 9:33, back in Capernaum, has ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ (“in the house”).

<sup>89</sup> There are also three other houses worth mentioning: one in Bethany (Mk 11:11/Mt 21:17; Mk 14:3/Mt 26:6; Lk 10:38–42; Jn 11), one in Jerusalem (Mk 14:12–17/Mt 26:17–20/Lk 22:7–14; Lk 24:33–49; Acts 1:12–14; and presumably Jn 13:2b–5), and – though only in Lk – one in Emmaus (Lk 24:13,28–31)

Jerome Neyrey examines the role of public versus private space and its relevance for understanding the social world of Acts.<sup>90</sup> Paul speaks publicly in honourable places (Acts 13:7, 16:19–20, 17:18–34, 24:1–26:32, 28:7)<sup>91</sup> and in important cities.<sup>92</sup> Some of his observations come equally to bear on Jesus in Mark, notable for the contrast in his avoidance of public spaces of ‘honour’ and important cities. When Jesus goes to the synagogue trouble inevitably ensues,<sup>93</sup> and his visit to Jerusalem results in conflict. This bears directly on Jesus’ social status.<sup>94</sup> Yet Stanley Stowers observes:

“The private home was a center of intellectual activity and the customary place for many types of speakers and teachers to do their work. Occasional lectures, declamations and readings of various sorts of philosophical, rhetorical and literary works often took place in homes. The speaker might use his own house or be invited to speak or teach in another home. These were private affairs and audiences came by invitation.”<sup>95</sup>

So private teaching was, at least for the elite, quite easily located in private homes. These social circles do however imply literacy and education, some-

<sup>90</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, ‘Teaching You in Public and from House to House’ (Acts 20:20). Unpacking a Cultural Stereotype, in: Jerome H. Neyrey/Eric C. Stewart (eds.), *The Social World of the New Testament. Insights and Models*, Peabody 2008, 183–199. First published in *JSNT* 26 (1986) 69–102.

<sup>91</sup> Neyrey, Teaching (Fn. 90) 193–194.

<sup>92</sup> Neyrey, Teaching (Fn. 90) 194–196.

<sup>93</sup> It is often, though not always, the same with Paul’s visits to synagogues in Acts (Acts 13:50, 14:1–7, 17:1–9, 18:1–17, 19:8–9). Paul later confesses that he himself had been an opponent and persecutor of Christians who came to synagogues (Acts 22:19, 26:11).

<sup>94</sup> Neyrey, Teaching (Fn. 90) 196: “males in private space outside the household had varying degrees of voice, depending on age, honor, social role, and status”. Females, of course, did not (*ibid.*). As far as public spaces were concerned: “Elite citizens had a public voice, but not male peasants.” (*ibid.*). Neyrey again discusses Jesus in private space in an essay on gender in Matthew (Jerome H. Neyrey, *Jesus, Gender, and the Gospel of Matthew*, in: Stephen D. Moore/Janice C. Anderson [eds], *New Testament Masculinities [SemeiaSt 45]*, Atlanta 2003, 43–66: 54–55): Jesus’ family is stuck “outside” the house (54); he appears to abandon them, particularly significant for female relatives, and especially hurtful for his mother. This is perhaps all the more ironic because of the absence of a “father” reference in this episode; it is of course clear that Jesus remains loyal to his heavenly father. *Abba* or *πατήρ* in Matthew is almost a name for God (cf. Jn 6:42, where the people ask – amid another long speech by Jesus about his origins and his “father” –, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”). There is again tension between what Matthew has taken over from Mark and the account he gives of the pious Joseph ensuring Jesus’ safety and survival (Mt 1–2). Jesus’ loyalty and honour belong not in private with his mother but in public with his Father (55).

<sup>95</sup> Stanley K. Stowers, *Social Status, Public Speaking and Private Teaching: The Circumstances of Paul’s Preaching Activity*, *NT* 26 (1984) 59–82: 65–66.

thing we cannot assume for Jesus and his disciples.<sup>96</sup> It is possible that the idea of private teaching in a house pervaded Greek culture and was known to those who did not enjoy such opportunities, so early Christians of various social classes were nonetheless aware of the phenomenon. The idea of Jesus teaching privately within a home thus fits both the plausible contextual setting of early Christian house groups and the contemporary cultural ideal of the home school.

A form-critical review of the evidence would thus point to the incidences of the “house” within previously independent traditions that the evangelist has brought together, most confusingly in the case of Levi. A redaction-critical review will highlight the importance of “the house” as a place for in-group teaching in Mark, where Jesus and the disciples can confer in private, no matter where they are in Galilee, Judea or Transjordan.<sup>97</sup> Yet neither discipline can avoid the tension created by the idea of a travelling Jesus and the absurdity of houses conveniently found when required. The only conclusion they can point to is that “the house” motif was so potent in Mark’s traditions and in his understanding of the nature of Jesus’ lifestyle that it pervades both.

Theobald can observe, “Allerdings bleibt die Schwierigkeit, daß Markus nirgends, wo er vom ‚Haus‘ als Aufenthaltsort Jesu spricht, es das seinige nennt.”<sup>98</sup> Yet the exegesis of Mark provides us with no clear indication that (a) Jesus was itinerant, or (b) Jesus used Peter’s home as a base. In Mark Jesus can leave home, return home, and be found at home, and his home appears to be in Capernaum.

#### 4.2. *The Gospel of Matthew*

There are few who doubt that Matthew used Mark as a source, and indeed followed him with considerable loyalty, despite a wealth of changes and additions. Matthew is surely the closest we have to an early reading of Mark’s Gospel, and thus his treatment of the “house” references and motifs in Mark is of particular interest to this study.<sup>99</sup> On the assumption that Matthew is familiar with the gospel of Mark and not reading it for the very first time, we must assume our later evangelist to be bringing his understanding of Mark to the text of his gospel. Matthew provides us with a birth narrative and prelude to the story that

<sup>96</sup> While Mark provides no explicit comment, Lk 4:16–20 has Jesus reading the prophet Isaiah, Jn 7:14–15 has the Jews in Jerusalem astounded at Jesus’ teaching, despite his lack of an education, and Acts 14:3 admits that Peter and John were uneducated men.

<sup>97</sup> And possibly even in the countryside by Tyre (Mk 7:24–30), though there is no mention of the disciples in this episode.

<sup>98</sup> Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie* (Fn. 73) 175, n. 45. Cf. *ibid.*, 183: “[...] da er das Haus, das Jesus in Kafarnaum als Aufenthaltsort dient, nie ‚sein Haus‘ nennt.”

<sup>99</sup> Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie* (Fn. 73) 169–170, n. 25 on the “house” in Mt.

Mark had presented. Knowing the story of Mark, what kind of prologue does Matthew deem appropriate?

Matthew knows (from Mark, if not from all early Christian traditions), that Jesus is “from Nazareth”. He also knows that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, so – like Luke – he provides an explanation of how the boy Jesus ended up living in Nazareth of Galilee.<sup>100</sup> The baby Jesus is born in a house in Bethlehem (Mt 2:11: οἰκία), but is forced to re-settle (Mt 2:23: κατώκησεν). Matthew then encounters the vague Markan summary:

Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. (Mk 1:14)

And then:

Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος ἀμφιβάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ.

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea. (Mk 1:16)

Jesus is in Capernaum. Matthew understands this, and clarifies it:

Ἀκούσας δὲ ὅτι Ἰωάννης παρεδόθη ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. καὶ καταλιπὼν τὴν Ναζαρά ἐλθὼν κατώκησεν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ τὴν παραθαλασσίαν ἐν ὀρίοις Ζαβουλὼν καὶ Νεφθαλίμ· ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου ...

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled ... (Mt 4:12–14)

The phrase καταλιπὼν τὴν Ναζαρά ἐλθὼν κατώκησεν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ tells us what Matthew understood when he read Mark’s gospel: Jesus lived in Capernaum. That much seems obvious. But it is noteworthy that Matthew includes this description before the call of any disciples.

In the rest of his gospel Matthew appears reluctant to keep references to Jesus “at home” which he reads in Mk:

- In the account of the paralyzed man in Capernaum (Mt 9:1–8/Mk 2:1–12) Matthew has no house and there is no un-roofing of a roof. Mt 9:1 simply has, “After getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town” (καὶ ἐμβὰς εἰς πλοῖον διεπέρασεν καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν

<sup>100</sup> The Infancy Gospel of Thomas C (Ms 355, Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris) has James explain of Jesus in a very odd formulation: γεννηθεὶς ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἡμῶν Βηθλεὲμ καὶ ἐν κώμῃ Ναζαρέτ. The same section has Mary lead Joseph and Jesus to Capernaum after the death of Herod.

ιδίαν πόλιν), which surely means Capernaum. Therefore while there is no talk of a house, Jesus' "own town" is now Capernaum; Jesus of Nazareth is now Jesus of Capernaum.<sup>101</sup>

- The next episode in Mark where Jesus is said to have been "at home" (Mk 3:20) is again omitted by Matthew, who sets this dispute about exorcisms in vague geographic terms (Mt 12:15: "When Jesus became aware of this, he departed." (ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς γνοὺς ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν)).
- Later in Mark the group returns to Capernaum from a rather long journey, and we read (Mk 9:33): "Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?'" (καὶ ἦλθον εἰς Καφαρναούμ καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ γενόμενος ἐπηρώτα αὐτοῦς· τί ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ διελογίζεσθε;). Matthew again introduces this discussion in typically vague terms (Mt 18:1): "At that time the disciples came to Jesus saying ..." (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ προσῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγοντες ...).
- The house of private instruction (Mk 7:17) now simply becomes "the disciples approached" (Mt 15:12).
- Similarly, Jesus' going home following an exorcism (Mk 9:28) is recounted by Matthew merely as κατ' ιδίαν (Mt 17:19).
- The privacy at home motif in the explanation of the teaching on divorce (Mk 10:10) is completely overlooked in Matthew (Mt 19:10), who at best can only be said to *imply* that the Pharisees of Mt 19:3 are not privy to this discussion.<sup>102</sup>

The one instance that appears to show agreement between Matthew and Mark on Jesus' being "at home" is the calling of the tax-collector:

Καὶ παράγων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκεῖθεν εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, Ματθαῖον λεγόμενον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ἀκολούθει μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, καὶ ἰδοὺ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐλθόντες συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ.

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at

<sup>101</sup> There is of course nothing to suggest that Jesus was known as "of Capernaum". Yet the designation "of Nazareth" may actually support the proposal that Jesus was "at home" in Capernaum. This (nick)name appears early in Mark (Mk 1:24) and Luke (Lk 4:34), with certain local connotations in John (Jn 1:45–46), and would hardly have been used of Jesus before he left Nazareth. Jesus is sufficiently settled in Capernaum to become known as "of Nazareth", possibly even before his fame spread elsewhere.

<sup>102</sup> There is no mention of the house where Jesus stays on his visit to the mountains of Tyre (Mk 7:24) in Matthew's account (Mt 15:21).

dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. (Mt 9:9–10)

The repetition of “Jesus” at the end of the sentence allows room for understanding the αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ as referring to the tax-collector, yet it is not the tax-collector’s associating with others of his ilk that causes a scandal. The οἰκία of Mt 9:10 appears, within the context of the gospel, to be Jesus’ house.<sup>103</sup> Thus, as in Mk 3, in Mt 9 people know where Jesus is to be found: the Pharisees (Mt 9:11), the disciples of John (Mt 9:14), a bereaved father (Mt 9:18), and two blind(!) men (Mt 9:27–28a) come in turn to Jesus’ house.

The general trend to omit Mark’s references to “the house” could well lead one to understand Matthew as moving away from the idea that Jesus had a home in Capernaum. There are however instances where Matthew adds references to Jesus’ house. In Mt 9:28 Jesus heals two blind men only when they have followed him home; in Mt 13:1 Jesus leaves home to go and sit by the sea; in Mt 13:36 he then returns to the house and the disciples approach him for an explanation of his teaching, a set-up very much in the Markan style. Perhaps most interesting is the Matthean Sondergut passage of the temple tax collectors (Mt 17:24–27): we have recently learned that Jesus must go up to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed (Mt 16:21), but we find ourselves back in Capernaum (Mt 17:24) – which is to be fair en route from Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13) – and Peter leaves the tax-collectors to find Jesus back in the house (Mt 17:25). Even at this late stage in the pre-Passion gospel narrative, when we know that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, there is still room for an understanding of Jesus having a house in Capernaum.<sup>104</sup>

Matthew includes the double-tradition saying on the homelessness of the Son of Man (Mt 8:20), and subsequent tradition has taken up this image of a homeless Jesus.<sup>105</sup> It is wise, however, to consider all of the evidence of the gospel, and to note the continued tension between traditions of itinerant homelessness and the instances where Matthew speaks of Jesus “at home” in Capernaum.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (EKK 1,2), Zürich et al. 2002, 43.

<sup>104</sup> There is insufficient room here for discussion of Matthean teaching which draws on the “house” motif (e.g. Mt 5:15, 7:24, 10:35–36, 12:43–45, 13:34–35, 13:52, etc.), much of which is paralleled in Luke. An interesting minor agreement is the lack of a reward of houses promised to those who have left home (Mk 10:29–30/Mt 19:29/Lk 18:29–30), due to the list being replaced by a promise of ἑκατοντα- or πολλα-πλασίονα.

<sup>105</sup> For homelessness in Mt see for example the recent study of Robert Myles, *The Homeless Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (SWBA 2,10), Sheffield 2014.

<sup>106</sup> It is perhaps also worthy of mention, though not directly bearing on the issue of Jesus’ house in Capernaum, that Matthew understands Joseph as having a house in Bethlehem (Mt 2:11) and

### 4.3. *The Gospel of Luke*

It is Luke who provides us with the synoptic account of a most homeless Jesus. Jesus had a home when growing up in Nazareth (Lk 2:39,51), but was born temporarily homeless (Lk 2:6–7).<sup>107</sup> Luke has none of the references to private home schooling of the disciples that we discovered in both Mark and Matthew,<sup>108</sup> nor at any point does Jesus return home following events taken over from Mark. There are examples of the “home” motif in Jesus’ teaching in Luke (e.g. Lk 6:47–49, 7:34–35, 11:24–26, 12:52–53, 15:6,8,25, 18:9–14), but Jesus is more often to be found as a guest at the homes of others: Simon (Lk 4:38–39), Levi (Lk 5:29), a Pharisee (Lk 7:36–37,44–46), Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38–42), a leader of the Pharisees (Lk 14:1), and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1–10).

Luke takes the Jesus-as-Guest motif he knows from Mark and develops and extends it. He does not make use of the logion of Mk 10:45: “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve”, but he does have Jesus explain hospitality and service (Lk 22:27): “Who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.” While this explains that the guest is paramount – as Jesus indeed is in Luke – the claim does not sit well with the evidence that Jesus is not to be found serving at meals in the gospel, with this instance in Lk 22:14–20 the single possible exception. For Luke, Jesus is the honoured guest of Greek culture.

Most importantly, alongside the double-tradition saying on the homelessness of the Son of Man (Lk 9:58), and the triple-tradition saying on leaving homes for Jesus’ sake (Lk 18:29–30), Luke adds the request of a would-be disciple to take leave of his family back home before joining the Jesus movement:

εἶπεν δὲ καὶ ἕτερος· ἀκολουθήσω σοι, κύριε· πρῶτον δὲ ἐπίτρεψόν μοι ἀποτάξασθαι τοῖς εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου. εἶπεν δὲ [πρὸς αὐτὸν] ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐδεὶς ἐπιβαλὼν τὴν χεῖρα ἐπ’ ἄροτρον καὶ βλέπων εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω εὐθετός ἐστιν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

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then one in Nazareth (Mt 2:23). The Infancy Gospel of Thomas takes up the idea of the boy Jesus at Joseph’s house (Inf. Thom. 3:3, 7:4, 11:1, 14:3, 15:3–4, 16:1), presumably in Nazareth, though this is never stated. Jesus is to be found playing on the roof (9:1), and at one point the long-suffering Joseph declares to the child’s mother: “Do not let him out the door!” (14:3)

<sup>107</sup> This idea was taken up by the Proto-Gospel of James 17:3–18:1 and 21:3, which locates Jesus’ birth in a desert cave on the outskirts of Bethlehem. A fine conflation of Matthew’s infanticide (Mt 2:16) and Luke’s poverty (Lk 2:7) is in ProtevJak 22:2, where Mary hides Jesus in swaddling clothes in a manger expressly to protect him from the king’s massacre. The Latin reworking of ProtevJak (which Tischendorf called the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew) explains that Mary gave birth in a cave and then moved to a stable (Ps.-Mt 14:1). The Infancy Gospel of Thomas C (Ms 355, Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris) refers to the holy family staying in the house of a widow in Egypt for one year.

<sup>108</sup> With the obvious exceptions of Jerusalem (Lk 22:7–38, 24:33–49) and Emmaus (Lk 24:28–31).

Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Lk 9:61–62)

This tradition clearly plays on 1 Kgs 19:19–21 and reinforces the “home-less” nature of the radical call of Jesus: the would-be disciple is not even allowed to return home briefly to say goodbye.<sup>109</sup>

There is a notable tension in Luke between the image of the pious holy couple (Lk 1–2) and traditions which do not indicate a positive role for Jesus’ parents (Lk 2:43–44, 48–50, 8:19–21, 11:27–28). Likewise there is tension between the anti-family sentiment of sayings such as that of hating one’s family being a prerequisite for discipleship (Lk 14:26), and both the teachings of Jesus that draw on positive family portraits (e.g. the love of the father in Lk 15:22–24) and the actions of Jesus that reflect a compassion for family members (e.g. the grieving mother of Lk 7:11–15). Thus it is surely all the more interesting that the house/no-house tension in Mark and Matthew is not to be found to the same extent in Luke. Luke is more consistent in his understanding of the home-less Son of Man.<sup>110</sup>

#### 4.4. *The Gospel of John*

In John of course we have a different set-up to the account of the calling of the first disciples. Jn 1:35–39 places their calling in Judea, and the disciples in question are already followers of John the Baptist. Jesus is somewhere in Judea:

ἦλθαν οὖν καὶ εἶδαν ποῦ μένει καὶ παρ’ αὐτῷ ἔμειναν τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην.

They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. (Jn 1:39)<sup>111</sup>

If the disciples are still understood to be Galileans<sup>112</sup> then perhaps they had come out to see John, as had the crowds from Jerusalem and Judea (Mk 1:5/Mt

<sup>109</sup> For discussion of the theological nature of this tradition, see François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (EKK 3,2), Zürich et al. 1996, 34–35.

<sup>110</sup> It is the pious homeless man who enters heaven, while the rich homeowner ends up in Hades, in Lk 16:19–31. Yet Lk 8:27,39 – for example – tells of a man who cannot live at home because of his demons, but is then sent home when healed by Jesus.

<sup>111</sup> Jean Zumstein, *Das Johannesevangelium* (KEK 2), Göttingen 2016, 108: “Interessanterweise expliziert der Text nicht, welches Objekt zu sehen die Jünger eingeladen sind.” Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12* (RNT), Regensburg 2009, 181, describes it as “wo er wohnt”.

<sup>112</sup> The only indication is Jn 21:1, which places them at the Sea of Tiberias. At Peter’s denial there is no reference to an accent, only a partial recognition from the scene of Jesus’ arrest (Jn 18:25–27).

3:5 adds Transjordan) and at least one man from Nazareth in Galilee (Mk 1:9/Mt 3:13). The next day Jesus decides to return to Galilee, though it is not specified where (Jn 1:43).<sup>113</sup> The third day sees Jesus and his disciples invited to the same wedding as his mother and his brothers (Jn 1:1–2). Clearly there has been no break with the family, as we discover later in the gospel of Mark, and yet we find everyone as guests in Cana, so again, nothing can be said of where Jesus now lives. The account ends however with a note that all of them moved to Capernaum, apparently their first arrival in the village and only for a few days (Jn 2:12).<sup>114</sup>

As discussed earlier in relation to the position of James, John gives us an account of Jesus' interaction with his (biological<sup>115</sup>) brothers in Jn 7:1–9. The evangelist does not specify where Jesus is at this point, other than to say: *περιπάτει ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ* (Jn 7:1). The argument presented by the brothers runs, however as follows:

οὐδεὶς γάρ τι ἐν κρυπτῷ ποιεῖ καὶ ζητεῖ αὐτὸς ἐν παρρησίᾳ εἶναι. εἰ ταῦτα ποιεῖς, φανέρωσον σεαυτὸν τῷ κόσμῳ (Jn 7:4)

For no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.

The implication is of course that Jesus is – at this point – somewhere in Galilee where he does not intend to be noticed. The brothers pick up on this and encourage him to go public. Wherever he is – and peripatetic or not – his brothers are able to find him and encourage him to be less secretive.

John's Jesus can stay with others, as he does in Mark and Matthew and especially often in Luke. The notable example is the house in Bethany (Jn 11:20,31 and 12:1–3). Yet in general, throughout the gospel of John, Jesus is on the move.<sup>116</sup> It is therefore perhaps ironic for us that he says in Jerusalem: "You

<sup>113</sup> Although this Galilee episode (Jn 1:43–51) recounts the calling of a man (Nathanael) who was an acquaintance of a disciple from Bethsaida (Philip), the only location given is "under a fig tree" (Jn 1:48).

<sup>114</sup> Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Fn. 111) 222: "V. 12 klingt so, als sei Kapharnaum Standort oder gar die Heimat (vgl. 4,44) Jesu und seiner Familie (vgl. aber 1,45f.). Den Vers beim Wort genommen, könnte der Ort für die kleine Reisegruppe aber auch lediglich eine Zwischen station gewesen sein." Zumstein, *Johannesevangelium* (Fn. 111) 122, sees it as "wo sich, diesem Vers nach zu urteilen, die Familie Jesu niedergelassen hatte."

<sup>115</sup> As opposed to his "brothers" of Jn 20:17. This is the only time in John that the Christian use of "ἀδελφοί" appears in the narrative, and perhaps notably at the first resurrection experience.

<sup>116</sup> Unlike in the synoptic gospels there are no great journeys described in John, rather jaunts to and fro between Judea (in the south) and Galilee (in the north). The travels of Jesus in John are: Judea (1:39), to Galilee (1:43), Cana (2:1–2), to Jerusalem (2:13), the Judean countryside (3:22), through Samaria (4:3–6), to Galilee (4:43–45), Cana (4:46), back to Jerusalem (5:1), the far side of the sea of Galilee (6:1), Capernaum (6:16–21), Galilee for fear of the Judeans (7:1–9), back to

will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.” (Jn 7:34). This elicits an interesting response from “the Jews”, who ask: “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?” (Jn 7:35); in other words, as an itinerant philosopher. Of course, the readers of John understand what Jesus means when he says he must return “to him who sent me” (Jn 7:33).

John understands that, “The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever.” (Jn 8:35). Jesus’ real “home” in the gospel of John is always understood to be with the Father, the One Who Sent.<sup>117</sup> Jesus is never depicted as residing anywhere, an aspect which is surely linked with the transient mission of the divine emissary as portrayed by John. John’s Jesus is too divine to settle in an earthen house.

## 5. Conclusion

The tension seen in both the traditions of Jesus’ relationship to his own family and the sayings about his followers’ relationships to theirs is also mirrored in conflicting ideas of Jesus’ “home”. To overlook the importance of the “home” and “house” motif in the gospel accounts of Jesus’ life and teaching is to miss a central element of the earliest understanding of Jesus’ lifestyle.

Mark gives us the earliest account of Jesus’ life and teaching.<sup>118</sup> He writes again and again of Jesus being “in the house”. Jesus certainly travels in Mark,

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Jerusalem (7:10), across the Jordan (10:40), Bethany (11:17–18), Ephraim for fear of the Judeans (11:54), back to Bethany (12:1), into Jerusalem (12:12), and finally an appearance on a beach in Galilee (21:1–4). In the tradition of the woman caught in adultery (Jn 7:53–8:11) it is also said that, “each of them went home, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives” (Jn 7:53–8:1); whatever the background of this account, the comment reflects nicely the idea of Jesus as a country boy in the city with no place to stay, in contrast to the city folk.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Jn 14:2: ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἰσιν.

<sup>118</sup> Q remains hypothetical, and therefore I cannot take it as evidence per se. Jesus is certainly a socially controversial figure in Mark: Guijarro Oporto, *Kingdom and Family* (Fn. 1) 232, sees Jesus’ homelessness as one aspect of “the counter cultural behaviour of Jesus which provoked scandal and rejection”. Other aspects include (ibid.) “his meals with publicans and sinners”, “his disrespectful attitude towards some norms and social practices, such as the observance of the fast [...], Sabbath rest [...], or to certain norms of ritual purity”, and “his claim to declare God’s forgiveness of sin”. It is distinctly possible, however, that the view of Jesus as homeless comes from an (unconscious) overvaluation of the double-tradition passages mentioned above. If however we understand Mark to be the earliest of the synoptic gospels, we must read it alone to see what image of Jesus it conveys, as Theobald, *Der Primat der Synchronie* (Fn. 73) 163: “Grundsätzlich gilt, daß ein Evangelientext in sich suffizient ist, d.h. dem Rezipienten alles für

and his journeys are not without theological significance; “the house” therefore likewise could be a theological construction. It is important however to notice that the journeys and the Jesus-at-home scenes complement one another. It is the sayings on leaving everything and becoming homeless that stand in direct tension with the evidence of continued comfort in a house, a boat, and at meals. Leaving everything to follow Jesus is a motif that Mark builds on top of traditions of a Jesus at home in Capernaum, and a motif that becomes most significant with the journey to Jerusalem.

Matthew is arguably the earliest interpreter of Mark, and certainly the closest. He reads and understands the traditions of Jesus “at home” in Capernaum, and while he omits many of the references to this house, he still has people approach Jesus where they know he is to be found, and even adds references to Jesus “at home” which he apparently had not read in Mark. The incorporation of non-Markan traditions into Matthew’s Gospel means that sayings on homelessness appear alongside teaching on building or illuminating a house. But Jesus had been born in a house in Bethlehem, lived in a house in Nazareth, and settled himself in Capernaum, all before beginning his teaching in and around Galilee. Capernaum was “his hometown”, the town where he had his home.

Luke, the author of both a gospel and a sequel, knows his way around the cities of the empire. He knows of the travels of Peter and the epic journeys of Paul. In his portrayal of Jesus he also reveals a preference for a travelling Jesus; Jesus is not a host, rather a guest (ξένοϛ). Nevertheless, the content of much of Jesus’ teaching in Luke is house-based and home-oriented. Jesus is no longer “at home”, but his teaching certainly still is.

John does not have Jesus at home at all. He is constantly travelling north and south between Judea and Galilee, but is conscious – as are John’s readers – that his real “home” is by his Father Who Sent him.

The order in which I have treated these four evangelists is not uncommon – though by no means undisputed – in chronologies of the gospels. This brief study on the idea of Jesus “at home” would suggest that there is a noticeable linear development from the earliest to the later understandings of his lifestyle. In Mark he is often at home; in Matthew almost as often; in Luke he is rather a travelling guest; in John he is a divine emissary who must return to the one who sent him, no mere resident of earth. If this observation reflects a linear development of the idea of Jesus’ residency, then it is clear that the earliest Jesus traditions included an understanding that Jesus could quite easily be found “at home”.

The connection between Jesus' teaching and lifestyle brings us to another observation. Again and again Jesus employs imagery of house-owners, farmers, housewives, and servants.<sup>119</sup> This implies a familiarity with these concepts among his audience, but also of course a familiarity with this lifestyle for Jesus himself. It is perhaps therefore an odd juxtaposition to propose that Jesus lived an itinerant lifestyle and called his followers to do likewise, while teaching them using the terms and imagery of a settled, rural community. Rarely does homelessness feature as an illustration of the Kingdom of God.<sup>120</sup> Those who argue that Jesus lived a uniquely itinerant and homeless life must grapple therefore not only with the direct evidence in the gospels for a "house" in Capernaum, but also with the portrait of private (home) schooling under Jesus, and with the content of Jesus' teaching that deals with settled village life.

So where could the idea of a homeless Jesus have come from? Three factors may be briefly mentioned:

- The itinerant nature of some early Christian missionaries may have resulted in a projection onto Jesus of the ideal travelling teacher. Jesus certainly travelled in Galilee and to Jerusalem; to argue otherwise would be to fight against a torrent of tradition. Nonetheless, there remains throughout both the early accounts of his life and the various versions of his teaching a constant tone of settled village life.
- The saying of Mk 10:28 (ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήκαμέν σοι) comes just as Jesus is setting off for Jerusalem (Mk 10:17,32–34). It is possibly at this late point in the gospel that the risk of following Jesus becomes considerably greater: a journey to the holy city and the threat of violence. This brings Peter to declare now what he could not have declared in Mk 1–4.
- Finally, and tentatively, it may be argued that the homeless "Son of Man" saying itself, when retro-translated into Aramaic, would to the average ear mean no more than "humankind". Admittedly this is certainly not the meaning that its contexts in Matthew and Luke allows. Nonetheless, we may have an early dominical logion on the nature of human existence and not on Jesus' lifestyle.

<sup>119</sup> Household language even pervades the sayings of Gos. Thom. 16, 21, 35, 48, 64–65, 71, 97–98.

<sup>120</sup> Lk 18:29 speaks of leaving one's family members for the sake of the kingdom; Lk 6:20 declares that the Kingdom belongs to the poor; in Lk 9:60 the Kingdom has no time for burials. There may be a connection to Mk 10:24–25 par, which explains it is very difficult for a rich person to enter the Kingdom. Yet in Matthew especially, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to property (Mt 8:11–12, 13:24, 13:44, 13:45, 18:23, 20:1, 22:2, 25:1), and even has keys (Mt 16:19). See also Moxnes, *Putting Jesus (Fn. 11) 142–15* for discussion of "Jesus, Household, and Kingdom in Galilee".

Form critics will recognise the independence of “Jesus at home” traditions in the gospels, while redaction critics will accept the adoption of the “Jesus at home” motif in Mark and Matthew; the tension remains with double-tradition sayings on homelessness, the cosmopolitan worldview of Luke, and the *extra-terrestrial* nature of Jesus in John. We do well, however, to note the tension, and not to paint over some of our earliest traditions with our understanding of later viewpoints. It is difficult to argue that the house in Mark is a “construction” of the evangelist, as it is a place of overcrowding in Mk 2–6 and a place of privacy and peace in Mk 7–10. Matthew has the same contrast, as the people know where to seek Jesus in Mt 9, but where the group later enjoys peace and quiet. In Mt 16:18 Jesus promises to build his church on the rock, and the site of obvious Christian significance in Capernaum has until now been understood in connection with Peter, the Rock. Yet there is nothing that places Jesus in Peter’s house from the morning after the healing of his mother-in-law. If there is a first century “Christian” house in Capernaum, it need not be that of Peter.

There is a tendency to speak poetically of religious groups as “movements”, a word which of course carries the semantics of motion. It is however my contention that the evidence of the gospels indicates that the earliest days of the Jesus “movement” were stationary, based in a house in Capernaum where Jesus lived. He called some to “follow” him to this house, others came on their own to seek healing. Before his journeys across Galilee and beyond, Jesus was to be found at home. In a modern, German-speaking context he would have had to apply for an *Anmeldebescheinigung* for his residence in his house in Capernaum.