

## Chapter Six

# Fishing for Entrepreneurs in the Sea of Galilee?

## *Unmasking Neoliberal Ideology in Biblical Interpretation*

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In her popular-level self-help book, *Jesus, Entrepreneur: Using Ancient Wisdom to Launch and Live Your Dreams*, Laurie Beth Jones confidently portrays Jesus as a model businessman from whom entrepreneurial readers can discover key business insights to enhance their careers. She insists that

Jesus, as unique as he was, was also like so many of us who are engaged in one kind of work yet yearn to be doing another. . . . Jesus . . . created a new category of work for himself and was able to make a living doing what he most loved. Yes, it was his Father's will. But it was his will, too. And he was economically sustained and supported as he went about his Father's work.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond speaking of Jesus's "impeccable market timing" and his clever use of an "offshore account" to pay overdue taxes (cf. Matt 17:22–27), Jones even deploys Paul's instructions to submit to governing authorities in Rom 13:1–5 as requiring employees to "respect and honor their bosses, serving them as 'unto the Lord.'"<sup>2</sup> Such assertions should rightly receive a bewildered response from most New Testament scholars. To begin with, Bruce Longenecker has observed:

Being pre-industrial and primarily agrarian, the Greco-Roman economic system was substantially different from economic systems that predominate in the developed and capitalist world of the twenty-first century. When this simple observation is lost from view, it is all too easy to read texts from the ancient world through the relatively comfortable lenses of contemporary middle-class affluence, and to be relatively numb to the economic dynamics that regimented ancient life to a considerable extent.<sup>3</sup>

That insight is of fundamental importance but is too easily relinquished in much discussion of Jesus and his context today. It is not uncommon to find unchecked entrepreneurial assumptions influencing the interpretation of the New Testament world, not only in the popular press but even within the discourse of biblical studies. From explorations of Jesus and Paul as social entrepreneurs,<sup>4</sup> or Paul's work as "an entrepreneur of dual identities,"<sup>5</sup> to admonitions of the "entrepreneurial widows" in 1 Timothy,<sup>6</sup> it appears that enterprise and innovation were just as alive and well in the first century as in the twenty-first.

A striking example of entrepreneurial language is found nestled in a recent article by the prominent scholar Burton Mack, who invites us to reimagine the pioneers of Christian thought as "intellectual entrepreneurs." He writes:

[T]here was no Christian Bible for the first three centuries of the Christian era, only mythmakers, such as Paul, Mark, Thomas, John, the tradents of the sayings traditions, and the so-called "Apostolic Fathers"—all intellectual entrepreneurs working in discourse networks that were carving out a social rationale for a new network of Jesus school associations this side of the end of the temple-state in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

Mack's description of Christian origins may evoke for some readers the academic's changing mandate in the cultural shift away from an educational environment built upon the Enlightenment to one grounded in entrepreneurship. In their book *Engines of Innovation: The Entrepreneurial University in the Twenty-First Century*, for instance, Holden Thorp and Buck Goldstein outline an "entrepreneurial opportunity" for universities in the twenty-first century to similarly act as agents of societal change by harnessing their intellectual and institutional capital.<sup>8</sup> The early "Christian mythmakers" are here remodeled by Mack as a constituent part of the knowledge economy, engaging in knowledge production, demonstrating entrepreneurial conduct through participation in research networks, via information exchange, and so on.

The language of entrepreneurialism is thus rife today through all genres of discourse—whether popular, political, or academic. Its ascendancy is a direct result of the dominance of neoliberalism, an increasingly "hegemonic mode of discourse"<sup>9</sup> in Western capitalist societies since the late 1980s. According to Wendy Brown, neoliberalism is best understood "not simply as economic policy, but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life. . . . [I]t formulates everything, everywhere, in terms of capital investment and appreciation, including and especially humans themselves."<sup>10</sup> Neoliberalism is intensely focused on the individual, specifying entrepreneurial conduct everywhere, and constraining the subject to act in a capital-enhancing fashion. One way the ideology of neoliberalism

has become entrenched as a governing rationality or what Philip Mirowski labels “a set of epistemic commitments”<sup>11</sup> is through a constant practice of dehistoricizing, universalizing, and internalizing some of its key tenets. One assumption that has become increasingly prevalent is the novel idea that the world consists solely or primarily of entrepreneurial agents—individualized subjects reduced to being cogwheels of human capital—seeking to maximize private interests through the navigation of market forces that supposedly comprise every dimension of human social existence.

Neoliberalism and its accent on entrepreneurialism now saturate the conditions under which biblical scholarship is produced, marketed, and consumed.<sup>12</sup> As a result, capitalist ideology subtly infiltrates our hermeneutical filters, guiding interpretive decisions and shaping the redescription of ancient economic and social realities. Subjects are interpellated everywhere and in every instance as enterprising businessmen and businesswomen trying to make an honest buck.<sup>13</sup> Concepts of stable employment have also become increasingly flexible as underemployed individuals are directed toward maximizing their own “employability” rather than placing accountability on dysfunctional industries, large market actors, and government policies that actively limit and reduce opportunities for secure work. These are precisely the cultural assumptions that Laurie Beth Jones can exploit in suggesting that Jesus’s shift from carpenter to itinerant prophet is best explained as an unassuming career change rather than due to broader social or economic forces.

This chapter reveals how the discourse of New Testament scholarship is itself implicated by neoliberal ideology through its fishing for entrepreneurs in the ancient economy. On the surface level, this means scholars are perhaps guilty of anachronism. While the category of the entrepreneur was specifically birthed under the conditions of capitalism and has assumed peak popularity during the neoliberal era, entrepreneurial language has come to lurk within descriptions of the biblical world and, in particular, how ancient subjects—almost always conceived of as enterprising individuals—navigate their wider social and economic context. In probing the problem deeper, however, I dive to the nether regions at the bottom of the ocean known as the benthic zone. At this lowest level, among the sediment and soil linings, one finds the substrate zero-sum remainder of ideology. The entrenchment of entrepreneurial language at the most basic levels of discourse reveals how neoliberalism has become internalized as an implicit hermeneutical frame, territorializing new discursive horizons which make thinking outside of a totalizing neoliberal paradigm increasingly difficult.

Historical disciplines can, however, play a crucial role in relativizing the inviolable reality of entrepreneurialism. This is achieved by emphasizing how individual entrepreneurialism is itself an inadequate heuristic device when

applied to Jesus, ancient fishermen, or the Gospels. Not only were the social and economic dynamics of an agrarian society different from the relations and structures of contemporary capitalism, but discourse around entrepreneurialism is itself one of the more contentious aspects of our own cultural moment.

The path of navigation is as follows. To set the scene, I situate the emergence of the entrepreneur within the development of classical economic theory. Having cast our nets, I dive deeper, investigating recent discussions concerning the fishing trade in first-century Galilee and Palestine as a case study. Entrepreneurial assumptions about the fishing trade have implications for the interpretation of the two pairs of fishermen called to be followers of Jesus in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 1:16–20//Matt 4:18–22//Luke 5:1–11). Rather than emphasize the fishermen’s moral decision to follow Jesus and its associated economic cost, I implore we instead read these narratives as embedded within a broader context of widespread social upheaval and as gesturing toward unrest among the lower classes. Such an approach should disrupt dominant entrepreneurial configurations by dissociating these texts from the modern and isolated concerns of enterprise, innovation, individualism, the free-market, and capital accumulation.

### ENTER THE ENTREPRENEURS

While entrepreneurialism is strongly associated with the emergence of capitalism, the positive value ascribed to the entrepreneur did not emerge explicitly until twentieth-century political-economic thought. Joseph Schumpeter, writing in the 1930s, pinpointed the entrepreneur as a source of surplus value. This became a way of explaining “spontaneous and discontinuous changes” in the economy without having to refer to extra-economic factors like wars, religion, or politics.<sup>14</sup> Before the twentieth century, the entrepreneur, when he appears in economic theory at all, is largely indistinguishable from the capitalist at the center of classical economics, or the petty capitalist trader within mercantilist theory.<sup>15</sup> For Schumpeter, entrepreneurial activity within capitalism essentially “consists of doing things that are not generally done in the ordinary course of business routine” that can result in new possibilities for the creation of surplus value.<sup>16</sup> The entrepreneur does not necessarily mean a person, but more a *function* that can, of course, be performed by an individual, but equally by technological development or new social or legal conditions. Simply put, an entrepreneur is an “innovator.” He or she is someone or something which “gets new things done.”<sup>17</sup>

Within the neoliberal era, the entrepreneur has become an enigmatic and contentious figure: Campbell Jones and André Spicer contend that discourse

about entrepreneurship is often ambiguous and revolves around the gap or lack constituted by repeated failure, which itself does not make notions of entrepreneurship less appealing but, in fact, somehow even more attractive and engaging. It is for this reason they argue that “the entrepreneur should be conceived as a ‘sublime object,’ that is, a figure of discourse which is attractive but ultimately empty.”<sup>18</sup> The mystical properties of the entrepreneur conceal inherent contradictions within the ideological-capitalist edifice. For every success, there are countless failures which go unacknowledged. Individual agency is also idealized in ways that divert attention from regulatory conditions that impact the success of particular business routines or practices.

When Karl Marx developed his theory of capitalism in opposition to the classical economists of the previous century, he poured scorn on the romantic image of an isolated, independent individual operating in a pre-social state of nature:

The individual and isolated hunter and fisherman, with whom Smith and Ricardo begin, belongs along the unimaginative conceits of the eighteenth-century Robinsonades [utopias on the lines of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*] . . . Smith and Ricardo still stand with both feet on the shoulders of eighteenth-century prophets, in whose imaginations this eighteenth-century individual—the product on one side of the dissolution of the feudal forms of society, on the other side of the new forms of production developed since the sixteenth century—appears as an ideal, whose existence they project into the past. Not as a historic result but as history’s point of departure.<sup>19</sup>

As we see here, Marx vigorously asserts that the Cartesian “individual” at the heart of classical economics was not a natural category but rather a product of the dissolution of feudal society and the rise of the productive forces of capitalism. The bourgeois individual, free competition, and so on, were thus not the starting point of history but its culmination.<sup>20</sup> Prior to the emergence of capitalism, economic value was found primarily in the factors of land, represented by the landowner, and labor, represented by the peasantry and slaves. Two of these actors put forward value claims: The landowner collecting rent, and the peasantry claiming what we might now call a wage. It was not until the late eighteenth century that a third actor puts forward a further claim, namely, the capitalist whose claim rested on the production of value through venturing capital. In exchange for an uncertain return, the capitalist takes interest. In the words of Jones and Spicer, “[e]conomic discourses now insist that entrepreneurs also add value . . . [for which] . . . they put forward yet another claim on value in the form of entrepreneurial profit.”<sup>21</sup>

While Schumpeter believed entrepreneurial activity was a constant of history, having “run its historical course, from the primitive tribe to the modern

large-scale corporation,”<sup>22</sup> prior to the emergence of capitalism, and especially within an agrarian economy like that of first-century Palestine, value created through entrepreneurial profit was probably not a significant factor, if it is to be considered a factor at all. While it is more-or-less nonsensical to speak of entrepreneurs in the first century, however, the minority of the workforce which does not directly work the land have often confused biblical interpreters. Do fishermen and artisans constitute some kind of “middle-class”? Moreover, were the conditions of their existence such that most were able to become “relatively prosperous”? As we will observe, these are common assertions found through the scholarly literature. The Marxist classicist G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, however, would say, emphatically, No! The small independent producer was still subject to indirect and collective forms of exploitation, primarily through payments and services not rendered from individual to individual but instead extracted by the authority of the occupying regime.<sup>23</sup> In what follows, I bring the work of Ste. Croix into sharp dialogue with recent discussions on the fishing trade in first-century Galilee to underline just how pervasive the logic of entrepreneurialism has become in guiding interpretive trends, choices, and omissions in biblical scholarship.

### WERE ANCIENT FISHERMEN “MIDDLE-CLASS”?

Historical, sociological, and archaeological research into the fishing trade has long interested biblical scholars, given that the Synoptic tradition identifies the first four disciples of Jesus as fishermen who abandon their fishing nets in order to follow him. The Sea of Galilee (actually a freshwater lake) was itself a prominent natural feature of the topography of Palestine. During antiquity, it gave rise to a number of settlements and villages, providing opportunities for trade and ferrying by boat. Whereas most economic activity within the ancient world was centered on the cultivation of land, the Sea of Galilee stands out as a notable exception in the political-economic activity of the region.

Did the importance of the lake and the fishing trade result in an enterprising group of fishermen who were able to accumulate wealth and ascend beyond the peasant masses? One merely has to open a standard Gospel commentary to find the assertion these fishermen were supposedly “middle-class.” This is despite no such class having existed in any meaningful sense in the first century. Dale Allison and W. D. Davies, for instance, designate the Matthean fishermen as coming “from the (lower) middle class.”<sup>24</sup> John Meier remarks that Mark’s mention of hired workers, omitted in Matt 4:18–22, gives the impression “of a relatively prosperous family fishing

business on the Sea of Galilee. Luke instead presents James and John not as workers for their father but rather as business partners with Simon Peter.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Meier suggests “[i]t is well to remember that the fishing business on the Sea of Galilee was a lively and prosperous one, at least for those who owned or oversaw the operations.”<sup>26</sup> Likewise, in his recent book on the historical Jesus, Jens Schröter observes that “Zebedee . . . employs day laborers; James and John, who join the followers of Jesus, are thus sons of a small businessman.”<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most blatant example of entrepreneurial language is found in an article by Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Fishers of fish, fishers of men,” published in the *Bible Review*. Murphy-O’Connor suggests that Simon Peter and Andrew “came from a prosperous, assimilated Jewish middle-class family.” What’s more, “[a]s experienced businessmen, they were astute enough to move their home in order to take advantage of a tax break. Such shrewdness, one can be sure, also manifested itself in the way they handled competition from the many other fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.”<sup>28</sup> This article, in particular, is littered with entrepreneurial buzzwords: from the shrewd “business practices” of the first disciples, to the “private entrepreneurs” attempting to meet the “demands of the market,” the first-century Galilean fishing trade is anachronistically described as a “lucrative market” in which “capitalistic enterprises” played a significant role. What else do we learn of these titans of industry? According to Murphy-O’Connor, the scale of their operation was like that of a large family business: “They worked in partnership (Luke 5:7) with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10), who had employees (Mark 1:20). They were free to start (John 21:1–3) and stop work (Luke 5:11) when it suited them.”<sup>29</sup> This apparent flexibility in their working conditions provided them with the luxury of dropping their nets and following Jesus. Indeed, against this backdrop of “a relatively well off family,” insists Murphy-O’Connor, “it becomes possible to understand how Simon Peter and Andrew were financially able to drop their work and become . . . disciples.”<sup>30</sup>

Murphy-O’Connor aside, the suggestion that the fishermen were “middle-class” or “relatively prosperous” immediately raises the question: relative or middle to what? Certainly, when compared to most slaves and the expendable population that was surplus to the demands for labor, one could suppose that fishermen were relatively prosperous. However, regarding their placement within the broader class structure of an advanced agrarian society, in which the overwhelming majority of the population, including independent producers like fishermen and artisans, lived below, at, or just above subsistence level, such comparisons seem less than helpful. R. Alan Culpepper quite reasonably notes that “[a]t most, we can say that the fishermen operated a

small fishing business that involved boats and hired workers. The evidence is insufficient to show that they were among the families of the upper class, but neither did they share the desperate lot of hired servants and day laborers.”<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, in his book on Paul and economics, Bruce Longenecker helpfully clarifies that while there might have been a small number of “middling groups” in the ancient economy, this “should not be seen as re-establishing the notion of a ‘middle class’ into our economic taxonomy of the ancient world.”<sup>32</sup> As will be explored further below, a more useful method of demonstrating someone’s place in an economic system is found not through measuring or estimating income levels but by considering their relationship to the means of production.

A pivotal article by K. C. Hanson published twenty years ago in the *Biblical Theological Bulletin* should have put some of these assertions about relatively prosperous fishermen to rest. Applying social-scientific criticism, Hanson forcefully argued that

[t]he fishers could hardly be classed as “entrepreneurs” in such a highly regulated, taxed, and hierarchical political-economy. While the boat owners/fishers may or may not have also been involved in fish processing this would not have made them wealthy, and certainly not “middle-class,” as some authors have contended, since the whole conceptualization of a middle-class is anachronistic relative to Roman Palestine. The “surplus” went to the brokers and the ruling elite.<sup>33</sup>

So where exactly do the fishermen fit in the political-economy of ancient Palestine? Crudely put, the class struggle refracted in the New Testament writings refers to the small class of aristocratic city-based elite who, controlling the means of production, extract surplus value from the work or labor-power of the remaining peasant and slave populations. Around the agricultural and other yields of this social formation grew an administrative and economic infrastructure that became imbalanced in terms of how those yields were distributed. Most resources were channeled upward to the elite minority. Beneath the elite and above the peasant masses was a nonbasic class of retainers who, although diverse in social roles, economic experiences, and political attitudes,<sup>34</sup> functioned to enforce and regulate the economic and administrative mechanisms which resulted in the upward flow of resources (see figure 1.1).

If we are to define class in the strict Marxist sense of one’s relationship to the means of production—that is, the infrastructure required to produce goods—then it is among the peasant masses that the fishermen and most other artisans should also be located.<sup>35</sup> As Alicia Batten observes, ancient “[w]riters such as Plautus (*Rud.*), Ovid (*Meta.* 3.583–591) and others describe the fish-



er's life as impoverished and miserable. In some cases, men who fished were characterized as unmasculine, as their trade meant that they earned their keep by serving the indulgent pleasures of others, particularly rich fish eaters."<sup>36</sup> G. E. M. de Ste. Croix specifically excludes fishermen from his discussion of "other independent producers"—which includes a nonheterogeneous "middling" group of artisans, traders of different sorts, and the merchants who carried on commerce between cities to small local dealers<sup>37</sup>—instead classifying them as part of the exploited classes located within the broad peasant strata of Greco-Roman society. He writes, "[t]hose ancillary workers (such as artisans, building and transport workers, and even fishermen) who originate from and remain among the peasants may be considered as peasants themselves."<sup>38</sup>

Like the overwhelming majority of peasants who worked the land, artisans also lived slightly below, at, or above subsistence level. Lucian of Samosata describes an artisan's life as "laborious and barely able to supply them with just enough" (*Fug.* 12–13).<sup>39</sup> Xenophon similarly describes the plight of marginal craftsmen as grim: "In small towns the same man makes couches, doors, ploughs, and tables, and still he is thankful if only he can find enough work to support himself" (*Cyr.* 8.2.5). Moreover, owning one's tools, shop, land, or boat would not be enough to guarantee economic security, although it would make one's existence slightly less precarious. The economic system was overdetermined in such a way that made it far more likely for small peasant landholders to lose their land through debt or elite requisition than obtain more land and expand their wealth. A range of lucrative opportunities for entrepreneurially minded Jewish peasants simply did not exist under the Roman occupation of first-century Palestine. In much the same way, fishermen could own boats and even hire servants, but this would not make them akin to aspiring small business owners with several employees (what Marx labels the *petit bourgeoisie* in industrial capitalism). The fundamental dynamics of an advanced agrarian social formation effectively precluded peasants from accumulating capital in any meaningful way. For that minority of "exceptional people" who were able to climb the socioeconomic ladder somewhere near or even into the propertied class, Ste. Croix maintains this could only be done in one of two ways: "either by displaying some extraordinary skill, or by becoming able to exploit the labour of others."<sup>40</sup> Possessing one or two servants, however, would not be enough to make a peasant household considerably wealthy. Boer and Petterson note that it was not uncommon for peasants to occasionally make restricted use of slaves or wage-labor.<sup>41</sup> As we will see below, even if fishermen owned their boats or were partners in a collaborative "fishing venture," they did not enjoy an absolute entitlement to the fish in the waters where they cast their nets. Rather, they paid the elite a hefty sum for the privilege.

### **LAISSEZ-FAIRE FISHING AND THE *PETITE BOURGEOISIE* OF GALILEE**

Be this as it may, a recent article by Raimo Hakola in *Novum Testamentum* asks us to re-examine the portrait of the Galilean fishing economy in light of fresh archaeological findings in Magdala along with recent classical scholarship on ancient fishing technologies and fish production. In direct opposition to Hanson's earlier article, Hakola contends, "the expansion of Galilean fish production and trade gave an economic boost to the local economy and that local collectives of fishermen were able to benefit from this development."<sup>42</sup> Hakola puts forward a number of arguments to support his claim. I will briefly summarize his main points before observing how entrepreneurial assumptions shape his interpretation of the data. It should already be clear that the assertion that a prosperous fishing trade would necessarily result in wealthy fishermen assumes a "trickle-down" logic and is not based on direct, observable evidence. At issue, then, is the tacit assumption that large-scale development necessarily benefits all participants—an assumption that would be even more contentious in an agrarian society than in a capitalist one.

First, Hakola notes that excavations on a Franciscan property in Magdala reveal an urban character and a harbor dating from the first century BCE (and extended in mid-first century CE), which suggests large industrial scale fishing and trade in the region. Structures such as storage facilities and port structures bear evidence "for the scale of investments that were put into the development of the infrastructures that facilitated the Galilean fishing economy."<sup>43</sup>

Second, Hakola suggests a high level of prosperity in the region, evidenced in part, by "[t]he high number of coins [found] of minimal value, [indicating that] intense monetary economic activity and frequent trade exchanges took place in Magdala."<sup>44</sup> Hakola suggests the findings in Magdala should be placed in a larger comparative context that "supports the conclusion that these structures are associated with small scale urban fish production" which often included rooms for salting and processing fish.<sup>45</sup> The discovery of lead weights in Magdala also suggests an organized and regulated "fish market." Hakola asserts "[i]t is most probable that urban fish salteries were examples of 'small privately owned industries working independently of the state and in competition with each other.'"<sup>46</sup>

Third, the documentary evidence used by Hanson and others,<sup>47</sup> indicating tight state control of fisheries in the ancient economy—that is, that the king or holder of an estate made a large amount of profit, whereas fishermen made very little, and that fishing rights were farmed out at a very high rate of taxation—comes from Egypt and might not apply to first-century Palestine.<sup>48</sup> The

legal document in question (P.Teb 701) demonstrates how the methods of preservation and marketing in Egypt were controlled by a large-scale entity as either a royal concern or one managed by the holder of a gift estate. Hakola wants to overturn Hanson's earlier suggestion that "local fishermen leased their fishing rights from tax farmers or collectors (τελώναι) working for the state"<sup>49</sup> and instead points to recent discussions concerning the legal status of fishing in the Roman world (see below).

It should go without saying that material remains from antiquity do not provide us with direct, unmediated facts and that archaeological discoveries, as with written texts, require interpretation. Archaeological material privileges the ceramic and durable over the aceramic and makeshift, meaning that what passes as conventional economic analysis can easily overlook those whose lives were aceramic and makeshift.<sup>50</sup> Material remains cannot, as such, be adequately understood without consideration of the prevailing patterns of power relations within Palestine and the Roman Empire. Irrespective of whether Hakola's assessment of the evidence is correct, however, it is not difficult to see how entrepreneurial assumptions are shaping his interpretative decisions and omissions. The idea of selling fish on a free market already presumes the catch was being exchanged in commodity form—thus requiring a level of abstraction (a differentiation between exchange value to extract a capital surplus) that was not a significant or natural factor of economic systems before the advent of capitalism.<sup>51</sup>

What's more, Hakola suggests the expansion of new fishing markets and "flourishing" local economy at Magdala "very likely opened up new possibilities of at least a reasonable livelihood for ordinary fishermen working on the lake as well." How did the ordinary fishermen seize these opportunities? It is likely, according to Hakola, that fishing was organized in Galilee through "professional associations." He continues, "[i]t is likely that some rural fishermen families who had organized the practice of their trade collectively were able to benefit from the development of the Galilean fishing economy and gain a moderate livelihood from their profession."<sup>52</sup> The idea that peasant fishing collectives would have had any real bargaining power, however, is based on wishful thinking. While Ste. Croix observes that "[s]pecialized workers of various kinds—not only craftsmen but also merchants, shipowners, ferrymen, moneychangers, gardeners and many others—became more and more addicted, partly under Roman influence, to collective associations,"<sup>53</sup> most of these associations would have had a fairly minimal organizational role, and "there is very little evidence of their having acted like modern trade unions to improve their members' pay or conditions of work,"<sup>54</sup> let alone of their ability to act as small business associations or networks.

Moreover, the idea of a loosely regulated free-market in which “privately owned” small businesses could pursue commerce independently of imperial control speaks past almost everything we know of Rome’s embeddedness within the political economy of its territories. Any “investment” in the infrastructure of the fishing trade was the result not of venturing capitalists but of the ruling elite. For whose benefit was this apparent investment made? In order to sustain its vast military might and extensive infrastructure, the Empire was reliant upon significant amounts of revenue funneled upward through taxes and other measures of economic extraction. The local aristocracy, although constituting a small minority of the population, nevertheless extracted a share of any surplus to sustain their relatively lavish lifestyles. It would be strange to think the fishing trade operated as an exception outside this basic set of power relations. Further, if everyone was so content with this arrangement, “why were there intermittent rebellions and flourishing apocalypses, culminating in the revolts against Rome, with the typical Roman response of occupation and terror, and continuing with subsequent criticisms of Rome?”<sup>55</sup>

To put it plainly: any textual or archaeological evidence of the fishing trade within Magdala and Capernaum needs to be contextualized within the broader cycles of production and extraction within ancient Roman Palestine. As noted above, this is inevitably a question of who controls the means of production. Further, in what direction are resources channeled? In the case of the fishing trade, the holders of fishing rights or contracts—whether in the form of official ruling or informal arrangement—are akin to “landlords” or wealthy “estate holders” and, for all practical purposes, can be identified along with the same class group. As Culpepper suggests, “[t]hose who purchased the fishing rights from Philip [the tetrarch], and who also served as tax collectors, would in turn lease fishing permits to fishermen for a share of what was caught.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, irrespective of whether the fishing trade was a prominent or even relatively prosperous “enterprise,” it does not follow that the fishermen themselves—even boat-owning, servant-hiring fishermen—were primary, or even secondary, benefactors. This would speak past their subordinate relationship to the means of production. The accumulation of small amounts of wealth does not result in a shift in economic class location, although it could facilitate small levels of upward social mobility. Even “middling groups,” however, would not receive automatic entitlement to an increased share of an especially lucrative catch, given that the very concept of entrepreneurial profit—understood as profit derived through creative or innovative efforts—was itself an anathema and not factored into the distribution of income. As Sean Freyne perceptively notes, “given the overall state of affairs related to the fish industry, it is unlikely that small Galilean fishermen

would profit from the new markets and better techniques of preservation, even if these were carried out on such a scale [as] Magdala.”<sup>57</sup>

While in some cases fishermen owned their fishing boats and nets, the lake itself—as with all natural resources—was ultimately under the jurisdiction of Rome. Indeed, as Alan H. Cadwallader points out in his chapter in this volume, imperial iconography, architecture, and even theological propaganda, granted the Emperor *cosmic* authority over land and sea. Hakola instead suggests that “the concept that fish, like hunted birds or wild animals, was regarded as *res nullius*, the property of no one” in ancient Greek philosophical thought and “was widespread from the classical Greek period to legal collections compiled at the instigation of Byzantine emperors.”<sup>58</sup> He also supposes there is no evidence of “officials policing sea waters in an attempt to regulate marine fisheries” in Galilee.<sup>59</sup> Further, because the Sea of Galilee was a sizable lake, he insists we view it as comparable to open sea waters in terms of jurisdiction (lakes, pools, havens, or lagoons were generally seen as owned by the state or temples). As such, “it is probable that fishermen, Jews as well as non-Jews, from different administrative areas were able to practice their profession on the lake without the intrusion of patrolling officials.”<sup>60</sup> Hakola notes an absence of evidence for decrees attaching open sea areas to territorial waters belonging to the command of different officials. Moreover, citing Ephraim Lytle, he suggests it is unrealistic “to think that marine fisheries could have been controlled by officials of Greek or Hellenistic city states or even by Roman authorities.”<sup>61</sup>

I would urge caution with respect to extrapolating evidence from other localized contexts and suggesting they apply with equal merit to Galilee, especially given Hakola’s expressed unease with Hanson’s use of legal papyri from Egypt to make sense of the Galilean fishing situation. While Hakola is right to avoid assuming the mechanisms of modern nation-states with patterns of administration and policing of relatively firm borders within Rome’s control, there is still evidence of onerous pressure from local centers of power to extract taxation and tribute. In fact, I wonder if the local evidence Hakola suggests is absent is actually hiding in plain sight in the Synoptic tradition itself. The call of Levi in Mark 2:13–14, from a tax/revenue office (τελώνιον) on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, mirrors the call of the fishermen in the Synoptic sources. In verse 13 Jesus goes out “again beside the sea” (πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν). The Greek adverb πάλιν (again, once more, anew) and verse 14a (“As he was walking along . . .”) establish an explicit narrative connection between Levi’s call and the call of the fishermen in 1:16–20. While interpreters have tended to explain this unity through its prototypical function (i.e., both are about Jesus choosing disciples and so represent a universal “call” to discipleship), the parallel setting of the lake’s

foreshore also amplifies a political-economic connection between the fishing trade and the collection of tax. This is an obvious example of soft compulsion under Roman (or elite) jurisdiction. Why else is there a tax booth on the foreshore? Wilhelm Wuellner suggests that as a tax-collector, Matthew-Levi would have had fishermen working for him (i.e., the two sets of fishermen in the Gospels).<sup>62</sup> This would mean the fishermen were not entrepreneurs but rather “employees.” Of course, within the intricate web of Galilean “industrial relations,” these so-called employees had their own hired help, while tax-collectors were themselves working on behalf of some absentee rights-holder. While Levi is part of the Jewish subject population and not a Roman official, tax collectors (τελώνες) were often not the holders of “tax farming” contracts themselves, but underlings hired by them. These individuals were generally taken from the native population, but the higher officials to whom they reported were usually foreigners.<sup>63</sup>

Where did such tax collections go? The Herods, in particular Herod the Great prior to the setting of the Synoptic texts, would have needed increased revenues to fund massive building programs, an apparatus of mountaintop fortresses, and the royal court and its administration. On top of this, the Herods would have given gifts and tribute to the imperial family in order to sustain the military and aristocracy of the Empire. Josephus also explicitly mentions the disruption and dislocation caused by the newly built city of Tiberias under Herod Antipas, which could be viewed prominently across the Sea of Galilee from the fishing village of Capernaum (*Ant.* 18:36–38). Richard A. Horsley suggests that in “[h]aving most Galilean villages within sight of one or another of his capital cities, Antipas could be rigorously ‘efficient’ in collecting the revenues needed to pay for such construction as well as to support his court and administration.”<sup>64</sup> Irrespective of official decrees, decades if not centuries of social upheaval and sometimes brutal repression would have imprinted on the native population who was really in charge of the lake. When the Roman warlord Cassius wanted to reassert Roman power in Palestine after an insurgency by one of the Hasmoneans, he enslaved thousands of people around the area of Magdala (specifically, Tarichaeae) in 53–52 BCE. In a classic moment of exaggeration, Josephus suggests it was as many as thirty thousand (*J.W.* 1.180; *Ant.* 14.120). According to Horsley, the “memory of this mass enslavement would hardly have faded by the time of Mary of Magdala and people in other villages along the shore, such as Capernaum and Chorazin (including the families of Cephas and Andrew, James and John).”<sup>65</sup> All of this leads me to address the interpretive ramifications of the fishermen’s class position. As we will see, if this broader context of widespread social upheaval is kept in focus, then the call of the fishermen

and their hasty decision to leave their livelihoods and follow Jesus can be seen as gesturing toward a wider pattern of peasant social unrest.

**“WE HAVE ABANDONED EVERYTHING!”:  
PEASANT SOCIAL UNREST AND  
THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION**

Commentators who reason that the fishermen were “relatively prosperous” often read the call narratives in the Synoptic tradition as demonstrating the *cost* associated with Christian discipleship. In his analysis of Matt 4.18–22, for instance, Daniel J. Harrington writes that “[i]n light of the importance of the fishing business at the Sea of Galilee it is clear that the first followers of Jesus were leaving behind a secure and stable lifestyle.”<sup>66</sup> On Mark 1:16–20, Francis J. Moloney similarly observes, “it would have been madness to abandon the tools of trade that they had learned to use from long experience, to relinquish all authority over a set of dependent servants, and to give up their trade and their commercial skill.”<sup>67</sup> Note how in both examples the stable and relative comfort of a peasant existence is simply assumed, thus making their supposedly atomized decision to abandon their nets all the more striking.

Even when the economic cost of following Jesus is spiritualized, however, the romantic image of voluntarily leaving employment and household nonetheless relies on relatable middle-class individuals making middle-class sacrifices. In his article on the entrepreneurial fishermen discussed above, Murphy-O’Connor suggests the primary reason the fishermen abandoned their livelihoods to follow Jesus was that “[b]usiness and profit . . . did not completely satisfy them. They looked for something more spiritual and were prepared to make sacrifices to attain it.”<sup>68</sup> Their private spiritual interests were thus maximized in exchange for an economic cost. Such transactional logic is also shared by Laurie Beth Jones’s entrepreneurial Jesus, whose creation of a new category of work for himself is divorced from the actual collective struggles of everyday peasant life. The characterization of the disciples’ actions as stemming from individual preference reflects an implicit hermeneutical framework rooted in capitalist assumptions about the entrepreneurial agent who operates relatively free from broader social, political, and economic factors.

Such assumptions also filter into the more “radical” interpretations of the Gospels in a way that can end up ironically anesthetizing their countercultural potential. In his Marxist reading of Mark 1:16–20, for instance, Ched Myers writes that the fishing trade is accurately represented as “an independent artisan

class, distinct from day laborers” and that “the break demanded by Jesus is not only with economic but social security as well.”<sup>69</sup> Following Jesus requires not just “assent of the heart, but a fundamental reordering of socioeconomic relationships.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, one’s identity is exchanged for another more radical identification (toward capital) within the growing marketplace of neoliberal subjectivities. This includes, I should add, those very identities opposed to the dominant culture itself. Halvor Moxnes similarly remarks in his stimulating and otherwise brilliant study of the historical Jesus that “[y]oung men who left their households and followed Jesus became displaced persons. By putting themselves ‘out of place’ they represented a provocation to the very order of the community.”<sup>71</sup> As much as Myers and Moxnes are correct to emphasize the disciples’ aberrant (or might we dare say “subversive”) social locations, they overplay the individual agency with which Jesus’s followers freely *choose* to abandon traditional patterns of life. Any radical predisposition is contained by the more substantial edifice of neoliberal ideology which itself reduces all social values and relationships to arbitrary economic measures and metrics.

Even if, on the surface of the text, it appears the fishermen actively choose their fate (and I think such an appearance is due more to a tradition of Protestant interpretation than what is actually there in the texts themselves), we ought to read against the grain and take seriously the exploitation inherent within the broader political-economic struggle. In her highly regarded commentary on Mark, Morna Hooker, in suggesting the disciples were “relatively prosperous,” ends up offering a “gap” or “rupture” we can exploit to hammer this point home. She contends, “The reference to hired men [in Mark 1:20] indicates that the brothers were by no means poor men. As fishermen they would all have been reasonably prosperous, and Peter’s boast in 10.28 is not an idle one.”<sup>72</sup> Peter’s boast is that he and the other disciples “have left everything” (ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα) in their pursuit of discipleship. Jesus’s reply, “there is no one who has left [ἀφῆκεν] house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and 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 [διωγμῶν]—and in the age to come eternal life” (29–30), infuses the destitution of discipleship with the promise of eschatological reward or restitution.

Peter’s boast is juxtaposed alongside Jesus’s radical statements *against* wealth, including his command to a man with “many possessions” (κτῆματα πολλά) to sell what he owns and give the money to the poor (17–22). The noun κτῆμα explicitly refers to “that which is acquired or possessed” including especially landed property.<sup>73</sup> The man departs unwilling to sever ties. Jesus then says to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God!” This evokes a “perplexed” (ἐθαμβοῦντο)



response from the disciples (23–24), which is understandable, given that it is conventionally the wealthy and powerful who control kingdoms. Peter’s boast that they “have left everything” in verse 28 echoes the disciples’ perplexed response as it demonstrates a misunderstanding which is subsequently turned on its head by Jesus. What distinguishes the man with many possessions from the disciples is that the latter were presumably *driven from their fields and households*.

While the key verb ἀφήμι can mean to “leave” or “depart from,” as in when the fishermen “left” (NRSV) their nets in 1:16, it has the double meaning of something being released, abandoned, or given up.<sup>74</sup> But why have they “given up” on everything for the sake of the Gospel? The genitive plural form of the noun διωγμῶν (translated by the NRSV as “persecutions”), framed by Mark’s eschatological promise of heavenly restitution, associates their giving up with an entirely routine scenario of peasant displacement under Roman imperial occupation. In the social upheavals of first-century Palestine, especially in the time leading up to and during the Jewish revolt, patterns of peasant life were frequently disrupted through resettlements and expulsions, sometimes resulting in entire families and households being forced to leave behind whatever meager livelihoods they previously possessed. This presumably included obligations and liabilities to heads of households, landowners, holders of tax-farming contracts, and even dependents. According to Friberg’s *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, διωγμός literally refers to a “pursuit” or “chase.”<sup>75</sup> The BDAG alternatively suggests “a program of systematic harassment.”<sup>76</sup> In either case, διωγμός would seem both a reasonably expected precursor to, and consequence of, having “given up” social and economic ties in a world where an underlying situation of instability was the norm. Severance from household or land was thus not an internal and individual decision of the heart, but rather a response to external social, political, and economic pressures (cf. 4:17, where διωγμός is explicitly connected to θλίψεως, meaning “tribulation” and “oppression”). From the disciples’ perspective, God’s call was just as devastating and irresistible as Roman conquest and requisition. Jesus’s reply to Peter’s boast, combined with the call of fishermen in 1:16–20, speaks directly to those without much to begin with who have “given up” what little they do have as an alternative to the grim prospect of staying bridled within an inequitable and exploitative political-economic system.

It is within this context of widespread social upheaval that the call of the fishermen should be situated. As I have argued, the economic life of fishermen, as with all peasants in the first century, was probably one of subsistence, in which any surplus produced would filter upward to retainers and the ruling elite. The additional intrusions of war, famine, heavy taxation, land acquisition, and social engineering under the Roman occupation would have

intensified this situation of instability. Taken this way, our basic predisposition to the text should be one in which we presume that underlying social and political volatility is driving narrative events. Indeed, peasants generally do not take such drastic actions as abandoning their livelihoods unless conditions have become such that they can no longer pursue the traditional patterns of life. Peter, Andrew, James, and John feature within the Synoptic tradition as severely agitated peasant fishermen, and Matthew-Levi as a fickle tax-collector, all caught in a complex web of exploitative economic relations and tight regulatory control. Their only hope, it would seem, is to abandon their meager existence, to join Jesus “for the sake of the gospel” (10:29) and see where this eschatological promise of an alternative Kingdom may lead. One might even draw parallels between the disciples’ awakening to their sordid predicament and the formation of a new kind of “class consciousness” as discussed by the Marxist theorist Georg Lukács. For Lukács, becoming conscious of one’s concrete social position and its revolutionary potential changes being itself.<sup>77</sup> No longer are the fishermen submissive peasants, but rather they constitute the beginning of a new collective subject who, as is the history of all hitherto existing society, goes on to antagonize beneficiaries of the exploitative classes, including those officials who, in the eyes of the Synoptic narrators, work on behalf of the elite to maintain the status quo. This antagonism intensifies through the respective narratives and culminates with the crucifixion of the lead instigator, Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

There is often little awareness or appreciation of just how radically different an ancient agrarian economy is from a modern capitalist one. What we see in the seemingly ubiquitous desire to make ancient people individual entrepreneurs is more than just an anachronistic tendency or inability to appreciate these differences. Instead, the retrojection of entrepreneurialism demonstrates just how totalizing neoliberal capitalism has become as an implicit hermeneutical frame—a way of seeing and structuring the entire world—in every field and period of human knowledge. The prevailing market society we operate in is now widely accepted as synonymous with universal reality. It is worth pondering, as such, whether Mirowski is correct when he suggests these shifts are being implemented at the epistemological level.<sup>78</sup> If so, the consequences are of fundamental importance for the interpretation of texts (any texts), and especially those texts imbued with mystical and authoritative properties like Scripture.

I have argued that we must make a serious and sober effort to rethink the first-century Galilean fishing trade and the more extensive agrarian social for-

mation in noncapitalist terms—challenging the universality of its constitutive categories such as conceptions of enterprise, innovation, individualism, the free-market, and capital accumulation. Historical disciplines can and should play a crucial role in relativizing the inviolable reality of entrepreneurialism. This can be achieved simply by emphasizing how individual entrepreneurialism is an inadequate heuristic device for reading ancient texts. As an alternative, I suggest we regard Jesus’s call of fishermen in the Synoptic tradition as indicative of social peasant unrest that was, in fact, widespread during the frequent upheavals of first-century Roman Palestine. When viewed in tandem with other social, political, and economic forces that were intruding on the daily lives of Jewish peasants, the Synoptic narratives suddenly take on new life.

## NOTES

1. Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, Entrepreneur: Using Ancient Wisdom to Launch and Live Your Dreams* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), xv.

2. Jones, 67. On Jesus’s “impeccable market timing” Jones writes, “One only needs to chart the timelines of Jesus’ arrival in Bethlehem (at birth) and his exit from Jerusalem (at death) to realize that his entry into the marketplace was perfectly timed to maximize God’s prophets” (12). Likewise, on Jesus’s rubbing shoulders with the elite of Palestine, Jones observes, “He got lots of free meals, being regularly invited to dine with some of the wealthiest people in the region” (xv).

3. Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 36–37.

4. Alicia Batten, “Brokerage: Jesus as Social Entrepreneur,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (London: Routledge, 2010), 167–78; Minna Shkul, *Reading Ephesians: Exploring Social Entrepreneurship in the Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

5. J. Brian Tucker, “Paul’s Particular Problem—The Continuation of Existing Identities in Philemon,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 409.

6. Harry Maier, “The Entrepreneurial Widows of 1 Timothy,” in *Women, Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Ilaria Ramelli and Joan E. Taylor (forthcoming). Accessed at: [https://www.academia.edu/35668262/The\\_Entrepreneurial\\_Widows\\_of\\_1\\_Timothy](https://www.academia.edu/35668262/The_Entrepreneurial_Widows_of_1_Timothy).

7. Burton L. Mack, “A Secular Bible?” *MTSR* 26, no. 2 (2014): 184. Elsewhere, Mack suggests the proliferation of mystery cults in the Greco-Roman world were an example of “[e]ntrepreneurs [who] took up many of the religious functions that had originally been part of the temple-state or city-state systems” (*Myth and the Christian Nation: A Social Theory of Religion* [London: Routledge, 2008], 112); cf. Burton L. Mack, “On Redescribing Christian Origins,” *MTSR* 8, no. 3 (1996): 260–61.

8. Holden Thorp and Buck Goldstein, *Engines of Innovation: The Entrepreneurial University in the Twenty-First Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). From a more critical perspective, Wendy Brown has noted that the value of knowledge is understood today almost exclusively for its contribution to capital enhancement, whether that capital is human, corporate, or financial, and not sought for developing or sustaining the capacity of citizens, culture, or life in common (*Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* [New York: Zone Books, 2015], 177–78).

9. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

10. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 176.

11. Philip Mirowski, "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism," in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 417.

12. See for example the metacritical analyses by James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism: Quests, Scholarship and Ideology* (Durham: Acumen, 2014); Todd Penner and Davina C. Lopez, *De-Introducing the New Testament: Texts, Worlds, Methods, Stories* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015); Robert J. Myles, "The Fetish for a Subversive Jesus," *JSHJ* 14, no. 1 (2016): 52–70; Robert J. Myles, "The Neoliberal Lives of Jesus," *Bible and Interpretation*, May 2016, <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/2016/05/myl1408025.shtml>.

13. The neoliberal fetish for entrepreneurialism has taken place wholesale across all social spheres and institutions in modern Western society. Higher education, for example, has been reconfigured in terms of investment and return on investment: an individual is encouraged to take out personal loans and measure their prospective income upon completion of degree or qualification.

14. Campbell Jones and André Spicer, *Unmasking the Entrepreneur* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009), 46–49.

15. Jones and Spicer, 48–49.

16. Joseph A. Schumpeter, "Economic Theory and Entrepreneurial History," in *Essays on Entrepreneurs, Innovations, Business Cycles, and the Evolution of Capitalism*, ed. Richard V. Clemence, 2nd ed (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 259; cf. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 2nd ed (Floyd: Wilder Publications, 2012).

17. Schumpeter, "Economic Theory and Entrepreneurial History," 266. The concept of "innovation," which functions as a dominant discourse in contemporary society, assumed its modern sense with the definition put forward by Schumpeter at the beginning of the twentieth century. For Schumpeter, "innovation" is the key to explaining what drives economic development.

18. Jones and Spicer, *Unmasking the Entrepreneur*, 7.

19. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 83.

20. See also Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (London: Penguin, 2015).

21. Jones and Spicer, *Unmasking the Entrepreneur*, 51.
22. Schumpeter, "Economic Theory and Entrepreneurial History," 264.
23. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 205–6. See further, below. In fact, these groups were sometimes more vulnerable than landed peasants in that they were susceptible to these same basic demands but had no direct or indirect access to the resources of the land.
24. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew 1–7*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 397.
25. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 213.
26. Meier, 3:214.
27. Jens Schröter, *Jesus of Nazareth: Jew from Galilee, Savior of the World*, trans. Wayne Coppins (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 60.
28. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men," *BRev* 15, no. 3 (1999): 48.
29. Murphy-O'Connor suggests the fact that "they were men of substance who controlled their own lives is confirmed by the quality of their house at Capernaum" (27). As evidence he refers to the House of Peter—a house larger than most others in Capernaum but with nothing to tie it to the historical disciples except for a dubious tradition dating from the fourth century.
30. Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men," 27.
31. R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 15.
32. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 55.
33. K. C. Hanson, "The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition," *BTB* 27, no. 3 (1997): 108–9.
34. See Christopher B. Zeichmann and Sarah E. Rollens's respective chapters in this volume which underscore the diversity among so-called "retainer" groups in the ancient Roman economy.
35. For a recent and more detailed account of the ancient economy as it relates to the New Testament, see Roland Boer and Christina Pettersen, *Time of Troubles: A New Economic Framework for Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).
36. Alicia J. Batten, "Fish Tales," *BTB* 47, no. 1 (2017): 9.
37. Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 269–73.
38. Ste. Croix, 211. See Alan H. Cadwallader's chapter in this volume for a critical discussion of Ste. Croix's malleable definition of the peasant strata, which allows for several internal differentiations.
39. Elsewhere, Lucian revealingly describes a leatherworker, Micyllus, as depicting his own impending death as a time when he will never go hungry or wander barefooted and naked on a winter's day (*Cat.* 20).
40. Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 270. What Ste. Croix has in mind here are the exceptions that prove the rule. How were the "seldom plausible" conditions of social ascendancy made possible? He suggests, as with those peasants who were freeholders, these

individuals were as a rule “not subject to *direct* exploitation by *individual* members of the propertied class . . . except in so far as they got into debt to rich men” (Ste. Croix, 271).

41. Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 71.
42. Raimo Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish as Source of Economic Growth in the First Century CE Galilee,” *NovT* 59, no. 2 (2017): 112.
43. Hakola, 113.
44. Hakola, 114. While Roman taxes in coinage did generate increased trade in the Roman Empire, the driving factor was not a free-market but rather that taxpayers themselves needed to earn money in order to pay them. See Keith Hopkins, “Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire (200 B.C.–A.D. 400),” *JRS* 70 (1980): 101–25.
45. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 115.
46. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 116.
47. See also Wilhem H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men”* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967). Both Hanson and Wuellner draw on Michael Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, Special Online Edition, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
48. Sean Freyne, *Galilee: From Alexander the Great to Hadrian* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980), 174.
49. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 121.
50. Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, xiv.
51. As Ellen Meiksins Wood observes, “The critical factor in the divergence of capitalism from all other forms of ‘commercial society’ was the development of certain social property relations that generated market imperatives and capitalist ‘laws of motion’, which imposed themselves on production.” No such relations or imperatives can be simply assumed to exist within the first-century Galilean fishing trade. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London: Verso, 2017), 75–76.
52. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 129.
53. Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 273.
54. Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 273.
55. Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 51.
56. Culpepper, *John, Son of Zebedee*, 14.
57. Freyne, *Galilee*, 174.
58. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 122.
59. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 123.
60. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 124.
61. Hakola, “The Production and Trade of Fish,” 122–23.
62. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* 43.
63. “τελώνης” in BDAG, 999.
64. Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 33.
65. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics*, 59.
66. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 72.

67. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 53.
68. Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men," 48.
69. Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 132.
70. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 132–33.
71. Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville: WJK, 2003), 72.
72. Morna Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Hendrickson, 1991), 61.
73. "κτῆμα" in BDAG, 572.
74. "ἀφίημι" in BDAG, 156.
75. Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 118.
76. "διωγμός" in BDAG, 253.
77. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1971).
78. Mirowski, "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism," 417.