Although I had read what Sean Freyne has published on Galilee over 25 years, I was still unprepared for his last book, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean*. It surprises by being a new and fresh approach to the much discussed question of the relationship between Jesus and Galilee. One of the remarkable qualities of Sean as a scholar is his willingness to learn from colleagues, and to put their criticisms and insights to use in ways that are totally his own. In *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean* he raises the old question of the relationship between Jesus and Galilee, and looks at Galilee as a contested space, where Jesus enters into the contestation.1 The truly original perspective is the way in which Freyne constructs Galilee, combining archaeology and economy with the history and myths of the region. In this way he weaves a fascinating picture of Galilee as *Landscape and Memory*.2 The question of the influence of Galilee upon Jesus is raised in a new and sophisticated way. Especially fascinating is a chapter on Jesus and the ecology of Galilee. Freyne’s focus here “is on the two-way interaction between the natural environment and human cultivation in first-century Galilee, and the impact which this might have had on Jesus’ own reactions to what he experienced in that environment and his consequent understanding of God’s call to him.”3

With his interest in the “two-way interaction between the natural environment and human cultivation,” Freyne takes up a question that was a characteristic aspect of scholarship on Galilee and the historical Jesus in the 19th century. The question of the relation between Galilee and Jesus was raised in terms of the impact of nature. The differences in religion and culture between Galilee and Judea were likewise ascribed to natural causes. Both the unique relationship between Galilee and Jesus and the contrast between Galilee and Judea became important

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1 Freyne (2004, 7–8) acknowledges his indebtedness to my study, *Putting Jesus in His Place* (2003a) for the spatial perspective, but proceeds to use it in an original way.
3 Freyne 2004, 27.
themes in later scholarship. In these areas, the 19th century beginnings of historical Jesus studies provided a paradigm of interpretation for much of New Testament studies in the 20th century. But there was a significant difference. Apart from more popular writings and travel narratives, the interest in nature and geography was not followed up. Focus was on religious issues, especially Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah in contrast to that of Pharisees and Scribes. It was not until the Third Quest of Jesus studies interacted with a new interest in Galilee, spurred by excavations and new, broader perspectives in archaeology, that questions of place and space, landscape and nature were again seriously discussed.

Thus in some ways the present stage of the quest for Jesus has more in common with 19th century studies than with the more dogmatically oriented Second Quest. Freyne is critical of 19th century authors, finding that they had a “romantic understanding of nature and its influence” that could result in “determinist views of human nature.” He singles out for special criticism Ernest Renan who “equated landscape and human characteristics in an alarming manner.” One example is Renan’s description of how the landscape of Lower Galilee influenced Jesus’ views. Likewise, Freyne criticizes the way George Adam Smith draws inferences from the differences in nature between Galilee and Judea with regard to the human characteristics of the inhabitants in the region.

But because of similar interests in the relations between natural environments and human characteristics in the First and the Third Quest, 19th century writers deserve a broader treatment than the brief comments from Freyne can give. Above all, we should attempt to see them within their larger cultural, social and religious contexts. This might also raise awareness of how our own studies are influenced by the present contexts within which they are undertaken. Here I will focus on The Historical Geography of the Holy Land by George Adam Smith, first published in 1894. This book is not as simple in its discussion of the relations between nature and human characteristics as Freyne’s brief

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4 See Moxnes 2001.
6 Freyne 2004, 26–27.