

A Methodology for the Analysis of Texts
Used in "Displacement Theologies"

William H. Harter

I. Preliminary Observations

This presentation will outline an approach. We desire to deal with every New Testament text which might be used to support some form of "displacement theology" (i.e., that the church has displaced Israel from the position of God's chosen; that the church has replaced Israel as the true people of God in history; that Israel no longer has a functional or vital position in the divine economy; that God has rejected the Jews and given their portfolio to the Christians).

Our initial step will be a detailed dissection of the gospel of Matthew. We will try to establish categories for the various texts which might be germane. Each category will include texts which can be understood or explained from a particular historical and/or theological perspective. From the breakdown of these texts we hope to come to some conclusions about the number and kinds of texts which might be used to support "displacement theologies", search for appropriate modes for interpreting those texts, and establish a model which can be used for the other books of the New Testament (perhaps also other early Christian literature).

II. Categories for the Texts:

- Continuity, Rindrest*
- 1) Synonymous: texts in which the perspective can be seen as identical with or in tune with at least one important facet or sector of first century Jewish attitudes.
 - 2) Fulfillment: texts in which the Christian phenomenon or experience would be understood as the fulfillment, the realization, or the flowering of a process, an expectation, or a hope within Judaism. This would not a priori separate the Christian reality from Jewish experience.
 - 3) Conflict with Judaism: texts in which conflict or contest with Jewish individuals or groups is apparent. The struggle, even when internecine, is essentially intra-Jewish.
 - 4) Allocation of Guilt or Responsibility: texts in which some form of moral/juridical responsibility or culpability is attributed to Jewish individuals or groups. Again, this would not a priori indicate an un-Jewish or non-Jewish perspective.
 - 5) Inclusion of Gentiles: texts indicating that in some way Israel's role as "light to the nations" is being realized or consummated in the mission of Jesus or in Christian experience.
 - 6) Displacement: texts which might be used to support "displacement" theologies. These break down into certain sub-categories:
 - a) Gentiles will take the place of Jews
 - b) The Jews are insufficiently righteous
 - c) Jesus' authority is greater, or of a different order than the authority found within Judaism.
 - d) The Jews are no longer productive for God, either

intrinsically or as evidenced in punishments they received.

III. Classification of Texts:

These texts have not been classified according to form-critical or redaction-critical criteria. That distinction would rarely be made by those who would wish to use them in "displacement" theologies. The question of whether the sayings of the historical Jesus would have greater authority than the sayings of the risen Christ (which could be shown by redaction-critical methods to have been mediated through the early community) is ^{utterances of the Risen Chr.} one which will need to be discussed. In the search for appropriate modes of interpreting texts particularly prone to being handled in negative, anti-Jewish ways, these critical methodologies would provide one important tool.

Another important tool, which can only be used in a limited way in one book, is the necessity for considering the "total witness"; i.e. that a particular passage be balanced, or "leveraged" with or against other texts in the same book or elsewhere in the New Testament.

A number of passages which have been or could be interpreted as "displacement" texts may properly be placed in other categories, thus, substantially reducing the number of texts which must be grappled with in the "displacement" category. These have been marked with an asterisk.

1) Synonymous

Matthew 7:12 -- "this is the law and the prophets"
 8:4 -- "offer the gift that Moses commanded"
 (for healing of leprosy)
 9:14-15 -- fasting
 10:5 -- "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"
 (also 10:23)
 *12:8 -- "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath"
 12:1-5 arguments from scriptural precedent
 12:9-14 argument from rabbinical example
 *13:52 - "Therefore every scribe who has been
 trained for the kingdom of heaven is like
 a householder who brings out of his treasure
 what is new and what is old"
 13:57 - "a prophet is not without honor except in
 his own country and his own house."
 15:24 - "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the
 house of Israel"
 "even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall
 from their master's table"
 18:17 - "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it
 to the church; and if he refuses to listen
 even to the church, let him be to you as a
 Gentile and a tax collector"
 19:17 - "If you would enter life, keep the command-
 ments"
 20:19 - "... deliver him to the Gentiles to be
 mocked and scourged and crucified"
 20:25 - "the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them"
 *22:12,13 man without a wedding garment cast out
 22:31-32 controversy with Sadducees over resurrection
 using Pharisaic argument
 22:34-40 answer to Pharisees - the "great
 commandment"
 23:2-3 "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses seat,
 so practice and observe whatever they tell
 you, but not what they do ..."
 *23:13-36 woes upon the scribes and Pharisees
 *23:37-38 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!
 killing the prophets and stoning those
 who are sent to you."
 24:2 -- prophecy of the destruction of the temple.
 *24:51 - the wicked servant will be punished.
 (25:30; 25:46)
 26:57-68 examination by chief priests and council
 (27:1-2)
 27:9 -- price set by "some of the sons" of Israel
 (cf. Zechariah 11)

2) Fulfillment (not fulfillment of prophecy per se)

*Matthew 1:1-17 -- genealogy

*Matthew 2: 13-15 -- flight into Egypt
 "out of Egypt I have called my son"
 *3:15 -- fulfill all righteousness
 *5:17-18 -- fulfill law and prophets, not abolish
 9:27 -- "have mercy on us, Son of David"
 *10:1 -- 12 disciples
 11:2-6 -- "are you he who is to come? ..."
 "Go and tell John what you hear
 and see ..."
 11:10 -- "Behold, I send my messengers before
 thy face"
 11:14 -- "he is Elijah who is to come."
 12:23 -- "can this be the Son of David?"
 12:39-41 -- "sign of Jonah"
 13:37,41 -- "he who sows the good seed is the Son
 of Man"
 15:22 -- Son of David
 *16:14 -- "who do men say the Son of Man is?"
 John the Baptist? Elijah? Jeremiah
 or one of the prophets?
 ... "You are the Christ, the Son of the
 living God."
 16:27-28 -- Son of Man will come in glory
 17:1-13 -- Transfiguration (Moses and Elijah)
 John the Baptist as Elijah
 17:23 -- Son of Man to be raised on third day
 17:25 -- Sons of the King of the earth
 20:17-19 -- Son of Man will be raised on the third
 day
 *20:23 -- "to sit at my right hand and my left
 ... is for those for whom it has been
 prepared by my father"
 20:28 -- Son of Man come to serve and give his
 life as a ransom for many.
 20:30,31 -- Son of David
 21:5 -- "your king is coming to you, mounted
 on an ass"
 21:9 -- "Hosanna to the Son of David"
 *21:33-41 -- son of the householder killed
 owner will seek revenge allegorical
 *21:42 -- "the very stone which the builders
 rejected has become the head of the
 corner."
 22:43-44 -- David calls the Son of David "Lord"
 24:3-14 -- "what will be sign of your coming and
 close of the age?"... he who endures
 to the end will be saved -- gospel
 preached to whole world.
 24:21 -- the great tribulation

Matthew 24:30 -- Son of Man coming on the clouds of
 heaven with power and great glory
 24:33-34 -- he is near
 this generation shall not pass away
 till all these things take place
 24:44 -- the Son of Man is coming at an hour
 you do not expect
 25:31 -- Son of Man will sit on his glorious
 throne to judge
 26:2 -- Son of Man will be delivered up to be
 crucified
 26:12 -- "in pouring this ointment on my body
 she has done it to prepare me for burial."
 26:18 -- "the Teacher says, 'my time is at hand'"
 26:24 -- "the Son of Man goes as it is written of
 him ..."
 26:29 -- "until that day when I drink it with
 you new in my father's kingdom."
 26:35 -- "not as I will, but as thou wilt."
 26:45 -- "the Son of Man in betrayed into the
 hands of sinners."
 26:53-54 -- "I can appeal to my Father ... but
 how then shall the scriptures be ful-
 filled ..." (and v. 56)
 26:64 -- "you will see the Son of Man seated at
 the right hand of power."
 27:11 -- "King of the Jews"
 (also vv. 29, 37, 42)
 27:51-53 -- curtain of temple rent
 earthquake
 tombs opened
 resurrections of the saints
 28:6 -- "he is risen, as he said."
 28:20 -- "lo, I am with you always, to the
 close of the age."

3) Conflict with Judaism

*Matthew 3: 7-10 -- Pharisees and Sadducees as "brood of
 vipers"
 5:11-12 -- revile you and persecute you
 6:1-2 -- practicing piety in the open
 (other contrasts in Sermon on Mount)
 6:5-6 -- praying in open
 (note vv. 7-8 -- Gentiles also
 included) cf. also 5:47 and 6:32
 6:16 -- fasting
 9:6 -- Son of Man has authority on earth to
 forgive sins.
 (accusation of blasphemy)
 9:11 -- eating with tax collectors and sinners
 9:14-15 -- disciples not fast now

Matthew 9:30 -- Pharisees "he casts out demons by the
 prince of demons" (also 10:25)
 10:17 -- they will deliver you up to councils
 and flog you in their synagogues"
 10:26 -- "have no fear of them ..."
 11:12 -- "men of violence take it by force"
 (Zealots)
 11:18-19 -- conflict with John and with Son of Man
 11:20-24 -- woes to Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum
 12:1-5 -- grainfield -- profanation of the sabbath
 (arguments from scriptural
 precedent)
 12:9-14 -- man with withered hand
 (arguments from rabbinical
 example)
 *12:24-34 -- Pharisees/brood of vipers
 *12:38-39 -- request for sign/evil and adulterous
 generation
 *13:5 -- "this people's heart has grown dull and
 their ears are heavy of hearing"
 13:57 -- "a prophet is not without honor except
 in his own country and his own home"
 15:1-20 -- washing hands when eating
 "they are blind guides"
 * * "why do you transgress the commandment
 of God for the sake of your tradition?"
 * * "for the sake of your tradition you have
 made void the word of God."
 *16:1-4 -- Pharisees request a sign
 "take heed and beware of the leaven of
 the Pharisees and Sadducees." (teaching)
 16:21 -- passion prediction
 suffer many things from elders, chief
 priests, scribes
 17:24 -- payment of half shekel tax
 19:3 -- controversy over divorce with Pharisees
 21:15 -- disapproval over his being called Son
 of David
 21:23 -- "by what authority are you doing these
 things, and who gave you this authority?"
 ...
 is baptism of John from heaven or from
 man? ... "we do not know"
 *21:31 -- "the tax collectors and the harlots go
 into the kingdom of God before you."
 22:15-22 -- controversy over payment of taxes to
 Caesar
 22:23-33 -- controversy with Sadducees over the
 resurrection

Matthew 22:41-45 -- with Pharisees over fact that Son of David is also Lord ...

*23:3-8 -- criticism of scribes and Pharisees for their practices

*23:13-36 -- woes upon the scribes and Pharisees

26:3-5 -- chief priests and elders take counsel to arrest and kill him

26:15 -- thirty pieces of silver

26:47 -- Jesus' capture by crowd from priests and elders

26:57-68 -- examination by chief priests and council

27:1-2

27:3

27:18 -- "out of envy ... they had delivered him up"

27:20 -- "persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus."

27:41 -- chief priests, scribes and elders mocked him

27:62-66 -- chief priests and Pharisees protect against resurrection fraud.

28:11-15 -- chief priests and elders bribe guard to tell lies.

4) Allocation of Guilt or Responsibility:

Matthew 23:31-32 -- "Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers"

*23:35 -- "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth." (cf. II Chron. 24:21)

*27:25 -- "And all the people answered: "His blood be on us and on our children."

5) Inclusion of Gentiles:

Matthew 4:12-17 -- Galilee of the Gentiles
people who sit in darkness have seen a great light

12:18-21 -- "he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles ... and in his name will the Gentiles hope"

12:41 -- men of Nineveh repented

12:42 -- Queen of the South came to hear wisdom

15:27 -- "even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table"

*19:30 -- "but many that are first will be last, and the last first."

- *Matthew 20:14 -- "I choose to give to this last as I give to you," so the last will be first and the first last
- *24:14 -- "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and thus the end will come."
- *24:27-28 -- "For as the lightning comes from the East and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the body is, there the eagles (vultures?) will be gathered together."
- *24:31 -- (Son of Man) will gather his elect from the four winds -- from one end of heaven to the other.
- 27:54 -- centurion: "truly this was the Son of God."
- 28:10 -- "tell my brethren to go to Galilee, there they will see me." (also 28:7 and 28:16)
- *28:19 -- "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

6) Displacement:

- (a) Matthew 3:9 -- "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham."
- (b) 5:20 -- "unless your righteousness exceeds scribes and Pharisees"
- (c) 7:29 -- "for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes."
- (a) 8:10-12 -- "not even in Israel have I found such faith."
"many will come from east and west ... while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness"
- (c) 12:6 -- "something greater than the temple is here"
- (c) 12:41 -- "something greater than Jonah is here"
- (c) 12:42 -- "something greater than Solomon is here"
- (b) 19:21 -- "if you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor ... and come, follow me."
- (a) 19:28 -- "in the new world when the Son of Man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
"every one who has left ... many that are first will be last and the last first."

- (c) Matthew 21:12 -- "drove out all who sold and bought in the temple"
- (d) 21:19 -- (fig tree) "may no fruit ever come from you again"
- (d) 21:43 -- "Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."
- (a)
- (d) 22:1-10 -- parable of marriage feast
- (a) "the king was angry and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."
- (b) "the wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find."
- (d) 23:37-38 -- "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem"
- (a) 27:9-10 -- "Behold your house is forsaken and desolate"
- (b) "a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel" cf. Zech. 11:13-14 -- for thirty pieces of silver the second staff Union was broken, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. (covenant with all the peoples annulled 11:10). This was the result of the work of the bad shepherd. v. 17 -- "woe to my worthless shepherd"
- (c) 28:18 -- "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

IV. Possible Modes of Approach to the Displacement Texts

a) inclusion of Gentiles does not necessarily imply rejection of all Jews. That some Jews would be punished was always a part of Hebrew and Jewish theological perspectives. Covenant with all peoples needed to be affirmed. Radical challenge tends to be presented in polemical terms.

b) call to extraordinary virtue is a sectarian heightening of an ethical thrust already present in Judaism.

c) perception of Jesus is in tune with Jewish eschatological imagery -- Son of Man, Messiah.

d) fig tree episode a symbolic act of judgment responding to events occurring in a particular instance. Destruction of the city simply a punishment for wrongdoing.