

NOTE: This thinksheet is on history. A parallel thinksheet on theology would seek to understand (a) Jesus/Jews, Jews/Christians' roles vis-a-vis God's action in history, and (b) God's intention in #1-#7.

1. If one concludes (1) that the question is unanswerable and/or (2) that answering is humanly unprofitable or even pernicious, the history of Jewish-Christian sibling polemics can't be very "involving," i.e. can't be studied with much hope of human or even sectarian [Jewish or Christian] profit. Include me, except that I believe in two benefits from sibling conflict carried out in mutual goodwill: (1) cathartic clarification by mutual critiquing (blowing ignorance, illusion, and arrogance) and (2) sharpened skills in mutual biblical apologetic-polemic (as in the Arab saying, "My brother and I fight, but my brother and I fight our cousin") [cp. the play-fighting of bear cubs].

2. Within the modest "except" [above], let's scenario right/wrong, true/false in the earliest Jewish/Christian confrontation, viz. Jesus and his Jewish opponents. NOTE: Even in this statement, two complexities: (1) "Christian" here is proleptic, for Jesus was "Christian" in the event (resurrection, the Early Church), not in the process (including the crucifixion), and (2) Jesus' "Jewish opponents" are variously assessed as (a) effecting his death, (b) implicated in his death only in that the conflict came to the notice of the Roman authorities, who were solely responsible for his execution, (c) implicated in ways the materials do not provide adequate data for assessing. It's theoretically possible that Jesus came to the Roman authorities' notice because he had no Jewish opponents: he had to be done away with because the Jewish people were following him en masse. But the literature, I believe, is overwhelming here: Jesus was unsuccessful in discipling the Jewish authorities, and only temporarily, perhaps sporadically, discipled any significant numbers of the Jewish populace: it's foolish and counterproductive for Jews to try to get the Pope or any other Christians to state that Jews were not implicated in Jesus' violent death [even if only in sense (b)].

3. The rest of this thinksheet exhibits scenarios of Jesus/"Jews" (meaning opponents among his own people) on a right/wrong, true/false grid.

SCENARIOS [or "ACCOUNTS" or "INTERPRETATIONS" or "PERSPECTIVES"]

#1: A'B'---Both wrong. The whole biblical vision is false, and Judaism and Christianity are only living fossils now dying under radiation from superior world-views. Our "cousins"!

#2: O--Historical skepticism (the records are too fragmentary to yield conclusions) and/or philosophical skepticism (de gustibus non disputandum: in religion and philosophy one can't talk of right/wrong, true/false, or at least shouldn't).

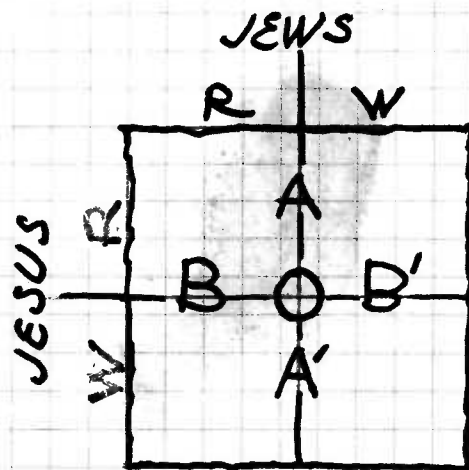
#3: ABA'--Orthodox Judaism: the Jews were right, Jesus wrong.

#4: BAB'--Orthodox Christianity: Jesus right, the Jews wrong.

#5: ABBA==Both partly right. The Jews rightly assessed the Roman reaction to messianic "pretenders," who were politically viewed as insurrectionists if not revolutionaries; Jesus rightly insisted on the appearing of novelty, of non-straightline events, in history, i.e. of "divine intervention."

#6: AB(BA)--Jesus was right in wanting to see his people delivered from the Roman yoke, and he would have made a significant contribution to that end had he not been seduced into (a) the zealot party [and so gone violent] or into (b) the apocalyptic sectaries [and so gone irrelevant nonviolent in passive-active resistance, preaching and awaiting the divine intervention of "the King[ship]dom of God"]. (Compare #3.)

#7: BA(AB)--If the Jews had followed Jesus, Jesus would have been proved wholly right: "the Kingdom of God" would have "broken in," "become established." (Compare #4.)



History, and God, leave us Christians and Jews in this "iffy" confrontation which I believe is true to (in verisimilitude with) the nature of history as luminous, yearning mystery.