religious faith or racial identity. To respond to the Holocaust by embracing the very kind of narrowness which characterized its perpetrators is a disservice, particularly to the millions who lost their lives in the inferno which such hate created.

Peter Novick has made an important contribution by casting light on a subject which few have been willing to discuss openly in the past. His book, in the words of Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is "a long overdue, endlessly fascinating and finely nuanced corrective to the temptation to turn the Holocaust from historical fact into world view." •

A JEWISH VIEW OF JESUS
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

him. Some of it is a reflection of attitudes that prevailed in the Christian Church towards the end of the first century. I have already mentioned the saying from John's Gospel, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life...', as a case in point. Much, if not all, of the vilification of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 is probably to be explained in the same way. And there is general agreement among New Testament scholars that the passage at the end of Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus charges his disciples, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (28:19), is a late interpolation.

But the other point to be made is that the Judaism of first-century Palestine was not monolithic but comprised a number of different streams: a fact of which the Dead Sea Scrolls have made us more aware than ever. The question, therefore, needs to be asked, with which of these streams Jesus should be identified. Most probably the answer is: with none; he was too much of a loner. Certainly the Sadducees can be ruled out. For they were priestly and aristocratic, whereas Jesus was neither; they were closely associated with the Temple, whereas he was ambivalent towards it; and they denied, whereas he affirmed, the resurrection of the dead (Mark 12:18-27).

Jesus and the Pharisees

On the other hand Jesus clearly had much in common with the Pharisees, whose ideas he will have absorbed to some extent during his education. Like them, as we have just seen, he believed in the resurrection. He employed the kind of Bible exegesis, and told the kind of parables, familiar to us from Pharisaic literature. The Paternoster prayer which he taught his disciples (Matt. 6:9-11) is a string of characteristically Pharisaic phrases. And when asked which was the greatest commandment, he singled out precisely the two which one would have expected a Pharisaic teacher to single out, namely, from Deuteronomy, 'Hear, O Israel, the Eternal One is our God, the Eternal God is One; and you shall love the Eternal One your God with all your heart and with all your soul...' (6:4f), and from Leviticus, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (19:18).

Incidentally, the changes that story undergoes as it is told in Mark (12:28-34), retold in Matthew (22:34-40) and then again in Luke (10:25-37) — whereas John disdains to mention it — show a clear progression from warmth to coldness to animosity in the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees, and allows us, by extrapolating the trend backwards, to surmise that in reality their relationship was even friendlier than the earliest Gospel tradition suggests, and therefore also that the venomous denunciations of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 owe less to Jesus and more to the hostility of the Church in the Evangelist's time.

Jesus and the Law

But did not Jesus adopt a negative attitude to the Law which was the pride and joy of the Pharisees? Only up to a point. He certainly didn't reject the Law. On the contrary, he lived by its precepts. He even affirmed it, and not only the Written Law, but the Oral Law as well. Two passages are especially relevant here, and they are again of the 'telltale' kind which the Gospel writers would have been unlikely to invent. Jesus said: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfil...Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of Heaven...' (Matt. 5:17-19). And even more significantly: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore do what they teach you and follow it...' (Matt. 23:2).

It is true that Jesus performed acts of healing on the Sabbath, but that was quite permissible when it was a matter of saving life, and even otherwise if it was done, as Jesus did it, by mere speech, without physical contact (Matt. 12:9-14). It is also true that he allowed his disciples to eat without first washing their hands, but there is no suggestion that he did so himself (Mark 7:1-8).

The only instance in which Jesus seems to question the obligatory character of the Law is a passage in which he makes light of the Dietary Laws by saying that it is not what enters the body, but what comes out of it, that defiles, at which point the Gospel text adds: 'Thus he declared all foods clean' (Mark 7:19). But that parenthetical comment almost certainly expresses the view of the Evangelist rather than of Jesus himself, and may even be a mistranslation (see Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew,* p. 29).

On the subject of divorce, the Gospels preserve two discrepant traditions: that Jesus would allow it only on the ground of adultery (Matt. 5:32, 19:9), in which case he agreed with the school of Shammai (Mishnah, Git. 9:10), and that he would disallow it altogether (Mark 10:11, Luke 16:18), in which case he advocated what the Rabbis called *middat chasidut,* a higher degree of piety than the Law strictly required.

In fact, much of the teaching of Jesus needs to be understood in the light of that principle. That is especially true of the Sermon on the Mount, which we will discuss presently. Meanwhile it must suffice to say that Jesus' attitude to the Law was generally positive, but combined with a certain disdain for the hair-splitting legalism to which the Pharisees were no doubt inclined, as it has characterised the legal mind in all ages. With these qualifications, then, we may re-affirm what we said previously: that Jesus had much in common with the Pharisees.

Jesus and the Essenes

But we must add that he also had much in common with the Essenes, who in turn are generally identified with the Qumran community. For like them, he practised celibacy and asceticism, tended towards communism, and believed in the imminence of the messianic age, and the urgency of the need to repent in preparation for it. 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand' (Matt. 4:17) was, after all, the burden of his message. (See also Mark 13:24-27.) In addition, the Essenes were much given to faith-healing — indeed, it is possible that their name derives from an Aramaic word meaning 'to heal', as their counterparts in Egypt were known as Therapeutae — and faith-healing played a large part in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus and the Zealots

Even with the Zealots Jesus had more in common than is generally supposed. Not only was one of his disciples, Simon, a member of that group (Mark 3:18, Matt. 10:4, Luke 6:15), but several of the teachings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels strike an activistic and even militaristic note distinctly reminiscent of the Zealots. For example: 'You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword' (Matt. 10:34); 'I have come to set fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled' (Luke 12:49); and 'whoever has no sword, let him sell his cloak to buy one' (Luke 20:36). These are surely among the 'telltale' passages whose authenticity is not to be doubted.

4. He was a faith-healer

My fourth proposition is that Jesus was a faith-healer. I could have said, more generally, a wonder-worker, but that would imply a belief in miracles which I don't hold. For I would regard all stories of the suspension or violation of the laws of nature as products of folkloristic imagination, whether they occur in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, the Talmud, or anywhere else. In that way I would discount, for instance, the stories of Jesus walking on the lake (Mark 6:48) and the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Mark 6:38-44). But faith-healing is another matter, since it is explicable in terms of the influence of the mind on psychosomatic conditions, and well enough attested.

Furthermore, the vast majority of the miracle stories told about Jesus in Mark, Matthew and Luke are in fact of the faith-healing kind. As Geza Vermes points out, 'Compared with the massive insistence of the Synoptists on the healing of mental and physical disease, other miracles assigned to Jesus are numerically insignificant' *(Jesus the Jew,* p. 26).

I find these stories essentially credible, even though some allowance must still be made for exaggeration, and though one may doubt the theory underlying the healing acts, for Jesus evidently believed that the sick were in many cases possessed by an evil spirit which had to be exorcised.

Certainly Jesus' activity as a faith-healer does not place him outside Judaism, for similar powers are ascribed to men of exceptional piety in Rabbinic literature.

It should also be added that in an age which believed implicitly in faith-healing, as in miracles generally, that belief would itself have been a factor contributing to the effectiveness of such therapy.

5. He was a preacher

My fifth proposition is that Jesus was a preacher. That is indeed obvious, but I mean it in a particular sense. It is often said that Jesus was a rabbi, but that is doubly wrong. First, it is anachronistic, for the term was not yet used as a title, but only as a mode of address, in his time. Secondly, a rabbi was essentially a Halachist — an expert interpreter of Jewish Law, and there is little indication in the Gospels that Jesus had either the knowledge of a Halachist or that much interest in the legal side of Judaism.

On the other hand, many rabbis were also masters of Aggadah — of homiletics. Some even specialised in that side of Judaism, and with them Jesus may appropriately be compared. He was, moreover, a charismatic, popular, itinerant preacher, like the East European Maggid of pre-modern times. Like some of the Pharisees, he conveyed his teachings largely through parables — especially about father and son, master and servant, king and subject — as well as terse aphorisms, in simple language and with vivid, homely illustrations. Some of his teachings, like some of Hillel's, are cryptic. Some are obscure. Some may have been confused in transmission. But the majority are clear, go straight to the heart of the relationship between person and person, and between God and humanity, hit home, and belong to the gems of religious literature. There is no reason why Jews should not appreciate them. If Jesus had not been appropriated by Christianity, they would no doubt have found their way into Jewish writings such as the 'Ethics of the Fathers' and Midrash. For their content is thoroughly Jewish and in particular, as has been pointed out, Pharisaic.

There are indeed many close parallels between the teachings of Jesus and those found in Pharisaic-Rabbinic literature. Here are just a few examples. Jesus taught: 'You of little faith! Do not worry, saying, What will we eat? or 'What will we drink? or What will we wear?' (Matt. 6:30f). Rabbi Eleazar taught: 'One who has enough to eat for today and says, What will I eat tomorrow? is a person of little faith' (Mechilta to Exod. 16:4).

Sabbath Made for Humans

Jesus taught: 'The Sabbath was made for humans, not humans for the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27). Rabbi Simon ben Menasia taught: 'The Sabbath is entrusted to you, you are not entrusted to the Sabbath' (Mechilta to Exod. 31:13).

Jesus taught: 'There will be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent' (Luke 15:7). Rabbi Abbahu taught: 'Where those who have repented stand, the perfectly righteous are not permitted to stand' (Babylonian Talmud, Ber. 34b).

Jesus taught: 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt. 5:48). The Rabbis stressed the biblical injunction, 'You shall be holy, for I the Eternal One your God am holy' (Lev. 19:2; Lev.R. 24:4), and taught: 'As God is called merciful, gracious and righteous, so you should be merciful, gracious and righteous' (Sifré Deut. to Deut. 11:22).

That saying of Jesus, 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect', comes from the Sermon on the Mount, which, with its recurring formula, 'You have heard X but I tell you Y,' is commonly taken to indicate that Jesus did, after all, seek to establish a new religion. But that is a misunderstanding, for the contrast he draws is not between an old religion (Judaism) and a new religion (Christianity) but between an incorrect and a correct interpretation of Scripture within the same religion, Judaism; and with his view of the correct interpretation, most Jewish teachers, not least Pharisees, would have agreed. Indeed, it is likely that the rejected interpretations were meant to be hypothetical rather than actual.

It may be safely asserted, then, that the teachings of Jesus are mainly aggadic