

2006

Book Review: Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, *An Encyclopedia of Judaism and Christianity*, London, DLT, 2004

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This book review in a scholarly journal was originally published as:

Morrison, G. J. (2006). Book Review: Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, *An Encyclopedia of Judaism and Christianity*, London, DLT, 2004. *Australian EJournal of Theology*, 6.

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Book Review – Glenn Morrison, *Australian EJournal of Theology* Issue 6 (February 2006) (1 page).

Dan Cohn-Sherbok & Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, *An Encyclopedia of Judaism and Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004). Rrp: \$47.95, 181 pages.

The encyclopedia was first published in 1991 and has been reprinted again. This serves to emphasise its success in contributing to the understanding and friendship between Jews and Christians. The purpose is to inform Jews and Christians about one another's philosophical and theological ideas, traditions, history, beliefs, symbols and practices. The authors have carefully brought out similarities and differences between Judaism and Christianity.

Every entry usually first brings out the Jewish view and then proceeds to a Christian perspective. There is a sense that the many of the important influences of each tradition are introduced. For instance, in the entry on the *Holy Spirit*, we discover the Jewish understanding through biblical, Talmudic, Midrashic and 12th century (Moses Maimonides) references, whilst in respect to Christianity, we find references from the New Testament, the Church Fathers, Councils, disputes as well as from Trinitarian theology. Nearly every entry makes use of the wide variety of resources from Christianity and Judaism.

The encyclopedia, however, cannot avoid certain generalisations of Christians and Jews. For example, in the entry on *Jesus*, the authors write, "Although Christians 'prove' Jesus' Messiahship by reference to the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish rejection of Christian doctrine is also based on biblical texts". Certainly, the Hebrew Scriptures have been used and no doubt today are used by many as an ontological 'proof' for evidence of Jesus' Messiahship. But, in view of Jewish-Christian dialogue and modern biblical scholarship, such a statement could have been avoided or perhaps qualified. For Christians, I would argue that Jesus' messiahship begins with the New Testament, faith and living out the paschal mystery in one's life.

Overall, every entry is like a piece of a puzzle that produces a picture of Judaism and Christianity and their relation to one another. But the encyclopedia itself does not produce the whole picture and it is acknowledged that every entry can hopefully inspire further reading and reflection. The encyclopedia is also useful for students of Scripture and theology as well as those involved in the study of comparative religion; it helps to teach us of the wisdom, goodness and heritage of both Judaism and Christianity. For example, the entry on *Suffering*, we find for both Jews and Christians, that evil is understood as an absence of the good. The encyclopedia engages in difficult philosophical and theological areas in a careful, structured way, often bringing out historical trends and changes in thought. For anyone interested in developing their knowledge of Judaism and Christianity, the small encyclopedia is a helpful guide and starting point.

