



Peter Hayes and John K. Roth, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*

The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies by Hayes, Peter; John K. Roth

Review by: Jay Geller

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Aquinas, in dialogue with key theological and philosophical questions of the day. The book will be of great help to persons interested in the contemporary renewal of Catholic theological science.

FR. THOMAS JOSEPH WHITE, *Dominican House of Studies, Washington, DC.*

HAYES, PETER, and JOHN K. ROTH, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. xiv+776 pp. \$150.00 (cloth).

Forty-three years ago, “Holocaust, Jewish, 1939–1945” became an official subject heading in the Library of Congress Catalog, and the number of reference works, conference proceedings, essay collections, monographs, and periodicals listed under this and its associated rubrics grows annually. Given this bibliographic vastness, providing surveys of the parameters of and debates in the study of the Holocaust as well as indications of where future research needs to be directed—the stated purposes of *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*—is much to be desired. With the historian Peter Hayes and the ethicist-theologian John Roth, leading Holocaust scholars with complementary disciplinary expertise, commissioning forty-five of their colleagues to contribute to the volume, Oxford University Press promised that this disciplinary *Handbook* would both exhibit the diversity of approaches to Holocaust studies and testify to the field’s complexity. The *Handbook* largely realizes its promise and accomplishes its purposes.

The editors innovatively divided the contributions into five broad categories: enablers, protagonists, settings, representations, and aftereffects. These headings rethink the conventional tripartite organization forms of Holocaust studies, whether according to chronology (before, during, after) or to participants (victims, perpetrators, bystanders). Further, three of the rubrics provide particularly useful reorientations: “enablers” avoids the reductionism and contradiction of prescribing causes, “protagonists” emphasizes the agency of all involved, and “settings” recognizes the heterogeneity of the means by which the Holocaust was perpetrated.

After the editors’ “Introduction” come the six essays of part 1, “Enablers”: “Antisemitism” (Richard S. Levy), “Science” (Patricia Heberer), “Nationalism” (Eric D. Weitz), “Colonialism” (A. Dirk Moses), “Fascism” (Philip Morgan), and “World Wars” (Doris L. Bergen). The essays reflect the growing recognition of how diverse and global a phenomenon the Holocaust was, not only in its realization, but in the conditions that rendered it possible. However, although Levy correlates the emergence of industrial capitalism and the rise of anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century, this part generally neglects the enabling role of twentieth-century economic conditions.

Part 2, “Protagonists,” consists of twelve essays. Including separate essays on “Hitler and Himmler” (Alan E. Steinweis), “Problem Solvers” (Christopher R. Browning), and “Killers” (Edward B. Westermann), detailing their roles in the killing process, the volume helpfully acknowledges without presuming to settle the scholarly and popular debates over which of these different strata within the Third Reich’s hierarchy holds principal responsibility. By entitling his contribution “On-Lookers” rather than “By-standers,” Paul A. Levine suggests a more self-aware role on the part of those who stood by the killing. Less clear is the reason why chapters on “Catholics” (Kevin P. Spicer), “Protestants” (Robert P. Ericksen), and “The Allies” (Shlomo Aronson) do not immediately precede (or follow) the one on “Rescuers” (Debórah Dwork); instead, they follow

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“Jews” (Dan Michman), “Women” (Lenore J. Weitzman), and “Children” (Nicholas Stargardt), and precede the catch(almost)all essay that discusses other victims of the Third Reich, “Gypsies, Homosexuals and Slavs” (John Connelly). Such placement suggests that Catholics, Protestants, and the allies were either marginal to the *Jewish* Holocaust or collateral damage—belying the chapters’ actual content. Given both the increasing research in and recognition of the distinctiveness of their Holocaust experience, separate essays on those in hiding and in exile would have been helpful.

The six essays in part 3, “Settings,” are “Greater Germany” (Wolf Gruner), “Living Space” (Wendy Lower), “Occupied and Satellite States” (Radu Ioanid), “Ghettos” (Martin C. Dean), “Labor Sites” (Mark Spoerer), and “Camps” (Karin Orth). One no-longer-overlooked site of Holocaust topography is not, however, addressed: North Africa.

Part 4, “Representations,” consists of eight essays: “Jews’ Diaries and Chronicles” (Amos Goldberg), “Survivors’ Accounts” (Henry Greenspan), “Literature” (Sara R. Horowitz), “Film” (Lawrence Baron), “Art” (Dora Apel), “Music” (Bret Werb), and “Memorials and Museums” (James E. Young). This part astutely begins with “German Documents and Diaries” (Peter Fritzsche). One minor concern is the absence of discussion of theatrical representations; more serious is the absence of a separate chapter on historiography.

The fifteen essays of part 5, “Aftereffects,” address “Liberation and Dispersal” (Arieh J. Kochavi), “Punishment” (Rebecca Wittmann), “Plunder and Restitution” (Hayes), “Denial” (Deborah E. Lipstadt), “Israel” (Boaz Cohen), “Jewish Culture” (Jeffrey Shandler), “Judaism” (Michael Berenbaum), “Christianity” (Stephen R. Haynes), “Germany” (Jeffrey Herf), “Europe” (Jan-Werner Müller), “The Social Sciences” (James E. Waller), “The Humanities” (Berel Lang), “Education” (Simone Schweber), “Human Rights Law” (David H. Jones), and “Ethics” (Roth). The number of contributions testifies to what has been and continues to be caught up in the Holocaust’s wake.

Many chapters, including those of Browning, Fritzsche, Goldberg, Lower, and Müller, offer excellent breadth in their surveys, insights into ongoing debates, and suggestions for further research. Still, it would have been a rare publishing event had all contributors kept to the template of providing a historical overview of each chapter’s topic as well as past inquiries in, current concerns over, and future possibilities for its study—Lang, for example, expressly states that his “account of the relation between the humanities and the Holocaust is less descriptive than prescriptive” (691), while Berenbaum employs an extended reading of David Weiss Halivini’s *Breaking the Tablets* (Lanham, MD, 2007) to highlight issues of Jewish theological reflection after the Shoah. Some chapters face formidable structural problems. For example, the centrality of the “Jews” to virtually all facets of the Holocaust (hence to most other entries), dilemmas presented by identifying the “Jews” (e.g., by historiography, by those self-identified, by racial legislation), and limitations on article length render any chapter on the “Jews” a near-impossible assignment. The chapter on the aftereffects of the Holocaust in Israel generates its own problems. In addition to failing to address the contested status of Holocaust survivors in Zionist ideology and the early state, the author, by employing “Holocaust” as an undefined label slapped onto every moment in Israeli history, risks undermining the disciplinary legitimacy, to which this *Handbook* would testify, of Holocaust studies. Naming the event (and the field) remains an ongoing concern. In their introduction, the editors rather quickly resolve the matter by adopting, properly, a pragmatic

course; however, the problem of naming, including the national interests, analogical appropriations, and epistemological-historiographic quandaries at play, should have received more treatment, whether in the introduction or elsewhere. All in all, though, the *Handbook* provides a valuable introduction to Holocaust studies as a discipline.

JAY GELLER, *Vanderbilt University*.

VICTOR, ROYCE M. *Colonial Education and Class Formation in Early Judaism: A Postcolonial Reading*. Library of Second Temple Studies 72. London: T&T Clark, 2010. x+212 pp. \$130.00 (cloth).

This revised doctoral thesis submitted to Brite Divinity School at Forth Worth, Texas, attempts to treat new ground in two regards: (a) twentieth-century postcolonial theory is applied to Judaism of the Hellenistic and early Roman period; (b) the ancient Jewish education “system” and its alleged social-political impact are compared to British education and “class formation” in modern India. Although the use of postcolonial theory seems promising at the outset, the study does not provide a convincing new understanding of ancient Jewish education and its context and consequences. The argumentation is based on secondary literature rather than on a new examination of the original sources. The application of sociological models suffers from too great a simplification. The alleged similarities with colonial India remain unconvincing due to the different religious, social, political, and economic circumstances.

The first two chapters of the book introduce the reader to postcolonial theory and its application to ancient Judaism. Victor argues that colonial education in both ancient Judaism and India under British rule created a class of intellectuals who could serve as intermediaries between the subdued nation and its conquerors. The suggestion that the so-called Hellenized Jews from the upper strata of society who had received a certain amount of Greek education, whatever that may mean, could function as translators of cultural values and subalterns of the Hellenistic and Roman authorities seems plausible. What is problematic with Victor’s study is its focus on the Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem as the basis for the alleged Hellenization of a Jewish elite. His main sources on Jewish education in the Second Temple period are a few references in 1 and 2 Maccabees and other Greek Jewish texts such as Ben Sira and Philo. He assumes that the establishment of a Greek gymnasium was an attempt to replace an indigenous system of “traditional Jewish education” (109) of which few traces remain. He argues, however, that the silence of the sources should not be taken as an indicator of the absence of schools—that is, he makes an *argumentum ex silentio* for the existence not only of schools but of a Jewish school system in Hellenistic times already. By contrast, the Greek gymnasium is said to have “likely influenced the curriculum of the Hellenistic Jewish schools” (118), which are seen as an alternative institutionalized system propagating Greek lifestyle, culture, and values. Physical education, one of the main activities of Hellenistic gymnasia, “probably would not have been a part” (118) of Jewish Hellenistic education. In reaction to the Hellenistic schools, Torah-observant Jews shaped “an indigenous Israelite Hebrew form of textuality and education,” which is seen as a “form of Jewish hybridity” (118).

There is no doubt that in the late Second Temple period, some Jews gained some Torah education, some studied Greek texts and/or engaged in the sports