

their geographic scope is also considerable, they are regionally unbalanced, as the South predominates. In addition, the articles are rather uneven in quality. Many do an excellent job situating their studies in a national context, yet others leave undeveloped the larger significance of the local histories they reveal.

For classroom use, I would prefer a collection that showcased more recent scholarship. The dates of original publication of the articles range from 1968 to 1992, with half of the articles from the 1980s. A bibliography is provided as a guide to further study, but even here several important, relatively recent works are conspicuous by their absence. An introductory essay that outlined the key policies of the New Deal and offered a framework for how to think about the articles synthetically would also have strengthened this collection. Moreover, I would also have appreciated a greater number of articles exploring the ways Americans of diverse racial, ethnic, and gender identities experienced the New Deal and the Great Depression.

Judging Jehovah's Witnesses: Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution, by Shawn Francis Peters. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000. x, 342 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

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Wars and Supreme Court decisions have increased violations of civil liberties in this country; Dred Scott would likely argue for the paramount importance of the latter. Shawn Francis Peters also makes that case in his book on the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States during the World War II era, *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses*.

When the Gobitas children in a mining town in Pennsylvania followed their sect's admonition and in 1938 refused to pledge allegiance to a secular power, their expulsion from school resulted in a 1940 U.S. Supreme Court decision that stigmatized Witnesses in many local communities. The remarkable reversal of *Gobitis* [sic] only two years later came too late to stem a wave of persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses, religious violence on a scale not seen since that against Mormons a century earlier. The persecution subsided but persisted even after the war.

One of the book's best chapters describes the legal battles Witnesses fought with the decentralized Selective Service System. As non-pacifists—they believe in self-defense and plan to fight in the Battle

of Armageddon—Witnesses are often the neglected stepchildren in studies of war objectors, even though they have been prominent numerically. Peters's indictment of a local draft board that managed to "misplace" a file even while adding detrimental evidence to it argues persuasively that the *Estep* case establishing due process rights for draftees would become fundamental to Indochina War era resisters.

A rare error occurs on page 40, where a scriptural reference to the "Book of John" should have been attributed to the *first epistle* of John. More serious is the question of "dawn" in the subtitle. Although civil liberties were undoubtedly extended as a result of the Witnesses' litigation, what of the civil liberties decisions after World War I? As Richard Polenbergh showed in *Fighting Faiths*—a model for applying social history to legal cases—the reaction against abuses of the Espionage Act provided a foundation for later expansions of civil liberties.

Peters's careful documenting of violence against Witnesses raised questions for me that he does not address. Assuming that the violence was triggered by *Gobitis*, what were the underlying causes? Was there a geographical pattern, as Richard Maxwell Brown suggested about local vigilantism? It does not appear so. Peters rightly identifies the American Legion as a provocative force, but what was it about the Legion's ideology that encouraged attacks on Witnesses?

Iowans can find evidence of the persecution of Witnesses and subsequent litigation in Clinton, Carson, and Lacona. And local historians from all over can appreciate the index, which does not accede to what seems to be an emerging standard of excluding local place names.

Peters, who started work on this project at the University of Iowa, might have found it instructive to consult Edward Allen's book on the Iowa Civil Liberties Union as well as Bill Cumberland's careful 1958 dissertation on Jehovah's Witnesses. And although *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses* expands our knowledge of the topic, it may not be the best introduction to it; with a narrower focus on protagonists in two Alabama cases that went to the U.S. Supreme Court, Merlin Owen Newton's *Armed with the Constitution* provides an empathetic portrait, as Peters readily acknowledges. But Peters's book extends the scope nationwide and answers some questions Newton left hanging (such as the later career of powerhouse Witness attorney Hayden Covington). On its own terms, *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses* meticulously documents the persecution and resistance of stubborn people who fought in the courts and the streets to give substance to First Amendment promises.

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