

Jews, Turks, and Infidels. By Morton Borden. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984. x + 163 pp. Notes, bibliographical note, and index. \$17.95.)

In this timely and well-written book, Morton Borden details aspects of the Jewish struggle for religious equality in the United States during the century following ratification of the Constitution. He concentrates on four themes: the struggle for political equality on the state level, particularly in those states that continued to deny Jews the right to hold public office; the battle against proposed Christian amendments to the Constitution; the ongoing effort to secure equal rights for American Jews in foreign countries; and the long wrangle over Christianity and the common law, especially with regard to Sunday legislation. In each case he musters an impressive array of sources revealing how prominent Americans sought to limit Jews' religious liberty. He then shows how Jews fought back, displaying vigilance "that caused other Americans to think about the meaning of religious freedom and, in many instances, to broaden its definition."

Borden argues his case passionately and with many telling quotations. Those unfamiliar with the monographic literature in American Jewish history will find this volume particularly useful. But those seeking deeper insights into the issues Borden raises will have to look elsewhere. Such questions as why particular issues arose when and where they did, how Jewish rights became enmeshed with other quite unrelated political issues, and what motivated individuals to argue for and against Jewish equality find few answers here. Even where secondary sources—for example, Edward Eitches's article, "Maryland's 'Jew Bill'" (1971)—have dealt with those questions, Borden has generally steered clear of them.

An unwary reader may come away from Borden's book with a somewhat exaggerated picture of Jewish-Christian hostility in nineteenth-century America. In fact, Jews found considerable Christian support in their various battles for rights, suffered comparatively little from the denial of certain liberties, and knew that they enjoyed far more equality in America than they had in Europe. It is true that the phrase "Jews, Turks, and Infidels" continued to adhere, marking Jews as undesirable. At the same time, however, a critical and as yet insufficiently studied change was taking place that would eventually see Jews included in a new grouping—alongside Protestants and Catholics in the "triple melting pot" of twentieth-century American religion.

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