



★★★ Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers.—*I. Blumi, Georgia State University*

53-1227 BM205 2014-27403 CIP
Koltun-Fromm, Ken. **Imagining Jewish authenticity: vision and text in American Jewish thought.** Indiana, 2015. 253p bibl index afp ISBN 9780253015709 cloth, \$75.00; ISBN 9780253015747 pbk, \$30.00; ISBN 9780253015792 ebook, \$29.99

For millennia, the importance of Torah (teaching) to Israel has been transmitted by written and oral tradition and sustained by the Mosaic rallying cry *Na'aseh ve-Nishma* ("We shall do and we shall hear [reason]" [Exodus 24:7]). Koltun-Fromm (Haverford College) looks at the impact of visual images and metaphors that are compelling in American Jewish thought and practice. The six chapters are presented in two sections that collectively apprise the genre of image production and transmission. Part 1, "The Anxiety of Authenticity in Image and Text," surveys the rhetoric of space (Zion), time (Sabbath), and food (kosher). Part 2, "The Embodied Language of Visual Authenticity," delves into the language of faith, gender, and race, suggesting the complexity and diversity of the Jews. Each chapter features a single author and his or her contribution (for example, chapter 1, on Zion, examines Bernard Rosenblatt's *Social Zionism*, 1919), which permits Koltun-Fromm to present a focused argument on the diversity of Jewish peoplehood and culture and the ways images enhance textual heritage to convey the continuum of Jewish preservation. In sum, this volume is not about traditionalist philosophical and theological underpinnings of the rabbinic covenant of learning Jewish authenticity but instead about creative Talmud Torah that speaks of two minds: emotional and experiential. A compelling read. **Summing Up:** ★★ Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.—*Z. Garber, Los Angeles Valley College*

53-1228 BX1378 Can. CIP
Kornberg, Jacques. **The pope's dilemma: Pius XII faces atrocities and genocide in the Second World War.** Toronto, 2015. 405p bibl index afp ISBN 9781442650213 cloth, \$80.00; ISBN 9781442628281 pbk, \$37.95

This is a well-researched, meticulously argued scholarly treatment of Pius XII's wartime legacy. Though he is an admitted "person of faith" and generally sympathetic to the Church, Kornberg (emer., history, Univ. of Toronto)—who is also author of *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism* (CH, Sep'94, 32-0468) and several other studies in the field of Jewish history and culture—maintains a rigorous historical methodology and bases his argument on contemporary sources. After reviewing the literature on the subject, the author analyzes the behavior of Pius XII from various angles, taking into account the Vatican's diplomatic relations with Germany and other states and the policies of previous popes. He concludes that Pius XII was a "moral failure," but he nonetheless finds that he was a "good pope," since he upheld the Church's spiritual priorities as understood at the time. The literature on this topic is abundant, much of it playing out on a popular and polemical level, but balanced, scholarly treatments are lacking. This valuable book will advance the discussion. **Summing Up:** ★★ Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.—*J. P. Blosser, Benedictine College*

53-1229 BL482 CIP
McCloud, Sean. **American possessions: fighting demons in the contemporary United States.** Oxford, 2015. 175p bibl index afp ISBN 9780190205355 cloth, \$29.95

Though by their very nature cultural fads and fancies change continuously, in the US, few new trends seem to stray far from the supernatural—whether angelic or demonic. Even as pollsters declare the decline of institutional religion, belief in God and in the power of prayer has remained strong. Indeed, American film and television industries trade on belief in unseen powers; witness the success of *Harry Potter*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and many others. Such good news for Hollywood has not been a welcome development for some modern-day Evangelicals, who see these as further evidence of Satan's work in the world. Against such spreading demonic influences, notes McCloud (religion studies, American studies, and communication, Univ. of North Carolina, Charlotte) in this interpretive critique, there has emerged a self-identified "third wave" of Evangelicals engaged in spiritual warfare. McCloud examines third-wave handbooks, deliverance manuals, websites, documentaries, and television programs, providing an interesting description of demon-obsessed Evangelicalism and placing it firmly, even uncomfortably, within the context of a US culture that is itself possessed by consumerism, haunted by an idealized past, and imbued with the language of the therapeutic.

Summing Up: ★★★ Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers.—*J. R. Stone, California State University, Long Beach*

53-1230 BS1160 2014-45384 MARC
Medieval exegesis and religious difference: commentary, conflict, and community in the premodern Mediterranean, ed. by Ryan Szpiech. Fordham, 2015. 329p bibl index ISBN 9780823264629 cloth, \$55.00

Study of the Bible in the medieval period, especially in the late Middle Ages, by Jews, Christians, and Muslims was a central religious and cultural activity. The meaning of scripture was not always clear, so investigation and exegesis were necessary in these communities for two reasons. One centered on internal dialogue within a tradition as to the correct reading of one's own holy book; the second depended on the evaluation of the canonical scripture of other religious traditions to confirm the truth of one's own revelation and engage in dialogue and confrontation with other religious communities. In the present collection, which emanates from a 2011 conference, contributors explore these two related issues with insight and erudition. Szpiech (Univ. of Michigan) organized the 13 papers into four sections: "Strategies of Reading on the Borders of Islam," "Dominicans and Their Disputations," "Authority and Scripture between Jewish and Christian Readers," and "Exegesis and Gender: Vocabularies of Difference." Readers are introduced to a rich variety of fundamental themes and subjects that were at the center of this essential medieval activity. This is a valuable collection of original and learned essays. **Summing Up:** ★★ Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty and professionals.—*S. T. Katz, Boston University*

CC 53-1231 BJ1286 CIP
Mittleman, Alan L. **Human nature & Jewish thought: Judaism's case for why persons matter.** Princeton, 2015. 215p index afp ISBN 9780691149479 cloth, \$27.95

What marks human beings as different from other animals? The question is ancient, and recent science—which denies the existence of a soul and increasingly contends that human actions and thoughts are entirely determined by DNA and brain chemistry—argues that humans really are no different at all. In this provocative and compelling study, Mittleman