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

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Medieval exegesis and religious difference: commentary, conflict, and community in the premodern Mediterranean, ed. by Ryan Szpiech. Fordham, 2015. 329p bibl index afp 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

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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