

from Judaism who were in conversation with diverse Christian denominational groups and Jewish traditionalists, pietists (Hasidim), reformers and nationalists.

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*A history of Korean Christianity.* By Sebastian C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim. Pp. xiv + 361 incl. 2 maps, 10 figs and 2 tables. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. £65. 978 0 521 19638 3

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Sebastian C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim's *History of Korean Christianity* is an example of the sad state of scholarship on this topic in the English-speaking world. The authors, who are not established historians of Korean Christianity, took on the daunting task of writing an all-encompassing history of Korean Christianity in three hundred pages. Not even historians who are specialists in Korean Christianity have dared to do this. The scope of this book covers all branches of Korean Christianity, including Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Churches, and all major denominations of Protestantism from their beginnings in Korea to the twenty-first century. Since Kim and Kim apparently had limited experience of doing original research on the subject, they depended almost exclusively on secondary sources for a grand historical narrative of Korean Christianity. Unfortunately, *A history of Korean Christianity* proves that they were ill-prepared to carry out such a formidable task. The book has so many factual errors, hasty generalisations and ungrounded conclusions that I could not read more than a few paragraphs without finding something that was incorrect. The factual errors alone are innumerable, ranging from mistakes in basic historical facts, dates and terminology, to references. For instance, Kim and Kim write on p. 80 that 'the US ambassador' requested three missionaries to protect King Gojong at the palace. However, the highest US representative in Korea at that time was a minister plenipotentiary rather than an ambassador, and there were other missionaries who by turns went to the palace. The authors say that the three missionaries 'smuggled' the king into the Russian legation, but in reality they had no part in the rescue. Then they write that King Gojong, proclaiming himself emperor, 'welcomed back to Korea' the exiled leaders of the 1884 coup. In fact, it was the Japanese minister who invited them, and they came back to Korea before King Gojong became emperor in 1897. On the same page Kim and Kim also state that Yun Chi-ho 'organised' Hyoepseonghoe, but Yun had little to do with that society. I could point out more inaccuracies that appear on p. 80 if space permitted. Sometimes the authors failed to consult the relevant sources, at other times they could not distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones. Further, many of their accounts are not sophisticated enough to convey the complexities of important historical events, hence misleading. One of the most glaring weaknesses is the authors' lack of a good knowledge of Korean history; they repeatedly consulted only a limited number of well-known general works. All in all, I was very disappointed in *A history of Korean Christianity*, and I would not recommend this book to my colleagues and

students. I surmise that Cambridge University Press published it without having it carefully reviewed by historians who were specialists in Korean Christianity. There are several historians in Korea and around the world who would have been more than qualified to comment on this manuscript before it was published. I do not understand why a prestigious publisher like Cambridge University Press failed to contact them.

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*Die katholische Kirche in der DDR. Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte Mitteldeutschlands.*

By Josef Pilvousek. Pp. 457. Münster: Aschendorff, 2014. €39.80 (paper).  
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Catholics in the German Democratic Republic survived life in a ‘double diaspora’, an almost ghetto-like existence as a minority among a Christian minority. Eastern Germany, or central Germany in Pilvousek’s worldview, was the epicentre of the Lutheran Reformation. The author, an ordained priest and retired professor, has brought together in this volume twenty-six previously published articles covering six areas of research. There is nothing here on Catholics coming to terms with the Nazi past and involvement in the holocaust. The focus of the first section is on Catholic work with refugees in Thuringia in the period 1943 to 1949. Eight biographical studies of key Catholic figures are gathered in the second section. Two articles on pilgrimages in honour of St Elisabeth of Thuringia follow. The remaining sections deal with Church life in the GDR, the reception of the Second Vatican Council and the specific Catholic response to political and constitutional developments after 1949, including the peaceful revolution of 1989. Strong regional identities led to resistance to ecclesiastical reunification in 1990. The struggles against the youth dedication rite and the abortion law (battles that the small Catholic Church lost) are discussed. Catholic bishops had nothing positive to say about the GDR (p. 429), it appears. The GDR is at times described as a totalitarian (with and without quotation marks) and sometimes as an authoritarian state. Yet its supposedly ‘atheistic’ government provided financial and other support to church bodies. By means of informers the SED gained many insights into Catholic thinking. Karl Fischer was one of these colourful characters, a man dropped like a hot potato by Church and SED once his sexual misdemeanours came to light. The focus of the book is, inevitably, on Thuringia and the ‘Silesian’ bishops who controlled ecclesiastical affairs. There is much overlap between the articles; rather annoyingly, many paragraphs are repeated verbatim. A list of abbreviations, indices of names and places and some explanation of the many technical terms would have made this book more accessible.

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