The present book consists mainly of annotated translations of some important Buddhist refutations of Christianity composed during the late Ming. The translated text(s) of each author are introduced by a short biographical note and by a sometimes extensive characterization of his criticism. The first part (pp. 50–92) deals with the earliest refutations: three short texts (ca. 1608) by the lay Buddhist Yu Shunxi and the Tianshuo (On Heaven, 1615) by Zhuhong. The second part (pp. 93–203) deals with refutations written around 1635 by three Chan monks: the Bian tian sanshuo (3 essays) by Yuanwu; four essays (sometimes collectively called Yuandao pixie shuo) by his disciple Tongrong; and two short essays by Tongrong’s disciple Xingyuan. The third part (pp. 204–268) presents a translation of the small collection Pixie ji (1643) composed by the monk Zhixu and the two refutations, Tiansue chuzheng and Tiansue zaizheng. The appendix (pp. 269–289) summarizes the Tianxue pi (9 short essays, written before 1640 by Ruchun, a monk not further known). The reason for appending this summary is the refutation of the Christian criticism on the doctrine of reincarnation in the 5th essay, which is nearly completely translated (pp. 276–281). Also the introduction (pp. 1–49) contains virtually complete translations of the letter (ca. 1634) by Huang Zhen from Zhangzhou (Fujian) to his teacher Yan Maoyou, and of the preface by Zeng Shi (1635) to the Buren buyan of Huang Zhen. The Buren buyan itself, a pamphlet written in order to arouse Buddhist monks to come to the defense of Buddhism, has been fully translated (pp. 23–31).

The book concludes (pp. 290–315) with a final remark about late Ming Buddhist criticism on Christianity; source references for the texts translated; a bibliography; and an index in three parts (names, titles of books, and subjects). Finally there follow the Chinese texts (pp. 316–418) of all essays translated in the three parts, in addition to the Buren buyan and Tianxue pi, photomechanically reproduced from mainly the Japanese reprint (1856) of the Poixie ji (1640), and the Pixie ji (Japan, 1861), a collection of reprinted Chinese texts.

Except for Yu Shunxi’s preface to the Jiren shipian (found in Yu’s Deyuan ji of 1623) and the essays by Xingyuan (in the collection Yuandao pixie shuo of 1636), selected translations from these texts are found in Jacques Gernet’s Chine et Christianisme (1982). A disadvantage of Gernet’s book, which is arranged

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1 The Yuandao pixie shuo was reprinted as the second juan of the collection Pixie ji (Hekijashû) edited by the monk Kiyū Dōnin (Ugai Tetsujō, 1814–1891).
The main incentive for translating these texts was the study of the controversy between Buddhism and Christianity during the late Ming and in this way to make a contribution to a phenomenological comparison and present-day dialogue between these two religions (p. 46). In this respect Kern makes some interesting observations. In the conclusion (pp. 290–298) as well as in the introduction (p. 45) he emphasizes that the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity during the late Ming cannot be characterized as a dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity in general. Not all elements of the Christian teachings were present in this dialogue, such as the belief in the resurrection of the body or the immanness of God in his creation. As for Buddhism, it was a reaction of Buddhist

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The first juan contains Zhixu’s Pixie ji (1643) and Ruchun’s Tianxue pi. According to Kern, the editor must have regarded these texts as the most important anti-Christian essays (pp. 44–45). Without denying that for Ugai these were important texts, the question remains to be answered whether they are the most important texts of late Ming times. Moreover, Kern (p. 47) does not explain well why only six of the 15 essays in the Yuandao pixie shuo were translated, viz. the four essays by Tongrong and two (of the five) by Xingyuan.

2 The Pixie lun (ca. 1657) of the well known Yang Guangxian, included in his Budeyi bian (1665), is not treated nor even mentioned in the present book. Although Kern makes it quite clear that his book is restricted to the late Ming (e.g. pp. 39, 41, 45), the title might suggest that it covers the entire 17th century, the more as three of the six authors lived into the early Qing period (see the subtitle).

3 The following examples indicate that at times translations and annotations have to be read with some caution:

—p. 25 “Konfuzius sagte: ‘Seitdem ich spreche [zi wu you you], dringen üble Worte nicht mehr an mein Ohr.’ Dies besagt dass man Beschimpfungen abwehren kann”, read: “Since the time I got (Zhong) You, I did not hear [...]”. See the biography of Confucius’ disciple Zhong You (zi; Zilu) in the Historical Records: when (the pugnacious) Zilu was his attendant, nobody dared to affront Confucius (Shiji 67.2194, commentary). In the Poxie ji a variant form of the character you is used, because the personal name of the Chongzhen (1628–1644) emperor was Youjian.

—p. 80 (line 5 and 10): “uns in geisteriger Weise entsprechen (ling ying)”, read: ‘divine responses’, ‘supernatural omens’ (miracles), virtually the same as ruiying (p. 260: glückliche Omen),


—p. 120: “So erschien er in die Welt, um von der leidvollen Existenz zu befreien”, read: “Thereupon he became enlightened and escaped from the painful destinations (i.e. rebirths)”