The book under review constitutes the editing of eleven articles concerning the subject of contemporary Chinese theology which were already published and taken from several journals, some of them being translated from the Chinese language. Sino-Christian theology is a comparably new field which emerged in Mainland China only in the late 1980s, for theology and related fields were forbidden there as academic fields. The volume written partly by Chinese theologians, some from Mainland China but also from other Chinese speaking countries, deals not only with Chinese theology in the strictest sense but there are also discourses on peripheral theological areas written in Chinese.

Most of the articles were published after 2000 with authors being professors at Protestant universities or institutions, and all of them are Chinese and not Westerners. They are primarily scholars from various academic disciplines rather than Christian theology. The editor stresses the fact that in the book Christian theology is less seen as belief and practice, i.e., a part of the Christian church(es) but as an academic discipline. This orientation, we have to add, is quite common in Europe and Germany where Catholic and Protestant theology is part of the academic education and therefore a department at the universities.

The articles of the first part Historical Review (Jason T.S. Lam, The Emergence of Scholars Studying Christianity, and Li Qiuling, Historical Reflections on Sino-Christian Theology, Peter K.H. Lee, The ‘Cultural Christians’ Phenomenon in China: A Hong Kong Discussion, Chan Shun-hing, Conceptual Differences between Hong Kong and Chinese Theologians: A Study of the ‘Cultural Christians’ Controversy) introduce the problem, give preliminary theological reflections and demonstrate the emergence of the movement. As the scholars doing this kind of theology are from various academic disciplines, they are not doing theology in the classical Western sense. They are also not necessarily adherents of Christian churches, although some of them might have Christianity as their personal faith. But these proponents are the first in academic circles in China who made studies of Christian theology. Because they are rather culturally interested in Christianity than believers of the Christian faith, they are called “cultural Christians”. Often they were not taken seriously by church leaders, but both sides have the same goal: the promotion of Christianity in China. In this context the term “Sino-Christian theology” was used by these cultural Christians for their theological discourses, and this phenomenon occurs in Mainland China and Hong Kong.

The second part Theoretical Reflection (Lai Pan-chiu, Theological Translation and Transmission between China and the West, Yang Huilin, The Value of Theology in Humanities: Possible Approaches to Sino-Christian Theology, Zhang Qingxiong, Sino-Christian Theology: The Unfolding of ‘Dao’ in the Chinese Language Context, and Chin Ken-Pa, The Paradigm Shift: From Chinese Theology to Sino-Christian Theology – A Case Study on Liu Xiaofeng) tries to define the term Sino-Western theology. Lai Pan-chiu shows that the main feature of a Sino-Christian theology is *hanyu*, namely, the exclusive use of the Chinese language for theology. The difference between indigenous theology (bense shenxue which was common in China before 1949 and focusing on the relationship between Christianity and traditional Chinese culture which survived in Hong Kong and Taiwan) and Sino-Christian theology is that the latter one focuses on contemporary Chinese culture. Lai argues that the past Christian theologies in China were mainly translations from the West (which is also true for the beginnings of early modern Christian mission in China, i.e. the time of the Jesuits who mostly worked with translations of Western theology). There were two Chinese theological innovations, one during the 1920-1930 years and one between 1980 and 1990. Yang Huilin gives the value of theology developed in the context of a secular society by non-believers and tries to explain the place of theology in the humanities. Zhang Qingxiong tries a philosophical way connecting the traditional Chinese word/character dao (word, way) in the meaning of language with the life of related language users hoping that it will generate some new contents. Chin stresses
the importance of the Chinese language for the Sino-Christian theology which should be seen parallel to the theologies in other languages because the Divine Word was accepted in a different way in different languages. It not only means a process of adaptation or translation but also means the formation of a new paradigm.

Part three entitled Reading Tradition (Lai Pan-chiu, Sino-Christian Theology, Bible and Christian Tradition, Yeo Khiok-khng, Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism, and Lin Hong-Hsin, Reflection on Enlightenment: A Proposal of the Focus of Sino-Christian Theology) shows that Sino-Christian theology is not static, not one single school, and without any representative doctrine or method. The interesting article by Yeo constitutes an attempt to combine the position of the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Romans concerning a cosmic salvation with Confucianism where the Great Harmony (Datong) in the community is the ultimate goal (telos). The goal also means the reestablishment of the Golden Age of the oldest times of China; therefore the direction towards the future is identical with an eschatological view of history which can be reached again when human beings have undergone a moral transition. This perfect world modeled after the past was also used by the philosopher Confucius. The Appendix contains only one article written by Gao Xin, Preliminary Survey on the New Generation of Scholars of Christian Studies in Mainland China.

In the last twenty years more and more Chinese researchers from Mainland China with academic and/or ecclesiastical background are involved in creating a Sino-Christian theology. They consider themselves as “Christian Scholars” (jidutu xueren) who want to distinguish themselves from cultural Christians. There are still translations of famous Western theologians which, however, also serve to start a new evaluation of the presented material. The Chinese scholars also pay increased attention to the tools of biblical and classical theology. In this respect the present book can be considered as a first step towards a new understanding of Chinese theology and an encouragement to continue its development. - Claudia von Collani.