

extensive use of Endō and Koyama), or any countries formerly part of the Soviet Communist bloc. In addition, only one contribution was written by a woman. In any collection this brief there will be omissions, but I think a more careful representation in these areas would have made this helpful book even better.

Also, as I read through this book, I was surprised that there are not more obvious areas of disagreement among the positions presented in the selected papers. This may be because, as one of the authors put it, “‘evangelicals’ are becoming more ‘ecumenical’ than ever, while ‘ecumenicals’ are becoming more ‘evangelical’.” However, the absence of any selections with obvious Pentecostal or feminist agendas, for example, makes me wonder how narrow the scope of selection had to be to prepare a slim volume like this.

These are small problems, though, in what I think is a fine help to those who are interested in missiology. Particularly in an era when theology and missiology are being shaped by widely varied churches from six continents, the task of hearing and learning from church and cultural traditions other than our own is a pressing need. Yet the sheer scope of that task can be daunting. I know of no easier way of making a start than by reading *New Directions*.

**Mysticism Buddhist and Christian:
Encounters with Jan van Ruusbroec**

Paul Mommaers and Jan Van Bragt
New York: Crossroad, 1995.

Bibliographical references and index.
302 pp. Cloth US\$29.35.

Reviewed by Christina Tsuchida, Nagoya

The current critical investigation of the leaders of Aum Shinrikyō (Supreme Truth Sect) is offering Japan a teachable moment

for making distinctions between true and false religion. A far more subtle distinction between true mysticism and a natural deviation has been made by Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381). This becomes clearer in the modern analysis of Paul Mommaers. Taking this clue into an exploration of Japanese Buddhism based on years and years of study and dialogue in Japan (but expressed in English), Jan Van Bragt finds both faithful and deviant models there as well. Non-mystics themselves, the authors appreciate mysticism, which can lead a willing reader into a challenging reading experience.

Ruusbroec is a foundational writer in Christian tradition, affecting St. John of the Cross and *The Imitation of Christ* (attributed to the one who rearranged it, Thomas a Kempis), among many others. The Flemish priest's discriminating division of true mysticism from real but wrongly directed mysticism is at once simple and complicated. Both are discussed in Christian and in Buddhist contexts by Van Bragt. Thus the book can serve to introduce Buddhist tradition and some of its Christian counterparts, to guide mystics or their directors or simply to entertain the sort of person who likes to resonate with mystical experiences.

The anti-mystical persons who can say “amen” to Martin Luther's rejection of mysticism should be dared to read this book through without changing their position (their opinion is noted). Non-mystics can identify with the authors if they are willing to explore a *novum*; mystics do well to follow St. Teresa of Avila in preferring learned persons to merely experienced persons as guides. Not every mystic is as gifted in analysis and expression as Ruusbroec, who was engaged in pastoral work.

The two authors give substantial thinking to issues not only of true and distorted mysticism but also to the dialogue of Christians and Buddhists. The matter of encounter versus identification as the primary mode of relating to Ultimate Reality is broached at the

deepest level in no superficial way, from the authors' two complementary perspectives.

I have met American Protestants who despised St. Bernard of Clairvaux because they considered his bridal mysticism to be sexually oriented. He appears to affirm a culture in stampede toward full sexual expression of love, even outside of marriage—not merely loving the sinners as Christians must, but approving the sins (“situational ethics”). I doubt that these persons closely read St. Bernard’s affirmation that life cannot be sustained by a mere “series of temporary ecstasies,” even if they be mystical ones. Surely they never envisioned the possibility that even the pale memory of mystical experience might arm the sexually poor against the temptations of lustful society. In any case, I fail to see why Luther’s rejection of the bridal mysticism of his spiritual director Johann von Staupitz should be fossilized into a stance opposing all mysticism, even in the Bible. (Many books seek to purge biblical interpretation of any mystical content. See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, for bibliography on both sides of the issue.)

In the book under review, the mysticism of Ruusbroec and his predecessor Hade-wijch is so well-portrayed that no one could confuse it with one of the possible pitfalls of inadequately directed sexual poverty. Before making the distinction between true and unfortunate mysticism, the problem of the meaning of the self is addressed with current philosophy (including even de-constructionism) as part of the colloquium along with those in the modern world who have had mystical experiences, such as Ruusbroec and the Buddhists of Japanese tradition.

Although Ruusbroec uses the term “natural contemplation” to describe deviant mysticism, the exploration of Buddhism in the light of this concept clearly goes beyond the use of a natural/supernatural distinc-

tion in the study of mysticism by such people as Jacques Maritain, R. C. Zaehner and Jules Monchanin. The new distinction is impossible to summarize without betrayal. There is good reason why the authors postpone elucidating the distinction until the end of the book, when even the non-mystical reader has at least some mental image of what is being discussed.

With this book, the Catholic study of mysticism catches up with Vatican II affirmations. Van Bragt’s experience of dialogue with Buddhist spokespersons in Japan enables him to do more than he might appear to after a superficial reading. Firm as his Christian affirmations are, they have been scoured of bias to such an extent that he can present a valid portrayal of the Buddhism current among official spokespersons in Japan, with a nod toward American Buddhism. Thus, the book is of value to Buddhists of the English-speaking world (who are invited to respond and deepen the discussion) as well as to Christians and to any outsiders who wish to listen in on such a colloquium.

A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542–1742

Andrew C. Ross

New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 216 pp.

*Reviewed by Christal Whelan,
Sophia University, Tokyo*

The present work by Andrew Ross, is an engaging study in the field of comparative missiology. The author traces the Jesuit missions in Japan and China over a period of two centuries (1542–1742). Among the nationalities represented by the Jesuits of the era are Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards and Germans. The book mainly deals with the fundamental dichotomy in mission