

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

styles and describes in some detail the consequences of each. The *il modo soave* of the Italians is contrasted with the *conquistadorial* mode of the Portuguese.

By extension, a contemporary sub-theme functions as an undercurrent throughout the study. The author reminds his readers that this conquistadorial mentality is still alive in the late twentieth century in its modern manifestation of "Europeanism," or "the belief that the European experience is the Christian experience and is definitive for all humanity."

Missiology past and present, then, is the vast area the book attempts to encompass. The history of the missions in China and Japan serve as illuminating case studies that demonstrate successes and failures in missionary strategy. The author analyzes these with skill. The case of the brilliant and supremely adaptable Matteo Ricci, who obtained the status of Confucian scholar and an imperial appointment, is presented as the epitome of success. The author then poses the question of why Christianity is so often confused with European culture even by missionaries themselves. The source of missionary success in Japan and China is attributed to the spirit of Italian humanism, and more specifically, to the Catholic humanism that shaped personalities of the caliber of Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci.

What distinguishes this book from earlier highly readable and scholarly studies on the Jesuits—Charles Boxer's *The Christian Century*, Michael Cooper's *Rodrigues The Interpreter* or Jonathan Spence's *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*—is its comprehensive scope. The earlier works focused on either Japan or China, but the present work follows Valignano, Visitor to the East, on his missions to Japan and China. As the planner of the inaugural mission of the Society of Jesus to China, only this field was to receive his definitive stamp. In the case of Japan, Francis Xavier inaugurated the mis-

sion, and Valignano was left to work with a missionary style established by his predecessor.

The differences in missiological strategies between Xavier and Valignano become the prototypes of all missionary work to follow, or Portuguese versus Italian. Valignano is the advocate of acculturation and adaptation, a position from which Xavier retreated after the "Dainichi disaster." From then on, Xavier clearly opted to leave key religious terms in the original Latin or Portuguese. The author sees serious implications in this refusal to translate since later refusals to adapt to the local culture will be predicated upon it.

The clash between missionaries adhering to different styles creates much of the tension in the book. These conflicts ultimately lead to the expulsion of the missionaries in Japan and the closing of the country. In China, the intolerance and controversy over "rites" effectively alienated the Chinese literati and led to an imperial edict of expulsion.

At times, *A Vision Betrayed* seems an apologia for the Jesuits, since the author systematically refutes any criticism of this fascinating group of intellectuals. On the other hand, no attempt is made to draw a realistic portrait of the friars. It would be preferable for praise of the Jesuits not to be conducted within a dynamic of scarcity. Indeed, why should praise of the Society of Jesus be at the expense of reducing the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians to mere foils and stereotypes?

This book is highly readable and its theme original. Much of its appeal lies in its comparative approach and attempt to globalize the particular issues raised. The Shimabara Rebellion is compared to the Nat Turner Rebellion of the United States (1831), and various other "people's religions." The aptness of such comparisons may be questionable, but the author's

power to synthesize and search for patterns is admirable.

This book, however, has some serious flaws. First, the editors responsible for the book have done a great disservice to its author. Repetitive and frequent typographical errors abound, as do misspellings of the names of both historical and contemporary people and places. Inconsistencies in book titles and names of organizations are also conspicuous. The Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda is later Congregation of the Propaganda Fide and finally Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Faith. Other errors that would leave the uninitiated perplexed are borrowed from previous authors. Takayama Hida-no-kami suddenly becomes Dario Takayama, with no explanation. Is this the same person? The cumulative effect of such carelessness undermines the authority of the author, since the reader is left to wonder if on the factual level as well the work is not equally imprecise.

Second, the research for this work is based entirely on secondary sources, the vast majority of which are in English. Thus, assertions such as "most authorities agree..." can carry only relative weight because the works of very few authorities, and all of these Westerners, have even been consulted. With no new primary sources introduced, the present study becomes a hearsay discourse. This is unfortunate methodology for a book that is so openly critical of "Europeanism" in the intellectual sphere.

Furthermore, the author does not seem to distinguish between authoritative and general studies and quotes them all as equal authorities. Jennes' *A History of the Catholic Church in Japan* is an excellent historical handbook, but should it be used in serious polemic? Furthermore, is it really fair to the reader to refer to Neil Fujita, as "a modern Japanese historian"? The biographical data on his book, *Japan's Encounter With Christianity*, describes a professor of religion at an American university, and a

glance at his bibliography reveals no titles in Japanese. It is just this sort of imprecision that accumulates throughout the book and leaves its impression on a critical reader. Despite these shortcomings, *A Vision Betrayed* is highly readable, covers a vast amount of information, and retells a fascinating story.

Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends

R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed.

New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 263pp.

Paper.

*Reviewed by Robert L. Ramseyer,
Hiroshima*

This collection of essays by Christian scholars has a clear point of view that the editor, R. S. Sugirtharajah, calls the "new extratextual hermeneutics." By this he means going "beyond the earlier monotextual approach, that puts so much emphasis on the canonical Christian texts, and...[using] literary and nonliterary resources that are common to all the peoples of Asia. It may be a coincidence, but the emergence of greater literary interest in biblical texts, especially among American scholars, has occurred at a time when Asian interpreters' attention was drawn toward literary and nonliterary genres of different religious traditions. The extratextual hermeneutics that is slowly emerging as a distinctive Asian contribution to theological methodology seeks to transcend the textual, historical and religious boundaries of Christian tradition and cultivate a deeper contact with the mysterious ways in which people of all religious persuasions have defined and appropriated humanity and divinity" (p. 3). These writers "also find the overt Christocentrism in [contemporary contextualizing efforts] a hin-