

Learning from *All* the Faithful

A Contemporary Theology of the *Sensus Fidei*

EDITED BY
Bradford E. Hinze
AND
Peter C. Phan

cal rejuvenation of Guadalupan devotion, or at least a vision of Guadalupan devotion that is the in-breaking of something new.

Ultimately the *sensus fidelium* must conform to norms, but following Ormond Rush, I am tempted to go with the norm of salvation. He writes, "The sense one has made of the faith is an individual's interpretive experience of revelatory salvation."¹⁷ This interpretive experience necessarily includes social, geographic, and other aspects of an individual's location. Not all the senses or understandings of the faith need to conform or be uniform . . . indeed, this is impossible in each case. But the understandings must be salvific; they must point to the liberative message of Christ, and lead the believer on a pilgrimage, a *camino* to that salvation. To my eyes, the story of Rosario and Gilda in "The Battle of the Virgins" represents salvation for both women, liberation from oppressive structures put in place by colonialism, sexism, and even very specific marianista expectations that plague women in Latin America and to some extent, the U.S. Karl Rahner felt that Christians may interpret doctrines in a variety of ways and indeed that this was a necessary feature of the global church.¹⁸ Our duty as theologians then, is to witness to the loci where these interpretations take place. Narratives like Ferré's give us insight into how devotions work through storytelling, a cornerstone of the life of faith and of Christianity, a religion based in gospel stories of the teacher-storyteller Jesus.

17. Ibid., 244.

18. Karl Rahner, "The Abiding Significance of the Second Vatican Council," *Theological Investigations* 20, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 90–102.

"Who Do You Say that I Am?"

*Uncovering the Chinese Sensus Fidelium in Images
of Jesus in Pre-Communist Chinese Catholic
Devotional Art from the 1930s to 1940s*

JONATHAN Y. TAN

IN THE ANNALS OF evangelization in the history of the Chinese Catholic Church, art often played a major role as a catechesis tool that enabled many new Chinese Catholic converts, especially the unlettered, to grasp and express the *sensus* of their newly-embraced Catholic faith. In the 1930s, Chinese Catholic art underwent a shift from European artistic styles (*xihua* 西畫) to Chinese artistic styles (*guohua* 國畫) that enabled a new generation of Chinese Catholic artists, many of whom were converts, to express their *sensus* of their new faith through layers of Chinese cultural, philosophical, and spiritual influences.

This essay explores the contours and articulates some tentative understandings of the early twentieth century Chinese Catholic reception and *sensus* of foundational christological principles in Chinese Catholic devotional art that were produced by the leading Chinese Catholic artists from 1930s–1940s. It discusses how these Chinese Catholic artists expressed their understanding of the Catholic faith and their sense of the soteriological significance of Jesus Christ in their artistic oeuvre. In doing so, it seeks to unpack how these Chinese Catholic artworks reveal the *sensus fidelium* of the Chinese Catholic community on the christological question. As space does not permit an exhaustive discussion of the entire range of Chinese Catholic art, the focus of this discussion is primarily on paintings from the collection of the Ricci Institute for Chinese Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco, supplemented by appropriate or comparable images from other collections.

Celso Costantini

The emergence of a distinctive Chinese artistic style (*guohua* 國畫) for Chinese Catholic art owes its beginning to Celso Costantini (1876–1958), who was appointed by Pope Pius XI as the first apostolic delegate to the then newly established Republican China on August 12, 1922. As apostolic delegate, Costantini arrived in China with a clear agenda to indigenize the Chinese Catholic Church according to the vision outlined by Pope Benedict XV in his apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud* (1919). By the time he returned to Rome in 1933 to take up his new appointment as secretary of Propaganda Fide, he left behind a list of remarkable achievements, including the convocation of the First Plenary Council of the Chinese Catholic Church in Shanghai in 1924, the establishment of the Catholic University of Peking (*Beiping Furen Daxue* 北平輔仁大學) in 1925, and making episcopal history with the episcopal ordination of six indigenous Chinese bishops by Pope Pius XI in 1926, marking the beginning of the transition of the Chinese Catholic Church from a mission church to an indigenous local church.¹ Jeremy Clarke sums it up succinctly when he states that Costantini “successfully shepherded the Chinese church towards maturity, helping transform it into a church that was no longer merely missionary, but one that became fully localized.”²

Costantini was an ardent proponent of using the genius of Chinese indigenous artistic and architectural forms rather than importing Western forms for use in China. He was highly critical of the pervasive presence of western architectural and artistic forms in the Chinese Catholic Church. In his own words:

Within the Gothic style, the roofs come to a rapid point in order to hasten the fall of snow from them, and the rising gothic spires are in magnificent harmony with the countryside of Northern Europe, but I am not in any way able to say the same about the gothic towers that I have seen nestled among bamboo groves during my journey throughout China.³

1. For an overview of Celso Costantini's contributions and accomplishments in China, see Sergio Ticozzi, “Celso Constantini's Contribution to the Localization and Inculturation of the Church in China,” *Tripod* 28 (Spring 2008) 11–28. This is a special issue commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Costantini's death with essays by Sergio Ticozzi on Costantini's contributions to the inculturation of the Chinese Catholic Church, Anthony Lam on Costantini's role in the First Plenary Council of Shanghai (1924), and Francis Chong summarizing Costantini's principal contributions to the Chinese Catholic Church.

2. Jeremy Clarke, *The Virgin Mary and Catholic Identities in Chinese History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 121.

3. English translation taken from Clarke, *Virgin Mary*, 125. For the original text,

Writing to the two Apostolic Prefects, Columban missionary Edward J. Galvin of Hanyang, Hubei and Maryknoll missionary James Edward Walsh of Jiangmen, Guangdong on April 23, 1923 soon after his arrival in China,⁴ Costantini minced no words when he insisted on the following points:

1. Western art is a style unsuited to China.
2. Western art in mission areas gives the impression that the Church is a foreign religion.
3. It has been a policy of the Church to adopt local art forms and incorporate them into the Christian tradition.
4. Chinese art (and culture) offers favorable possibilities for adaptation.⁵

A year later, at the First Plenary Council of the Chinese Catholic Church in Shanghai (1924), Costantini pushed hard for the Council to adopt the following proposal: “In constructing and decorating the sacred buildings and residences of the missionaries, styles of foreign art should not be employed, but, as far as possible and according to the opportunity, forms of the native art of the Chinese people should be used.”⁶

In this regard, Costantini was not introducing something novel but implementing the original vision of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in its instruction to its newly appointed apostolic vicars, François Pallu and Pierre Lambert de la Motte, in 1659 on the eve of their inaugural mission to Tonkin and Cochinchina respectively:

Do not in any way attempt and do not on any pretext persuade these peoples to change their rites, customs and mores unless these are clearly contrary to religion and good morals. For what could be more absurd than to bring France, Spain, Italy, or any other European country over to China? It is not these countries but faith that you must bring, the faith that does not reject or jeopardize the rites and customs of any people as long as these are not depraved, but rather desires to preserve and promote

see Celso Costantini, “L'universalité de l'art chrétien,” in *Dossiers de la Commission synodale. Numéro spécial sur l'art chrétien chinois* 5 (1932) 413.

4. See Costantini, “Universalité de l'art chrétien,” cited in Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China*, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 734 n.2.

5. These four points are taken from Lawton, “A Unique Style in China,” 472. For an alternative translation of these four points that Costantini made, see Ticozzi, “Celso Costantini,” 18–19. For primary source of these four points, see Celso Costantini and Maoxue Sun, *中國天主教美術 Zhongguo Tianzhujiao Meishu* [Catholic Art in China] (Taizhong: Guangqi, 1968), 12.

6. English translation in Ticozzi, “Celso Costantini,” 19.

them . . . Admire and praise whatever deserves praise. As to things that are not praiseworthy, they should not be extolled, as is done by flatterers. On the contrary, exercise prudence in either not passing judgment on them or in not condemning them rashly and exaggeratedly. As for what is evil, it should be dismissed with a nod of the head or by silence rather than by words, though without missing the opportunity, when people have become disposed to receive the truth, to uproot it without ostentation.⁷

With support and encouragement from Costantini, the foundation for the Catholic University of Peking (*Beiping Furen Daxue* 北平輔仁大學) was laid in 1925 and its art department was created in 1930. Costantini held high hopes for Furen, which was administered by Benedictines of St. Vincent Archabbey (Latrobe, Pennsylvania) from 1925–1933 and the Society of the Divine Word from 1933–1952. Indeed, he envisaged that this university “would be a centre of high culture, religious and humanistic.”⁸ Under the aegis of Furen in the pre-Communist Chinese Catholic Church, a number of Furen’s Chinese Catholic art professors and their students produced a diverse array of Chinese artistic images of Jesus drawn from infancy narratives, Madonna and Child, the Holy Family, as well as the life and ministry of Jesus for both public ecclesial and private devotional use. Mary S. Lawton notes that the period between 1939 and 1959 represents the high point of Chinese Catholic devotional art, observing that there were “not only orders

7. This advice is found in *Sacra Congregatio de. Collectanea Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide: seu decreta, instructiones, rescripta pro Apostolicis Missionibus*. Vol. 1. (Roma: Ex Typographia Polyglotta, Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1907), 42. The Latin text reads: “Nullum studium ponite, nullaue ratione suadete illis populis ut ritus suos, consuetudines et mores mutant, modo non sint apertissime Religioni et bonis moribus contraria. Quid enim absurdius quam Galliam, Hispaniam, Italiam aut aliam Europae partem in Sinas invehere? Non haec, sed fidem importate, quae nullius gentis ritus et consuetudines, modo prava non sint, aut respuit aut laedit, immo vero sarta tecta esse vult . . . Admiramini et laudate ea quae laudem merentur; quae vero laudis expertia sunt, ut non sunt praeconiis, assentatorum more, extollenda ita prudentiae vestrae erit de hit aut iudicium non ferre, aut certe non temere et ultro damnare; quae vero prava extiterint, nutibus magis et silentio quam verbis proscindenda, opportunitate nimirum captata qua, dispositis animis ad veritatem capessendam, sensim sine sensu evellantur.” The English translation is taken from Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 193–94.

8. Celso Costantini, *Church and Chinese Culture* (New York: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1931), 10.

for paintings but also for altar pieces and there is an indication that there were even orders for the complete or partial decoration of church interiors.”⁹

While some of the artwork of these artists portrayed Jesus in Westernized styles (*xihua*), a significant number of the Furen art professors and their students began expressing their understanding of their Catholic faith and their *sensus* of what Jesus meant to them using the Chinese artistic style (*guohua* 國畫) that incorporated layers of Chinese cultural, philosophical, and spiritual influences. These artists included (Luke) Chen Yuandu 陳緣督, Lu Hongnian 陸鴻年, Xu Jihua 徐濟華, Wang Suda 王肅達, Luke Hua Xiaoxian 華效先, Bai Huiqun 白慧群, Francis Gao Tihan 高提厂, and others. While many pieces of Chinese Catholic art from this period were irreversibly destroyed or lost during the chaos following the forcible closure of Furen in 1952 and the chaos and destruction of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1975), a number of images are preserved at the Archives of the Society of the Divine Word in Rome, the Ricci Institute for Chinese Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco, and in museum and private collections around the world.

In an era where Latin, the official language of the Tridentine liturgy, was unknown to a majority of Chinese Catholics, these images in Chinese artistic style (*guohua* 國畫) functioned as “bibles for the poor,” narrating aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and popular Catholic devotions to Mary and Jesus in an accessible manner. Indeed, much of Chinese Catholic art as an emerging genre in the 1930s and 1940s functioned as catechetical aids and devotional objects in churches and homes. More significantly, the artists and students of Furen were themselves converts to Catholicism. Their embrace of art as a tool of catechesis in early twentieth century China enabled them to grasp and express the *sensus* of their Catholic faith through devotional art.

From “Western Art” (*xihua* 西畫) to “Chinese Art” (*guohua* 國畫)

The Chinese Catholic paintings that compose the collection “Icons of the Celestial Kingdom” at the Ricci Institute for Chinese Western Cultural History originated from the 1930s and 1940s and were produced by an artists’ workshop that called itself the Fine Arts Department of Beijing Sacred Heart Church at Guanganmen (*Beiping Guanganmen Shengxintang Meishubu* 北平廣安門聖心堂美術部). Not much is known about this collection, which

9. Mary S. Lawton, “A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing,” *Monumenta Serica: Journal of Oriental Studies* 43 (1995) 479.

was brought to France and subsequently acquired by the Ricci Institute in 1992. There does not appear to be any records indicating any church or chapel at or near Guanganmen. Monica Liu has advanced the hypothesis that this artists' workshop was likely affiliated with Furen's art department.¹⁰

The Nativity

The nativity of Jesus is a popular subject for the emerging Chinese Catholic artists in the 1930s and 1940s, with many examples by Lu Hongnian, Huang Ruilong, and others. The first image that we are considering is *Birth of Jesus* (耶穌誕生),¹¹ by Luke Hua Xiaoxian 華效先. The inscription of this painting reads "天主慶賀吾主耶穌聖誕圖; 路加華效先; 北平廣安門聖心堂美術部出品" (God celebrates the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus; Luke Hua Xiaoxian; A product of the Beiping Guang'anmen Sacred Heart Church Fine Arts Department). This painting depicts Mary and Joseph with the newborn Jesus in a cave in the style of a Chinese landscape (shanshui 山水) painting. Of interest is the angels, which are depicted in the style of Daoist immortal maidens playing traditional Chinese instruments. This interreligious engagement is reminiscent of a painting by the Chinese artist Xu Sanchun who produced paintings in St. Luke's Studio (Anglican) in Nanjing under the auspices of T.K. Shen (Shen Zigao 沈子高), the first indigenous Chinese Anglican bishop who advocated for the indigenization of the Anglican Church in China through the use of Chinese art and music. Xu's *Visit of the Three Magi* depicts a kneeling Buddhist monk, a Confucian scholar, and a Daoist with his long beard and gourd of water visiting the baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph under a thatch hut beside a pine tree.¹² Xu's portrayal of the three religions (*sanjiao* 三教)—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—paying homage to the newborn Jesus is illustrative of how many Chinese converts of that era perceived their newfound faith as a continuation of their ancestral faith traditions.

10. See Monica Liu, *Chinese Sacred Art*, internal report for the Ricci Institute, cited in Clarke, *Virgin Mary*, 171.

11. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon4.htm>.

12. A black and white reproduction of this image may be seen in Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Each with His Own Brush: Contemporary Christian Art in Asia and Africa* (New York: Friendship, 1938) 18.

The Homage of the Three Kings

The painting *Homage of the Three Kings* (三王來朝),¹³ by Luke Hua Xiaoxian 華效先, is a fascinating interpretation of the Adoration of the Magi in the context of Confucian China. The inscription reads "三王來朝; 一九四八年七月北平廣安門聖心堂美術部路加華效先敬 繪" (The Homage of the Three Kings; painted by Luke Hua Xiaoxian, Beiping Guang'anmen Sacred Heart Church Fine Arts Department, July 1948). This painting depicts Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in a garden pavilion in a traditional Chinese courtyard, receiving gifts from the three kings. In the background, the kings' horses are being handled by their manservant. This fascinating interpretation of the visit of the three kings melds the classical Chinese portrayal of vassals offering tribute to the emperor with the three kings offering tribute to Jesus, who is depicted with Mary and Joseph in a setting of a garden pavilion that is characteristic of wealthy Chinese households.

The Holy Family

The Holy Family is another popular subject for Chinese Catholic artists. Compared to European paintings of the Holy Family that often present the Holy Family in idealized and otherworldly terms, Chinese artists often contextualized the Holy Family within the idealized Chinese family that is shaped according to Confucian norms. In this regard, *The Holy Family* (聖家),¹⁴ by Bai Huiqun 白慧群, depicts the Holy Family in as a well-to-do traditional Chinese family, with Mary and Joseph around baby Jesus in his crib in a pavilion of the courtyard of a Chinese home. In particular, Joseph is shown as a Confucian paterfamilias watching over his household. This depiction of the Holy Family as an idealized Confucian family can be seen in *The Holy Family with Angels* (天使隊中聖家), by (Luke) Chen Yuandu 陳緣督,¹⁵ where Joseph, the Confucian paterfamilias, gazes at Mary with a standing toddler Jesus, all served by a team of angels as in a traditional and wealthy Chinese nobility family. Hence, Chinese convert artists painted the Holy Family not in abstract theological terms, but as an idealized Confucian

13. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon6.htm>.

14. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon7.htm>.

15. A black-and-white reproduction of this image is found in Fritz Bornemann, *Ars Sacra Pekinensis: Die chinesisch-christliche Malerei an der Katholischen Universität (Fu Jen) in Peking* (Mödling bei Wien: Druck und Verlag, 1950), 31.

family, integrating Confucian and Christian understandings of family life to convey their understandings of the Holy Family.

The Confucian dimension is also explicitly highlighted in Bai Huiqun's *The Education of Jesus* (耶穌受教育),¹⁶ which highlights the traditional Confucian ideal of the love of learning (*xue* 學) and filial love of one's parents (*xiao* 孝). He depicts this within the traditional Confucian household in a creative reinterpretation of the familial bonds of the Holy Family. This image depicts Jesus as a young boy reciting his lessons in traditional Confucian style to his father, shown as a Confucian *paterfamilias*, with his mother listening to him while engaging in embroidery. The setting of this painting is a pavilion in a garden of a Chinese traditional house. Chinese Catholic converts who gazed at this image would not miss its overt Confucian emphasis on Jesus' filiality (*xiao* 孝) toward his father, as conveyed by his reciting his lessons to an approving father. Moreover, it highlights the preeminence of learning (*xue* 學) in Confucian society, to the extent of showing Joseph as the ideal embodiment of an educated Confucian *paterfamilias* who is able to participate in the learning and education of his son.

The idea of filial submission and obedience can also be seen in the remarkable painting *Jesus Submits to his Parents* (耶穌服從父母),¹⁷ by Wang Suda 王肅達. In this painting, Wang Suda vividly portrays "Jesus was obedient to his parents" (Luke 2:51) in a Confucian context. Set in a simply furnished Chinese home, Joseph, as *paterfamilias* in a Confucian household, sits at a table with carpentry tools beneath it. The table is set for a meal with steaming Chinese dishes, bowls, chopsticks, and bottles of condiments. Mary presents Jesus, who is bringing out a tray filled with bowls of steamed rice to offer to his father Joseph. Here, the Chinese Catholic *sensus* that integrates the Confucian ideals of filiality as outlined in Analects (*Lunyu* 論語) 1:6¹⁸ and 2:5¹⁹ with the commandment to honor one's parents (Exodus 20:12) is portrayed unequivocally.

16. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon9.htm>.

17. A black-and-white reproduction of this image is found in Bornemann, *Ars Sacra Pekinensis*, 127.

18. "子曰：弟子入則孝" (The Master said, "As a young brother and son, be filial (*xiao* 孝) at home"). English translation from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, trans. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998) 72.

19. "子曰：生，事之以禮；死，葬之以禮，祭之以禮" (The Master replied: "While [your parents] are living, serve them according to the observances of ritual propriety (*li* 禮), when they are dead, bury them and sacrifice to them according to the observances of ritual propriety"). English translation in Ames and Rosemont, *Analects*, 77.

Madonna and Child

The next set of images is, strictly speaking, the Chinese equivalent of the genre of Madonna and Child. However, the mother-child relation that is expressed in this painting is different than European images of Madonna and Child. "Jesus recites his lessons from memory" (耶穌在背書),²⁰ by Francis Gao Tihan 高提厂, develops the Confucian love of learning (*xue* 學) and filial love toward one's parents (*xiao* 孝). In this image, Gao Tihan presents a young Jesus reciting a lesson from memory with his back turned toward his mother, who is seated at a table with an open book. The whole scene is set in a traditional Chinese landscaped garden with a screen at the back of Mary. This painting often elicits differing responses from East Asian vis-à-vis European audiences on the issue of Jesus' apparent submission to his mother on the matter of his education and studies. Whereas the latter might react to the incongruity of this depiction of Jesus having to be tested by his mother in contrast to the Lukan narrative of the boy Jesus knowing more than the learned teachers in the Temple (Luke 2:41–51), East Asians would recognize immediately the traditional posture of learning, that is, reciting lessons from memory for a parent that exemplifies both the quest of learning (*xue* 學) and filiality (*xiao* 孝) toward one's parents.

The evocative image *Our Lady at the Spinning Wheel with the Child Jesus* (紡織中的聖母與孩童耶穌),²¹ by Bai Huiqun 白慧群, shows the tender mother-child relation in a Chinese domestic family context. Specifically, Bai Huiqun presents Mary hard at work at a spinning wheel in a traditional Chinese garden while Jesus, who is seated next to her, reads a lesson from his book. This image expresses the same *sensus* as the preceding image, namely the mother-child relation between Mary and Jesus as understood through the lens of filial obedience and love of learning in the quest to be a noble or perfected human person (*junzi* 君子), the goal of Confucian moral rectification as expressed in the Analects (*Lunyu* 論語) of Confucius.

Likewise, Bai Huiqun (白慧群)'s *Our Lady with the Child Jesus Writing Characters* (聖母與孩童耶穌在寫字)²² further unpacks the Confucian reception of the mother-child relations of Mary and Jesus. In this image, set in a landscaped garden under a tree, the young boy Jesus holds an ink stone as Mary prepares to write on a scroll. It appears that Jesus is gazing raptly at

20. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon14.htm>.

21. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon13.htm>.

22. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon15.htm>.

Mary as she writes characters. The implication here is Mary's show-and-tell on how to write characters. "Our Lady with the Child Jesus" (聖母與孩童耶穌),²³ also by Bai Huiqun 白慧群, continues in a similar vein. Set yet again in a traditional Chinese landscaped garden, Mary is seated on a rock looking lovingly at Jesus with his opened book, as he proudly shows his mother what he has done in his learning (*xue* 學).

At the same time, this is not the only manner of portraying the mother-child relation. *Our Lady with the Child Jesus* (聖母與孩童耶穌),²⁴ by Luke Hua Xiaoxian 華效先, portrays Mary leaning on Jesus for support in a traditional Chinese garden that is landscaped with rocks, bamboo, and trees. This image of Mary leaning on Jesus for support as she walks comes out of traditional foot-bound Chinese women who needed the assistance of their servants to hobble on their painful crippled feet. "Jesus helps his mother in her work" (耶穌助母勞作),²⁵ by Lu Hongnian 陸鴻年, seeks to convey comparable sentiments. Lu Hongnian sets his painting in a Chinese countryside. Jesus, depicted as a young child, is helping Mary with the family laundry, squeezing the newly washed clothes to dry them. Here, we see filiality (*xiao* 孝) in action as Jesus helps his mother in her daily chores.

Nonetheless, not all Madonna and Child images are stern and serious. A lighthearted example is *Mary and the White Doves* (聖母和白鴿).²⁶ In this delightful painting, set in a landscaped garden bounded by a wall and gate, Mary and the young child Jesus are playing with flying white doves as Joseph peeks at them through the gate. In particular, Mary holds a bowl of water for the doves to drink while Jesus plays with the doves around him. Instead of overt Confucian precepts, one finds a Chinese family enjoying one another's company in the simplicity of nature.

More importantly, the tenderness and poignancy of this mother-and-child portrayal in the various representations of mother-and-child relations is unmistakable. At a more profound level, this shows the extent to which Chinese Catholic converts perceive and receive the traditional Holy Family and parent-child relations on their own terms, that is to say, through a Confucian familial perspective. The genius of the Chinese *sensus* is that the Holy Family and Madonna-and-Child are not abstract doctrinal contexts

23. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon17.htm>.

24. For image, see: <http://usf.usfca.edu/ricci/collection/exhibits/celestialicons/icon18.htm>

25. For a black-and-white reproduction of this image, see Bornemann, *Ars Sacra Pekinensis*, 179.

26. For a black-and-white representation of this image, see Bornemann, *Ars Sacra Pekinensis*, 181.

but realized through a powerful synthesis of Confucian-Christian contextualization where Jesus, notwithstanding his status, is filial toward his parents, submits to their authority, assists in daily chores, and engages in rigorous learning and study under his parents' tutelage. We see a very human Jesus engages in typical Confucian practices of moral rectification—filiality, learning, and studying, as well as assisting and serving parents, exemplifying a low christology from below rather than a high and triumphant christology. We see an explicit endeavor to contextualize Jesus in real, human terms in a creative engagement and synthesis of Confucian and Christian imagery of being human (*ren* 仁) as the highest and perfected embodiment of Confucian moral rectification.

Conclusion

Religious art and imagery as faith expressions of a community often reveal that community's identity construction and sense of belonging in relation to the wider society. Jeremy Clarke's observations, made in the context of Chinese Catholic Marian art, are also applicable here. Specifically, Clarke asserts

Chinese Christian art was more than just a fad promoted and supported by only a few Westerners. These works, and the reception of them, therefore reveal aspects of the Chinese Christian communities. In the same way, the choice of thematic content illustrates key identifying characteristics of the Catholic communities.²⁷

More importantly, Clarke argues that these paintings are more than mere devotional piety of the new waves of Chinese Catholic converts. He points out that these images, which were "used on all manner of church occasions, ranging from prayer cards at ordinations to devotional artwork in family homes," represent a major response to the push and challenge by Costantini to Chinese Catholics to find indigenous ways of "expressing the Chinese Church's emerging individuality" that formed "a critical part of the movement towards a Chinese Catholic identity."²⁸

From the foregoing discussion of various Chinese images of Jesus in various settings, one is struck by the creative synthesis of Confucian ethical vision with the artists' sense of the ethical and soteriological significance of Jesus Christ in their artistic oeuvre. As Chen Yuandu (陳緣督) explained:

27. Clarke, *Virgin Mary*, 189.

28. *Ibid.*, 191.

I believe that when I paint the wonders of Christianity according to the ancient rules of Chinese art, the painted objects exert an externally new and strange effect, so that at the same time I enrich to a marked degree the old laws of Chinese painting. . . . If I can represent the teachings of our holy church in pictures according to Chinese art, and by means of such natural impressions draw the Chinese to know God, why should I not render so useful and enjoyable a service?"²⁹

The intended catechetical function of these artistic images is clear. As Jeremy Clarke explains, these images were painted primarily to serve as catechetical aids for display in churches and chapels, as well as pious devotional images for adornment in homes.³⁰ He notes that the images were largely on biblical themes, with a strong preference for infancy narratives and representations of the Madonna and Child.³¹ Mary S. Lawton suggests that Chinese Catholic art of this period focused on specific themes because of their intended use, as well as in response to cultural sensibilities of the artists and their audience.³² As she explains:

Almost all the compositions are biblical and the majority illustrate the childhood of Jesus and the life of the Virgin. There are very few Ascensions or Crucifixions and, again, these are painted by only one or two men. Such rarity of themes so prevalent in the West is, in part, in deference to the general proclivity of the Chinese to avoid the depiction of physical suffering in art. Moreover, a similar aversion to nudity meant that the image of a semi-clad Christ suspended upon the cross would have offended the traditional sense of decorum and contravened the degree of respect felt to be due to Him. On the other hand, consistent with the requirement for proper reverence are the mandarin settings which serve as the background for paintings of the Virgin and especially scenes of the Annunciation. Indeed, unless introduced into conventional Qing landscape iconography, illustrations of the Holy Family in unbefitting settings of poverty are extremely rare.³³

Lawton's observations can be seen in the artistic depictions in this selection, which framed the artistic depictions of Jesus within Confucian

sensibilities. For example, the framing of many images within the norms of traditional Chinese landscape (*shanshui*, 山水) art of mountains, gardens, and nature, as previously discussed, reveals how these artists contextualized their reception of Jesus and the stories from the Christian Gospels about Jesus within the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸)'s primordial vision of cosmic union and balance (*he* 和) between the triad of heaven (*tian* 天), earth (*di* 地), and humanity (*ren* 人), as expressed in the traditional Confucian adage—"heaven, earth, and humanity are one" (*tiandi renyi* 天地人). Likewise, the portrayals of Jesus within a Confucian familial setting that portray the child Jesus as engaging in learning (*xue* 學), as well as showing filiality (*xiao* 孝) and embodying deferential manner of relating (*li* 禮) to his parents, highlight the traditional Confucian themes of moral rectification in the Analects (*Lunyu* 論語) that are used to convey the *sensus* of what Jesus meant to the artists and their audience—a Jesus who loved learning (*xue* 學), who was filial (*xiao* 孝) to his parents, and who modeled the Confucian manner of relating deferentially to one's elders (*li* 禮).

On one level, one could read this as the Chinese artists, as Catholic converts and their audience perceiving their relationship to the God of their Catholic faith as exemplified by the manner in which Jesus related to his parents. On a deeper level, it reveals how these Chinese Catholic artists were able to integrate and synthesize Confucian and Catholic worldviews in response to Costantini's call to root the Catholic faith in Confucian Chinese soil. Nonetheless, the deep Confucian dimensions of these images of Jesus also meant that the traditional Confucian association of poverty, suffering, and death with failure resulted in a paucity of images that dealt with elements of poverty, suffering, and dying in favor of highlighting the relational, ethical, and cosmic aspects in their paintings. Hence, we see the *sensus* of the Chinese Catholic converts that sought to integrate their reception of the Christian Gospel and express what Jesus meant to them within traditional Confucian categories. Thus, we saw how Bai Huiqun and Chen Yuandu portrayed the Holy Family within the context of an idealized Confucian family that combined the best aspects of Confucian and Christian understandings of family life.

Finally, the nascent interreligious aspects of these images should not be overlooked. For example, the Nativity scene by Luke Hua Xiaoxian and the Visit of the Three Magi by Xu Sanchun exemplify these interreligious dimensions, with Hua's inclusion of Daoist immortal maidens as angels and Xu's imaginative reinterpretation of the Three Magi as three wise elders representing the three Chinese religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Hence, we see an incipient positive perspective that

29. Cited in Fleming, *Each with His Own Brush*, 12.

30. Clarke, *Virgin Mary*, 184–85.

31. *Ibid.*, 185.

32. Lawton, "A Unique Style in China," 474–75.

33. *Ibid.*, 475.

the three great religious traditions of China that emphasizes continuity and engagement, rather than confrontation and absolute break with the past.

Discerning the *Sensus Fidelium* in Asia's Narrative Theologies

EDMUND KEE-FOOK CHIA

Stories Reveal the *Sensus Fidelium*

Theology is often seen as a task of experts who can easily handle abstract explanation and argument . . . Today, however, the awareness is growing that, if theology is asking questions and reflecting over one's experience in the context of one's faith, then anyone who can ask questions and reflect can theologize. They can as well take the form of a story.¹

NARRATIVE THEOLOGY IS THE thrust of the present article. Though by no means mainstream, it has become more recognized today. While narrative theologians have been with us for centuries and millennia, it is only in the recent decades that their contributions have come to be regarded as theology. In reflecting on the place of story in systematic theology, Paul Fiddes alludes to this and, in fact, demurs theologians who "classify metaphorical and narrative discourse as 'religious speech,' [in order] to reserve 'theology' for conceptual reflection on religious expressions." Instead, he insists, there is "no need to deny the title 'theology' to a mode of talking about God which is characteristic both of everyday speech of the community of faith and of a certain kind of academic thinking."²

1. Michael Amaladoss, "Foreword," in Wedell D'Cruz, *A Warli-Christian Story: An Experiment in Story Theology* (Delhi, India: Vidyajyoti/ISPCCK, 1999), ix.

2. Paul F. Fiddes, "Concept, Image and Story in Systematic Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11.1 (2009) 7. Fiddes cites Nicholas Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM, 1986) 101.