



1999.018

Unidentified Artist

South America

The Last Judgment

Late 17th or early 18th century

Oil on canvas, 96 3/4 x 76 inches

Paintings of the Last Judgment were created for the Indian chapels in churches throughout the Andean region. The conversion of the indigenous people was the paramount goal of the missionaries, and the visual arts were recognized as effective weapons against idolatry. Felipe

Guman Poma de Ayala, in his *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1613), wrote that “in each church there is a painted judgment and there is shown the coming of the Lord to the judgment, the heavens and earth and the punishments of hell.”ⁱ A contemporary viewer remarked on the efficacy of the theme painted in the Jesuit church in Cuzco:

and there have been notable changes and conversions of Indians through the consideration of the judgment and glory and punishments of the condemned that is all painted on the walls of this chapel, and particularly [in consideration] of the penalties and punishments that the vices and sins of the Indians receive in hell, which are well portrayed as to their types and differences; because the Indians are greatly moved by paintings, often more so than by sermons.ⁱⁱ

Most of these images of the Last Judgment created in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, clearly a favorite theme of the missionaries for the decoration of Indian churches, were wall paintings and are no longer extant, though in the nave of the church of Curahuara de Carangas (Bolivia) is a large mural painting of the Last Judgment painted in 1608 (and restored in 1777).ⁱⁱⁱ Diego Quispe Tito painted the Last Judgment on a large canvas for the church of San Francisco in Cuzco in 1675 (fig. 1), José López de los Ríos painted four enormous canvases representing the Judgment as well as Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory for the church of Carabuco in Bolivia (completed in 1684), Melchor Pérez Holguín painted a version for the church of San Lorenzo in Potosí, Bolivia (1708), and other versions were created well into the eighteenth century.



Fig. 1. Diego Quispe Tito, *The Last Judgment*, 1675, oil on canvas. Convent of San Francisco, Cuzco.

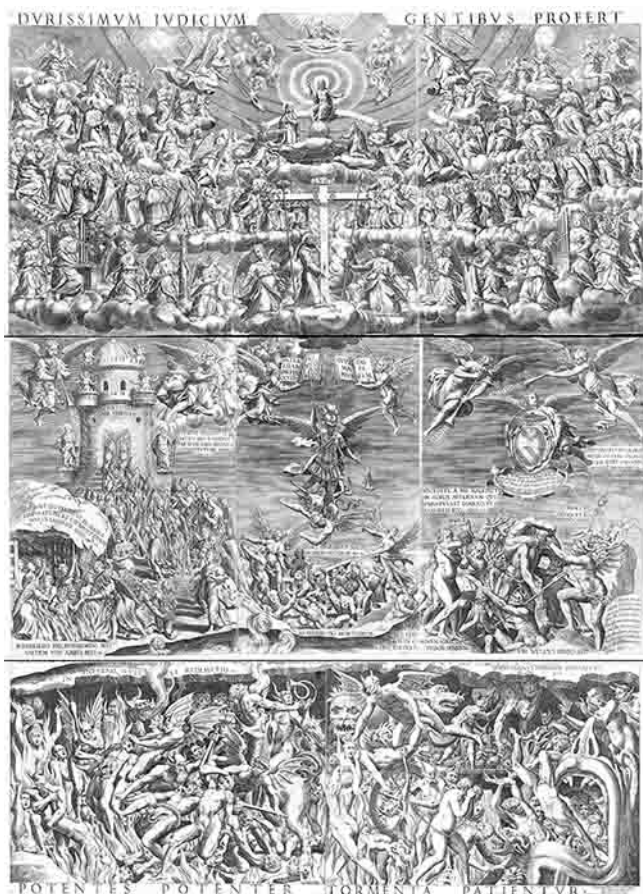


Fig. 2. Philippe Thomassin, *The Last Judgment*, 1607, engraving.

Sources for these paintings are both visual and written. There were a number of engravings of the Last Judgment, such as that by Jan Wierix in Benito Arias Montano's *Christ Iesu vitae* (1574), another Wierix print in Arias Montano's *Monumenta*, published in 1583, and a large engraving of 1606 by Philippe Thomassin (fig. 2) that artists in the Andes could have used

as starting points for their compositions. As well, there were textual sources that indigenous Andeans would read, but whose words, transformed into passionate oratory, would have rung out from the pulpits. Consider, for example, a brief quotation from the Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nieremberg's description of hell in his *De la diferencia entre lo temporal y eterno. Crisol de desengaños con la memoria de la eternidad, postrimerías humanas y principales misterios divinos*, first published in Madrid in 1640:

What torment will there be for those condemned ones, who will be burning alive and will not be able to unfetter themselves, and wherever they touch they will touch the fire of brimstone, and their bodies will be submerged in it, and now in the middle of that jail [hell], is a round well of fire that the Scriptures call a pool and lagoon of fire, and there will be the unfortunate souls swimming like fish in the sea, touching fire everywhere through their whole being.^{iv}

We know that Nieremberg's treatise was widely used by the Jesuits in their missionary work: later in the seventeenth century it was translated into Guaraní and published with 41 engravings based on European models by Juan Yaparí, many more than the 10 engravings in the 1684 edition published in Antwerp.^v Nieremberg's lengthy meditation on death had roots in the *Spiritual Exercises* of the Jesuit Ignatius of Loyola, but it also reflects a tradition of theatrical sermonizing that became a powerful tool for conversion in the Americas. The voice from the pulpit and the paintings on the wall of the church worked together as instruments of the dissemination and defense of the faith. The use of visual images by preachers was particularly recommended for missionary work, or even for small towns in Spain, where parishioners were uneducated and impressionable. In his *Retórica Christiana* (Mallorca, 1647), the Jesuit Juan Bautista Escardo dedicated chapters to "How the preacher should know the way to bring from the pulpit devout images that will move [the congregation] to tears" and "Of the ways in which the image of Christ Crucified can be used from the pulpit to move the audience."^{vi} Understanding the context in which paintings such as the Thoma *Last Judgment* were created and used enables the viewer today to understand the violent and cruel depiction of the condemned as a necessary aspect of the iconography.

The composition of the Thoma painting might be based on the same graphic source as the large *Last Judgment* that Diego Quispe Tito painted for San Francisco in Cuzco, though the Thoma painting is much smaller and designed as a vertical rather than horizontal composition. Paintings of the Last Judgment were created for churches all over the Viceroyalty of Peru and were created in the Viceroyalty of New Spain as well.

At the very top of this *Last Judgment*, Christ the Judge is connected to the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist, just below him, by a rainbow. To either side are two rows of saints, some of them identifiable as Saints Rose of Lima, Rita of Cascia, Teresa of Avila, and the Franciscan Clare of Assisi. Below Saint Francis with the cross is the Archangel Michael, trampling on Satan. Angels guide the blessed upward, and a devil with a pitchfork directs his unfortunate charges to their doom. The dead rise from their graves in various stages of decomposition to be judged. At the bottom of the composition, men and women, popes and cardinals and kings, suffer their gruesome fate in Hell. Nieremberg described the vision of a monk who, as he performed penance, was figuratively led to a high mountain from which he could see a valley filled with fire: "there, hearing first a frightening voice, he saw his father who boiled in the fire like a chickpea when the pot is stirred, and his brother, swimming among the flames, now up, now down."^{vii} And then they disappeared from view.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

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- i “y en cada iglesia haya un juicio pintado (y) allí (se) muestre la venida del Señor al juicio, el cielo y el mundo y las penas del infierno.” Quoted from José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Holguín y la pintura virreinal en Bolivia*, 2nd ed. (La Paz: Librería Editorial Juventud, 1977), 91.
- ii “ha habido notables mudanzas y conversiones de indios con la consideración del juicio y gloria, y penas de los condenados, que está todo pintado en las paredes de esta capilla, y particularmente, con las penas y castigos que en el infierno tienen los vicios y pecados de los indios, que están allí bien dibujados por sus especies y diferencias; porque los indios se mueven mucho por pinturas y muchas veces más que con muchos sermones.” Friar Antonio de la Vega, as quoted by “Ramón Mujica Pinilla, “El arte y los sermones,” in *El Barroco Peruano*, vol. 1 (Lima: Banco de Crédito del Perú, 2002), 244.
- iii Ibid., 92.
- iv Translated from *Obras escogidas del R.P. Juan Eusebio Nieremberg*, edited by Eduardo Zepeda-Henríquez, in *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, vols. 103-104 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1957), 209.
- v José Torre Revello, *Orígenes de la imprenta en España y su desarrollo en América Española* (Buenos Aires: Talleres s.a. Casa Jacobo Peuser, 1940), 120-21.
- vi For more about the mutually supportive relationship between the preacher and the painting, see Arsenio Moreno, *Mentalidad y pintura en la Sevilla del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Electas España, 1997), 55-59 and Mujica Pinilla, op. cit., 219-313.
- vii Nieremberg, ibidem.