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## Heaven on Earth: Churches in Early Modern Hispanic America\*

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On arriving at the last archway, which was in front of her church, an angel alighted from a cloud to welcome her and, flying towards the temple, in harmonious voices called at her doors, which until then were closed; and from within replied another choir of angels, and between alternate harmonies opening the doors, everyone saw Heaven open.<sup>1</sup>

The above citation reads like a fantastic theological vision, which in effect, is exactly what it is. What may surprise us, however, is that it was a vision seen in 1672 by the populace of the city of Lima in the viceroyalty of Peru, as they participated in a procession to inaugurate the church of Santa María de los Desamparados. The chronicler, the Jesuit Ioseph de Buendia, documents how an image of the Virgin was ceremonially carried around the city, passing through triumphal archways until finally it (she) reached the newly constructed church. The angel was no spirit, but was attached to a theatrical device that used wires and pulleys designed specifically for the purpose of 'greeting the Virgin'. Choirs were trained in musical dialogue and directed to sing as if angelic voices were asking for the gates of heaven to be opened; others responded from within. The entire spectacle was carefully orchestrated so as to seem as close to the divine as possible. It was clearly intended to inspire awe in the onlookers and participants. Yet, most importantly, this was not a dramatic exercise cynically to reinforce social power structures: awe was the correct and necessary emotion to feel as one entered the presence of

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<sup>1</sup> Ioseph de Buendia, *Vida admirable y prodigiosas virtudes del venerable y apostolico padre Francisco del Castillo, de la Compañia de Jesus, Natural de Lima, Ciudad del los Reyes en la Provincia del Perú* (Madrid, 1693), p. 299. This and, unless otherwise indicated, all other translations are my own.

God – it was a religious awe intended to arouse intense feelings of devotion. The following chapter will examine how the church in the early modern Hispanic World was believed to be a tangible reflection of the divine here on earth, a place of divine glory and of sanctuary from the dangers of everyday life and, through the celebration of the Eucharist, a place from which God's grace and light could emanate outwards 'bringing light to those in darkness'. In so doing it will draw on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples from throughout the region, the viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico), New Granada (in particular, Colombia), and Peru. It will examine the relationship between the local communities (both religious and secular) and their church buildings and will highlight the central importance of the Blessed Sacrament both within that relationship but also within the church building itself. It will also seek to shed light on the significance of churches for the populations of early modern Hispanic America. Letters written by missionaries to Rome and chronicles describe the construction of these buildings, and the significance and symbolism of the architecture, while they also depict the tremendous inauguration ceremonies laid on after their completion. Through the study of these descriptions of particular church buildings in early modern Hispanic America, the chapter will piece together an idea of how the celestial was perceived, depicted, and even experienced by local populations.

During the sixteenth century in Hispanic America, the responsibility for evangelization and pastoral care (and this included the ministerial functions of parish priest) was largely undertaken by the religious orders. Bishops would commonly be appointed from their communities and regular clergy commonly answered to regular ordinaries. The building of the majority of parish churches, therefore, was primarily carried out by indigenous workforces under the supervision of the religious orders that had jurisdiction over their parishes.<sup>2</sup> The secularization of parishes and church buildings began in earnest in the last decades of the same century with the enforced concentration of indigenous populations into urban parish settlements known as *reductions* and continued (not without resistance – from both indigenous populations and regular clergy) well into the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding this process, the regular and missionary orders still continued to have parochial jurisdiction into the eighteenth century, depending on ecclesiastical and crown policy versus the will and capacity of the regular clergy and their parishioners to resist its transfer into secular hands.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For Mexico, see in particular, Eleanor Wake, *Framing the Sacred: the Indian Churches of Early Colonial Mexico* (Norman, OK, 2010); Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spain* (Notre Dame, IN, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> In Guatemala, for example, for numerous reasons this process took place largely in the eighteenth century and was bitterly resented by the regular clergy who faced losing the parochial incomes that sustained their monasteries. See Adriaan C. van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism: A Parish History of Guatemala 1524–1821* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 137–42. For the northern Andes and the secularization struggle in the

Whether religious or secular, together with their indigenous, mixed race (Spanish and indigenous) and black parishioners, religious and missionary orders (such as the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, the Mercedarians and, after the Council of Trent (post-1560), the Jesuits), and secular dioceses, built their church buildings in the likeness of their own particular evangelic visions – visions which reached back into medieval European traditions and wove it together with the contemporary Hispanic-American reality. This chapter, therefore, will consider Hispanic-American churches from the perspective of these visions inscribed in stone, which arguably came from a common blueprint: Hispanic-American church buildings were places where the divine presence resided and where angels and birds of paradise sang and played together.

### I. Situation, Construction, Radiation

I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to 1533, after the arrival of the first Franciscans in 1524, closely followed by the Dominicans (1526) and the Augustinians (1533) church buildings and convents in New Spain had been rather temporary affairs, but between 1530 and 1540 more permanent rubble-work constructions began to replace them.<sup>6</sup> By 1559, the Franciscans had eighty convents, the Dominicans forty and the Augustinians a further forty.<sup>7</sup> A similar, albeit later, pattern of growth occurred in the viceroyalty of Peru during the sixteenth century. According to a letter written by the first bishop of Cuzco, Vicente de Valverde, by 1539 – less than five years after the conquest – seven churches had been built.<sup>8</sup> By 1564, so many were being built using indigenous labour that the Dominican friar Jerónimo de Loaiza wrote to the king that, ‘it would be convenient if so many monasteries were not built in indigenous townships as this is a great burden for the Indians’.<sup>9</sup> Of course, within this petition can be seen layers of political antagonism as religious orders competed for influence and labour with each other and also with agents of the crown; indigenous people involved in the construction of churches and monasteries could not be working at the same time to provide tribute. Cynicism aside, however, Rúben Vargas

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seventeenth century, see Karen Vieira Powers, ‘The Battle for Bodies and Souls in the Colonial North Andes: Intraecclesiastical Struggles and the Politics of Migration’, in John F. Schwaller (ed.), *The Church in Colonial Latin America* (Wilmington, DE, 2000), pp. 121–46.

<sup>5</sup> Revelations 21:22–23.

<sup>6</sup> Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia de la Iglesia en el Perú* (Lima, 1953), I, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Ibid., I, p. 124.

Ugarte believes that many of these church buildings were in fact begun on the initiative of indigenous people themselves as they did not want to be living in a township without a temple.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, Loaiza's petition to the king also demonstrates the genuine concern of many missionaries that indigenous Andeans were being over-worked (due to tribute exactions and falling populations as a result of epidemics and civil war) and many labourers were dying as a result. In his opinion, to have them working on churches and convents as well could only compound the problem. Nevertheless, according to Gauvin Bailey, in the seventeenth century, the Jesuit missionaries of the Southern Andes tried a different approach to this on-going problem and, in rotation, taught groups of indigenous labourers from local communities the crafts and trades necessary for church construction and decoration specifically so that they might be exempted from being drafted to work in the silver mines of Upper Peru. The policy had the effect of saving many from the mines, which was an effective death sentence for many thousands, but it also increased church (re)construction and contributed to the spread of a distinctive decorative, architectural and religious style throughout the region.<sup>11</sup> Arguably, then, this was a life-saving evangelic vision carved into the very stone of the church buildings and religious complexes.

Returning to the sixteenth century and the initial stages of this programme of evangelization through construction in New Spain, we see similar concerns on the part of the missionaries with respect to Spanish abuse of their indigenous charges. Thus on 17 April 1530, on the feast day of Santo Toribio de Astorga, Puebla de los Angeles – the city of the Angels – was founded in the viceroyalty of New Spain. If Mexico City had become a veritable *civitas terrena* or earthly city (along the lines of that envisaged by Saint Augustine) filled with vice and corruption, Puebla de los Angeles was intended to be its opposite, a spiritual haven for the indigenous neophytes, a *civitas Dei*, in the heart of the Americas.<sup>12</sup> According to the eyewitness account written by Toribio de Motolinía, the marking out of the city began only once Mass had been said, after which the land was cleared and marked out for the new construction.<sup>13</sup> Jaime Lara's work, *City, Temple, Stage*, makes a detailed and interesting case for Motolinía's vision of Puebla's design and construction being based on an apocalyptic Franciscan tradition that perceived the regular grid-pattern for urban design as a reflection of the New Jerusalem envisioned by Saint John.<sup>14</sup> The heart of the city, known in Nahuatl as Huitzilpan (meaning hummingbird or dove), corresponded to the dove of the Holy Spirit and, as such, the city was

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque: Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru* (Notre Dame, IN, 2010), pp. 75, 164.

<sup>12</sup> Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, pp. 104–06.

<sup>13</sup> Toribio de Benavente, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, edited by Claudio Esteva Fabregat (Madrid, s.d.) p. 282.

<sup>14</sup> Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, pp. 104–06. For the historical context to this argument see pp. 41–104 *passim*.

identified with the utopian 'third age of the spirit'.<sup>15</sup> In this case, the divine light described by John's Revelation, would radiate outwards from the heart of the newly founded city and would illuminate the surrounding countryside that for so long had been perceived to languish in pagan darkness. The motor that generated this light was the celebration of the Eucharist:

The Indians entered with their banners singing and playing their tambourines and ringing their little bells, and other youths came in dancing many [different] dances. *Then, that day, once Mass was said* – which was the first to be said there – without further ado the Indians cleared the area (they had brought the plans already drawn up by a mason from the area) and, with ropes, they divided up to forty plots for forty [future] residents [my italics].<sup>16</sup>

The open-air nature of the Mass, which was the first thing to be said and done on the day of the foundation (the processional dances and music forming part of the Eucharistic liturgy), was only ever intended to be a temporary measure until the sacramental rites (and the Blessed Sacrament itself) could be enclosed within a church complex. Churches became the centres of these newly founded and angelically guarded cities and, within them, the focal point was the Blessed Sacrament and the celebration of the Eucharist. These were perceived to be the beating hearts that unceasingly pumped grace into the surrounding communities, turned souls back to God and incorporated them within the ever-growing *civitas Dei*, the communion of the faithful. This perception is ably demonstrated by the notarial description of the foundation of Lima (Peru) and accompanying proclamation by Francisco Pizarro on the 18 January 1535 quoted verbatim by the seventeenth-century Jesuit chronicler, Bernabé Cobo (d. 1657):

'And because the beginning of any *pueblo* or city must be in God and for God, and in his name [...] it is appropriate to begin it in His church.' [...] And after marking out the square he made and constructed the said church, and with his hands laid the keystone and the first wooden beams. [...] 'with hope in Our Lord and His blessed Mother [...] that He will perpetually conserve and augment it by His hand, for it is made and constructed for His holy service and so that our holy catholic faith might be praised, spread, communicated and sown amongst these barbarous peoples, who until now have been turned from knowledge of Him, and His true doctrine and service'.<sup>17</sup>

Church construction by the missionary religious orders in the Americas, then, was a primary act in reclaiming souls for God, souls that were perceived to

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 105–06.

<sup>16</sup> Benavente, *Historia de los indios*, p. 283. See also, Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, pp. 104–05.

<sup>17</sup> Bernabé Cobo, *Fundación de Lima* [1639], in *Obras del Padre Bernabé Cobo* (vol.2) edited by Francisco Mateos (Madrid, 1956), pp. 289–90. See also Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493–1793* (London, 2000), p. 169; Juan Günther Doering and Guillermo Lohmann Villena, *Lima* (Madrid, 1992), p. 53; Andrew Redden, *Diabolism in Colonial Peru 1560–1750* (London, 2008), p. 18.

be enslaved by the devil.<sup>18</sup> Just as the Incarnation enabled God to become man in history and as his sacrificial crucifixion enabled his grace to free souls from damnation caused by the sin of Adam, so the celebration of the Eucharist (and the physical construction of the edifice that housed these rites) mapped spiritual salvation onto geographical locations in the Americas, in the process reconstituting (to a greater or lesser extent) the already existent sacred landscapes that were so familiar and so important to indigenous peoples of the region. This was a complex process that lasted beyond the duration of the colonial period and which was influenced by many different cultural and social factors including population movements, miscegenation, concentration of missionary campaigns and Hispanicization. Of course, the less contact indigenous cultures had with Hispano-American religious practices and beliefs the less indigenous spiritual landscapes were affected. The important point to bear in mind is that the process was always dynamic.<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, from within the Hispanic (and subsequently, the Hispano-American) religious framework, churches, and the rites that were held within them, enabled grace and divine light to flow outwards, eventually (and ideally) covering the spiritual landscape of the Americas. This perception – very much a part of medieval European Christianity in which church buildings were defined as a “superlative site” where God is “more present” and where “his grace pours forth more abundantly”<sup>20</sup> – can also be seen in the opening quotation to this essay taken from Ioseph de Buendia’s account of the inauguration of the Church of Santa María de los Desamparados, Lima. And Buendia continues:

All the choirs were singing the *Te Deum laudamus*. The church was glorious, not only for its beauty, but also for its illumination, for in all its high platforms and corridors [...] burned five hundred wax torches that caused the night to retreat and to cede its jurisdiction, for amongst so much light a new day began.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For a fuller explanation see Redden, *Diabolism in Colonial Peru*, pp. 13–20.

<sup>19</sup> In recent years a large number of excellent studies have been carried out that highlight the complexity of this process. A few key texts include: Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahuatl-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson, AZ, 1989); Nancy M. Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, NJ, 1984); Juan Carlos Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad: la incorporación de los indios del Perú al catolicismo 1532–1750* (Lima, 2003); Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Kenneth Mills, *Idolatry and its Enemies: Colonial Andean Religion and Extirpation, 1640–1750* (Princeton, NJ, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> *Acta synodi Atrebatensis* 1285B and 1286A, cited in Dominique Iogna-Prat, ‘Churches in the Landscape’, in Thomas Noble and Julia Smith (eds), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Early Medieval Christianities c. 600–c. 1100* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 364. For the medieval development of concepts linking the church as sacred space to the sacraments and, in particular, the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Christian community see Iogna-Prat’s seminal work, *La Maison Dieu: Une histoire monumentale de l’Église au Moyen Âge (v. 800–v. 1200)* (Paris, 2006), pp. 444–86.

<sup>21</sup> Buendia, *Vida del Venerable Padre Francisco del Castillo*, p. 299.

While this description can be understood literally – so many burning torches not surprisingly gave off a great deal of light – from the way the account is worded we can also see that the author also intended it as a metaphor for the spiritual illumination of the locality; both the narrator and his readership would have understood the retreat of the surrounding darkness in the theological context of the coming of Christ. This context is most explicitly expressed by the words of the Advent antiphons known within the Catholic world as the ‘Great’ or the ‘O’ antiphons, and in particular, the fifth antiphon sung on the 21st December, which begins ‘O Oriens’:

O Orient, splendour of eternal light, and Sun of Justice! Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.<sup>22</sup>

In the late sixteenth-century parish church of San Pedro Apóstol, Andahuaylillas, near Cuzco, in the then viceroyalty of Peru, this same association with the dawning light and Christ is depicted physically (artistically and architecturally). On the rear wall of the church in the choir loft, is painted a fresco of the Annunciation, with the Angel Gabriel on the left side and a kneeling Virgin Mary on the right. In the centre of the wall is an oculus or circular window of light reminiscent of the halos that commonly surround representations of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Significantly, notes Teresa Gisbert, because the light source is an opening rather than a painting, the dove is notably absent from the imagery, the divine aspect being represented by only the light of the sun.<sup>23</sup> Gisbert interprets the fresco as deliberate syncretism that makes the association between the Holy Spirit and the sun and understands this in the context of a broader tendency of Andean Christianity in the sixteenth and early- to mid-seventeenth centuries to deliberately associate aspects of the Trinity with the sun.<sup>24</sup> In this case, however, the oculus is not meant to be associated merely with the Holy Spirit but rather, and in particular, with the coming of Christ.<sup>25</sup> Deliberate associations between Christ and the sun had previously

<sup>22</sup> ‘O Oriens, splendor lucis aeternae, et sol justitiae: veni, et illumina sedentes in tenebris, et umbra mortis’. Prosper Guéranger, *L’Année Liturgique*, Vol. 1, *Advent* (Tours, 1926), p. 552. See also the online English translation by Laurence Shepherd, from *The Liturgical Year*, Vol. 1, *Advent* (Westminster, MD, 1948), pp. 500–501. [http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns\\_and\\_Carols/Notes\\_On\\_Carols/O\\_Antiphons/Gueranger-Antiphons/o\\_oriens.htm](http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Notes_On_Carols/O_Antiphons/Gueranger-Antiphons/o_oriens.htm) [Last accessed 18/07/11].

<sup>23</sup> See Teresa Gisbert, *Iconografía y mitos indígenas en el arte* (La Paz, 2004), p. 31 and figure 26. Gisbert cites earlier work by the art historian José Mesa.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29–32.

<sup>25</sup> Gisbert appears to have been working from a study by José Mesa which was carried out before the restoration of the frescoes and this has caused a misinterpretation of the words around the oculus, some of which were then illegible. The restored fresco reveals the lettering much more clearly (compare the black and white photograph (fig. 26 in her text) with the newer colour image (un-numbered after fig. 33). The first word would have read SAPI/ENTIA meaning ‘wisdom’ (rather than SANTO as Gisbert

been experimented with by Franciscan friars in mid-sixteenth-century New Spain, with the location of obsidian mirrors at the centre of large stone crosses placed, in turn, at the centre of the church courtyards (known as *corrales*). Thus, the Franciscans symbolically placed a solar Christ at the centre of the cosmos.<sup>26</sup> In Andahuaylillas a few decades later, the association between Christ and the sun took place in the church building itself by integrating the architecture with the liturgical antiphons.<sup>27</sup> Around the oculus a semi-circle of other circles is arranged, each containing words reading: '[S]A[PI/E]N[TIA], ADO/NAI, RA/DIX, EMMA/NUEL, CLA/VIS, REX' and at the top right of the semicircle, 'ORI/ENS' and these are in fact references to the abovementioned Great Antiphons of Advent, sung in the seven days before Christmas and which evoke the yearning of the faithful for Christ's arrival:

*O Wisdom [...] come and teach us [...] / O Adonai and leader of the house of Israel [...] come and redeem us / O Root of Jesse [...] come and deliver us; tarry now no more / O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation and Saviour of the nations! Come and save us, O Lord our God! / O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel [...] come and lead the captive from prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death / O King of nations, and their desired one, [...] come and save man [...] / O Orient! Splendour of eternal light, and Sun of justice! Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death [my italics].*<sup>28</sup>

While the specific recital of these antiphons was limited to the Advent period in the week before Christmas, their sense of yearning was a retrospective metaphor for the peoples of the Americas who, as God's creatures – according to the Thomistic and Lascasian perspective – yearned for Him down the centuries prior to the arrival of Christianity (albeit unbeknownst to them).<sup>29</sup>

While the Christian liturgy regulated the calendar year in temporal cycles (just as indigenous religious rites had done and continued to do), the mystery of the Incarnation (through the Annunciation) was believed both specific to one particular point in history and be timeless as it continued to occur in the liturgical and spiritual life of the Church and, in particular, in the celebration of the sacraments in the church building. In his essay on Theatine churches in early modern Rome, Simon Ditchfield argues that the church building was

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thought) (the curve of the S can be seen in the restored fresco) and the central bottom word which was then illegible now clearly reads EMMA/NUEL.

<sup>26</sup> Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, pp. 154, 168.

<sup>27</sup> I am grateful to Jack Leung for drawing my attention to the link between the fresco and the antiphons.

<sup>28</sup> For the full text in English, see Shepherd's online translation of Guéranger's *L'Année Liturgique*. [http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns\\_and\\_Carols/Notes\\_On\\_Carols/O\\_Antiphons/great\\_advent\\_antiphons.htm](http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Notes_On_Carols/O_Antiphons/great_advent_antiphons.htm) [Last accessed 17/04/09].

<sup>29</sup> This is a particularly sixteenth-century viewpoint. See Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apología o declaración y defensa universal de los derechos del hombre y de los pueblos*, edited by Vidal Abril Castelló et al. (Salamanca, 2000), cap. XXXV, pp. 225–33. For an English translation see Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, translated and edited by Stafford Poole (DeKalb, IL, 1992), pp. 226–33.



an attempt to abolish time and transcend this material world.<sup>30</sup> This, in fact, was not a conceptualization specific to Rome, but was very much a part of contemporary global Catholicism. Thus, in Andahuaylillas, the temporal restriction on the liturgical use of the Advent antiphons was largely irrelevant to their timeless fulfilment in the Incarnation and this was demonstrated by the very architecture of the church itself. Through the light and warmth of the sun, Christ would enter the building through the oculus in the choir and would extend the grace of God to the expectant congregation, and it was this perceived life-giving mystery of the Incarnation that was also believed to always take place in the consecration during the Eucharistic rite. This rite simultaneously combined God's sacrifice of his own son (through the Incarnation), Christ's salvific self-sacrifice for humankind which fulfilled the expectations of the Advent antiphons, and the Christian community's reciprocal sacrifice of the Mass as it was offered up to heaven.

The church building, in effect, was a place where the divine and the terrestrial were conjoined and where Catholic congregations believed they communed with Christ, and his saints and angels. In fact, with this in mind, early modern Hispano-American churches were intended to be terrestrial representations of Heaven, tangible links to the eternal and timeless Empyrean. To enter a principal Hispanic church at the height of the Baroque was to walk with the angels and be transported to a golden and silver space where angelic cherubs played and sang and where saints accompanied the divine presence.

Smaller churches, if they could not afford precious metals for decoration, created similar effects by the creative use of sculptures, paintings and liturgical theatrics. In the final years of the seventeenth century, for example, there arrived in Rome a missive describing the dramatic inauguration of the new Jesuit church of Saint Ignatius in Santafé de Bogotá (New Granada) in 1697, in which the Blessed Sacrament played the central role.<sup>31</sup> Amidst a tremendous procession accompanied by fireworks and music, it was carried accompanied by six boys dressed as angels who were scattering rose petals and perfume as they went. Various teams had competed to construct the most complicated and decorative castles they could for each point in the procession where the Blessed Sacrament would stop. One of these castles was 'populated with angels [...] armed with carbines [...] At the very top, were beautifully dressed angels with harquebuses on their shoulders'.<sup>32</sup> Two

<sup>30</sup> Simon Ditchfield, 'Reading Rome as a Sacred Landscape, c. 1586–1635', in Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (eds), *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 178.

<sup>31</sup> Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [hereafter ARSI], Provincia Novo Regno et Quitensis [hereafter ProvNR&Q] 13.2, Litterae Annuae [hereafter Litt. Ann.] 1694–98, ff. 351–366v.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 356. For an historical account of the depiction of angelic harquebusiers in the Colonial Andes see Ramón Mujica Pinilla, *Ángeles apócrifos en la América virreinal* (Lima, 1996). See also Ramón Mujica Pinilla, 'Angels in the Conquest of Peru', in Fernando Cervantes and Andrew Redden (eds), *Angels, Demons and the New World*

boys dressed as angels, one with a lighted torch, the other with a garland of flowers came out of the castle to receive the host [His 'Sacramented' Majesty] and joined the other six in accompanying him (it) to his new and majestic palace. The procession continued through the streets and into the town square past shrines set up to tell the life of Saint Ignatius and past yet more angels who accompanied him. Another castle was decorated with branches and flowers in which birds of paradise were placed with other animals to represent the Garden of Eden as the procession neared its goal, the church, God's house, or Paradise itself.

## II. Paradise on Earth – American Eden

As the procession entered the church, 'instruments and delicate voices could be heard welcoming Christ and Saint Ignatius into his temple'. Describing the dome, the narrator said that there were innumerable children and angels (presumably cherubs). Seated on the altarpiece were two angels, on every archway there were more. As the Blessed Sacrament entered, the boy-angels accompanied it in procession scattering flowers and amber.<sup>33</sup>

Such décor accompanied by spectacular liturgical rites was by no means uncommon in Hispanic America. The description of angels and saints painted in the New Granada church is reminiscent of others throughout the region that have survived against the odds to the present day.<sup>34</sup> In addition to the Andean church of San Pedro Apóstol in Andahuaylillas, interested readers can visit the Dominican church of San Jerónimo de Tlacoahuaya near the colonial city of Antequera (now Oaxaca), New Spain. It was constructed at the centre of an indigenous settlement and one-time *encomienda* around the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Covering the walls are seventeenth-century frescoes of angels and archangels painted by indigenous artists; those on the organ play musical instruments, while winged cherubs circle the dome and line the roof.

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(Cambridge, 2013), pp. 171–210. For an excellent and broad-ranging collection of essays on angels in the Early Modern Christian tradition see also Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> ARSI, ProvNR&Q, 13.2, Litt. Ann., 1694–98, f. 363v.

<sup>34</sup> Many have been destroyed during and since the colonial period by fires, floods, earthquakes, even volcanic eruptions, not to mention numerous civil wars and revolutions. Sometimes churches have been rebuilt various times and the original decorations have been unfortunately lost. The described decoration in the Jesuit church in Bogotá is unfortunately no longer there and the walls have been whitewashed.

<sup>35</sup> An *encomienda* was a royal grant of indigenous people to act as a workforce for particular individuals or institutions in return for the commitment to educate them in the Catholic faith. The practice was ordered abolished in the mid-sixteenth century due to widespread abuse.

The intention behind such intricately decorated churches and such accompanying grand liturgies (as described in the Jesuit letter from Bogotá) was to show the congregation God's glory on earth. Here was a place filled with light, where angels sang the praises of God. 'In short', the Jesuit who witnessed the inauguration in Bogotá wrote:

The church was a living representation of Heaven whose delights were experienced by all those that crossed the threshold. Many were those who felt sweet tears pulled onto their cheeks by the joys of their heart.<sup>36</sup>

In the context of Hispanic Baroque religiosity and, in particular, that lived by the Jesuits, tears were a sign of inner conversion; to be moved to tears was a sign of God's grace working within oneself, turning the individual back to God and inspiring him or her to ever-greater devotion. The second of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (55:4), for example, reads: 'The Second Prelude will be to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for growing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins.'<sup>37</sup> It was no shameful thing to be emotionally overcome by the presence of God – indeed this was only to be expected as, while God had become man and walked among humankind, the scriptural precedent that humans in their fallen state could not look on God's glory was well-established and well-known.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, early modern mystical theology stripped individuals bare of their emotional protection (or in other words the human psychological barriers that distanced them from God) and left them raw, unbalanced even – desirous of seeing the face of God above all else but being unable to achieve it by their own efforts:

The soul then desires to see herself possessed by this great God, by whose love the heart feels itself to be stolen away and wounded; and being unable to suffer any longer she begs Him to reveal and show His beauty, which is His divine essence and to slay her with the vision [...] and thus to loose her from the flesh since she cannot see Him in the flesh and have fruition of Him as she desires.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that during this period mystical theology was not merely practiced by one or two exceptional individuals destined for sainthood. Many ordinary people, under the direction of their confessors, attempted to follow the spiritual exercises set out by mystics such as Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila. Indeed, the practice of these exercises was extremely widespread and encouraged by many in the clergy (notwithstanding the fact that when poorly directed it was also extremely

<sup>36</sup> ARSI, ProvNR&Q, 13.2, Litt. Ann., 1694–98, f. 363v.

<sup>37</sup> See the translation by George E. Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Chicago, 1992), p. 43.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Genesis 3:8, Exodus 3:4–6, Ezekiel 1–2:1, and Matthew 28:1–5.

<sup>39</sup> St John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza xi, cited and translated by Thomas Merton in *The Ascent to Truth: A Study of St John of the Cross* (London, 2002), p. 221.



10.1 Hybrid centipede puma, flora, indigenous head, bird of paradise (from bottom to top). Detail from the façade of the Church of Santiago, Arequipa. (Photograph and copyright, the author)

dangerous for the individual and those around them and could lead to madness and possession – another increasingly common phenomenon of early modern Hispanic spirituality).<sup>40</sup>

Church buildings in this period were a physical manifestation of this mystical theology, though a safer, more communal expression of it. On entering the building the individual (or community) would be entering the presence of God and, as such, the building itself represented a terrestrial paradise – a new Eden – and was constructed and decorated in order to leave the viewer with no doubt that this was the case. The form of the building and the symbols carved and painted on the walls were also intended to demonstrate the process of God's life-giving grace to the world. It was only right that the faithful onlookers should be moved to tears – this was their homecoming after so many generations of exile for the sins of Adam.

One church complex that ably demonstrates both the belief in the church building as a terrestrial Eden and also a text that describes God's life-giving grace is the Jesuit church of Santiago in Arequipa. In 1698 the façade of the new Jesuit church complex of Santiago was completed with intricate carvings detailing (among other symbolic representations) indigenous mythological creatures such as hybrid centipede-pumas disgorging flora that in turn grows into an indigenous human likeness.<sup>41</sup> At the top of the section the head of a bird of paradise can be discerned rising out of the flora (Figure 10.1).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For an eschatological interpretation of early modern possession, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 389–91, 401–34. For comparable cases of possessions in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru linked to mysticism, see Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (London, 1994), pp. 98–124; Redden, *Diabolism in Colonial Peru*, pp. 37–90.

<sup>41</sup> Gauvin Bailey states that construction continued into 1699, despite the date 1698 inscribed on the façade, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque*, p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> I am grateful to Carla Lizárraga for first pointing out these artistic details to me. After a stuttering start, the Jesuit residence of Arequipa was officially founded in 1581. The complex has remarkably survived successive earthquakes, although many of the internal frescoes have not. Nevertheless, enough remain for a visitor to experience and appreciate the beauty of the remaining frescoes and to see (and interpret) the carvings. For a detailed discussion of the incorporation of indigenous myths into colonial Christian symbolism (including the puma-centipede hybrid) see Gisbert, *Iconografía y mitos*, pp. 17–73. The puma-centipede appears as figure 59 between pp. 48–49. See also, Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque*, pp. 303–35.



10.2 Top section of the façade of the Church of Santiago, Arequipa. (Photograph and copyright, the author)



10.3 Central section of the façade of the Church of Santiago, Arequipa. (Photograph and copyright, the author)



10.4 Papaya with three grape bunches or maize cobs, hanging from a cherub-sun-flower, cloister of the Church of Santiago, Arequipa. (Photograph and copyright, the author)

autochthonous-American and European fauna: an Arequipa papaya (Figure 10.4), develops into three grape bunches or maize cobs, which in turn hang from a cherub-sun-flower.<sup>44</sup> The likeness to grapes or maize depends on which column is being examined and differences are down to individual sculptures and sculptors rather than anything deliberate. Significantly, both plants, whether grapes or maize, work well within Andean-Christian Eucharistic symbolism, and any ambiguity would not have mattered. Directly above the cherub on the capital is a four-feathered headdress to signify nobility (Figure 10.5).

Of course, these decorations are open to interpretation (especially given the lack of documentary evidence detailing the precise intended forms and meaning of these carvings), but the fact that understanding these symbols can and could be left to the informed imagination is significant in itself, for this Andean religious art could be interpreted from both indigenous and European perspectives.<sup>45</sup> Broadly speaking, these fruits of the earth were symbols of fertility and life that descended from the divine power, here represented as a

<sup>43</sup> Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque*, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> Bailey writes that the 'papaya' has often been misrecognized as it is a representation of the more uncommon local mountain papaya (small and grooved) rather than the much more recognizable coastal papaya (large and smooth) (Ibid., p. 50). To one not familiar with the Arequipa papaya, the sculptures can look more like cacao pods.

<sup>45</sup> Bailey's study and transcription of the relevant documentary evidence in the parish and diocesan archives is the most systematic to date. See the appendices of *The Andean Hybrid Baroque*.

sun-cherub crowned with the feathered headdress of nobility. Seen from an entirely indigenous perspective, the artistic narrative would have been quite coherent, as maize the staple-crop (which, used in divination and to make a maize-beer known as *chicha* for reciprocal ceremonies, also had significant religious connotations for Andean peoples) could only be grown by the power of the life-giving sun god. From an entirely European perspective, these fruits of the earth that descend from the sun-like cherub allegorically placed the agricultural cycle and hence earthly nature within the natural and celestial hierarchy: all life, all grace descended from God, through his natural order. The triple but interlinked grape bunches or maize cobs meanwhile carried a Trinitarian as well as Eucharistic significance. Of course, indigenous and European meanings of these sculpted symbols were not meant to be teased out from each other in this way but instead created a



coherent Andean-Christian religious narrative. The church building, as such, became a text that could be read and understood from a range of perspectives all loosely incorporated within a broad category of Andean Christianity.

Inside the church, the artistic theme linking the divine, the angelic hierarchies, Edenic nature, and indigenous totems continue in a breath-taking manner. In the chapel of Saint Ignatius, birds of paradise in glorious coloured plumage alight on branches of flowering tropical fruit trees, and angels and archangels hover over cornucopias of fruit and bread while the evangelists look on.<sup>46</sup> A golden and bleeding sacred heart set on three indigenous arrows rather than the traditional three nails of Christ meanwhile drips onto a puma head set in tail-fan of another bird of paradise. It has been suggested that this Edenic theme, based on the flora and fauna of the Amazon, was because the chapel was used by the Jesuit seminarians who were trained for missions to the Andean jungle.<sup>47</sup> However, I would suggest that the overall theme has a much greater significance. Very similar Edenic representations of flora and fauna, especially the birds of paradise eating the tropical fruits can be

10.5 Feathered headdress above a papaya with three grape bunches or maize cobs, hanging from a cherub-sunflower, cloister of the Church of Santiago, Arequipa. (Photograph and copyright, the author)

<sup>46</sup> Originally the entire church was painted in this way – faint traces can still be seen in isolated spots on the walls – but unfortunately the original frescoes were lost. Thankfully the frescoes in the chapel of Saint Ignatius have survived and have been restored.

<sup>47</sup> Public explanatory notes in the chapel in fact read: ‘the unknown creators of the sacristy, betraying both Spanish and Arabian influence, have left us a work profusely decorated with a jungle motif, doubtless because the sacristy belonged to a house of studies or college were prepared for their future work in the jungle’ [signed Diego Rodríguez].

seen in the frescoes painted a century earlier in the Augustinian Convent of Malinalco, New Spain.<sup>48</sup> The same apparently syncretic Sacred Heart/three arrows iconography visible in the Church of Santiago, Arequipa, can also be seen in Malinalco. The *saeta* (dart or arrow) was the weapon of choice for the Amazonian Indians and without the similarities at Malinalco could be taken as further evidence to back up the thesis that the frescoes were painted because the Jesuit College in Arequipa trained seminarians who would become missionaries to the Amazon. The similarities between Malinalco and Arequipa are too significant to ignore, however, and I would suggest are indicative of a larger pan-Hispano-American iconographic tradition. Rather than proposing that there may have been a direct link between the two convents – highly unlikely, in fact, as the Malinalco frescoes were painted over in the course of the seventeenth century – the century of difference between the frescoes of Malinalco and Arequipa could instead be taken as demonstrative of the strength of this tradition.

This is a tradition that works as much on the functional level as it does on the symbolic. On a functional level, with regard to the frescoes and sculptures of Arequipa (and more broadly the style that he called the Andean Hybrid Baroque), Gauvin Bailey plausibly posits that the inspiration for the patterns on the church façade and walls may well have been the textiles that the indigenous sculptors' and painters' wives were producing in their own parallel industry; the patterns between the two are, indeed, remarkably similar. While on the one hand this situates the Arequipa style very much in its regional locality, it is worth mentioning that the incorporation of textile patterns of flora and fauna onto the sculptural decoration of convents and churches had also been an accepted practice in the *mudéjar* architecture of medieval Spain – stucco carvings of the twelfth-century Cistercian convent of Las Huelgas in Burgos, for example, copy the patterns on the Islamic textiles used as shrouds for Castilian nobles.<sup>49</sup> The point, then, is that while particular designs can be regionally pinpointed, throughout Spain and the Americas the use of representations of flora and fauna on religious buildings was not an unfamiliar aesthetic during the early modern period.

In order to better understand this traditional Hispanic aesthetic, it is important to also consider its broader symbolic meaning. In this regard, and

<sup>48</sup> Jeanette Favrot Peterson links the Malinalco frescoes to the descriptions of flora and fauna in the Florentine Codex by the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún and his team. See *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Austin, TX, 1993). I am grateful to Daniela Bleichmar and Iris Montero for drawing my attention to the frescoes at Malinalco. For examples of Sahagún's incorporation of flora and fauna into religious texts see Bernardino de Sahagún, *Psalmody Christiana*, translated by Arthur Anderson (Salt Lake City, UT, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> Jerrilynn D. Dodds, María Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture* (London, 2008), p. 185.



with respect to church decoration in the southern Andean Highlands, the Bolivian art historian Teresa Gisbert has drawn our attention to the treatise *El Paraíso en el nuevo Mundo*, written by Antonio de León Pinelo, in which he attempts to pinpoint the historical and geographical position of the no-longer existent Garden of Eden.<sup>50</sup> Most significantly, León Pinelo locates Eden in the Amazonian centre of the South American continent, close to the Jesuit centre of Julí and the missionary province of Paraguay.<sup>51</sup>

The symbolism of the Jesuit frescoes in Arequipa (and the earlier frescoes at Malinalco) was not mere allegorical representations of Paradise in the Amazonian Eden. Their representation merged with an early modern European quest to locate the paradisiacal Garden of Eden's former presence in the Americas. In so doing, those who searched for Eden would be contributing to the missionary duty to bring human exile from God to a close. Ultimately, however, the purpose behind these associations between angels and tropical birds and their physical representation in the churches was not so much to find the Garden of Eden in itself, or even to suggest that its former location had been found, but was to demonstrate that the church and its edifices represented Paradise on Earth, with the incarnated Christ as the key that would unlock the gates. The Eucharistic sacrament, meanwhile, was the beating heart that pumped grace out to the Christian community and the rest of the world. So what better way to evoke all this than by covering the walls with sacramental allegory combined with depictions of Paradise before the Fall? Physically entering the Church was the only way to return to this pre-Fall, Edenic spiritual place.

There arises, however, an interesting paradox if we consider that this Paradise, this Garden of Eden, the church, was the very heart of the urban centre, the point from which Christian civilization (and God's grace) could radiate out to the barbarous rural hinterland.<sup>52</sup> But perhaps this can be considered less of a paradox when we consider that in Islamic culture, urban gardens constructed along principles of natural harmony and order, were also considered spaces representative of Edenic Paradise, a place where God dwells. With this in mind, it is perhaps significant that the frescoes of tropical

<sup>50</sup> Gisbert notes that the book remained a manuscript until it was published by Raul Porras Barrenechea in 1934. The bibliographical details she gives are: Antonio León Pinelo, *El Paraíso en el Nuevo Mundo*, 2 vols (Lima, 1943). See *El Paraíso de los pájaros parlantes: La imagen del otro en la cultura andina* (La Paz, 2001), pp. 155–62, 177–78.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156. For the map in particular see p. 159. See also Heidi Scott, 'Paradise in the New World: an Iberian Vision of Tropicality', *Cultural Geographies*, 77:1 (2010): 85. In this essay, Scott examines Pinelo's work in detail in the context of 'comparative tropical geography'. Importantly she notes that although contemporary scholars were not trying to suggest that the Biblical Eden still existed, they were seeking 'to identify its former location on Earth' (*Ibid.*, p. 83).

<sup>52</sup> See above, pp. 000, especially Cobo's description of the foundation of the city of Lima.

paradise in Arequipa also bear apparent traces of Moorish influence.<sup>53</sup> While Fairchild Ruggles argues that he found 'no evidence for an explicit association between the constructed palatine garden and heavenly paradise in the eighth through tenth centuries', he continues by saying that certain passages in the Qur'ān:

talk of the earth not as a reflection of the paradise to come but as a thriving natural environment given life by God and given to humankind. The use of the word *janna* clearly meant 'paradise', here it is used to refer to a productive earthly garden stocked with familiar flowers and fruit from the domestic landscape of which God is the steward.<sup>54</sup>

The idea of the garden as a paradise on earth was certainly present in later Islamic poetic descriptions of gardens and it is important to bear in mind that the transition from Moorish palatine gardens and decoration, representative of God-given civilization, to their ideological incorporation into an Hispanic religious aesthetic, was a long and complex process.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, there were other medieval and early modern Christian Edenic associations that also fed into contemporary Hispanic and Hispano-American spirituality, such as the Carmelite attempts to recreate both Eden and the 'desert' of the Church fathers in the sacred space delimited by the confines of their convent lands. 'Desert nostalgia' – and deserts were understood as wildernesses full of life – in the words of Trevor Johnson, 'resonated through the religious culture of Golden Age Spain'.<sup>56</sup> It was this same religious culture that journeyed with the mendicant missionaries to the Americas in the sixteenth century and was rejuvenated by the Jesuits in the seventeenth. It was this religious culture that was reflected in their church architecture.

At the same time as Hispanic religious culture was affected by peninsular aesthetic and ideological traditions, in the Americas it was not enough to explain Christianity to indigenous peoples as purely an urban phenomenon; gathering the rural population together into urban parish settlements (*reductions*) was not sufficient. In order to make Christianity intelligible to indigenous peoples it was also necessary to explain it with referents that would have made sense in the context of agricultural cycles and rural life. More significantly, in attempting continually to undermine indigenous animism or the deification of natural phenomena, Hispanic missionaries tacitly helped to reinforce what might be described as the spirituality of the sacred landscape

<sup>53</sup> For Moorish influence in the Arequipa frescoes see above, footnote 32. For Islamic gardens and Paradise, see D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (Philadelphia, PA, 2003), pp. 215–20.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>55</sup> See Dodds, Menocale and Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy*, *passim*.

<sup>56</sup> Trevor Johnson, 'Gardening for God: Carmelite deserts and the sacralisation of natural space in Counter-Reformation Spain', in Coster and Spicer (eds) *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, p. 195.

but always (in their minds) with the churches (and the Blessed Sacrament at their heart) as the focal points of these landscapes.

In 1585, for example, a series of sermons were published in Lima following the publication of the new catechism the previous year. In the fifth sermon on the mysteries of the faith, the priest is instructed to reason that there was 'not one god who ruled heaven, another earth, and another maize, and another livestock, and another wheat, and one who sends thunder, and rains and another who grants health' instead, 'there is only one God and no more'. He continues: 'Just as your souls, in your bodies, are the spirits that govern the body, and is in the entire body [...] so you should understand that your God is in the heavens, the earth, and sea, and is present in all places.'<sup>57</sup> Decorating the churches with images of Edenic paradise and the fruits of the earth was an important way of incorporating indigenous sacred landscapes within Christian theology and reinforcing the notion of the church building as the focal point (and even source of) God's presence 'in all places'.

### III. Celestial Sanctuary

If the early modern church in the Americas was meant to be understood as paradise on earth and a place within which humankind could commune with God, the angels and the saints, church buildings not surprisingly were understood as places of spiritual power and to enter one was to place oneself under divine protection. At the same time, however, in places and times of socio-religious conflict, they could become focal points for attack for those who wished either to erase the Christian (or Catholic) presence from a particular region, or to simply demonstrate the strength of their spiritual patrons and deities over those of the Catholic faith.

In 1596 the Jesuit Provincial of the agglomeration of missions in Sinaloa (in the northern frontiers of the viceroyalty of New Spain) admitted in a letter to Rome that the Partido de Guaçabe, 'has not been as fruitful as had been desired'. He continued with a tale of how one of the Jesuits had come across a stone idol that his party carried back to the village. Once there, he trod it into the ground scandalizing the gathered villagers who protested that this mistreatment of their god would cause sickness and death and that a great wind would blow down their houses and the church.<sup>58</sup> Although the Jesuit preached that this was merely the lies of the devil, 'a furious wind with great dust-devils' blew up following his sermon, damaging the houses and

<sup>57</sup> 'Sermon V. En que se enseña que cosa es Dios, y que no ay mas de vn Dios, y ese DIOS es Padre, y Hijo, y Spiritu Sancto', in *Tercero Cathecismo y Exposicion dela Doctrina Christiana, por Sermones. Para que los curas y otros ministros prediquen y enseñen a los Yndios y a las demas personas* (Ciudad de los Reyes, 1585), ff. 30–v.

<sup>58</sup> ARSI, Provincia Mexicana [hereafter ProvMex] 14, *Litt. Ann. 1574–1614*, 'Annua de la Prov de la Nueva España Año de 1596 para el P. Barth. Perez, Assistente en Roma 1.3.1597', f. 156v.

terrifying the villagers. After two unsuccessful petitions from indigenous religious leaders (called *pyles* by the Jesuit and explained as 'like priests among the Indians') for the return of their deity, the populations of the surrounding area – already discontented by the obligatory *corvée* labour imposed on them by the Spaniards – deserted their newly founded *reductions* and, 'not content with this, some of the most ungrateful and inhuman ones set fire to the churches and broke the images'.<sup>59</sup>

This was a resounding rejection of the Christian faith based on reasonable observation of terrifying causal evidence after they witnessed the wind-borne anger of their own deities. Their subsequent violence was directed at the central symbols of the Christian faith, such as the church buildings and the saints contained within them. Nevertheless, this directed violence merely affirmed to the Jesuits the view that Lucifer had such a strong hold over these frontier peoples and gave urgency to the incentive to 'expel the devil from the fortress-souls of which, until that moment, he had such easy possession'.<sup>60</sup> The Jesuits Hernando de Santarén and Alonso Ruiz reported that the devil seemed to grieve significantly when they took the idols away from the indigenous population of Topia and San Andrés. Members of the community had apparently even seen them shed tears 'even though they were stones', and been threatened with death and famine for handing them over. Once again the situation turned violent and a general uprising across the region began with the killing of 'five Spanish youths and some Indians who were accompanying them as they slept very carelessly in the Church'.<sup>61</sup> For the pragmatic Jesuit narrator, their carelessness was not so much that they chose to sleep in the church building but was more to do with the fact that they failed to keep an effective watch and so paid for this failure with their lives. But from the perspective of the youths and their indigenous guides (Christian neophytes), apart from being an enclosed space in which they could take physical shelter from the elements, they might also have presumed (tragically) to have divine protection while sleeping in this sacred space. Their mistake, ultimately, was to presume to know God's plan while ignoring the fact that they too had an obligation to protect themselves and keep watch. Scripture contains a number of warnings against such complacency, from Christ's instruction to his disciples to stay awake and keep watch in the Garden of Gethsemane to the Book of Job, which was an object lesson in not presuming to know the mind of God.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> From the summary of the report from the Zacatecas residence., *ibid.*, f. 155. For an accessible study of these frontier conflicts see chapters 1–3 of Donna J. Guy and Thomas E. Sheridan (eds), *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson, AZ, 1998), pp. 3–51.

<sup>61</sup> 'ARSI, ProvMex 14, *Litt. Ann. 1574–1614*, 'Anua de la Nueva España para Roma 1601', f. 292.

<sup>62</sup> Mark 14:34–40 and Job 38.

Tragic lessons like this notwithstanding, the church building was still seen to be a place of sanctuary and divine power as can be seen by a further example during the same rebellion when Spaniards under attack in San Andrés, took refuge in the church until 'it pleased the Lord to drop on the enemy a great wind and tornado that confused and scattered them'.<sup>63</sup> Large dust-devils are common in this region but with the coincidence of one occurring that scattered an attack on the church, it is not surprising that a supernatural cause was attributed to it by the Spaniards and, by the same token, it would be likely interpreted in a similar way by the attacking warriors. As we saw above, parallel supernatural associations with dust-devils occurred after the Jesuit mistreatment of indigenous deities, but in this particular case the mini-tornado was considered a divine wind sent by God to protect those who had taken sanctuary in his church.

These associations between church buildings, sanctuary and divine power were further demonstrated during a similar attack a few years later, in which the Spaniards taking sanctuary inside the church became so disheartened that the Jesuit Alonso Ruiz took up a crucifix and a small shield and exhorted his comrades to follow him outside and die in defence of the faith. If they had lost faith in the church building as a sanctuary, at least they would die as martyrs. Of course, it is perhaps easy for a modern readership to be cynical about the Spanish resolve to 'die for the faith' when in fact it is quite plausible that they preferred to die fighting rather than trapped inside a burning church. While this is highly likely, the determination to die fighting could be and was turned into a virtue (for the Spaniards) by resolving to die fighting to defend the faith. To die a martyr, even a fighting one, would be to gain sure entry to God's kingdom. Significantly, in order to underline the necessary hatred of the faith or *odium fidei* for martyrdom to be recognized, the narrator notes the insurgents' particular aggression towards the banners the Spanish party had made from the canvas paintings of the saints from the church, 'dragging them along the ground in order to dishonour our religion'.<sup>64</sup> These images that came from within the church building were symbols of religious power for both sides involved in the conflict. One side invoked this power for protection, the other concentrated on destroying it. Ultimately, however, for the Spaniards, the outcome of the struggle was yet another lesson in the unknowable nature of Divine Providence. Resolved to die (fighting) for the faith after initially taking sanctuary in the church building, they were in fact saved by the arrival of a group of 'Indian friends' who came to defend them.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> ARSI, ProvMex 14, *Litt. Ann. 1574–1614*, 'Annuæ de la Nueva España para Roma 1601', f. 239.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 239v.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

#### IV. Conclusion: Divine Providence

On hearing the horrific roar of such a tragic blow the entire city awoke at the same time: and as the news spread that the devastation had affected the Society of Jesus a huge crowd gathered in our street and adjacent square [...] moved by love and affection for us.<sup>66</sup>

The destruction of church buildings and their contents was not limited to the human enemies of Catholic Christianity (or, more particularly, the Spanish). While they were considered dwelling-places of the divine, churches were still built by human hands and, as such, were still subject to the vagaries of human error and geological disaster. The construction of the church of Saint Ignatius in Santafé de Bogotá that was inaugurated with such pomp and circumstance in 1697 had not gone entirely smoothly and, shortly before it was due for completion, cracks appeared in the structure once the supports for the dome were taken away. On the night of 23 April 1691, the construction came crashing down.<sup>67</sup> What is significant about the collapse is the way the population and the Society of Jesus perceived and reacted to it. We have seen how churches were considered central to the spiritual landscape of the Hispanic Americas, places in which God dwelt with his angels and saints with whom the entire community could connect in this earthly paradise. We have also seen how the Blessed Sacrament was the focal point within these buildings, with the rites enabling divine grace to spread through the surrounding region. We have also briefly discussed how, because of this spiritual power, church buildings were considered places of sanctuary by the faithful and focal points to attack by the enemies of Hispanic Christianity. How then did populations react to the natural (or even providential) destruction of these edifices?

Firstly the same sense of community that existed within church edifices manifested itself even after the collapse of the building. The people of Bogotá gathered in vigil outside the Jesuit residence acknowledging the tragic loss and registering their support as a community even if they wondered how and why it had come about. The Jesuit narrator recognized it had been down to human error saying that 'with the appearance of the cracks it became clear that the building had been constructed all wrong'.<sup>68</sup> Even so, the hand of providence was believed to be at work, as we shall see below. The Blessed Sacrament, meanwhile, still remained central to the ritual landscape of the community, with or without a completed church building:

While the people returned to their houses [...] our community went down to the church and on seeing the terrible damage and acknowledging the likelihood of

<sup>66</sup> ARSI, ProvNR&Q 13.2, Litt. Ann. 1694–8, ff. 347v–348.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 347v.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

greater ruin as the ceiling had not yet completely fallen, they took out the Most Holy [Sacrament] in a devoted procession and carried His Majesty to the interior chapel.<sup>69</sup>

With the Blessed Sacrament protected ritually and physically removed to the equivalent of an 'inner sanctum', the Jesuits could turn their attention to why their church, such a tremendous work of devotion on their part but also on the part of the local community had been allowed to collapse.<sup>70</sup> They would not so much be questioning God as examining their own consciences. The assumption that God's actions were just was a given. They simply needed to work out either what they had done to deserve such (just) punishment or what greater good would come of the disaster. They found consolation by comparing their circumstances with scripture:

With this blow it seems that the Divine Majesty wished to test the perseverance of this College: and having found it ever-faithful in its meticulous and religious observances, through his immense goodness, he consoled it as he consoled Holy Job by restoring and bettering such great losses.<sup>71</sup>

True to the spirituality of the Hispanic Baroque, in the face of such a setback, all they could do was to put their faith in God and rebuild. From that point on, the narrator noted that they were receiving greater financial and physical assistance from the local population than previously, and as the narrator goes on to describe in the letter, the church that was finally built and inaugurated in 1697 was far better and far grander than the one they had originally tried to build. The completed church then, was a serious lesson in trusting in divine providence and better reflected God's glory on Earth. In this, the church of San Ignacio de Santafé de Bogotá was an exemplary Hispanic American church.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 348.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 346v.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

