The Patrimony of the Religious Orders in Spanish American Colonial Cities

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Architecture and History

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND GRAPHS

INTRODUCTION

I have spent my adult life in exploring the history of Latin America, focusing on different topics that have caught my interest. I have researched historical demography of indigenous populations in the Americas, nineteenth century liberalism and patterns of land tenure, the colonial caste system, the evangelization of indigenous peoples in Spanish America, and frontier missions. I have combined my interest in photography with my historical research, and have used photographs to provide context in my articles and monographs. A sense of place is always important in trying to document the past.

I have dedicated time to what I call my wanderlust to visit and photograph historic sites related to my research interests, and to include photographs in my publications. I have been particularly drawn to the colonial-era patrimony of religious art and architecture in Spanish America, be it sixteenth century *doctrinas* (centers of indigenous evangelization) in central Mexico or frontier missions in North and South America. While I continued my historical research, I also started the publication of a series of Visual Catalogs dedicated to different categories of religious architecture.[1] The first documented the architectural patrimony of sixteenth century doctrinas in central Mexico. This volume is the last in the series.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries male and female Catholic religious orders established and had large complexes built in colonial Spanish American cities. The orders, that generally enjoyed support from the Crown and Spanish American elites, invested considerable sums in the construction and decoration of churches and cloisters. They also received donations of money and income generating urban and rural properties. Their complexes occupied a large part of the urban space, and the cost of supporting them was, in a real sense, a drain on the economy. The members of the religious orders were a small minority that, in many senses, were privileged to be able to dedicate their lives to an exploration of their spirituality. For example, at the end of the eighteenth century there were some 2,100 nuns cloistered in convents in Mexico. At the time of their expulsion from Spanish territories in 1767, there were some 2,400 Jesuits in all of Spanish America. At the same time the architecture and art they left behind constitutes an important historical patrimony, a patrimony that at times is at risk. I say at risk, because historically and now some governments have seen the orders and their architectural and artistic patrimony as a liability. Mexico and Colombia, for example, implemented anticlerical policies that affected the religious orders as politicians saw them as a liability in an agenda of economic and societal modernization. In some cases governments ordered the partial or complete demolition of complexes in the name of progress and urban development.

This volume provides a visual record of the architectural and artistic patrimony left by, and in some cases still occupied, by the male and female religious orders in selected Spanish American colonial cities, and a bit of the historical context. It does not pretend to be comprehensive, but rather representative. The cities chosen to profile in Mexico include Mexico City, Puebla, Querétaro, and Antequera (Oaxaca). Those chosen in Colombia are Cartagena de Indias and Santa Fe de Bogotá. Three cities in Perú are profiled. They are Lima, Cuzco, and Arequipa. The last city is Buenos Aires, located in what today is Argentina. It was an important urban center in the Rio de la Plata region that historically was marginal when compared to the more important colonial centers, for example, in Mexico and Perú. Buenos Aires did not obtain the legal right to trade directly with Spain until the implementation of the reform policy of *comercio libre* (free trade within the Spanish empire) in the mid-1770s.

Religious iconography is an important part of the artistic patrimony of the religious orders, and played an important role in the evangelization of indigenous peoples by missionaries from several of the male religious orders including the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Mercedarians, and Jesuits. Chapter 1 analyzes the themes of iconography, and its changing use over time. The members of the Society of Jesus played an important role in colonial Spanish America as educators, missionaries, and spiritual leaders until expelled from all Spanish territories in June of 1767 on the orders of King Carlos III. Although never numerous, there were, as already noted above, some 2,400 Jesuits in Spanish America at the time of their expulsion, the importance of their presence and role was far greater than their numbers. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the roles of the members of the Society of Jesus in Spanish America as a case study of the history of the male religious orders, and Chapter 3 discusses Jesuit baroque architectural through case studies from

[1] Robert H. Jackson and Fernando Esparragoza Amador, *A Visual Catalog of Sixteenth Century Central Mexican Doctrinas* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); Robert H. Jackson, *A Visual Catalog of Spanish Frontier Missions, Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries.* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018); Arturo Vergara Hernández and Robert H. Jackson, *Las doctrinas franciscanas de México a fines del siglo XVI en las descripciones de Antonio de Ciudad Real (O.F.M.) y su situación actual* (Pachuca: Universidad Autónoma Estado de Hidalgo, 2018); Robert H. Jackson and Juan Antonio Siller Camacho, *A Visual Catalog of Jesuit Missions in Spanish America* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021); Robert H. Jackson, *A Visual Catalog of the Building Complexes of the Male Religious Orders in Mexico's Colonial Cities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024).

Mexico and Perú. An appendix provides a visual record of the surviving Jesuit architectural patrimony in Spanish American cities. What follows is the visual record of the patrimony of the male and female religious orders in the cities profiled here. My hope is that this volume proves to be useful for both researchers and the general public.

CHAPTER 1

ICONOGRAPHY AND EVANGELIZATION

At the time of Spanish conquests in the Americas and the beginning of the so-called "spiritual conquest" in the sixteenth century, religious iconography played an important role in the evangelization of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Latin and not the vernacular was the official language of the Catholic Church, and the Church banned the publication of the Bible in vernacular languages. Most people were illiterate, and priests were the purveyors of the esoteric knowledge of the faith. Iconography was important in teaching the European populations. The evangelization of the indigenous peoples of the Americas was complicated by the many languages, and the difficult task of translating Judeo-Christian concepts of faith into cultures with very different religious traditions and World-View. The persistence of pre-Hispanic religious beliefs alongside the new faith complicated the process of evangelization, and indigenous artists incorporated pre-Hispanic iconography in what ostensibly was Christian iconography.[2]

Missionaries stressed different iconographic themes in visual representations of faith at different times, and in different social-political contexts. Artistic aesthetics changed over time, but so too did the visual representations used in evangelization. This article discusses changing iconography from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth-centuries in Europe and in the evangelization of the Americas. It first discusses the iconography of death in Europe in the fifteenth-century, shortly before the expansion to the Americas. Life was short and brutal, and death was always present. The Black Death, the bubonic plague outbreak in the years 1346-1350, killed as much as a third of the population of Europe, and disease and warfare continued to reduce the populations. The iconography of the Dance of Death and the Triumph of Death reminded the faithful of the inevitability of death in graphic terms, and was found across Europe.

The evangelization of the Americas created new challenges for the missionaries, who had to fight for the hearts, minds, and faith of indigenous peoples with very different religious traditions. The missionaries stressed different iconographic themes, and stressed the Final Judgment and the possibility of an eternity of suffering in Hell for sin. Sin included the concept of the Original Sin, but also indigenous cultural-religious traditions and practices that clashed with the teachings of the Church such as the ritual consumption of the fermented drink pulque. The missionaries used graphic iconography in an effort to convince indigenous peoples to abandon their old Gods and beliefs, and taught that pre-Hispanic religion was demonic in origin. The missionaries themselves believed that they were in a war with Satan and his demonic minions, and tried to convince indigenous peoples that this was the truth. Examples of sixteenth century iconography of evangelization in central Mexico are found in the *capilla de indios* ("open chapel") of the Augustinian *doctrina* (Mission) at Actopan (Hidalgo), and the *visita* chapel Santa María Xoxoteco (Hidalgo), both located on the contested Chichimeca frontier.

Approaches to evangelization changed in some ways over time. Two Jesuit doctrina chapels in the Cuzco region of Perú, Andahuaylillas and Huaro, preserve late seventeenth and eighteenth-century iconography, and are analyzed and discussed here in the context of earlier examples of iconography. The eighteenth-century Franciscan reform of evangelization through the apostolic colleges included a shift in the iconography of evangelization. This can be seen in the decoration of mission churches in the Sierra Gorda region (Querétaro), and the later California missions established after 1769. The Final Judgment was still a theme found in San Fernando church in Mexico City attached to the apostolic college that founded and administered the Sierra Gorda and California missions. A large painting found in the church

[2] This discussion builds upon previous publications on iconography and evangelization in sixteenth-century Mexico. See, for example, Robert H. Jackson, "Visual Representations of Religious Conversion in Spanish American Missions," *California Mission Studies Association Boletín* 25:2 (2008), 5-30; Robert H. Jackson, *Conflict and Conversion in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico: The Augustinian War on and Beyond the Chichimeca Frontier* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2013); Robert H. Jackson, "The Virgin of the Rosary at Tetela del Volcan (Morelos), Conversion, the Baptismal Controversy, a Dominican Critique of the Franciscans, and the Culture Wars in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico," *Boletin: Journal of the California Missions Studies Association* 29:1 (2013) 12-28; Robert H. Jackson, *Visualizing the Miraculous, Visualizing the Sacred: Evangelization and the "Cultural War" in Sixteenth Century Mexico* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014); Robert H. Jackson, "Representaciones de la muerte en las doctrinas del centro de Mexico durante el siglo XVI," in Arturo Vergara Hernandez, *Arte y Sociedad en la Nueva Espana* (Pachuca: UAEH, 2014), 39-70; Robert H. Jackson, "The Design Element on the Façade of the Jesuit Church of Nuestra Senora de la Asuncion Opodepe (Sonora): The Persistence of Pre-Hispanic Religious Beliefs?" *Kiva Journal of Southwestern Archaeology and History* 80:3-4 (March-June, 2015), 393-408; Robert H. Jackson, "Temas de la evangelización: el pecado y representaciones de la muerte en las doctrinas del centro de Mexico durante el siglo XVI," *Mesoamerica* 57 (enero-diciembre 2015), 1-21; Robert H. Jackson, "Rethinking the "Spiritual Conquest" in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico," *Boletín Journal of the California Missions Foundation* 38:1 (2022), 5-38; and Robert H. Jackson and Leonardo Meraz Quintana, *Urban Plan, Architecture, and the Geography of the Sacred in Colonial Morelos* (Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers, 2024).

represents the Final Judgment, although not is such graphic terms as in the iconography of sixteenth-century. A second section of the painting is a depiction of the Franciscan Tree of Life, or of direct descent from the crucified Jesus and thus the legitimate teachers of the true faith. It also depicts Franciscan martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of their beliefs, and of Franciscan saints who exemplified Christian values. The first section of this article discusses the iconography of death.

The Dance and Triumph of Death

The late Medieval church used graphic iconography to remind people of the inevitability of death, and of the need to follow the teachings of the Church and to prepare for death. The Dance of Death showed a skeletal representation of death dancing with different members of society, including monarchs, the nobility, and the clergy. The Triumph of Death depicted death claiming all levels of society. The Nuremberg Chronicle published in 1493 was typical. It depicted a group of skeletons dancing (see Figure 1). The mural in the public space of an exterior wall of the Oratorio dei Disciplini in Clusone (northern Italy) painted in 1483 represented both iconographic themes (see Figure 2). In the upper panel the King of Death and two of his soldiers claim different members of society. One soldier uses a bow and arrows, and a second a primitive arquebus. The lower panel depicts different members of society dancing with Death. A mural in the *sala capitular* of the Franciscan convent of San Francisco de Morelia (Castellón, Valencia, Spain) presents a variation on the theme of death. One panel depicts different members of society in the Dance of Death (see Figure 3), and a second panel depicts Death using a bow and arrows to claim his victims in a Tree of Life (see Figure 4). The sala capitular was built between 1427 and 1442, which provides a possible range of dates for the painting of the mural. In a mural painted in 1446 in Palermo (Sicily, Italy), Death riding a skeletal horse uses a bow and arrows to claim its victims (see Figure 5).

Figure 1: The Dance of Death from the Nuremberg Chronicle.

Figure 2: The Clusone mural showing the Triumph and Dance of Death. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 3: The Dance of Death in the convent of San Francisco de Morelia. Photograph in the collection of the author.

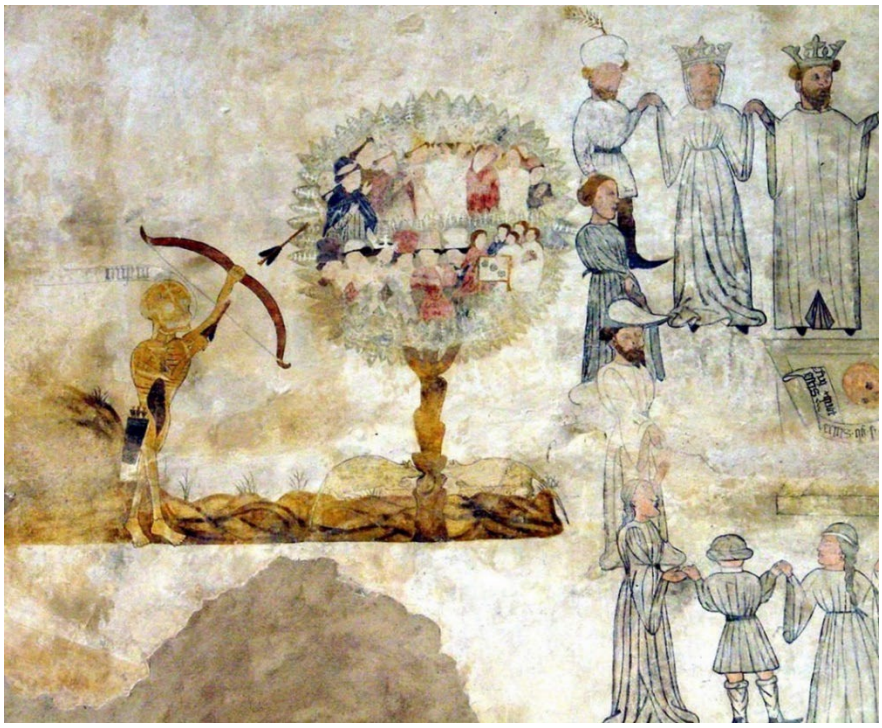

Figure 4: Death uses a Bow and Arrows to claim its victims from a Tree of Life.
Photograph in the collection of the author.

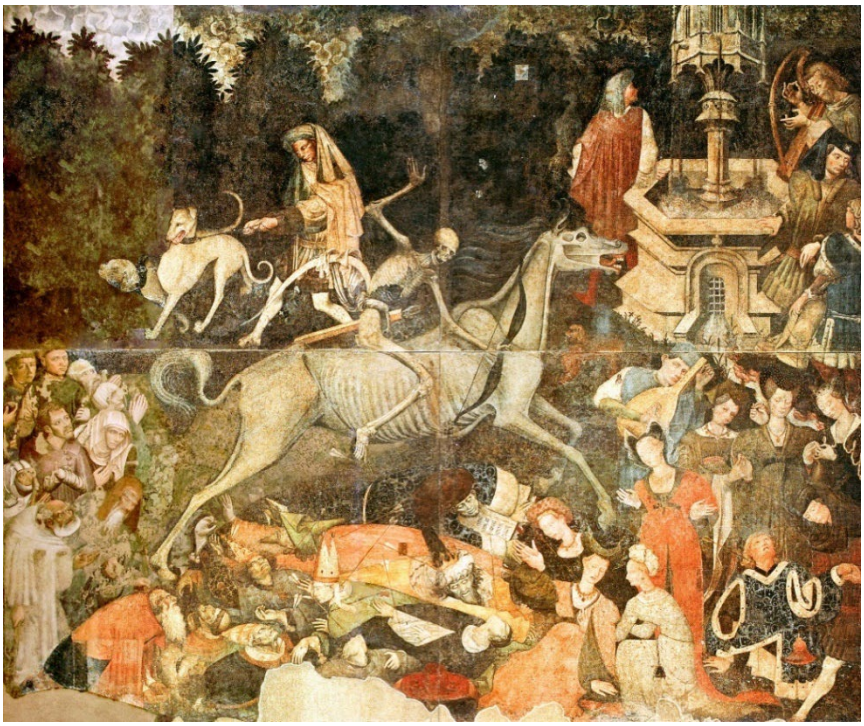

Figure 5: The Triumph of Death from a 1446 mural in the Palazzo Scalfani, Palermo, Sicily.
Photograph in the collection of the author.

Plagues, war, and famine killed many in sixteenth-century Europe, and the iconography of death continued to be important. Wars convulsed Europe, and the c. 1562 painting of the Triumph of Death by Pieter Bruegel the Elder captured a sense of the mayhem and destruction (see Figure 6). An army of skeletons ravage the land, killing indiscriminately and burning buildings and even ships at sea. There was no end to the conflict and carnage, and the painting depicts humanity as being at the mercy of the relentless skeletal army. It presents a dark image of the inevitability of death born of a period of chaos and conflict.

Figure 6: The Triumph of Death by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Photograph in the collection of the author.

The missionaries in sixteenth century Mexico, on the other hand, did not employ the theme of the inevitability of death in the evangelization of indigenous peoples. They stressed instead the Final Judgment and Sin. There are mural representations of death and the Triumph of Death, but not in the public space of the doctrinas used in the conversion of indigenous peoples. The sixteenth-century examples are found in the private space of the doctrina complexes as reminders to the missionaries themselves, and in a private residence in Puebla. The most complete example is a representation of the Triumph of Death in the upper cloister of the Franciscan/Augustinian doctrina in Huatlatlauca in Puebla. Death armed with a bow and arrows claims its victims from the different ranks of society (see Figure 7). The indigenous artists who painted the mural used a European print as the model. The second example is found in a niche in the lower cloister of the Augustinian doctrina in Malinalco (Estado de México). It depicts an Augustinian missionary with death (see Figure 8). A third example is a representation of the King of Death in the *portería* or entrance to the cloister of the Franciscan doctrina San Gabriel Cholula, Puebla (see Figure 9). The final example is a representation of the Triumph of Death that dates to the 1580s found in a private residence in Puebla known as the Casa del Deán. Death rides a chariot that tramples its victims (see Figure 10).

Figure 7: The Triumph of Death in the upper cloister of the doctrina in Huatlatlauca.
Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 8: Death and an Augustinian missionary, Malinalco. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 9: The King of Death in the portería of the Franciscan doctrina in Cholula, Puebla. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 10: The Triumph of Death from the Casa del Deán, Puebla. Photograph in the collection of the author.

A pair of late seventeenth century murals in the public space of the Jesuit doctrina church San Juan Bautista Huaro (Cuzco, Perú) drew upon the European iconography of death in graphic detail. The first is a representation of the Tree of Life, similar to the mural in the Franciscan convent San Francisco Morelia discussed above. In a Huaro mural Death uses an ax to chop down the Tree of Life instead of shooting arrows, and a demon uses a rope to help bring the Tree down. There is a banquet going-on in the tree with musicians, and people dancing (see Figure 11). The second mural is a graphic representation of death claiming its victims that draws on European iconography. Death is shown with a scythe in the central panel, and his surrounded by symbols of war such as a pair of canons, military drums, and a helmet and armor. Death claims all members of society as represented by a crown used by a King, and hats and a crozier used by members of the Church. In the same panel two priests attend to a dying man. Death is shown standing next to the bed, and a Demon is under the bed hoping to claim a sinner. A child is on the point of death, and an angel is ready to take his soul to heaven. In two side panels Death is ready to claim the lives of several couples (see Figure 12).

Ritual and processions also figured in popular responses to the reality of death and particularly mortality crises at a time when medical knowledge was still largely impotent in the face of lethal pathogens such as smallpox and measles. The clergy and particularly the regular orders were seen as intermediaries to a vengeful God who sent disease as a punishment for sinful behavior. Members of the religious orders organized processions during times of epidemics to placate God`s wrath. One example was a *novena* (nine days of processions and penitence) organized by the Jesuits during a 1727 measles epidemic in Mexico City. The Jesuits had the statue of the Virgin of Loreto from San Gregorio church carried to the Cathedral for the novena.[3] However, divine intervention did not always blunt the effects of epidemics, and the members of the clergy and religious orders prepared people for death in the hope that they would find salvation in heaven. A mural in the rural doctrina church in Catcca (Cuzco, Perú) depicts Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits confessing and giving the last rites to victims of the 1720 epidemic (see Figure 13). The pathogen that caused the pandemic has not been identified. The mural shows Jesuits and members of other religious orders (Franciscan, Dominican, Mercedarian) hearing the confessions of the sick in the main square of the community. Bodies are lying on the ground unattended. One man is dragging a body with a rope, and a horse is carrying several other bodies. The pandemic caused heavy mortality, and there was little the clergy could do other than to offer confession. It was another reminder of the inevitability of death, and the practices to prepare people for death and the hoped for after-life.

[3] Robert H. Jackson, "Jesuits in Spanish America before the Suppression Organization and Demographic and Quantitative Perspectives," *Jesuit Studies* 2.4 (2021), 17.

Figure 11: A mural of Death chopping down the Tree of Life. San Juan Bautista Huaro, Cuzco, Perú. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 12: The inevitability of Death. San Juan Bautista Huaro, Cuzco, Perú. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 13: A mural in the doctrina church in Catcca (Cuzco, Perú) showing members of the religious orders confessing and giving the last rites to the dying during a lethal 1720 epidemic. Photograph courtesy of Javier Colmenares

The Final Judgment and Sin

The missionaries who attempted to evangelize the indigenous peoples of central Mexico believed they were in a war with Satan and his demonic minions, and that pre-Hispanic religious beliefs were inspired by Satan. While the missionaries taught the basic doctrinal elements of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, they also employed the concept of the Final Judgment and the torment of sinners in Hell in the iconography of the public spaces used for catechism and mass. The mural programs of the capilla de indios of the Augustinian doctrina in Actopan (Hidalgo) and the visita chapel of Xoxoteco (Hidalgo) are prime examples of this iconography. Although they evidence stylistic differences, the two mural programs depict the same themes, and were examples of a common regional approach to evangelization.

The first example is the mural program in the capilla de indios at Actopan. The capilla de indios or “open chapel” was an architectural adaptation that allowed the missionaries to bring large numbers of people together in the space of the doctrina atrium for religious instruction and mass (see Figure 14). The murals on the back wall of the capilla presented the Final Judgment that juxtaposed the blessed in heaven and sinners in Hell. It also presented the concept of the Original Sin, Purgatory, the Temptation of Christ in the desert, and sinners drowned in the Flood, among other themes (see Figure 15). The murals on the lateral walls of the capilla present a heavy handed and graphic representations of Demons tormenting sinners in Hell. Smaller panels presented specific lessons the missionaries attempted to teach. One panel shows Hernán Cortés leading an indigenous man away from a pre-Hispanic temple with a deity at the top represented as a Demon. A second panel shows an indigenous couple surrounded by Demons drinking pulque (a ritually fermented alcoholic drink), a practice the missionaries attempted to suppress. A third panel shows a Spanish and Indigenous woman surrounded by Demons who tempt a Spanish and indigenous man, which was a reference to the concept of the Original Sin (see Figures 16-17).

Figure 14: The capilla de indios at Actopan (Hidalgo). Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 15: The murals on the back wall of the Actopan capilla de indios. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 16: Murals on the lateral wall of the Actopan capilla de indios. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 17: Murals on the lateral wall of the Actopan capilla de indios. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Santa María Xoxoteco was a visita chapel of the Augustinian doctrina Los Reyes Metztitlán, located in the Sierra Alta of Hidalgo. It was constructed in the form of an "open chapel," but was later enclosed. The murals on the back wall of the chapel represent sinners entering Hell through the open mouth of a beast (the Maws of Hell), and the original sin. The murals on the lateral walls represent the same demonic torment of sinners in Hell, and the same smaller panels. One of the indigenous couple surrounded by Demons drinking pulque, Cortés leading the indigenous man away from the pre-Hispanic temple, and the women surrounded by Demons who tempt a pair of men. Hideous Demons torment sinners in different ways (see Figures 18-19). The missionaries attempted to deliver a graphic and heavy-handed message to indigenous peoples.

Figure 18: The Xoxoteco murals. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 19: Detail of the Xoxoteco murals showing Demonic torments and the panel of the indigenous couple surrounded by Demons drinking pulque. Photograph in the collection of the author.

There are equally graphic examples of the theme of the Final Judgment in the Jesuit doctrina churches of Andahuaylillas and Huaro and other religious complexes in Perú. One variation on the theme of the Final Judgment was the Road to Heaven and the Road to Hell. A mural in the church at Andahuaylillas contrasted the perilous journey to Hell with sinners tormented by Demons while walking to their fate to be consigned to the flames, which is contrasted to Angels who awaited the souls of those who attained salvation (see Figure 20). A mural in a cell of the Mercedarian convent in Cuzco depicts the same theme, as Demons await sinners but also attempt to trap those who attained salvation in Heaven (see Figure 21).

Figure 20: The Road to Heaven and the Road to Hell from the ex-Jesuit church at Andahauylillas, Perú. Photographs in the collection of the author.

Figure 21: The Road to Heaven and the Road to Hell from the Mercedarian convent in Cuzco, Perú. Photograph courtesy of Javier Colmenares.

The ex-Jesuit doctrina church in Huaro contains two graphic representations of the Final Judgment. The first dates to the late seventeenth-century, and contains the juxtaposed images of the torment of sinners in Hell and those who attained salvation in Heaven. Sinners enter Hell through the Maws shown as the jaws of a large beast similar to the representation in the murals at Actopan and Xoxoteco (see Figure 22). A second mural painted following the expulsion of the Jesuits re-enforced the message of the Final Judgment by focusing on the torment of sinners in Hell presented in graphic detail, and in terms as graphic as the Actopan and Xoxoteco murals discussed above (see Figure 23). Sinners are boiled in large pots, are tortured on a wheel, and other forms of torture. They are consigned to the perpetual flames of Hell.

Figure 22: The Final Judgment in the ex-Jesuit doctrina church at Huaro, Perú.
Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 23: The torment of sinners in Hell. Mural from the ex-Jesuit doctrina church at Huaro, Perú, painted in 1803.
Photograph in the collection of the author.

The murals depicting the Final Judgment and the torment of sinners in Hell were a constant reminder and lesson for the indigenous peoples the missionaries attempted to convert to the true faith through fear. At the same time it is important to comment that the indigenous peoples had their own different concepts of the afterlife. Although important, the mantra of fear was not the only doctrinal concept the missionaries taught. Beginning in the sixteenth-century the missionaries from the different orders employed visual catechisms, known as Testerian catechisms from the versions used in central Mexico. The visual catechism used images to teach basic doctrinal points such as the Passion of Christ, the Crucifixion, and Resurrection, but also challenged the pre-Hispanic deities as false gods. The visual catechisms often had texts

translated into indigenous languages, but, as already mentioned, above, there was a problem of translating culturally embedded Judeo-Christian religious concepts into cultures with very different religious concepts and World view.

The Edgerton Manuscript is a typical Testerian visual catechism, with text in Náhuatl (see Figure 24). Images on one page of the catechism challenged pulque consumption, which was a practice the missionaries attempted to suppress as a measure of social control. It also challenged pre-Hispanic deities. The missionaries, however, also incorporated their own war with the Demon into the catechism. One panel shows a hideous Demon attacking an indigenous man. The next panel depicts a missionary armed with a sword challenging the Demon, and protecting two indigenous men who run to the missionary for help.

Figure 24: A page from a Testerian visual catechism.

Evangelization and Baroque Iconography in Eighteenth-Century Missions

Beginning with the establishment of the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz in Querétaro, Mexico, the Franciscans reformed and re-invigorated their missionary impulse in Mexico. Franciscans from the Apostolic College of San Fernando in Mexico City administered missions in the Sierra Gorda region of Querétaro with a mandate to accelerate the conversion and integration into colonial society of the Pames and Jonaces who inhabited the region. The first missionaries attempted to evangelize the indigenous peoples of the region in the 1530s and 1540s, and the Crown financed missions administered by Augustinians that largely failed to overcome resistance to the effort to change their way of life. José de Escandón, who received a mandate to colonize a region he named Nuevo Santander and reform the missions, criticized the Augustinians for their failures, and replaced them with the Franciscans from San Fernando. Reports drafted by the Franciscans described their method, which was to emphasize the instruction of the children, which was a strategy that also acknowledge the difficulty of changing the engrained beliefs of the adults. They also reported evidence of the persistence of pre-Hispanic religious beliefs and practices.[4]

The San Fernando church of the apostolic college located outside of Mexico City was an example of baroque architecture and interior design, and was typical of the baroque religious structures of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The construction of San Fernando church was completed in the 1750s, and it was built with a baroque façade (see Figure 25). An 1855 lithograph shows the baroque and neoclassical retablos in the church (see Figure 26). The baroque main altar was later removed, but in the 20th century a replica of the original baroque main altar was installed in the church (see Figure 25). Paintings replaced murals, and one notable large painting still exists in the church. It surrounds the lateral entrance to the church. It depicts two themes. The first is the Final Judgment, and the second is a representation of Franciscan saints and martyrs showing their descent from Jesus shown on the cross. The representation of the Final

[4] See Robert H. Jackson, *Frontiers of Evangelization: Indians in the Sierra Gorda and Chiquitos Missions.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 83-90.

Judgment is very different from those of the sixteenth-century discussed above. The emphasis is on salvation in Heaven, and the depiction of Hell does not contain the same graphic detail as in the earlier murals. The use of such graphic detail was no longer necessary as it was deemed to be during the first stages of evangelization.

Figure 25: The Façade and main altar of San Ferando Church. Photographs in the collection of the author.

Figure 26: An 1855 lithograph of the interior of San Fernando church with its baroque and neoclassical retablos. The original baroque main altar was still in place behind a neoclassical design element.

Figure 27: The Painting in the San Fernando church that depicts the Final Judgment and the Franciscan Tree of Life with descent from Jesus on the cross. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 28: Detail of the main sections of the painting. Photographs in the collection of the author.

During their tenure on the Sierra Gorda missions (1744-1770), the Franciscans from the Apostolic College of San Fernando directed the construction of baroque-style stone churches. The church at Tancoyol was typical (see Figure 29). The Franciscan complex contained architectural elements commonly found in sixteenth-century doctrinas. They included a walled atrium, a capilla de indios, and *capillas posa* located at the corners of the atrium used in processions, and a cross located in the center of the atrium often aligned to the church entrance. With the exception of the atrial cross, these were architectural elements not found in the complexes of the later Franciscan California missions. The baroque design elements on the church façade included statues of saints and other Christian iconography related to Christian bounty. Baroque design elements were also absent from the later California missions.

Figure 29: The Franciscan church at Tancoyol. The capilla de indios is located to the right of the church. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 30: The baroque main altar of the ex-Jesuit church of San Francisco Xavier at Tepotzotlán (Estado de Mexico). Photograph in the collection of the author.

The interior design elements and altars were later converted to neoclassical-style, most likely in the nineteenth-century. The original design most likely was baroque, and would have included gilt wooden altars typical of the period. The 1855 lithograph of the interior of the San Fernando church provides a sense of baroque interiors, but there are other contemporary churches that still retain baroque altars that can provide a better idea of what the interiors of the Sierra Gorda mission churches may have looked like. One example is the ex-Jesuit church of the novitiate at Tepotzotlán dedicated to San Francisco Xavier. The gilt wooden main altar was designed by the noted eighteenth-century artists Miguel Maldonado y Cabrera (1710-1768) in the early 1760s (see Figure 30), and contains Jesuit iconography but also other common baroque iconographic elements such as angels, the archangels, and statues of non-Jesuit saints (more on the Jesuit baroque in Chapter 2 below). The Sierra Gorda missions had fewer resources than did the Jesuits, and the baroque altars would have been simpler. However, they would have contained similar design elements. The church interiors were also decorated with different baroque design elements and colors, fragments of which exist in several of the churches. The elements included geometric and floral designs.

The Franciscans had the churches decorated with colorful baroque design elements. The baptistries of the churches contained stone baptismal fonts, niches with murals depicting the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, and mostly floral design elements. Those of Tancoyol and Tilaco were typical (see Figures 31-33). That at Tancoyol still retains original floral design elements below the mural niche. Other parts of the churches were similarly decorated. The church at Xalpa (Jalpan) has floral designs in the sacristy, and fragments of what appears to be geometric designs on the lateral walls of the nave (see Figures 34-35). Original floral designs were uncovered on the lateral walls of the church at Concá (see Figure 36). The church naves, which were the principal public space of the new sacred structures, had paintings mounted on the walls with different themes. An example is a painting of the Virgin Mary in the church at Xalpa (see Figure 37).

Figure 31: The stone baptismal font and mural of the baptism of Jesus in the baptistry of the Franciscan church at Tancoyol, Querétaro. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 32: Original floral design elements in the baptistry of the church at Tancoyol. Photograph in the collection of the author.

Figure 33: The niche with floral designs and mural in the baptistry in the Franciscan church at Tilaco, Querétaro. Photograph in the collection of the author.