

Article

The End Times in and After Philippe Thomassin's *Last Judgment* (1606)

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Abstract

This article examines how Philippe Thomassin's *Last Judgment* (1606) engraving traveled from Rome to the colonial Spanish Americas, acting as a powerful tool for reshaping both local belief systems and the physical environment. Moving beyond simple artistic analysis, I show how this image promoted a worldview that prioritized human salvation over the survival of the natural world. I connect this historical visual culture to the modern destruction of the Amazon rainforest by apocalypticist religious groups, who view clearing the forest not as an environmental disaster but as the preparation of a divine paradise. By linking early modern prints to today's climate crisis, I argue that art history must address the active role of eschatological images such as Thomassin's: they do not just depict the end of the world but can actively help bring it about. This case study reveals how colonial visuality continues to shape the precarious future of the Amazonian biosphere.

Keywords: Philippe Thomassin; apocalypticism; colonial Latin American art; Amazon rainforest; environmental collapse

"Nothing in this world is indifferent to us".
Laudato Si', 2015

Lettered across the upper edge of a large engraving of the *Last Judgment* (Rome, 1606), an ominous inscription warns of catastrophe: "durissimum iudicium gentibus profert". Someone—or something—"brings forth a most severe judgment to the nations" (Figure 1). Within the internal drama of the image it is Christ the Judge. He can be seen up high among the clouds presiding over an ecstatic heavenly court, the earthly harvest of good and bad seeds, and an infernal theater of despair. Yet the inscription's null subject—the Latin verb *profert* lacks an explicit grammatical subject—invites another, more expansive reading.

It did not occur during the lifetime of its engraver, the Frenchman Philippe Thomassin (1562–1622), but within a few decades following his death, his *Last Judgment* had been reprinted and transported over land and sea (Rodríguez Romero and Siracusano 2010). By the early eighteenth century, the composition had become a source for artworks in southern Europe, northwestern Africa, central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Americas (Figure 2).¹ Given the vast distances the engraving traveled and the diverse peoples that encountered its message, the print itself became the medium that issued the harsh verdict.

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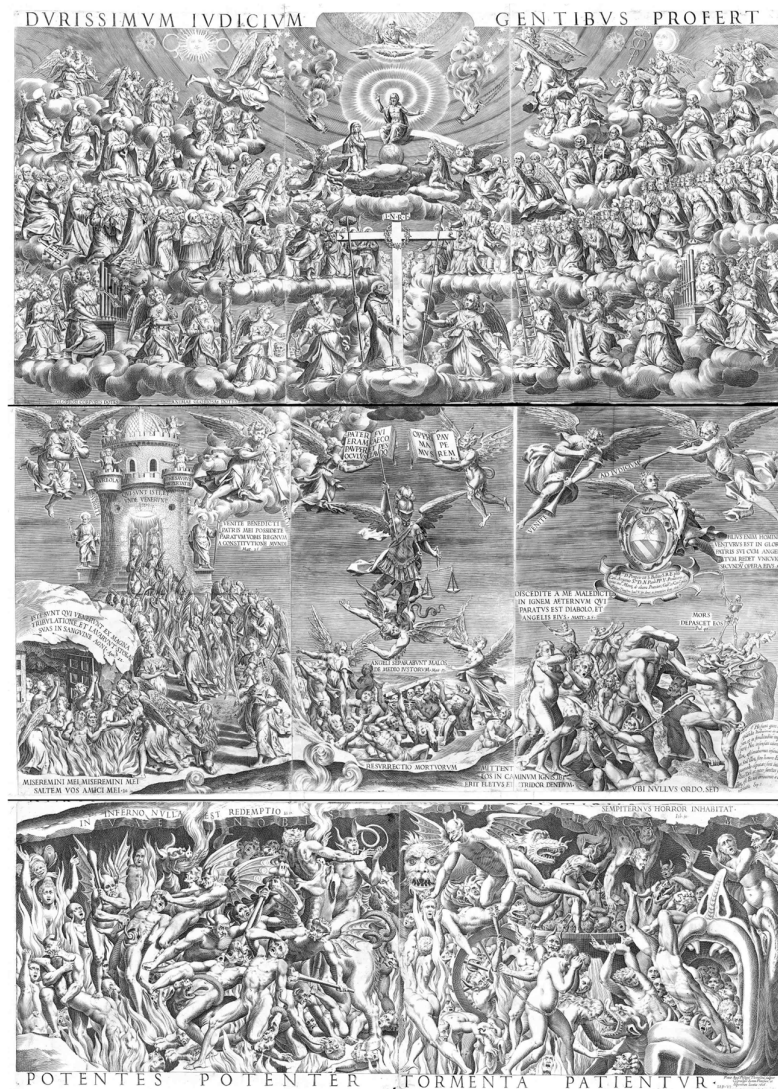


Figure 1. Philippe Thomassin. *The Last Judgement*, 1606. Engraving from eight plates, 147.4 × 105.5 cm. Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense.

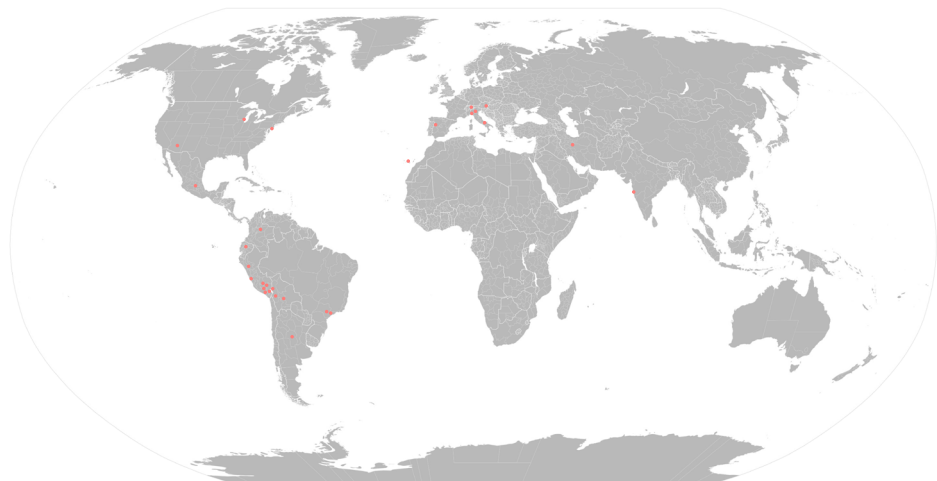


Figure 2. Global distribution map of the current or last known locations of attested paintings based on Thomassin's *Last Judgement*. Red dots indicate regions with one or more artworks.

Its message now haunts our present time—for what if that judgment does not pertain to a providential future, but rather to an anthropogenic present overdetermined by past imaginaries? This question acquires terrifying urgency in the current decade. In 2021, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service declared the extinction of twenty-three species due to climate change; in 2022, a glacier the size of New York collapsed in East Antarctica; in 2023, Tropical Cyclone Freddy was registered as the longest of its kind on record, killing hundreds in southern Africa; and, in 2024, a record-breaking heat index of 62.3 °C (144.1 °F) was registered in Rio de Janeiro.² These are not omens, but the systemic unraveling of the biosphere—a crisis that projections indicate can only accelerate, with the imminent loss of perennial Arctic sea ice and the rapid approach of the 1.5 °C global warming limit now all but certain (IPCC 2023; WMO 2026). We seem to be experiencing the events that eschatological images such as Thomassin’s once staged as a future, divine spectacle.

This article emerges from the friction between two understandings of the coming cataclysm. For some observers, the current convulsions of the Earth system fulfill biblical prophecy: the last days made manifest as a zero-sum futurity of salvation and damnation.³ For others, these catastrophes represent an environmental crisis engendered by the very anthropocentric illusions that apocalypticist imagery helped to foster—a perspective I share (Marques 2020). In affirming the discontinuity between humankind and nature and in promoting an accelerationist and teleological conception of history, visual fantasies such as Thomassin’s *Last Judgment* have contributed to the ideological scaffold of our current anthropogenic impasse (Bergmann 2018; Jackson and Jensen 2022; Kowalewski 2022; Stümer et al. 2024).

To make such argument is to practice a particular kind of art history—one that seeks to dismantle the artificial borders that have historically separated the humanistic study of art from the biological realities of the natural world. In her recent call for an ecological approach to the discipline, Claire Farago argues that the discourse on art became entangled with notions of human exceptionalism during the sixteenth century, a process that historically excluded most of humanity and non-human entities from the domain of civilized culture (Farago 2025). Thus, Thomassin’s *Last Judgment* serves as the primary object of the present study because it embodies the mobile agency of this schism at the genesis of the global circulation of commodities, images included. Born in Rome but born again across non-European lands, the print facilitated what Simon Ditchfield characterizes as the “circulation of the sacred”—portable technologies of belief that bridged the visual policies of the post-Tridentine Church with the extractive frontiers of colonial expansion, a process that re-fashioned Catholicism as a world religion (Ditchfield 2022).

But rather than viewing this global reach as the mere transport of a static idea, a borderless art history recognizes it as a series of generative material conflicts. This methodological shift moves beyond the dominant paradigms of the discipline in its global reach—namely, comparative iconology and serial formalism—toward what the physicist Karen Barad defines as *intra-action*: the understanding that entities do not pre-exist their encounters but rather emerge through their mutual entanglement (Barad 2007, pp. 33–34, 128–32). Within this framework, Thomassin’s *Last Judgment* functions less as a static repository of meaning and more as a constitutive agent that helped install a specific ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad 2007, p. 409). And it was through the apparatus of Christian eschatology—materialized in portable objects—that the Earth was reconfigured as a disposable stage for human salvation.⁴

Nowhere is this anthropotheocentric self-delusion more rampant in its appetite for destruction than in the Amazon rainforest.⁵ While large-scale agribusiness remains the most destructive force in the region, it shares a foundational logic with another key, if less dominant, agent of deforestation: religious groups. Colonies of Peruvian Israelites and Bolivian Mennonites aim to transfigure what they perceive as mere wilderness into

productive “Promised Lands,” acting on a providential mandate that mirrors agribusiness’s own drive to convert “unused” nature into commodities. Both are expressions of the same teleological development and deep anthropocentrism—the conviction that the Earth is raw material destined for human purposes. This providential mandate is helping push the rainforest toward a regional tipping point, an event that will precipitate a systemic unraveling of the biosphere (Marques 2023, pp. 149–96; Nobre 2014). The chain of foreseeable catastrophes—from mass extinction and continental drought to the collapse of global supply chains and the triggering of other Earth system tipping points—would represent the materialization, in our day and age, of the eschatological “most severe judgment.”

By leading with this contemporary catastrophe, I echo Walter Benjamin’s recognition that the present must be read as a constellation of historical fragments. And it is precisely his famous conceptualization of the past as a memory that “flashes up at a moment of danger” that animates this investigation into Thomassin’s print (Benjamin 2007, p. 255), for this inquiry is less an antiquarian reconstruction than an interrogation of the onto-epistemological apparatus that drives environmental collapse—and, in doing so, it doubles as the expression of a perhaps naïve, potentially hopeless hope in Benjamin’s messianic uprising against the technocratic Antichrist (Löwy 2005, pp. 45–46).

This sad history is told in four movements. First, I examine the internal logic of Thomassin’s print as a mechanism of dominance—a visual program that installed a worldview of human transcendence over nature through a missionary architecture of salvation and its ethics of exile. Second, I track this program to the Viceroyalty of Peru, demonstrating how the Third Council of Lima (1582–1583) sanctioned the use of standardized images as a technology of conversion to fill the vacuum left by the failure of linguistic translation. Third, I analyze the material evidence of this encounter in Potosí and Carabuco, where eschatological imagery was repurposed to sanctify the extraction of silver and the conversion of the Andean landscape into disciplined urban spaces and its peoples into colonial subjects. Finally, I show how this onto-epistemological framework persists in the contemporary Amazon, where a theology of the chainsaw hastens the rainforest’s collapse.

1. The Tower of Heaven

Whatever we call it—creation, phenomena, environment, biota, or raw matter—nature plays a secondary role in Last Judgment imagery, if it appears at all. In most depictions of the Christian doomsday, the earthly realm serves merely as a backdrop for a drama that is fundamentally focused exclusively on the fate of the human body and soul. In Thomassin’s engraving, this subordination of the planet to the human is epitomized in the figure of Christ the Judge, who rests his feet upon a globe (Figure 3).

This gesture has often been interpreted as an assertion of geopolitical dominion: Christ as lord of all the Earth (*dominus mundi*). However, the early modern theological literature suggests deeper semantic strata that associate spiritual transcendence with contempt for the world (*contemptus mundi*) while simultaneously celebrating epistemological interest in creation (e.g., Valadés 1579, p. 10; Pezzi 1588, pp. 14–16). By the late sixteenth century, the concept of the world was undergoing a profound lexical reconfiguration; the charged moral field of *mundus* retained its medieval associations with vice, corruption, and metaphysical decay even as it began to signify the immensity and beauty of the cosmos—resulting in images that paradoxically celebrated and undercut newfound knowledge of planetary complexity (Ramachandran 2015, pp. 10–14).



Figure 3. Upper center panel of Thomassin's *Last Judgment* (detail), 1606, engraving. Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense. Photo by the author.

This paradoxical oscillation between mapping the Earth and rejecting it finds its theological resolution in the twelfth-century dictum of Hugh of Saint Victor, which viewers of Thomassin's *Last Judgment* would have absorbed through centuries of monastic and mendicant tradition: "Perfect is he for whom the whole world is a place of exile," for such a man "has extinguished his love for the world" (*Didascalicon* 3.19).⁶ Hugh's formulation reveals that this apparent contradiction is a functional synergy—to conceive the world as a place of exile is not to withdraw from it but to render it available for use. Because the exile remains ontologically detached from the land through which he passes, he is licensed to measure, extract from, and eventually discard it without the constraints of stewardship. Following this logic to the extreme, to extinguish one's love for the world is not to renounce its utility but to authorize its systematic exploitation.⁷

This posture of transcendence saturates Thomassin's composition. However, the print does more than stage an attitude; it functions as a communication device that installs a specific habitus of use. To understand the sign functions of this mechanism, we must

first examine certain elements of its visual logic through which the engraving conscripts its viewers into a belligerent, world-denying view of the world.

Enter the gate of heaven (Figure 4). Placed in the engraving's left center panel, the entrance to paradise is not an ornamental portal but an archaizing round tower, fortified with guards, turrets, battlements, and oculi for the windlass of a missing drawbridge. This structure is not the permeable threshold into a welcoming kingdom; it is, instead, a military installation. Inscribed upon the tower's bartizans are two Latin terms: *aureola* and *thesaurus paupertatis*, the *aureole* and *treasure of poverty*.



Figure 4. Left middle panel of Thomassin's *Last Judgment*, 1606, engraving. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie. Photo by the author.

These inscriptions provide the theological justification for the tower's defensive posture, codifying the entrance requirements for this celestial fortress. The *aureola*, as Thomas Aquinas explains in the *Summa Theologiae*, is an additional crown of glory awarded not to all the saved but specifically to virgins, martyrs, and doctors—those who have “won against external assaults” (ST Suppl., q. 96, a. 6).⁸ Within this militant social arena, it serves as a meritocratic reward for spiritual combat, a visual promise that the valiant defenders of the faith will receive extraordinary honor in heaven. Directly above the entrance, an angel demonstratively displays a laurel wreath—the classical prize for victory in a contest, here signifying the successful conclusion of spiritual warfare—making the agonistic nature of salvation unmistakable.⁹

The *thesaurus paupertatis* carries even more bellicose connotations. A common expression among thirteenth-century Franciscans, the term articulated the paradox that by renouncing worldly goods through the *usus pauper*—the strict limit to the use of material goods central to the Rule of Saint Francis—the faithful became possessors of divine wealth (Todeschini 2010; Agamben 2011). But early Franciscan theologians such as Peter John Olivi and Nicholas of Lyra understood this impecunious riches as an eschatological

weapon; for them, the *thesaurus paupertatis* provided the blueprint for the new humanity of the coming Millennium, with the mendicant orders serving as the spiritual army tasked with its realization (Burr 1985; DeVun 2009; Matus 2017; Nicholas of Lyra 1997, pp. 223–25).

Such innuendos, which lionized the mendicant orders and their role in salvation history, help explain why Thomassin's *Last Judgment* was so widely circulated by Franciscan missionaries. The print surreptitiously casts them as the protagonists in an overarching epic that began with one sacred wood, the Tree of Life, and will end with another, the eschatological Cross (Bousset 1999, pp. 232–52; Baert 2004). Among these heroes, Francis of Assisi occupies the place of highest honor. Therefore, in the print and in the myriad colonial paintings derived from it, we find the Seraphic Saint in a central position: he embraces the True Cross—the *signum filii hominis* destined to appear in the sky above Jerusalem on the Last Day—standing directly below Jesus and immediately above the archangel Michael (Figure 5; Vogel 1967, pp. 83–108; Lara 2004, pp. 157–64). By placing the *poverello* between these two divine beings, the engraving highlights his dual alterity: as the Second Coming of the Savior (*alter Christus*), he heralds the third and final appearance of his double as the universal Judge; as a mighty spiritual warrior like the angel (*alter Michaelis*), he will battle the Antichrist just as Michael will defeat Satan in the expected final aerial showdown based on Revelation 20.¹⁰ In fact, it was widely believed among the Minorites that not only was Francis the Angel of the Sixth Seal, but he would eventually return to lead the Christian armies.¹¹

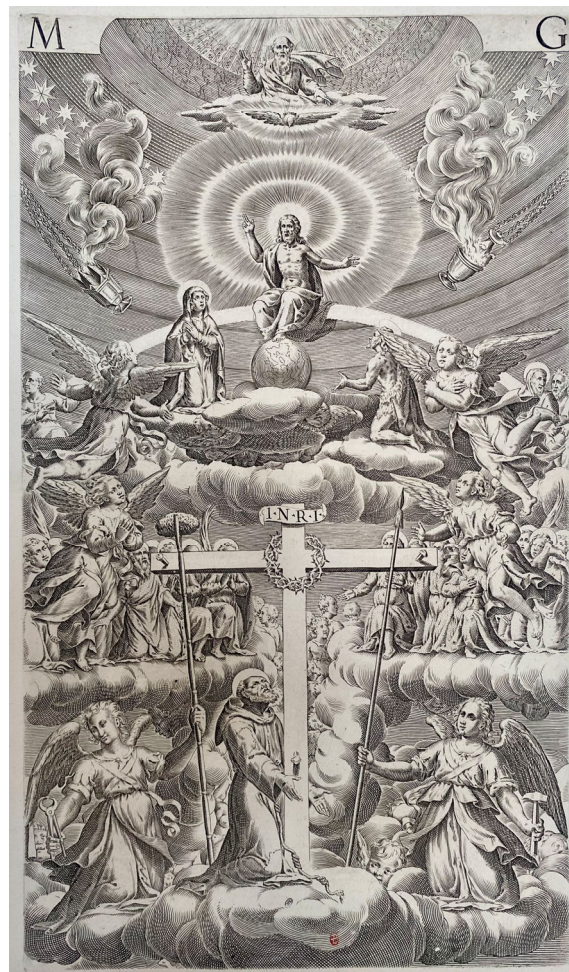


Figure 5. Center upper panel of Thomassin's *Last Judgment*, 1606, engraving. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie. Photo by the author.

Because such views verged on the heterodox, they could not be explicitly articulated in a print requiring Curial approval for its commercial survival. Thomassin, a veteran of the print industry in post-Tridentine Rome who had narrowly escaped Inquisitorial prosecution in 1590 on charges of Huguenotism, was acutely aware of the risks of presumed heterodoxy (Bruwaert 1896; Audisio 2006; Bodart 2004). His *Last Judgment* is therefore anchored by a suite of official insignia on its middle register, a protective layer of orthodoxy designed to insulate the work from suspicion while simultaneously conscripting the viewer into a specifically Roman militancy.

Situated on the far right, an angel displays the coat of arms of Cardinal Pompeo Arrigoni (Figure 6), who, by 1606, exerted significant influence over ecclesiastical censorship (Fattori 2010). His heraldic presence functions as a formal warrant: it acts as a graphic *privilegio*, signaling that this print operates under the authority of the Church's most powerful institutions of doctrinal enforcement (Leuschner 1998; Bury 2005; Ginsburg 2013).¹² Centered in the register, the archangel Michael tramples Satan in a pose derived from Raphael's *Great Saint Michael* (Figures 7 and 8)—a composition widely disseminated through engravings and monumentalized in Perino del Vaga's version within the Castel Sant' Angelo (Figure 9; Hansen 2013, pp. 13–53). This central figure acts as a fulcrum, balancing Arrigoni's shield on the right with a third architectural anchor on the left: the Tower of Paradise. Guarded by statues of Peter and Paul as the apostolic pillars of the Church (*columnae ecclesiae*), this gate directly mirrors the entrance to the Ponte Sant' Angelo leading toward the Vatican Borgo (Kessler 1987; Roberts 2001; Burroughs 1995). This was an image deeply embedded in the early modern consciousness—not only through the lived experience of the thousands of pilgrims who crossed the Tiber to reach the shrine of the apostles but also through its wide circulation in the Roman print trade (e.g., Figure 10; Collins 2019).



Figure 6. Right middle panel of Thomassin's *Last Judgment*, 1606, engraving. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie. Photo by the author.



Figure 7. Center middle panel of Thomassin's *Last Judgment*, 1606, engraving. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie. Photo by the author.



Figure 8. Raphael, *Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan* (aka *Great Saint Michael*), 1518, oil transferred from wood to canvas. Paris, Louvre. Image in the public domain (Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 9. Perino del Vaga and Pellegrino Tibaldi, *The Archangel Michael*, 1545–47, fresco. Sala Paolina, Castel Sant’ Angelo, Rome. Photo by the author.



Figure 10. Unidentified artist, frontispiece to *Bullarium Romanum Novissimum*, vol. 1 (Rome: Typis Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1638). Engraving.

This topographical correspondence adds a strategic semantic layer to Thomassin's tower, explaining the unusual dome that crowns it as a reflection of the urban nexus of the Borgo. In his *Last Judgment*, Thomassin collapses this monumental axis into a militarized capriccio: the Ponte, the Castel Sant'Angelo, and St Peter's Basilica are fused into a single, impenetrable bastion. By transmuting the gate of heaven into a recognizable papal stronghold, Thomassin reinforces the print's militant subtext: that salvation is exclusively found within the walls of the embattled and belligerent Catholic Church.

Yet this Roman bastion was never intended to remain static. It was a transportable visual architecture designed to be projected onto the furthest reaches of the Catholic world, providing a standardized grammar of power where linguistic diplomacy had reached its limit—as in the Spanish Americas.

2. Last Judgments in the Viceroyalty of Peru

By the late sixteenth century, the Spanish colonial project in the Andes faced a deepening crisis of communication. The First and Second Councils of Lima (1551–1567) had struggled to reconcile the need for mass evangelization with the lack of a unified linguistic strategy. While early legislation fluctuated between requiring priests to learn native tongues and compelling Indigenous populations to learn Spanish, neither approach proved effective. The mandate of the Second Council to teach Christian doctrine exclusively in Spanish was largely ignored in the rural highlands, where the clergy's lack of vernacular competence and the persistence of native languages created a widening gap between the pulpit and the congregation (Durstun 2007, pp. 123–62; MacCormack 1985).

This dual failure created a vacuum that the Church would eventually seek to fill through a different medium: the systematic deployment of standardized visual and textual materials that could operate across linguistic boundaries. The image was no longer merely a decorative supplement to the sermon; it became the primary vehicle for a psychosomatic conditioning—a means of bypassing the intellect to strike directly at the viewer's neurological and emotional registers.

The legislative architecture for this new sensory regime was provided by the Third Council of Lima (1582–1583). Representing a watershed moment in the history of the colonial Americas, the Council codified these strategies into a rigid legal framework (Valenzuela Márquez 2006). To remedy structural failures in Indigenous parishes—such as the lack of instruction for Andean miners—and to codify the manner of conversion, the Council issued a series of *constituciones* categorized into *acciones*.¹³ According to the fourth *constitución* of the second *acción*, theological complexities should be reduced to a stark, meta-physical binary:

But as for those who possess such impediments [old age, sickness, and cognitive impairment] that they cannot undergo more extensive instruction, the principal points of our faith must be taught to them according to their capacity; which are: first, that there is only one God, maker of all things, who grants the reward of eternal life to those who serve Him, and punishment with eternal torments in the next life to the wicked who offend Him in this one.^{Error! Reference source not found.}

While this sentence may seem a reductive summation of Abrahamic metaphysical tradition, in the Andean context it functioned as the primary mechanism for a new kind of spiritual and temporal discipline.

This simplified dogma concealed a sophisticated tripartite logic of control. First, it asserted the presence of a patriarchal ruling principle—an *arch*-entity whose gendered authority was mediated and multiplied through sanctioned spokesmen (*pater*), operating through rigid moral binaries (Silverblatt 1987, pp. 150–53; Redden 2008, pp. 37–65). Second, this authority functioned as a hedonic biopower, seeking to regulate the behavior of

the colonial subjects by mapping it onto the psychosomatic registers of pleasure and pain (Graham and Kilroy-Ewbank 2018, pp. 1–32). Finally, the Church projected a suprahuman increase in the intensity and duration of these sensations into an eternal futurity: the supersensual realms of heaven and hell. More simply put, the labor of Andean indoctrination was a matter of lilies and swords—a divine economy where the harvest of souls was conceived as being as systematically managed as the extraction of silver.

The Council's most enduring innovation in this regard was its turn to the image. Recognizing that doctrine could not always be conveyed through words, the *Tercero catecismo* (1585) explicitly invoked the figure of the archangel Michael weighing souls to render the invisible judgment visible to native eyes: "And for this reason you have seen depicted Saint Michael, the glorious Archangel, with a scale, weighing the souls, which signifies, and means, that in the other life the good and the evil that the souls have done are examined, and according to that they receive judgment."¹⁵ By transforming abstract metaphysical threats into a patterned set of visceral reactions, these images bypassed the linguistic failures of the viceregal project. They functioned as a cross-border visual language, capable of transmitting the militant theology of colonial Catholicism across the deep cultural divides of the Andean frontier. As one Jesuit missionary observed around 1600:

And there have been notable changes and conversions among the Indians through the contemplation of judgment, glory, and the pains of the damned, all of which is painted upon the walls of this church and chapel; and particularly through the pains and punishments that the vices and sins of the Indians suffer in hell, which are clearly depicted there according to their specific types and distinctions, for the Indians are moved far more by pictures than by sermons, and often more than by many sermons.¹⁶

By 1615, the Quechua chronicler Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala could argue that such images should become mandatory across the viceroyalty: "And in every church let there be a painted [Last] Judgment. Let it show there the coming of the Lord to judgment, heaven and the world, and the pains of hell, so that it may be a witness for the Christian sinner."¹⁷

Transmission, however, did not mean passive reception. In the Church of Santiago Apóstol in Huancané, Peru, an early-eighteenth-century canvas after Thomassin's *Last Judgment* now gathers dust (Figure 11). The artwork and the world from which it came seem like faded relics. But a closer look at the netherworld section reveals the powerful emotions it embodies and inspires. Small holes dot the hellscape. While at first glance they appear to result from neglect, there is a calculated pattern to them. Most of these perforations have struck the eyes of the devils and the damned—indexes of the aggrieved reaction this terrible fate once instilled in the parishioners (Figure 12).

As David Freedberg observed, the iconoclastic "blinding" of artworks seems to be a cross-cultural phenomenon in which the image is treated as a surrogate for the entity depicted. Thus, a physical assault to the eyes is intended to neutralize its nefarious gaze (Freedberg 1989, pp. 378–428). More than acts of vandalism, these holes are material evidence of an encounter—they probably record a moment when members of the Indigenous congregation treated the image as a living force with real power. If so, these holes possibly index an aggressive encounter as vestiges of an oppressive doctrinarian climate that remains remarkably constant, for in the church masses, the local priests continue to preach the basics: obedience leads to the "good place", disobedience to the "other."¹⁸



Figure 11. Anonymous, *Last Judgment*, first half of the eighteenth century, oil on canvas. Church of Santiago Apóstol, Huancané (Peru). Photo by the author.



Figure 12. Detail of anonymous eighteenth-century *Last Judgment* in the Church of Santiago Apóstol, Huancané, Puno, Peru. Photo by the author.

This pedagogical apparatus of Pavlovian conditioning, sustained through afterlife imagery, is best understood within the fraught history of this territory, located on the northern shore of Lake Titicaca (Stanish et al. 2014, pp. 1–22). In late 1923, the province of

Huancané became the site of a violent suppression of the Wancho–Lima movement, an Indigenous uprising that had attempted to establish an independent, self-governing Ayмара town to escape the predatory local authorities (Ortiz del Carpio 2022). Deeply rooted in the Andean utopian tradition, this movement sought to overturn the exploitative structure of the provincial government and the dominant creole state by projecting a neo-Inca cosmology that envisioned the restoration of an idealized past (Flores Galindo 1987, pp. 254–67).

In doing so, they revolted simultaneously against the elites of Lima—the descendants of the colonial upper classes that ruled viceregal Peru for centuries—and against the Christian machinery of ideological management reified in the local *Last Judgment*. The violent rejection of these structures—manifested in strikes against the landed estates of *gamonales* (rural landowners), royalist Indigenous aristocracy, and the symbolic authority of the Church—represents a centuries-old struggle to dismantle the material foundations of colonial society and replace them with an autonomous Andean order.¹⁹ In fact, Huancané and the surrounding Puno region have long been hotbeds of insurrection, where religious clashes and syncretic hybridizations remain at the forefront of political life (Stern 1987).

3. The Mouth of Hell

The most consequential site of this visual apparatus, however, was not Huancané, but Potosí. Around 1708, Melchor Pérez Holguín—lauded by his patrons as the *brocha de oro* (“golden brush”)—completed two monumental canvases for the Church of San Lorenzo de Carangas: a *Last Judgment* and a *Ship of the Church* (Figures 13 and 14), both adapted from engravings by Thomassin, the *Last Judgment* and the *Triumphus Ecclesiae*, respectively (Figures 1 and 15; de Mesa and Gisbert 1956; Mendieta Pacheco 1998; Gisbert and de Mesa 2010).²⁰ In the *Last Judgment*, a work of immense proportions populated by hundreds of figures, Holguín envisioned a tripartite landscape where souls are separated amidst the ruins of the world, while his *Ship of the Church* depicts the Catholic institution as a sturdy galleon navigating a storm-tossed sea filled with monsters and drowning sinners.



Figure 13. Melchor Pérez Holguín, *Triumphus ecclesia*, 1706. Oil on canvas. Originally commissioned for the Church of San Lorenzo de Carangas; currently preserved in the Convento of San Francisco, Potosí. Photo by the author.



Figure 14. Melchor Pérez Holguín, *Last Judgment*, 1708. Oil on canvas. Originally commissioned for the Church of San Lorenzo de Carangas; currently preserved in the Convento of San Francisco, Potosí. Photo by the author.



Figure 15. Philippe Thomassin, *Triumphus ecclesiae*, 1602, engraving. Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense.

These paintings were far more than derivative copies; they were ambitious transpositions of Thomassin's compositions, reimagined to resonate with the specific spiritual and social pressures of the Andean interior. This process of local adaptation was anchored by Pérez Holguín's own self-assertion, as he signaled his role as the deliberate mediator of this new vision through his distinct stylistic boldness. In his *Last Judgment*, he did so by inserting a self-portrait into the composition: in the center of the landscape, he appears as a melancholic figure caught in a moment of introspection, his compass in hand while an angel gestures heavenward and a bandaged demon tries to call his attention (Figure 16).

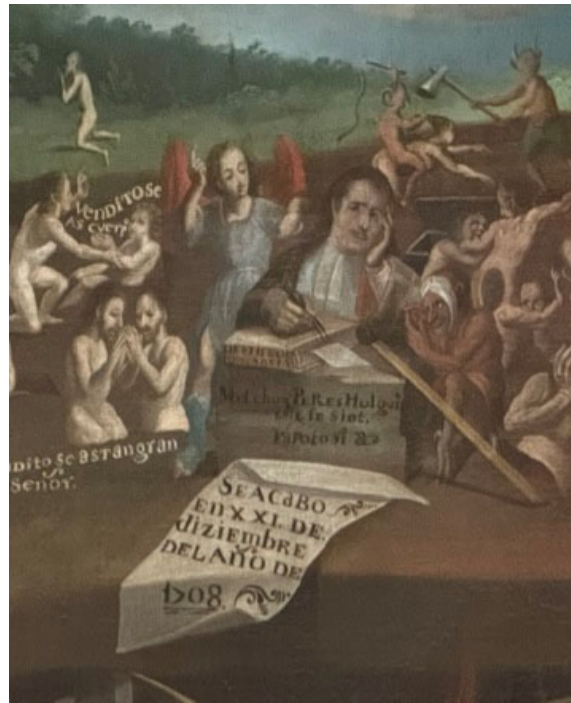


Figure 16. Melchor Pérez Holguín, detail of *The Last Judgment*, 1708, oil on canvas. Potosí, Church of San Francisco. Photo by the author.

However captivating, authorial braggadocio and other small iconographic elements were secondary to the paintings' spatial function. Within the nave of San Lorenzo, Holguín's *Last Judgment* was installed to directly face his *Ship of the Church* on the opposite wall, creating a deliberate complementarity of damnation symbols. In the seascape of the *Ship*, the traditional hellmouth—often expressed in maritime scenes through Leviathan-like sea creatures—is conspicuously absent; instead, the peril of the abyss is expressed through the dangerous waters infested with enemies of the Church (Cohn 1993; de Kruijf 2017; Leibfried and Winter 2013; Sorce 2022). This omission points across the aisle to the *Last Judgment*, where a gargantuan hellmouth looms in the lower right corner to swallow the damned. By extracting the hellmouth from the ocean and anchoring it to the land in the companion piece, the visual program effectively *terrestrialized* the demonic. In a mining capital like Potosí, this shift bound the spiritual abyss to the very ground the laborers inhabited, tying the threat of damnation to the material realities of mining activity. Ultimately, this spatial relocation suggests a shift in focus from the perils of the Atlantic crossing to the dangers of the Andean interior.

That San Lorenzo contained not one but two monumental canvases by the *brocha de oro* himself signals that this was no ordinary parish. It was one of the original fourteen *parroquias de indios* (Indigenous parishes) established in the late sixteenth century to organize the *mitayo* population of Potosí according to their provincial origins (Mamani 2015; de Mesa and Gisbert 1997, pp. 213–34). Located on the periphery of the city's Spanish center—in the shadow of Cerro Rico, the so-called “mountain that eats men”—the church functioned as a strategic infrastructure for social and ethnic management. Within its walls, the administration of *curas de indios* (Catholic curates responsible for the spiritual management of native communities) and the activities of ethnic confraternities served to discipline the labor force, providing a structured religious identity to a population whose biological life was being systematically extracted in the service of silver (Mamani 2019). Its monumental façade—a lithic program of dense cross-cultural entanglement where celestial sirens playing the charango (an Andean lute) and botanical motifs are woven into

a vertical firmament surmounted by Christian angels and saints—stood as a powerful ideological counterweight to the physical devastation of the mines (Figure 17; DaCosta Kaufmann 2004, pp. 272–99; Bifaretti et al. 2017; Gisbert 2004, pp. 15–74).



Figure 17. Portal of San Lorenzo de Carangas, Potosí, Bolivia. Photo by the author.

To understand what this counterweight concealed, one must grasp the scale of that devastation. By the early eighteenth century, Potosí had become the richest city in the Americas, its legendary mining mountain, Cerro Rico, producing 20% of the world's silver for much of the colonial period (Lane 2019, pp. 5–9). Travelers described the streets as cobbled with silver bars, spreading the idea of the region's unparalleled wealth (Lane 2019, pp. 140–42). Yet this metropolis was a machinery of relentless extraction. Driving its survival were thousands of Indigenous laborers and enslaved Africans, forced to work under lethal conditions in the mountain's subterranean galleries and in the mercury-polluted refinery mills (Bakewell 1984). The widespread use of mercury amalgamation transformed the region into a landscape of toxic saturation, where the poisoning of Andean water systems and the slow death of laborers through diverse pollutants turned the mines into chemical mouths of hell (Robins 2011; Cooke et al. 2009).

To facilitate this exploitation, the Viceroy Francisco de Toledo sought to systematically restructure the Andean landscape into a vast mining apparatus in the 1570s. Among these reforms, the General Resettlement of Indians (*Reducción General de Indios*) represented an unprecedented effort in social and spatial engineering designed to ensure the survival of the silver industry by transforming the Indigenous population into a measurable and manageable resource for the colonial state (Mumford 2012). With the forced concentration of dispersed communities into grid-patterned towns (*reducciones*), Toledo sought to dismantle the traditional Andean vertical archipelago—a sophisticated system where lineages managed resources across diverse ecological tiers—and replace it with a centralized administrative landscape (Murra 1975). This reorganization transformed the Andean people into a measurable and reachable resource, ensuring they were convertible,

taxable, and, most crucially, accountable for the Spanish forced labor draft (*m'ita*) (Cole 1985). This forced labor draft required one-seventh of the adult male population from sixteen highland provinces to cycle through the mines and refineries of Potosí, providing the human energy necessary to sustain the extractive enterprise.

The scale of what was being managed—and destroyed—defies easy comprehension. Beneath the orderly grid of the *reducción* lies one of history's most devastating demographic collapses. The Spanish invasion had already decimated Andean populations from an estimated 9 million in the 1490s to approximately 1.3 million by the 1570s through warfare, disease, and the systematic seizure of resources (Cook 1981, pp. 94, 114). Toledo's resettlement accelerated the catastrophe. By the early 1630s, only about 600,000 Indigenous people are believed to have survived in the once-ebullient Inca heartland. In the space of little more than a century, the Andean world suffered a population freefall of approximately 93 percent (Koch et al. 2019, pp. 15–21). With such numbers in mind, some historians have not minced words, describing this process as “ethnocide” (Yaranga Valderrama 1995). Viewed hemispherically—taking into account similar dynamics from Alaska to Patagonia—the scale of mass deaths justifies the characterization offered by Danowski and Viveiros de Castro as the “biggest demographic catastrophe in History” (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2016, p. 105; Stannard 1992, p. x).

Toledo was acutely aware of the high human cost of his reforms. In a letter to Philip II dated 8 February 1570, the viceroy noted that “even if some of the natives should die” in the process, “there would be no reason to stop it, even against their will”. While acknowledging the massive loss of Indigenous lives in the recent past, he used that history to claim that it would be of little inconvenience if some were missing now to give them compatibility with Christian doctrine and the planned social order. Toledo explicitly identified the primary payoff of this demographic sacrifice: the resettlement of Andean laborers “near the works of the mines.”²¹ Production records confirm that the consolidation of labor followed by the introduction of mercury amalgamation were brutally effective. As a result, silver output surged during the 1575–1640 boom, peaking at nearly half of global production (Bakewell 1975; Lane 2019, p. 128). This era saw human life and silver locked in a tragic negative correlation, later summarized in the Potosino dictum: “un puente de plata a Madrid, un puente de huesos a Potosí” (“a bridge of silver to Madrid, a bridge of bones to Potosí”).

The specific weight of this bridge of bones fell most heavily upon the province of Carangas, formerly the powerful Aymara kingdom of the Karanqas (Medeiros et al. 2024a). As part of Qullasuyu, the southern district of the Inca empire, this polity maintained a sophisticated vertical economy that controlled a vast archipelago of resources spanning from the high Altiplano to the fertile Pacific valleys of Arica and Tacna—a territory covering west-central Bolivia and the borderlands of Peru and Chile (Medeiros et al. 2024b). Before Toledo's General Resettlement, Carangas was one of the most populated jurisdictions in the Audiencia of Charcas (modern-day Bolivia), with a population exceeding 29,000. However, the imposition of the *m'ita* and the forced concentration of people into *reducciones* precipitated a catastrophic demographic collapse. By 1683, as Carangas supplied one of the highest numbers of *mitayos* to Potosí, its resident population had plummeted to fewer than 8000. This decline represented a double process of displacement: while many perished in the mines from occupational hazards such as silicosis, an irreversible lung disease, a significant portion of the population escaped the draft by becoming *forasteros* (migrants who fled their home communities to live as foreigners in distant regions) or by migrating toward local mining camps discovered within the province during the seventeenth century (Gil Montero 2018; Gavira Márquez 2008). The Karanqas who remained in Potosí were settled around the parish of San Lorenzo, which served as their

specific ethnic and administrative hub within the mining capital, functioning as a site where they recreated their identity under the colonial regime (Mamani 2015, pp. 73–89).

For the Karanqa *mitayos* who worshiped in San Lorenzo, the hellmouth on Holguín's canvas did not represent a distant theological abstraction. It was the symbolic double of the man-eating mountain that consumed their lives—a visual instrument of control that mirrored the physical reality of the mines. The Cerro Rico was known in the local vernacular as “la montaña que come hombres” —the man-eating mountain—an appellation usually paired with another: “la boca del infierno,” the mouth of hell.²² This was not merely a folk metaphor. It was a direct reflection of a reality in which countless laborers were physically consumed by the mountain's depths. The mercury that poisoned their bodies, the tunnels that collapsed on their kin, the forced resettlement that destroyed their communities—all were rendered invisible or, worse, providential by an eschatological apparatus that promised salvation to the obedient and damnation to the rebellious.

The paintings of San Lorenzo de Carangas did not just depict judgment; they enacted it. They sought to conscript the Karanqas into a worldview that framed their own destruction as the cost of salvation, their labor as participation in a divine economy, their suffering as the path to heaven. This was the apparatus of dominance at its most efficient: a visual regime that made extraction look like providence and required the consumed to believe they were being saved.

4. The Four Last Things in Carabuco, Bolivia

If Potosí shows us the apparatus of dominance at its most efficient—binding the mouth of hell to the man-eating mountain—then the decoration of a rural church in Carabuco, a small Bolivian town on the eastern shores of Lake Titicaca, shows us that apparatus at its most explicit. Here, a monumental painting cycle does not merely depict judgment; it documents, step by step, the replacement of a living ecosystem with colonial urbanism, and situates that replacement within salvation history.

Behind the plain façade of the Church of San Bartolomé (Figure 18) lies an interior of extraordinary adornment (Figure 19), dominated by the cycle of the *Four Last Things* (Spanish: *Postrimerías*): *Glory*, *Purgatory*, *The Last Judgment*, and *Hell* (Figures 20–23; Windus 2021; Windus 2019). Commissioned in the early 1680s by the ambitious parish priest José de Arellano and finished in 1684 by the master painter José López de los Ríos, these four massive canvases are rendered in rich pigments of azurite, hematite, and malachite, binding local materials to imported iconography—thus ensuring that, even as they served post-Tridentine pedagogy, Andean mineral pigments carried an autochthonous spiritual potency (Guerra and Tudisco 2010; Maier et al. 2010; Siracusano 2005).

While they represent a significant stylistic and iconographic shift from their source, all four canvases are based on Thomassin's *Last Judgment* engraving, which López de los Ríos split into four sections to create this sequential cycle. The painter deviated extensively from the source to suit the local context, most visibly in the *Purgatory* and *Hell* canvases; the former, for instance, shows the Virgin of Copacabana presiding over the suffrage of souls, while the latter presents colonial society—natives and Spaniards—oscillating between salvation and damnation against the background of an expansive Andean landscape.



Figure 18. Façade of the Church of San Bartolomé, Carabuco, Bolivia. Photo by the author.



Figure 19. View from the choir loft of the nave of the Church of San Bartolomé, Carabuco, Bolivia. Photo by the author.



Figure 20. José López de los Ríos, *Glory*, 1684, oil on canvas. Carabuco, Church of San Bartolomé. Photo by the author.



Figure 21. José López de los Ríos, *Purgatory*, 1684, oil on canvas. Carabuco, Church of San Bartolomé. Photo by the author.



Figure 22. José López de los Ríos, *Last Judgment*, 1684, oil on canvas. Carabuco, Church of San Bartolomé. Photo by the author.



Figure 23. José López de los Ríos, *Hell*, 1684, oil on canvas. Carabuco, Church of San Bartolomé. Photo by the author.

While their upper registers visualize the ultimate fate of humanity—frequently featuring Arellano himself in various stages of salvation or intercessory prayer—it is the lower edge of each painting that holds the key to understanding the cycle’s deepest significance. Along the bottom of the canvases runs a series of thirty narrative roundels (Figure 24). Heavily textual, these medallions trace the legend of the Cross of Carabuco, a relic central to the spiritual identity of the region. According to local lore, the Cross was brought to the shores of the lake by Bartholomew or Thomas during a legendary apostolic mission to the Americas in the first century C.E. (Bandelier 1904; Olds 2020). The legend recounts that the ancient Aymara community, under demonic sway, expelled the apostle from the region, causing him to depart without his evangelizing tool. Enraged by the presence of this holy wood, the devil ordered it to be buried deep within the lake’s shore to erase its memory. This long period of occlusion only ended in the late sixteenth century, when the Cross was supposedly unearthed by Spanish officials, who had followed rumors from local residents and tortured an Indigenous woman to reveal its exact location.²³

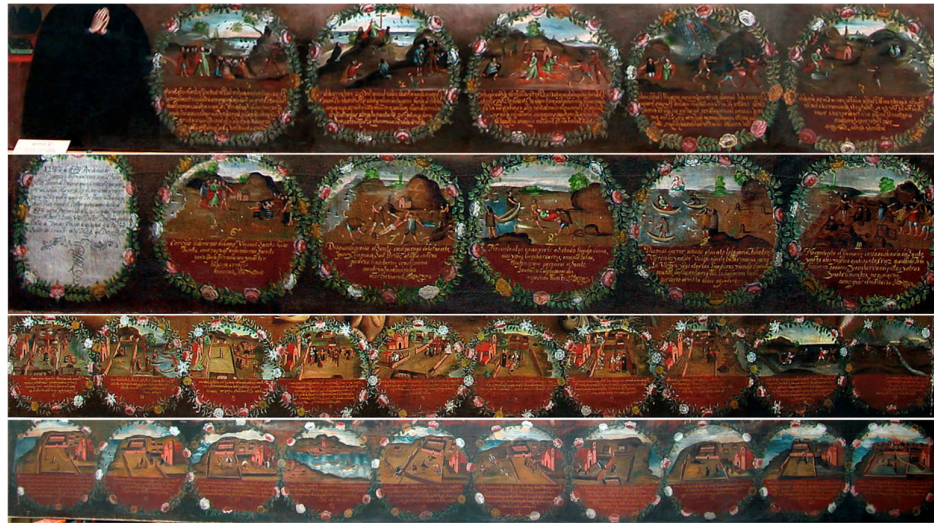


Figure 24. Narrative roundels in José López de los Ríos's *Four Last Things*, 1684, oil on canvas. Carabuco, Church of San Bartolomé.

This story—from the arrival of the Cross in the region to its unearthing many centuries later—is briefly told in the first fourteen roundels, while the other sixteen vignettes recount the many miracles associated with the relic: a blind man regaining sight, a merchant saved from drowning, a fragment of wood deflecting a bullet, and a mute woman recovering her voice after domestic violence, among many other episodes.^{Error! Reference source not found.} Together, these vignettes construct a nuanced portrait of seventeenth-century Col-lao society, revealing the brutal realities of colonial domination through their very mundanity. One of the most telling episodes involves three laborers who fell during church construction; after administering last rites to one and confirming two others dead, Arellano casually returned home for a meal. Upon his return, he found the bodies gone and, assuming that they had been made healthy again, attributed their disappearance to the powers of the Cross.²⁵ Whether factual or hagiographic, this scene lays bare the dehumanizing conditions of Indigenous labor, where workers were routinely coerced to serve the local priest in a series of degrading and dangerous chores. Arellano's chilling indifference—his ability to eat while presuming three men dead, their corpses lying on site for all to see—epitomizes the systemic disregard for Indigenous lives among colonial clergy, a pattern of institutionalized neglect that found its most extreme expression in the curate of figures like Father Juan Bautista de Albadán (Paredes 1968, pp. 34–35; Hyland 2016).

Beyond the human drama of labor and violence, the roundels encode a deeper transformation: the narrative arc traced by the roundels maps a theological trajectory from the holy wilderness of a primordial Andean Eden to the holy city of a colonial Heavenly Jerusalem (Rubial García 1998; Mardones Bravo 2019; McClung 1983). The planting of the Cross serves as the ontological rupture, triggering a metamorphosis where the unregulated landscape of the Altiplano—rich with *Polylepis* trees and native fauna—is systematically supplanted by the geometric discipline of the urban space (Lara 2004). As the narrative progresses from the apostle's legendary arrival in the mid-first century C.E. to the late seventeenth century, the environment is increasingly domesticated, with the organic pre-Hispanic hinterland being gradually replaced by brick walls, roads, houses, and the rigid symmetry of the *plaza mayor* (Dougherty 1980; Kinsbruner 2005, pp. 26–29).

Through this progression from Eden to Jerusalem, the paintings sanctify the very process of settlement and extraction that dismantled the Andean ecosystem. While the Church celebrated this transition as a triumph of institutional order, this transfiguration carried a profound material cost—the systematic depletion of the natural world was the

physical counterpart to the broader colonial enterprise. The *Polylepis* flora that dotted the landscape in the first medallions were not merely trees and shrubs; they were the vascular system of a vertical economy, anchoring soils, regulating water, and providing fuel and shelter for communities that had co-evolved with them for millennia.²⁶ Similarly, the native fauna depicted in López de los Ríos's canvases—large predators like the puma and their prey, vizcacha rodents, as well as several avian species, such as the ubiquitous Puna teal and the crimson-feathered cock-of-the-rock—were not just animals; they were partners in a cosmos where the human and non-human had not yet been radically separated (de la Cadena 2015; Viveiros de Castro 1998). Their disappearance coincides with that of the devil, who vanishes from the land at the same time that Eurogenic civilization begins to take hold—as if to suggest that ecocide followed by urban progress is a form of exorcism.²⁷

Beyond the walls of the Church of Carabuco, the conversion of the Andean world into a mining enterprise triggered an ecological shockwave felt from the depths of the soil to the riverbeds and into the air. To expedite the extractive juggernaut of Potosí, mercury from the mines of Huancavelica was released into the environment as toxic vapor, a heavy-metal legacy that continues to compromise Andean ecosystems and human health today (Robins and Hagan 2012; Dell 2010). Yet the devastation captured in the roundels was not merely local; it was a hemispheric demographic catastrophe. Mass deaths across the Americas allowed an estimated 56 million hectares of cultivated land to revert to forest. This abrupt rewilding may have sequestered enough carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to intensify the acute global cooling at the turn of the seventeenth century—the Grindelwald Fluctuation, a 0.15 °C drop that intensified regional cooling, triggering crop failures and social instability across the Northern Hemisphere (Koch et al. 2019).

Whether or not this atmospheric impact was as direct as some suggest, the resulting planetary scar marks the fulfillment of an apocalypticist program: the moment when the triumphant *ecclesia militans*—symbolized by the victory of the Cross over a pagan wilderness—started transfiguring the Earth's peripheries into sites of industrial-scale exhaustion (Moore 2010). Viewed in this light, the *Four Last Things* of Carabuco stand as unwitting witnesses to the dawn of the Anthropocene, the geological era defined by the very extractive logic that financed the Spanish Empire.²⁸

5. Apocalypse Then and Now

The visual apparatus that Thomassin encoded in his *Last Judgment* did not remain confined to paper or canvas. From the outset, the engraving functioned as what Aby Warburg termed a *Bilderfahrzeug*—a vehicle for transporting images and, with them, a coherent set of ideological commitments across geographic and cultural boundaries (Haug 2019). The print carried into the Andes more than just a religious scene; it brought a geo-eschatological vision that cast the New World as the ultimate stage for salvation history (Milhou 2000).

This framework had been brewing in Europe for centuries before Thomassin pulled his engraving from the Roman press in 1606. Its origins lay in the millenarian speculations of the twelfth-century Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore, who divided history into three successive ages corresponding to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Reeves 1993). According to the Joachimites, a total war against the forces of the Antichrist was imminent, necessitating a final, universal conversion led by a new breed of spiritualized men (*virii spirituales*) (da Campagnola 1974). In this scenario, the hope for a final Christian victory shifted from the military force of the Crusades to the Evangelical mission of the mendicant orders, who were reimagined as spiritual crusaders armed with preaching and shielded by poverty (Daniel 1969).

By the early sixteenth century, the Spiritual Franciscans had long been engaging with Joachimite ideas, which led them to identify their own order as the vanguard of the

coming millennium (Burr 2001). This ideology was uniquely compatible with the militant identity of the Iberian kingdoms, forged through centuries of borderland conflict against the Muslim polities of al-Andalus (Covey 2020, pp. 71–108). While early victories such as the conquest of Toledo (1085) were framed as the restoration of the old Church, later triumphs like Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) were increasingly interpreted through an apocalypticist lens (Whalen 2009, pp. 143–48). By the thirteenth century, religious chroniclers began to cast the kings of Castile and León—notably Alfonso X (1221–1284)—as key agents in the history of salvation, their conquests in southern Spain framed as eschatological events (Kagan 2009, pp. 18–27). These expectations intensified during the fifteenth century. The Portuguese capture of Ceuta (1415) was celebrated as the prelude to the encirclement of Islam and the recovery of Jerusalem by teaming up with the eastern forces of the mythical Prester John—the ultimate ideological horizon of Iberian expansion (Russell 2000, pp. 29–58, 120–27; Newitt 2005, p. 19). When Granada finally fell in 1492, the conquest of the last Muslim emirate on the Peninsula was seen not merely as a political triumph but as the completion of a holy war (García-Arenal 2003). In this climate of prophetic expectation, Christopher Columbus came to conceptualize his own role in providential history—an idea that continues to resonate, as the image of a providential Columbus has become a rallying cry for right-wing Evangelicals in the contemporary United States.²⁹

The Genoese admiral absorbed these notions during his years in Seville, where he cultivated a close relationship with the city's Franciscans (Millhou 1983; West 1991). By his third voyage, he had begun identifying himself in millenarian terms. The etymology of his name, he believed, revealed his destiny: as *Christophorus* (Christ-bearer), he was to carry Christianity across the Ocean Sea; as *columbus* (dove), he was to usher in the Age of the Holy Spirit (Sweet 1986). The lands he claimed for Spain were not merely new territory but sites of mineral extraction to fund the reconquest of Jerusalem, an event that many believed would trigger the end of the world—a conviction that would shape not only his own voyages but the entire ideological apparatus of Iberian expansionism (Delaney 2006).

However unwarranted, Columbus's "discovery"—or, better yet, "revelation"—of the New World redrew the very spatio-temporal coordinates that structured his self-professed role as a providential explorer (Bauer 2019). This individual sense of destiny was grounded in a broader European intellectual climate that was fundamentally geo-eschatological (Whalen 2024; Maurer 2024). This worldview was characterized by a temporal structure dictated by the progressive upheavals of the Apocalypse and a spatial structure derived from a religious construal of Ptolemaic geography (Scafi 2006). Reports of a new continent forced a systemic overhaul of salvation history, transforming the Atlantic from a limit into a bridge to the final millennium (i.e., from the *nec plus ultra* ideal associated with classical cosmography to the expansionist *plus ultra* motto of Charles V) (Martin 2022, pp. 169–86; Rosenthal 1971). This shift is palpable throughout sixteenth-century literature; for example, the Spanish chronicler Francisco López de Gómara (1511–1564), in the dedication to Charles V of his *Hispania victrix*, declared that "the discovery of the Indies" was "the greatest event since the creation of the world," barring Christ's Incarnation and Passion.³⁰ Such hyperbolic assertions were not unique to Spain; they resonated across the continent in the works of scholars like the French polymath Guillaume Postel, who saw in the Spanish-led expansion of the global horizon the unfolding of the end times (Postel 1560, pp. 52–53).³¹ As the mendicant orders built the religious infrastructure of the Americas, they also envisioned the territory as the ultimate spiritual battlefield, disseminating their eschatological program through sermons and the pedagogical power of images (Phelan 1956; McClure 2016; Bauer 2019; Lara 2013; Mujica Pinilla 2003).

Once unleashed beyond the echo chamber of the Euro-Mediterranean world, the apocalypticist imagination became a fluid vocabulary used to justify both colonial and

anti-colonial projects (Fleischer 2018; Subrahmanyam 2003; Graziano 1999, pp. 8–9). A striking early instance is found in the career of the Dominican Francisco de la Cruz, a university rector who proclaimed that Europe would soon be ravaged by Ottoman conquest, necessitating the transfer of the Holy See to Peru under his own rule. Fray Francisco further declared that his son—sired with a local noblewoman he dubbed the “Queen of Israel”—was the providential leader destined to consolidate a millenarian paradise for Spaniards, Andeans, and mestizos alike (Bataillon 1965; Bartosik-Vélez 2021). While he was burned at the stake in Lima in 1578, the execution did not extinguish the ideological horizon he conceived. His core conviction that the Americas were the center stage of a new millennium remained a persistent undercurrent, resurfacing in various guises—ranging from the utopian and Edenic to the messianic and apocalypticist—to challenge the religious and political foundations of the Viceroyalty of Peru (Milhou 2000).

The seventeenth century saw its share of Andean messiahs who claimed biblical or saintly identities while drawing power from *huacas* (local guardian entities), but the most striking uprisings tinged with millenarian rhetoric occurred later. This tradition of eschatological defiance culminated in the mid-eighteenth century, when Juan Santos Atahualpa led a successful rebellion against viceregal forces in the Peruvian Amazon before mysteriously vanishing in 1756—an exit that his followers interpreted as a bodily ascension to heaven, as their leader had claimed would be his destiny.³² Atahualpa had positioned himself as the harbinger of a new Age of the Holy Spirit, a Joachimite concept learned from his Jesuit tutors (Lara 2016, pp. 242–43; Flores Galindo 1987, pp. 13–63). A few decades later, José Gabriel Condorcanqui—adopting the title Túpac Amaru II—presented himself as the second coming of the last ruler of the neo-Inca state. His 1780 rebellion systematically deployed end-times symbols: his followers blew horns in reference to the archangel Gabriel’s role as the trumpeter of the doomsday, and he commissioned Christ-like portraits of himself structurally similar to local Last Judgment canvases (Lara 2016, pp. 161–62; Cohen-Aponte 2016, pp. 145–81; Estenssoro 1991).

This tradition of Andean messianism persisted into the late twentieth century, flowing through both secular and religious channels of radicalism. In the 1970s, the Maoist guerrilla group Shining Path emerged in regions where late-medieval prophecies, introduced by Catholic missionaries five centuries prior, had primed the local population for a total, world-altering transformation (Degregori 2012). The organization’s name officially references the words of the Marxist philosopher José Carlos Mariátegui, yet its local efficacy relied on a deeper, subterranean resonance with Franciscan prayers popular in the central highlands that identified the Catholic saint as the “shining pathway” to salvation.³³

It is within this same eschatological substrate—and the specific geography of the central jungle where the displaced and marginalized sought a structured order amidst state abandonment—that the Evangelical Association of the Israelite Mission of the New Universal Covenant (Asociación Evangélica de la Misión Israelita del Nuevo Pacto Universal, AEMINPU) must be situated (Ossio Acuña 2014). Founded in this volatile landscape in 1968 by Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal (1918–2000), the movement offered a fundamentalist religious alternative to the political crusade of the Maoists. Known to his followers as Brother Ezequiel, Ataucusi claimed that in 1956 he was consecrated during an ascension to the Third Heaven, where he received a divine mandate from the Holy Trinity to enforce the Ten Commandments as the only shield against a global cataclysm. By appointing himself as the Messiah tasked with establishing an imminent Andean paradise, Ataucusi redirected the region’s apocalypticist energy toward a strict, agrarian communalism (Masson 1991).

To fulfill this mission, Ataucusi organized his followers, his “living frontiers” (*fronteras vivas*), into colonies in the Peruvian Amazon, which he envisioned as the new Promised Land (Désilets 2008). These settlements, where the *israelitas* live according to a strict

moral code and wear robes inspired by Raphaelite biblical imagery, were intended to serve as an Edenic haven where the chosen people could shelter from the impending destruction of humanity. AEMINPU's belief system has been described as "a syncretic amalgamation of Adventism, Judaism, Inca Messianism and Maoism"—which makes it sound like a cult imagined by the likes of Kurt Vonnegut in his *Cat's Cradle* mode, a religious aberration typical of the twentieth century. Yet, the historical roots of Ataucusi's doctrine are much older. They lie in the same Joachimite millenarianism that animated Columbus and the same geo-eschatological imagination that Thomassin's engraving carried across the Atlantic (Houghton 2015).

6. Eden Deforested

AEMINPU might be dismissed as yet another marginal doomsday cult. But the 1989 founding of its own political party, the Agricultural People's Front of Peru (FREPA), and the startling congressional success in 2020 revealed that the Israelites' message carries a deep-seated appeal across the country (Collyns 2020; Casey-Pariseault 2020). Voters, weary of continuous corruption scandals, found a compelling alternative in the group's theocratic platform, which aims to moralize the political system through the application of divine law. Their vision of agrarian revitalization and strict ethical discipline was disseminated through grassroots engagement in marginal urban and rural areas, purposefully bypassing traditional media circuits (Ráez Suárez 2022).

The Israelites' social model of agrarian communalism—anchored by massive migration to the northeastern Amazon basin, in the Peruvian department of Loreto—imposes a rigid, geometric discipline upon the landscape. Unlike the traditional riverine communities whose land-use patterns respect natural contours, these settlements fragment the forest to make way for crops and cattle to the detriment of ecological continuity. In recent years, these remote colonies have facilitated a "narcification" of the frontier, where illicit coca cultivation accelerates forest removal while providing an economic substrate for the mission's survival (Brehaut 2023a). The movement is now associated with a host of documented illegal activities, including the systematic disregard for environmental protections, encroachment upon Indigenous territories, forced labor, and child trafficking (Brehaut 2021; Tremlett 2026). This theologically sanctioned transfiguration of the rainforest into farmlands in proximity to criminal networks is not an isolated phenomenon; it is mirrored by the expansion of Brazilian Evangelicals and Bolivian Mennonites elsewhere in the basin (Taj 2024; Esteves 2023; Brehaut 2023b). Their collective impact has prompted dire warnings from monitoring groups like MAAP (Monitoring of the Andes Amazon Program), which observes that rampant clearing through heavy machinery, pesticides, and slash-and-burn farming could soon push the biome toward the irreversible threshold of a regional dieback (Brehaut 2023c).

But what is at stake if the Amazon collapses under the weight of this providential expansion? Scientific consensus now views the rainforest not only as a biodiversity hotspot but as a crucial biotic pump—a mechanism of roughly 400 billion trees that actively irrigates the atmosphere with roughly 1000 L of water per day per tree, thus sustaining the atmospheric rivers essential for continental rainfall (Makarieva and Gorshkov 2007; Nobre 2026). The rainforest is rapidly approaching a regional tipping point—estimated at a limit of 20–25% deforestation—beyond which the biome faces an irreversible savannization (Nobre et al. 2016; Lovejoy and Nobre 2019). The stakes are planetary: not only does the Amazon function as a gigantic air-conditioner for the planet, but its collapse would trigger continental drought and the sudden release of colossal carbon stores totaling up to 200 gigatons, an amount equivalent to over two decades of global fossil fuel emissions that would render climate goals unattainable (Marques 2023, p. 160; Flores et al. 2024). This tragedy would be compounded by the extinction of millions of species, a

loss in planetary biodiversity that would imperil the resilience of the entire Earth system.^{Error! Reference source not found.} When confronted with the imminent possibility of the Amazon's dieback, the meteorologist Carlos Nobre was categorical: "It is the end of the world" (D. Phillips 2019).

This ominous statement appeared in the *Guardian* in a 2019 article by Dom Phillips. In June 2022, the British journalist was murdered along with Bruno Pereira, a Brazilian Indigenous expert, while on a reporting trip near the Javari River, a tributary of the Amazon that separates the Brazilian state of Amazonas from the Peruvian department of Loreto (T. Phillips 2022). Their assassinations were carried out by one of the many criminal gangs of illegal poachers that plague the Tres Fronteras—the tripoint in the Upper Amazon where the boundaries of Brazil, Peru, and Colombia meet—continuing a history of frontier violence deeply rooted in the colonial extraction of the region that has surged in recent years.³⁵ Pereira was an experienced defender of Indigenous territories in the Javari Valley. Phillips was researching a book titled *How to Save the Amazon*.

Approximately 105 miles west of the site of the murders lies Alto Monte de Israel, the settlement that AEMINPU reveres as its holy land (Figure 25). This proximity is more than a geographic coincidence; it underscores a shared perception of the Amazon as a territory to be subdued, whether through the pragmatic brutality of extractive factions or the sacred mandate of the settlers. In this volatile borderland, the ideological program of the Israelites provides a theological justification for the very environmental transformation driven by organized crime: the conversion of a primary forest—still perceived as an unregulated wilderness, a *terra nullius*—into a profitable agrarian territory.

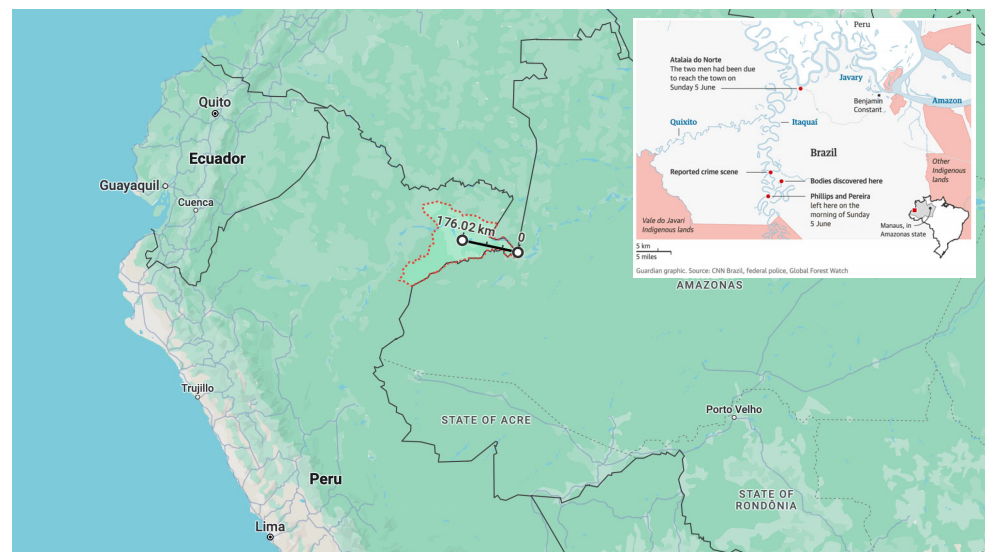


Figure 25. Google Maps view of the Javari Valley (Google Maps) overlaid with reporting data from *The Guardian* (derived from Dom Phillips, 17 June 2022). The map illustrates the transit corridor between Atalaia do Norte (Brazil) and Alto Monte de Israel (Peru), highlighting the proximity of the urban frontier to the isolationist religious settlements of the Israelitas del Nuevo Pacto Universal (AEMINPU).

Yet this systematic disciplining of the land entails far more than a reconfiguration of physical borders; it represents a profound and often irreversible unraveling of the continent's ontological fabric. No matter how much data we collect, it is impossible to fully quantify what this transformation meant—and means—for the deep history of the region. How many hands once busy weaving gods into tunics and mantles went cold? How many

words for “tree” and “root” died their deaths in dead tongues? And how many myths celebrating kinship with hills, rivers, and lakes were unsung into oblivion?

The Great Dying of the Indigenous Peoples represented an epistemic catastrophe as much as a biological one. Centuries ago, this demographic collapse meant the suppression of panpsychic and panentheistic perspectives in favor of a monotheistic worldview that reduces the biosphere to a mere stock of resources for a transcendental leap into the unknown. Such convictions continue to echo in the voices of those currently clearing the Amazonian frontier. Albino Ramos, an Israelite preacher in Santa Cecilia, Ucayali, describes the conversion of the rainforest into farmland as a civilizing triumph: “We have made this land productive that before was pure wilderness,” he explains, “and we have brought agriculture and livestock” (Brehaut 2022).³⁶ This view of the forest as a utilitarian void is echoed by the Mennonite communities who operate under a similar justification. One such farmer recently summarized this stance with chilling clarity, stating that “[t]he trees, the rocks, are things. And things have been placed by God for our use” (Brehaut 2023c).³⁷ The impact of these beliefs is both measurable and devastating. As of October 2024, the Mennonites have already deforested 4819 hectares of the Peruvian Amazon with blatant disregard for environmental laws (Finer et al. 2024).

7. Art History at the Tipping Point

The theological provenance of this devastation—the logic that reduces the world to a mere instrument for a human drama of salvation—is the subject of “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” a firestorm of an article by Lynn White Jr. (White 1967). Originally delivered as a lecture in 1966, in it the Princeton Medievalist leveled his *j’accuse* at Western Christianity as the ideological architect of our current environmental impasse, in a manner that has been characterized as “the foundation, the jumping-off point, the lode-star” for most academic discourse on the relationship between religious beliefs and environmental attitudes (LeVasseur and Peterson 2016, p. 1). As Lynn White’s thesis goes, humankind’s disastrous relationship with the environment has been overdetermined by three fundamental illusions derived from Western theology: the mandate for limitless expansion based on a reading of Genesis centered on humanity’s mastery over creation; a naïve optimism in progress toward a millenarian utopia rooted in Revelation; and the reduction of the biosphere to an instrumental apparatus for a humanity that, being made in God’s image, claims to transcend the chain of life—a presumption that Arthur O. Lovejoy once derided as “one of the most curious monuments of human imbecility.” (Lovejoy 1936, p. 186).

These three axioms—extractive dominionism, eschatological teleology, and anthropotheocentrism—are not abstract concepts floating in the ether. As the art historian Edgar Wind argued in 1936, human behavior is largely shaped by social imaginaries and historical traditions—those masses of past experience that intrude into our present to compel belief and action (Wind 1936, pp. 255–64). These imaginaries are embodied in cultural practices and find their vindication in the heritage artifacts that archive them. Because these objects function as conduits for a tradition that continues to “demand” and “compel,” the act of studying them is never neutral. In this respect, Wind reminds us that the historian, like the scientist, is never a passive observer but an intruder into the process under investigation; to engage with history is to be “historically affected” (Wind 1936, pp. 258–59).

Consequently, to awaken documents such as Thomassin’s *Last Judgment* or the Carabuco canvases from their historical slumber is to disturb the historic process. By dragging these forgotten words and images from the archive, we interfere with the ideological nexus they embody, a réseau that transmitted a specific eschatological program from Rome to the Americas and which survives today in catastrophic forms. In the terms set by

Tim Ingold, Thomassin's print is not a bounded object with a fixed ontological status; rather, it is a knot in a meshwork of relations, a biosocial becoming whose form continues to emerge through its ongoing entanglement with Andean viewers, colonial priests, and contemporary environmental crises (Ingold 2013). To study it is to participate in this continual ontogenesis: every disclosure regarding the tangible and intangible dimensions of these objects—whether it is about authorship and means of production, the theological subtext of an iconographical element, or the chemical legacy of a mining town that hosts a painting of the end times—reacts to the construction of the implements we use to understand our own existence, art history included.

Should we fail to recognize the recursive agency of the deep-rooted apocalypticism encoded in our visual heritage, the Book of Revelation may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy, but one in which the longed-for New Heaven and New Earth manifest as a polluted atmosphere and a charred landscape. This outcome is the inevitable conclusion of a hylomorphic view of the world—one that treats the Earth as inert, raw matter waiting to be informed by a pre-figured human template. In this model, life is not an emergent process but the mere transcription of an external design, whether that design is found in a divine plan of salvation or a colonial grid of extraction. Imposed onto landscapes and their peoples, such top-down forms sever the biosocial integration of life: the recognition that the organic flux of the biological and the relational pull of the social are not separate layers of existence but intertwined strands of a single, ongoing becoming.

When this integration is broken, we cease to inhabit the world as knots in a vibrant meshwork of relations, appearing instead as discrete units to be managed, measured, and eventually transcended. The environment—once a zone of interpenetration where organisms and their lifelines spill into one another—is reduced to a passive stage for a drama of human exceptionalism. Thus, the “most severe judgment” heading Thomassin's engraving will complete its loop: no longer a providential warning for a distant future, the inscription materializes as the systemic collapse of the biosphere—the inescapable verdict that our inherited worldview has effectively passed upon its own planetary body.

To interrupt this loop is the urgent work of a historically conscious present.

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Notes

1. The global dissemination of Thomassin's composition exemplifies the "viral" nature of early modern prints as primary agents of cross-cultural iconographic transmission. For the theoretical framework of print as a mobile medium in early modernity, see (Massing 2017; Hyman 2021; Porras 2023).
2. For an overview of current environmental catastrophes, see (Marques 2023). Regarding the 2021 extinctions, see (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2021). For the ice shelf collapse, see (NASA Earth Observatory 2022). On the record-breaking duration and impact of Cyclone Freddy, see (WMO 2024). For the record-breaking heat index, see (Al Jazeera 2024).
3. Regarding the prevalence of these eschatological views, a 2022 Pew survey found that 39% of Americans believe they are living in the end times, with roughly a quarter of those believers rejecting environmental concerns on religious grounds; see (Alper 2022). This stance is frequently reinforced by an embattled mentality in which environmentalism is perceived as a competing, secular eschatology; see (Veldman 2019, pp. 1–21). Such rhetoric has reached a new intensity in the accelerationist teleology of the tech elite; notably, Peter Thiel has framed the modern obsession with climate risks as a harbinger of the Antichrist, suggesting that fear of planetary collapse is being used to justify a totalitarian "one-world state" that would stifle divine progress (in Douthat 2025). Klein and Taylor (2025) have identified Thiel's brand of apocalypticism as the hallmark of a revamped "end times fascism," warning that the powerful are no longer interested in stewardship, but rather in building "fortressed escape pods" to survive the very collapse they are causing.
4. I here follow Agamben's classical definition of *apparatus* as a heterogeneous network of discourses, material forms, and institutions that captures and models the behaviors of living beings toward a dominant strategic function. See (Agamben 2009, pp. 1–24).
5. I use the term "anthropotheocentrism" to describe the ideological fusion of a God-centered universe with the practical assumption that the material world exists for human utility.
6. "[P]erfectus vero, cui mundus totus exsilium est. Ille mundo amorem fixit, iste sparsit, hic exstinxit." My translation. For an analysis of how this ethics of exile informed Hugh's understanding of Christian selfhood, see (Illich 1993, pp. 22–26).
7. According to Fernando Luiz Lara, the European de-ontologization of non-human entities in favor of the detached, transcendental human spirit (i.e., the Hugonian exile) was enacted through techniques of abstraction that reconstituted "the world as a fully masterable terraqueous globe." See (F. L. Lara 2020, p. 75).
8. On the *aureola* in scholastic thought and visual art, see (Hall and Uhr 1978, 1985).
9. On the symbolic transition of the laurel from the Greco-Roman military agon to the Christian triumph, see Tertullian, *De corona* 15, in which the author argues that secular military awards are eclipsed by the incorruptible rewards offered by Christ to those who fought "the good fight" (cf. 2 Tim. 4:7). For the broader context of Tertullian's statement, see (Gero 1970).
10. Although Michael is not explicitly named in the final defeat of Satan (Rev. 20), Christian iconography frequently conflated this ultimate triumph with the initial war in Heaven (Rev. 12); this conflation allowed artists to depict the Archangel as the eternal executioner of divine justice. On the specific identification of Francis as alter Christus and alter Michael in the context of the struggle against the Antichrist, see (Lara 2016, p. 32). For the identification of Francis as the Sixth Angel as a cornerstone of both Conventual and Spiritual apocalypticism, see (Leff 1980, p. 229).
11. This belief found vivid expression in the visual culture of the Spanish Americas, where several paintings cast Francis as a warrior confronting the Antichrist and his forces. A preeminent example is Cristóbal de Villalpando's *Saint Francis Defeats the Antichrist* (c. 1691–2) in the Convent of St. Francis in Antigua, Guatemala.
12. In seventeenth-century Roman print culture, the *privilegio* served a dual function: it granted the publisher exclusive commercial rights while simultaneously acting as an ecclesiastical license signaling that the work had been scrutinized and approved by the Church's censors, typically the Master of the Sacred Palace (*Maestro del Sacro Palazzo*). By featuring Arrigoni's coat of arms, Thomassin's engraving incorporates this legal and doctrinal warrant into the visual field, branding the print as an authorized instrument of the post-Tridentine Church's global missionary and political agenda.
13. *Actiones* (actions) refer to the major thematic divisions or sessions into which the proceedings of the Third Council of Lima were organized. Each action addressed a specific area of ecclesiastical governance, such as the sacraments or the instruction of Indigenous peoples. Within these divisions, *constituciones* (constitutions) represent the individual statutes, decrees, or canons that established specific legal and religious mandates for the Province of Lima.
14. (Vargas Ugarte 1951–1954, vol. 1, pp. 323–24): "Mas a los que tuvieren tales impedimentos, que no sufran más larga enseñanza hánseles de enseñar a su modo los principales puntos de nra. fe; que son, el primero que hay un solo Dios hacedor de todas las cosas, que da premio de vida eterna a los que les sirven, y castigo con tormentos eternos en la otra vida, a los malos que le ofenden en ésta". My translation.

15. (Concilio Provincial de Lima 1585), fol. 196r: “Y por esto habéis visto pintado á San Miguel, glorioso Arcángel, con un peso, que está pesando las ánimas, que significa, y quiere decir, que en la otra vida se mira el bien, y el mal que han hecho las almas, y conforme á eso reciben sentencia.” My translation.
16. Anonymous, (Mateos 1944, p. 36 [22]): “[Y] ha auido notables mudancas y conuersiones de yndios con la consider.on de juicio y gloria y penas de los condenados, que está todo pintado por las paredes de esta yglesia y capilla, y particularm.te con las penas y castigos que en el infierno tienen los vicios y peccados de los yndios que están allí bien dibujados por sus especies y diferencias, porque los yndios se mueuen mucho por pinturas, y muchas vezes más que con muchos sermones.” My translation.
17. (Guamán Poma de Ayala ca. 1615), fol. 674 [688]: “Y en cada yglecia ayga un juycio pintado. Allí muestre la uenida del señor al juycio, el cielo y el mundo y las penas del ynfierno, para que sea testigo del cristiano pecador.” My translation.
18. Personal experience of masses celebrated in the Church of Santiago Apóstol, Huancané, Peru. 19 August 2024.
19. For example, after the battle of Sangarará on 19 November 1780, the forces of Tupac Amaru II torched the pueblo church, killing the people who sought refuge inside the temple and thus starting “the largest rebellion against Spanish rule in the Americas between the conquest and the wars of independence.” See (Garrett 2005, pp. 183–84).
20. Due to restricted access to the Franciscan archives in Potosí, studies on these two paintings remain almost nonexistent. A rare exception is (Leaño España 2018).
21. Toledo to King Philip II, Lima, 8 February 1570, in (Levillier 1921, vol. 3, pp. 342–43): “[Q]ue quando por esta causa muriesen algunos de los naturales no mudándoles de sus temples y dando las aguas pastos y tierras y buenos asientos no avria porque parar en hazello aun que no quisiesen pues por muchas y tan ynjustas causas en tiempo pasado se a consumido tan gran numero dellos por dalles aora compatibilidad de doctrina cristiana y pulgia que se pretende no seria de mucho ynconveniente que faltasen algunos los que quedasen y sus descendientes quedaran útiles para el servicio de nuestro señor y de vuestra magestad y bien suyo y no con poco provecho del Reyno el poblado y plantallos cerca de las lavores de las minas del.” My translation.
22. Potosí’s appellation as the “mouth of hell” has been attributed to the Dominican friar Domingo de Santo Tomás, who visited the mines of Cerro Rico in 1550.
23. The inscription in the fourteenth roundel states: “Estando ya enterrada la Santa Cruz, luego de muchísimo tiempo, habiendo Oído un fiscal en una borrachera, y propalaba en ambas Parcialidades Sabedora donde estaba enterrada La Sta Cruz la India, dio parte al cura y al correjidor le hicieron Comparecer a la mencionada india decir, quien Sabía donde estaba la S.ta Cruz la cual torturada, designó el Sitio, y se desterró la Santa Cruz.” (“After the Holy Cross had lain buried for a very long time, an overseer, while attending an Indigenous drinking ceremony, overheard talk in both moieties about the whereabouts of the Holy Cross. An Indian woman, who knew the burial site, informed the priest and *corregidor*. Forced to testify, the woman revealed the location under torture, and so the Holy Cross was disinterred.”) My translation.
24. Fifteenth, sixteenth, nineteenth, and thirtieth roundels, respectively. For a detailed reading of the narrative roundels, see (Claros Arispe 2013). The roundels are numbered and inscribed; Claros Arispe provides Spanish transcriptions of each.
25. The inscription in the twentieth-fourth roundel states: “Estándose Retexando La yglesia cayeron de ensima de ella Tres indios siendo Cura de este pueblo el B.[achill]er Joseph de Arellano a los quales queriendo faboreserlos hallo muertos a los dos y al uno de ellos solo acudio a confesarlo y se fue el dicho Cura a su casa a comer y luego que acabó Salio a hacerlos amortajar y hallo que ya se avian ido a sus cassas por sus pies sanos.” (“While the church was being rethatched, three Indians fell from its roof. The priest of this town, Bachelor Joseph de Arellano, sought to aid them, but found two already dead and was able to hear the confession of the third. Then, the priest went home to eat. When he later returned to prepare the bodies for burial, he found that they had already gone home, healed, on their own feet.”) My translation.
26. Often the only trees in an otherwise treeless landscape, *Polylepis* species form the highest forests in the Western Hemisphere, reaching elevations above 4800 m. These trees provide essential ecosystem services, including erosion control and water regulation, while serving as a primary source of building material and firewood for Andean inhabitants. Human land use has shaped these forests for millennia, though it is estimated that over 90 percent of their original natural cover has been lost. See (Boza Espinosa and Kessler 2022).
27. On the theological association of the devil with untamed landscapes and the “exorcism” of Indigenous territory through colonial settlement, see (Cañizares-Guerra 2006); see also (Cervantes 1994) and (Mujica Pinilla 2013). Lumnius (1594) attributes the rise of heretical movements in sixteenth-century Europe to the expulsion of the devil from Asia and the Americas due to their colonization; according to the author, the return of Satan to the Old World was a sign that the end of history was hastening toward its conclusion (see pp. 108–12).
28. On the Orbis Spike as a potential marker for the Anthropocene, see (Lewis and Maslin 2018, pp. 147–87). This chronological framing faces significant challenges on several fronts. Recent high-resolution analysis of ice cores suggests that the sudden 1610

drop may be a statistical artifact resulting from a few anomalously low values rather than a genuine global spike; instead, data supports a more gradual CO₂ decline spanning the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (King et al. 2024). From an Earth system science perspective, critics argue that the demographic collapse in the Americas, while an extreme environmental event, did not represent a fundamental shift in the functioning of the planetary system in the way the later Industrial Revolution or the Great Acceleration did (Hamilton 2015). Furthermore, locating the start of the Anthropocene in the seventeenth century is contested by those who argue for a much deeper history of human climate impact beginning with the spread of agriculture millennia ago, such as (Ruddiman 2005). This debate has culminated in growing skepticism toward the Anthropocene as a formal epoch of the geological time scale by stratigraphic authorities, who found 1610 and other pre-industrial markers insufficient for a globally synchronous boundary. For the *status quaestionis*, see (Rull 2024).

29. For the modern political resonance of Columbus's teleological "heroism," see "Trump installs Christopher Columbus statue on White House grounds" (CNN 2026). According to Davis Ingle, Assistant Press Secretary to Donald Trump, the president saw the Genoese admiral as "the original American hero, a giant of Western civilization, and one of the most gallant and visionary men to ever walk the face of the earth." Trump himself has been seen by many of his Evangelical supporters as a visionary hero—and thus, implicitly, a restorer of the Christian America inaugurated by Columbus—despite *and* because of his notorious flaws; see (Trangerud 2022).
30. "Muy soberano señor, la mayor cosa, después de la creación del mundo, sacando la encarnación y muerte del que lo creó, es el descubrimiento de las Indias." (López de Gómara 1553), dedication.
31. Postel identifies the discovery and conversion of the New World in less than fifty years as a "sudden mutation" of human history. He argues that this expansion—achieved by the "mere power of Mariners and Merchants"—coupled with the providential invention of printing and artillery, signaled that God was "completing power" (*accomplir la puissance*) and "consuming wisdom in the world" (*consommer la sapience au monde*), thereby confirming the arrival of the final age. Similarly, in a letter to Abraham Ortelius in 1579, Postel praised the geographer's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570) for providing a view of a harmonious world in which humankind, gathered in its diversity under Christianity, could move forward toward the millennium. See "Guillaume Postel to Abraham Ortelius, 1579," in (Hessels 1887, pp. 186–92).
32. On the mix of Christian and Indigenous belief systems fueling neo-Inca rebellions, Stefano Varese argues that Juan Santos Atahualpa's "ideas (possibly his doctrine), which represent the inevitable syncretism of two centuries of Christian presence alongside primordial indigenous religious thought, are those of a religious renewer rather than those of a social revolutionary in search of worldly power." See (Varese 2002, p. 92).
33. The name of the revolutionary group famously derives from a saying by the Peruvian public intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui, who claimed in the 1920s that "el Marxismo-Leninismo abrirá el sendero luminoso hacia la revolución" ("Marxism-Leninism will open the shining path toward revolution"). However, Jaime Lara hypothesizes that the term *sendero luminoso* goes back to Franciscan prayers popular in northeastern Peru, whence the Shining Path emerged; see (Lara 2016, p. 317, fn. 45).
34. (SPA 2021). The report warns that crossing the 20–25% deforestation tipping point could trigger a massive release of up to 200 gigatons of carbon into the atmosphere and a collapse of the biotic pump essential for continental rainfall (pp. 13, 26–31). This systemic dieback would lead to irreversible savannization and the mass extinction of the region's immense biodiversity (pp. 29–31).
35. The homicide rate in the Brazilian North—which contains the majority of the rainforest—grew by 260.3% between 1980 and 2019, a spike driven by the convergence of transnational drug routes, illegal logging, and land-grabbing conflicts. See (de Lima 2021).
36. "Hemos hecho esta tierra productiva que antes era puro monte y hemos traído agricultura y ganadería." My translation.
37. "Los árboles, las piedras, son cosas. Y las cosas las ha puesto Dios para que las usemos." My translation.

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