

The representation of Heaven and Hell in Last Judgement scenes

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This paper shall discuss the development of the iconography of Heaven and Hell in association to depictions of the Last Judgement, relating this development especially to religious changes during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Aiming at concision, this article shall consider especially Tuscan paintings, or made by Tuscan artists in other Italian areas, from the eleventh century until the end of the fourteenth century.

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The Last Judgement is one of the most important themes for Christianity, daily remembered by the faithful as he recites, during the Mass, the Creed which is nowadays still very similar to the version defined in the first Council of Nicaea in 325: Christ, indeed, is “who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead”. The Last Judgement, as we can see, is clearly connected to the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ. If He was not made man, and if He had not died and then resurrected to redeem the sins of mankind, there would be no reason for His final return. The Last Judgement, hence, is the ultimate moment in which Christian history is at last fulfilled. It is the second and final moment when Christ returns to this world, to judge all men, and separate mankind between the blessed and the wicked, who shall go, respectively, to Heaven or to Hell through all eternity.

Its theological significance, therefore, justifies the importance given to representations of the Last Judgement since the first centuries of Christianity, when it was evoked by the scene of Christ separating the sheep from the goat (undoubt-

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edly alluding to the gospel of Matthew¹) – as can be seen, for instance, in Roman sarcophagi such as the example from the end of the third century or the beginning of the fourth, nowadays in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Actual representations of the theme in Western tradition, with its most significant iconographic elements, date back to the ninth century, but it would reach a real prominence from the thirteenth century on. There are variations in the depiction of the Doomsday, but some iconographic types appear more consistently in all works, in all periods. The most developed scenes of the Last Judgment include Christ-Judge who traditionally presents the stigmas (undoubtedly the most important element of the scene); the trumpeting angels, who would unequivocally indicate the moment of the final judgement², and the angels who carry the *Arma Christi* and, in few cases, also the angels who bring the books of Life and Death, described in scriptural texts³; the resurrection of the bodies⁴;

¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world [...]’. Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels [...]’. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”. Mt 25,31-34,41 and 46.

² See, for instance, 1Cor 15,51-52, which associates the sound of the trumpets to the resurrection of bodies on the last day: “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed”.

³ As in Rev 20,11-15: “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire”.

⁴ Besides the excerpt from 1Corinthians already quoted, the resurrection is also mentioned, for instance, in 1Thes 4,14-17 (“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

the act of judgment *per se*, often represented by the weighing of souls (usually presided by Saint Michael⁵), the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist (or, less commonly in Italian examples, Saint John the Evangelist) on both sides of the Christ, forming the *Deesis* group⁶, of great popularity as it shows the possibility of saints' intercession before the judge and, lastly, the separation between the blessed and the damned, who will respectively receive the blessings of Paradise and the punishments of Hell, as indicated, among other scriptural sources, by the already mentioned excerpt from Saint Matthew.

Heaven and Hell, as we can see, are important elements for the Christian concept of the Last Judgement; they are fundamental as there must exist somewhere the souls may go after immediate death, and especially after the resurrection at the end of the world. Christians believed since the first centuries in the physical existence of these otherworld instances, and such conviction had a great impact on their everyday life. As Jacques Le Goff states, "ideas about the other world are among the more prominent features of any religion or society. The life of the believer undergoes a change when he becomes convinced that life does not end with death"⁷. This certainty influenced their attitudes and guided their daily actions, as Christians knew these would eventually determine their eternal *status*: among the blessed, gazing at Christ in Heaven, or among the sinful, condemned to the everlasting punishments of Hell.

If they actually existed, as it was believed in the Middle Ages, where would they be? According to Christian conceptions, there would be a clear opposi-

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord"), which also alludes to the trumpets.

⁵ The weighing of souls is indicated in few scriptural texts. For example, Dan 5,27 ("Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting") and Job 31,6 ("Let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless"). The participation of Saint Michael in the weighing, on the other hand, relies scripturally in Dan 12,1 ("At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered"), but especially in the absorption of Greco-roman and/or Egyptian traditions of the weighing of souls. On this topic, see M.P. PERRY, *On the Psychostasis in Christian art*, in "Burlington magazine", XXII (1912-1913), and T. QUÍRICO, *A psicostasia nas representações visuais do Juízo final [The psychostasis in visual representations of the Last Judgement]*, in AA.VV. *Atas da VII Semana de Estudos Medievais*, Rio de Janeiro, PEM/UFRJ, 2007.

⁶ On the *Deesis* group, see T. VELMANS, *L'image de la Déesis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde byzantin*, in "Cahiers archéologiques", XXIX, 1980-1981.

⁷ *La naissance du Purgatoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996, p. 10.

tion between Heaven and Hell, as they distinguished the earth from the sky, as once again Le Goff explains: “though underground, Hell was still identified with earth, and in the Christian mind the infernal world contrasted with the celestial world, just as in the Greek mind the chthonic world contrasted with the uranian”⁸. More than a simple opposition, thus, we have a vertical axis which oppose both otherworld instances – Heaven is above, Hell is beneath, as Hugh of Saint Victor wrote in his *Summa de sacramentis christianae fidei* in the twelfth century: “just as God has prepared corporeal punishments for sinners who must be tormented [...] so he has set aside corporeal places for these corporeal punishments. It is right and proper that the place of torment is down below and the place of joy up above, because sin weighs the soul down, whereas justice raises it up”⁹. Christian tradition believed that even in Hell this vertical opposition would exist, as the worst tortures should take place deeper inside the infernal *locus*, as it would be more distant from Heaven¹⁰. This idea would also be explored by Dante in his *Commedia*, as we will find *Lo ’mperador del doloroso regno* in the center of the Earth, in the deepest area of the *Inferno*. In a similar way, in Dante’s *Paradiso* the blessed are placed in one of the nine concentric heavens, according to their merits. The most deserving ones will be above the others, therefore nearer God.

Despite the significance of the vertical axis which geographically – and theologically – opposed Heaven and Hell, we can perceive that, in visual representations of the Last Judgement, the otherworld instances were not usually opposed according to this verticality; an exception is the remarkable small panel in the Metropolitan Museum of Art painted by Jan Van Eyck around 1420-1425, in which a great skeleton mounted by Saint Michael, occupying the entire width of the panel, clearly divides the surface in two, separating the underworld, in the lower half of the panel – thoroughly depicted with detailed tortures and bodies torn apart –, from the celestial court around Christ up above. Another exception is the *Trecento* panel from an anonymous Bolognese painter, nowadays in the collection of the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Bologna, although it is not a traditional depiction of the Last Judgement. This panel is visually divided in three parts; in the lowest portion we can see Devil devouring some of the damned, while excretes another one from an inner head in his genitals. Hell is also meticulously represented, with demons torturing other figures. Separating the in-

⁸ *Ivi*, p. 11.

⁹ *Ivi*, p. 195.

¹⁰ See, for instance, the Purgatory of Saint Patrick, written in the twelfth century: “in indignation the demons then rushed into the fiery pit and dragged the knight with them. The deeper he went the wider it became, and the more terrible were the punishments that he saw” (E. GARDINER (a cura di), *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, New York, Italica, 1989, p. 142).

fernal region from the upper portion of the panel, Saint Michael weighs a soul while fights two demons which try to distort the result of the weighing. Above him, the celestial court once again surrounds Christ, Who is not judging mankind as it would be expected; He is instead crowning the Virgin Mary with the approval of God the Father. This panel, therefore, mingles three different Christian themes: Last Judgement (indicated by the weighing of souls), Hell and the Coronation of the Virgin in Heaven.

As we stated before, regarding the vertical opposition Van Eyck's painting is the one exceptional example, clearly the most important. Traditionally, both on panel paintings, frescoes or reliefs, the otherworld *loci* are opposed to each other in a horizontal axis. This is probably due to a visual interpretation of the already mentioned passage from Matthew's gospel, in which Christ clearly states that "He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left", sheep and goats evidently interpreted as the blessed and the damned, respectively. In other words, Heaven must be represented to the right of Christ, while Hell must be depicted to His left. There may also be visual reasons for such composition: in fact, when Heaven and Hell are opposed horizontally, they have the same visual prominence to the observer, as they are represented at the same eye-level. If we consider the functions expected from these images – as it will be discussed later – such visual equivalence acquires greater importance.

In spite of their significance, the otherworld *loci* had not always been explicitly represented in association to the Last Judgement. In fact, they began to be depicted in this context around the tenth century, in the same period in which the visual representation of the Doomsday was developed in Western monumental art, but at least until the thirteenth century Heaven and Hell were especially indicated rather than actually depicted in these scenes. There are few and very important exceptions, such as the tympanum at the Abbatial Church of Sainte-Foy, in Conques (ca. 1124), or, in the Italian Peninsula, the fresco from the Church of Sant'Angelo in Formis, in Capua, painted around 1080 [fig. 1]. In both cases, Heaven but especially the interior of Hell are depicted, differently from what is seen in other ancient models, in which traditionally the otherworld instances are just suggested by their entrances (the Mouth of Hell and the gates of Heaven).

The Mouth of Hell is a powerful image, as it shows the infernal *locus* as a monstrous figure devouring sinners. The origin for this iconographic type is probably the Leviathan description which is found in the Book of Job¹¹. Even

¹¹ 41,13-21: "Who can strip off his outer garment? Who would come near him with a bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth is terror. His back is made of rows of shields, shut up closely as with a seal. One is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they clasp each other and cannot be separated. His sneezings flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn. Out of his mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils

the later developments of the iconography of Hell and the detailed representation of its interior have not prevented the inclusion of its mouth. Once again we can notice it in the tympanum from Conques: some devils pull a soul into the mouth, from which it shall fall in Hell's interior to be tortured by Devil and its assistants. In some later examples, like in the fresco from the Pisan Camposanto (which will be discussed later) [fig. 4], the Mouth is depicted inside Hell, as it would regurgitate the damned thrown into the infernal area, instead of swallowing them. The close association between the entrance of Hell and this monstrous jaw, as well as the visual importance of this image, can be inferred by the fact that, in medieval plays in which the infernal region should be represented, a giant jaw was frequently incorporated to the scenery in order to "create buildings with the quality of nightmarish reality"¹².

The allusion to Heaven, on the other hand, may have some variations. One of the most familiar, especially in Eastern tradition, is its representation as Abraham's bosom (or of the three patriarchs), based in three different passages from the gospels, especially the parable of Lazarus described in Luke 16,19-26¹³. As an interpretation of these biblical excerpts, Heaven is symbolised by Abraham, sometimes accompanied by Jacob and Isaac, who bear on their hands a mantle in which tiny souls of the blessed can be seen. Sometimes this iconographic type

comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth from his mouth".

¹² P. SHEINGORN, 'Who can open the doors of his face?' *The iconography of Hell mouth*, in AA.VV. *The iconography of Hell*, a cura di C. DAVIDSON – T.H. SEILER, Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, 1992, p. 08.

¹³ "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame'. But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us'. The other biblical passages are Mt 8,11-12 ("I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth") and Lc 13,28 ("In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out").

is associated to another possible representation of Heaven: the enclosure garden, based on the Latin meaning of the term *paradisus*, which is derived from the Persian *pairidaeza*, the Hebrew *pardeš* and the Greek *παράδεισος*. Therefore, we can often see a garden area in the left corner (to Christ's right, we must emphasise) of the Last Judgement scenes, in which we find blessed souls.

There is also a third way of alluding to Heaven, which is perhaps the most synthetic and, therefore, the most frequent in ancient Western representations: the gates or the walls of a city, which undoubtedly evokes the Heavenly Jerusalem described in the Book of Revelation (21,18-27) and especially in Saint Augustine's *City of God*. It is widespread throughout Europe, from two frescoes respectively in Clayton, west Sussex (England), and in Notre-Dame de Lye, in Indre (France), both painted in the twelfth century, and in which Heaven is depicted as a walled city, to a tomb relief in Portugal – the tomb of *Dona Inês de Castro*, in the Monastery of Alcobaça –, carved during the fourteenth century. It is frequent in such iconography the presence of Saint Peter in front of the city doors, waiting for the blessed who make their way to Heaven.

In some cases, particularly from Eastern origin, there is a combination of all these iconographic types to allude more consistently to Heaven. For example, in the mosaics from the Baptistery of San Giovanni, in Florence [fig. 2], and from the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, in Torcello (near Venice), the first made on the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the latter by the end of the twelfth century, Heaven is depicted as an enclosure garden locked by a door – in front of which there is not Saint Peter, but an angel receiving a soul. Inside the garden, the three patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob and Isaac, carry tiny blessed souls¹⁴. In Western tradition, on the other hand, Heaven is usually alluded to through the procession of the blessed that walks toward Heaven, whose entrance is indicated by the gate¹⁵.

From the thirteenth century on, as we stated, the otherworld *loci* acquired greater prominence in representations of the Last Judgement. Nevertheless, when the iconographic developments of these instances are compared, we clearly perceive an emphasis in Hell. While the infernal area began to be meticulously depicted, stressing the punishments and tortures of the damned, Heaven continued to be represented fundamentally in the same way. Which are the reasons for this discrepancy?

We must consider that it is not by chance the fact that the increase of importance of these otherworld instances in Last Judgement scenes, and in particular the development of their iconography, began in the thirteenth century. This

¹⁴ We must emphasise that, although made in Italian cities, both mosaics have Eastern influences, especially the Venetian, most likely of Byzantine execution.

¹⁵ On the iconography of Heaven, its origins and developments, see J. BASCHET, *Paradiso*, in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, vol. IX, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1998.

is the moment in which we perceive deep changes in medieval societies and in lay religiosity, especially due to modifications brought by Mendicant orders. The Roman Church had to open itself to these changes, and from the *Duecento* on we perceive in the Italian Peninsula, for instance, the development of lay confraternities – Marian, penitential or charity confraternities being perhaps the most usual. In fact, according to Charles Marie de la Roncière, if in 1200 we counted only two confraternities in Florence, in the beginning of the *Trecento* we already had twenty-two, and more than forty by 1375¹⁶. Undoubtedly, as Roncière once again points out, to enroll in a confraternity did not necessarily mean assiduity or effective participation in confraternal life. Nevertheless, the increase in the number of these confraternities throughout the Italian Peninsula was certainly consequence of the fresh air Mendicant orders brought to religion. If some of these confraternities were first created to fight heresies – as the most famous *laudesi* – soon they became mainly devotional confraternities. Such devotional impetus also indicates changes brought into religiosity in this period: religion became a private matter too.

In order to guide the private devotion of laymen and help conversion, preaching became a central instrument of the Church. The Lateran Council of 1215 emphasised the importance of preaching related especially to Lent and Easter, imposing a more intense pastoral action, seen as an incitement to conversion¹⁷. As Innocence III had already urged Saint Francis, they should preach aiming at the repentance of all men – *omnibus poenitentiam praedicare*¹⁸. All men, indeed, but the pope certainly meant especially lay people, who should be stimulated and exhorted to conversion, rather than instructed in the mysteries of faith. Although Mendicants were not the only ones preaching in the thirteenth century, their importance on this matter cannot be neglected, especially because Franciscans and Dominicans, aiming at a greater audience and its conversion, preached in vernacular, in the language of the simple, and emphasised popular aspects in order to be more easily understood. In fact, differently from those who preached to the clergy, popular preachers “needed to conquer their listeners. Ideas and language should be popular. Under this aspect, then, considered in a religious point of view, the sermons of the Mendicants friars reflected opinions and attitudes from the respective lay environment”¹⁹.

¹⁶ Cfr. *Les confréries à Florence et dans son contado aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, in AA.VV. *Le mouvement confraternel au Moyen Âge: France, Italie, Suisse*, a cura di A. PARAVICINI BAGLIANI, Rome, École Française de Rome, 1987, pp. 297-298.

¹⁷ Cfr. E. DELARUELLE, *San Francesco d'Assisi e la pietà popolare*, in R. MANSELLI (a cura di), *La religiosità popolare nel Medioevo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1983, p. 237, note 19.

¹⁸ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 241.

¹⁹ A. MURRAY, *Pietà ed empietà nel secolo XIII in Italia*, in R. MANSELLI (a cura di), *La religiosità popolare*, cit., p. 255.

In this context of repentance and renovation of faith, the concept of the Last Judgement (as it is directly related to the Passion of the Christ and therefore to Lent and Easter, as we discussed before), but especially its everlasting consequences, had an important role in the conversion of laymen. After all, most preachers agreed that, by the thirteenth century, sin was becoming stronger and worse. “Lust, arrogance and unrestrained thirst for money, in ascending order, are the sins that are placed on top of all the others”²⁰.

A concern in most sermons was the unawareness of when the judgement would come, and the lack of preparation of the faithful to it. As Remigio de’ Girolami wrote in his *Sermones quadragesimales*:

A man considers himself in good health. He then puts aside the fear of an early death, and postpones doing good. He doesn’t realise that man is vanity or, when death comes, he simply and purely stops existing. Such person excludes the possibility of dying suddenly, by sword or lightning. He forgets that it is like navigating in the edge of death, in which he can break and sink in the depths of hell²¹.

The consequences of a dissolute life or of a sudden death, and the lack of possibility of repentance, then, should frequently be reminded to laymen. We perceive, therefore, that Mendicant friars quite often mentioned the Doomsday on their Lent sermons. Giordano da Pisa, Jacopo Passavanti and Vincent Ferrer, just to mention a few, they all describe – sometimes in details – the moment of the Last Judgement and its eternal result. Girolamo Savonarola, by the end of the fifteenth century, relating such theme to private devotion (although representations of the Last Judgement are not properly devotional images), defended that all Christians should have on their homes, particularly on their bedrooms, a depiction of the Doomsday, in order to constantly be reminded, from dawn until the moment of sleep, of the end of the world and the judgement which shall come. The Last Judgement, therefore, became a powerful instrument of conversion.

As it has already been well established by scholarship, preachers frequently developed their sermons in association to images. As Lina Bolzoni explains regarding Bernardino da Siena, in the fifteenth century he

Makes repeated reference to paintings his listeners could see in the streets, churches and palaces of their city. Each time he follows a precise strategy: the viewer’s way of looking is guided such a way as to compel perception of the image

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 274.

²¹ “Fecit se sanum et incolumen, non timet tam cito mori et sic tardat bene facere et non respiciunt [sic], nec cogitant si subito vel gladio vel fune esset sibi possibile mori, et non perpendit quia ipse est sicut scopulum mortis, et frangitur, et submergitur in profundum inferni” (A. MURRAY, *Pietà ed empietà*, cit., pp. 266-267, note 61).

from the viewpoint constructed by Bernardino himself. At this point the image is associated with a part of the homily or even with its whole structure. Acting as mediator between the two there may be an emotive connotation (usually the underlining of a gesture linked to a particular feeling), or a moral interpretation, transforming the image into an exemplum, or yet again a complex allegorical reading. Using various means, Bernardino sets himself a single aim: to guide the reception of images and also to condition their future reception, to create a kind of automatic response system in the observer. In this way the homily can endure, operating outside the bounds of the ephemeral time of its preaching: the city streets, the paintings that mark the most meaningful places of the city are transformed into a memory theatre of Bernardino's teachings²².

This close association between word and image we can see from the thirteenth until at least the fifteenth century is probably one of the reasons for changes and the developments of the iconography of the Doomsday that began in the *Duecento*, particularly of Heaven and Hell. Such a development culminates in the mid-1330s in the complete detachment of the otherworld instances from the Last Judgement composition in monumental paintings, when they are turned into autonomous scenes, often represented in independent walls, although still besides the Doomsday painting and therefore associated to it.

When Heaven and Hell were still incorporated to the Last Judgement scene, and suggested rather than actually depicted, as in the first representations of the theme, the act of judging, and thus the separation between blessed and wicked, was emphasised. Such scenes, therefore, would remind the observers that a future judgement shall take place, and that all should be prepared to it. *Memento*, thus, is an important concept for the proper religious understanding of these scenes, as Giordano da Pisa already stated in the beginning of the *Trecento*: "above all things of this life it is useful the memory of the judgement and of the punishments"²³.

When the otherworld *loci*, particularly Hell, acquired greater importance in these scenes, its understanding and interpretation slight changed. Around 1335, Giotto sketched the Last Judgement fresco cycle from the Palazzo del Bargello, in Florence, and Heaven became an autonomous scene [fig. 3]. At a similar date, probably around 1336-1340, Buonamico Buffalmacco painted his *Trionfo della Morte* cycle in Pisa Camposanto, in which Hell was detached from the judgement scene [fig. 4]²⁴. In both cases, we perceive an emphasis in the depiction

²² L. BOLZONI, *La rete delle immagini. Predicazione volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena*, Torino, Einaudi, 2002, pp. XXIV-XXV.

²³ "Sopra tutte le cose di questa vita è utile la memoria del giudicio e de le pene [...]". *Quaresimale fiorentino 1305-1306*, a cura di C. DELCORNO, Firenze, Sansoni, 1974, p. 57.

²⁴ For a thorougher discussion regarding the Bargello and the Camposanto cycles,

of one of the otherworld instances, creating a more straightforward and direct message to the observer: these images clearly show Christians the eternal *post-mortem* possibilities, with all their consequences – rewards or punishments – in order to rethink their past and present attitudes with the intention to modify their future. Later cycles of the Last Judgement, influenced by these changes, would have both Heaven and Hell detached from the main scene, as in Nardo di Cione's frescoes in the Cappella Strozzi, in the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, painted between 1354 and 1357, and Taddeo di Bartolo's cycle in San Gimignano Collegiate, probably completed around 1393 [fig. 5].

As stated before, the iconography of Heaven and Hell developed differently: the emphasis was concentrated on the representation of the punishments. When the otherworld instances acquired compositional autonomy – and in monumental painting these *loci* usually occupied a whole large wall surface –, Heaven could not be represented as Abraham's bosom anymore. The iconography did develop and change but, differently from what we perceive in Hell scenes, there are no particular rewards shown; actually, we see only one recompense: the eternal contemplation of God, as Heaven was depicted as the Celestial court, with ranks of saints gazing at Christ and, often, also at the Virgin Mary (as in Nardo di Cione and Taddeo di Bartolo's frescoes). If iconographically this scene seems less appealing than Hell's, we must consider that, theologically, it shows the greatest reward man could expect.

To understand this apparent discrepancy between the depictions of the otherworld *loci*, we must reflect on the expected religious functions of the Last Judgement scenes. We briefly considered how this theological theme was explored by Mendicant preachers aiming at conversion of laymen, many of whom were uneducated, most of whom illiterate. As we stated before, Dominicans and Franciscans usually developed in their sermons ideas about sin and how it should be abominated. There was a conviction that the common man should be convinced of the right path to follow especially by fear, not merely by persuasion, and this is the possible explanation for the thorough description not only of sins, but especially of their punishments. As once again wrote Giordano da Pisa in one of his sermons, it is useful the memory of the judgement and of the possible pun-

which cannot be properly developed here, see T. QUÍRICO, *A Capela del Podestà, o ciclo do Trionfo della Morte e novos modos de representação do tema do Juízo final* [The Cappella del Podestà, the Trionfo della Morte cycle and new ways of depicting the theme of the Last Judgement], in "Revista de História da Arte e Arqueologia", 20 (2013); T. QUÍRICO, *A iconografia do Juízo final no Trecento: a importância de Dante e Giotto no desenvolvimento de novos modos de representação* [The iconography of the Last Judgement in the Trecento: the importance of Dante and Giotto in the development of new ways of depiction], in AA.VV. *Anais do Colóquio Internacional de História da Arte e da Cultura*, v. 01. Juiz de Fora, 2013.

ishments because “it seems that sinners repent of evil only by fear”²⁵. Fear, undoubtedly, of the everlasting condemnation and of such dreadful punishments.

Giordano echoes an ancient idea already expressed, for example, by Saint Anselm, who wrote in the eleventh century that only when man is afraid of the eternal condemnation he can truly repent. This is probably the reason for the meticulous depiction of Hell, in paintings as well as in sermons – Jacopo Passavanti, for instance, describes in detail not only the final judgement, but also the infernal punishments in his *Specchio di vera penitenza* (1354)²⁶. In visual arts, punishments are carefully described and represented and, quite frequently, observers can clearly identify the sins for which the damned are being punished. It is not by chance that most of the seven capital sins were usually depicted. Therefore, we can see in Giotto’s fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel, painted around 1305-1307 [fig. 6], damned hanging from their genitals, or a sinner whose penis is pinched by a demon – both undoubtedly punished for luxury. In Taddeo di Bartolo’s cycle in San Gimignano, a man identified as *sottomutto* – the sodomite – is tortured with a stake which is put in his anus by a demon; this stake comes out of his mouth and finally enters the mouth of another sinner. In the Pisan Camposanto we can see a similar representation. For the sin of gluttony, there are two main ways of representation: usually – as in Pisa or in San Gimignano – sinners are put in front of a table with all variety of food, but demons prevent them from eating it through all eternity. In Padua, on the contrary, food is continuously and eternally given to the gluttons by means of pipes which are put into their mouths.

The didactic purpose of this visual association between sin and punishment is obvious: the viewers, aware of their own sins, could easily identify the everlasting tortures to which they shall be submitted unless they are remorseful and seek for redemption. These scenes would be no longer just an incitement to repent and confession; they would clearly show to the faithful which sins he should avoid in order to escape from those specific tortures. Above all, they are no longer only a *memento* of the future judgement: they explicitly show, in a most direct form, the only two possible destinations for mankind through eternity, with all their consequences, whether good or (especially) evil.

In the Pisan painting there was originally another powerful detail: a real mirror was placed on the bottom right corner of the Hell fresco, therefore at the viewer’s eye-level, in the infernal region reserved to the luxurious. The faithful could then see himself reflected on the painting, “projected in the interior of that terrifying vision; from witness of the torments he suddenly became

²⁵ “[...] imperò che i peccatori non pare che · ssi rimangano dal male se non per paura”. *Quaresimale fiorentino 1305-1306*, cit., p. 57.

²⁶ *Specchio di vera penitenza*, in *Racconti esemplari di predicatori del Due e Trecento*, vol. 4, t. II, a cura di G. VARANINI – G. BALDASSARI, Rome, Salerno, 1993.

protagonist"²⁷. Thus, there was no longer the mental projection of a *post-mortem* possibility; the viewer did not need to imagine himself being punished: he would be already there, among other sinners, eternally suffering the consequences of a careless life. The effects of such potent element on the observer can be inferred by the fate of the mirror: in fact, we know from ancient records that it was destroyed or robbed, and then replaced, at least twice, still in the fourteenth century. By 1530, Giovanni d'Antonio Buzzini, *il Sollazino*, painted a false mirror in its place, reflecting the image of one of the damned of the scene. The original intention and the message of this detail, then, are still present, although greatly diminished.

As we are reaching to conclusion, it is important to mention that this development of the composition of the Last Judgement, and especially the emphasis on the otherworld instances, particularly on Hell, does not occur solely in the visual arts. By the same period, we can clearly perceive that *laudas* sung by the *laudesi* confraternities also began to have this distinctiveness: not only had it become common to sing about the Doomsday; we observe that the description of Hell was usually much bigger and detailed than Heaven's or even than the account regarding the judgement *per se*. If in the *Laudario* of Cortona (from the end of the thirteenth century), the text is very similar to the narrative of Matthew's gospel, other *laudas*, as those in the *Laudario* of Pisa (probably written between 1305 and 1315) already emphasise the *post-mortem* destination of souls, particularly of the wicked: while they beg for God's mercy, Christ-Judge mentions different types of sins as He pronounces the sentences.

In the *Laudario* of Perugia, probably written in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, there is a specific *lauda* – *L'Anticristo e il Giudizio Finale* – which describes with vivid details the Last Judgement. Nineteen strophes depict it and, as in paintings from the same period, we can clearly see the greater emphasis on the damned. In fact, three strophes announce the fate of the blessed, while seven are needed to proclaim that of the wicked. This *lauda* then continues with thirty strophes regarding the sinful, who hopelessly ask for the intercession of the Virgin. According to Jérôme Baschet, although such an accurate description is really exceptional in this period²⁸, it is not a coincidence the close dates for the composition of this *lauda* and of cycles such as those from the Bargello and the Pisan Camposanto. Similarly, it is not by chance the fact that many of these *laudesi* confraternities could be related to Mendicant orders, tightening and strengthening interrelationships discussed in this paper.

²⁷ E. TOLAINI, *Lo specchio dell'Inferno nel Campo Santo di Pisa, un passo dell'Aretino e una nota di Francesco da Buti*, in "Critica d'arte", LXV, n. ° 16 (2002), p. 34.

²⁸ Cfr. J. BASCHET, *Les justices de l'au-delà. Les représentations de l'enfer en France et en Italie (XII^e-XV^e siècle)*, Rome, École Française de Rome, 1993, p. 455.

Certainly, Mendicants were not the only ones responsible for these changes. We have demonstrated elsewhere the capital importance of Dante's *Commedia* to properly understand the development of a tripartite composition of the Last Judgement²⁹. Scholars also relate these transformations to other aspects of Italian societies, such as the progress of cities' statutes regarding justice³⁰. In fact, the influence of daily life cannot be ignored in the analysis of the iconography of Hell. Especially from the fourteenth century on, we can see, for instance, that some of the punishments depicted in these scenes are very similar to penalties applied to convicted prisoners. The visual purpose of this aspect is once again evident: as these sentences were carried out in public spaces, in order that they could be seen by all citizens, the observers could unmistakably recall the pain inflicted by such punishments as they contemplated the infernal image. Nevertheless, even if they are not the only reasons for changes, undoubtedly religious modifications brought by Franciscans and Dominicans had a fundamental role in this process.

Words and images related to the Last Judgement, therefore, are combined to accomplish one of the most important roles to Christianity: the conversion of mankind. Both somehow echo, with their specificities, the words of Ecclesiasticus 7,36: "in everything you do, remember your end, and you will never sin".

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²⁹ *A iconografia do Juízo final no Trecento*, cit.

³⁰ To a specific analysis of the Bolognese statutes and their connection to visual arts, see R. PINI, *Le giustizie dipinte. La raffigurazione della giustizia nella Bologna rinascimentale*, Bologna, Minerva, 2011.

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Fig. 1. Last Judgement (c. 1080) – Basilica, Sant’Angelo in Formis. Provenance of the image: CHRISTE, Y. *Il Giudizio universale nell’arte del Medioevo* (trad. M. G. Balzarini), Milan, Jaca Book, 2000.

Fig. 2. Coppo di Marcovaldo. Last Judgement (c. 1270-1290) – Baptistry of San Giovanni, Florence. Photography: Tamara Quírico.





Fig. 3. Giotto and followers. Last Judgement and Heaven (c. 1336-1337) – Cappella del Podestà, Palazzo del Bargello, Florence. Photography and assembling: Tamara Quírico.



Fig. 4. Buonamico Buffalmacco. Last Judgement and Hell (c. 1336-1340) – Camposanto, Pisa. Provenance of the image: CARLI, E. *La pittura a Pisa. Dalle origini alla 'bella maniera'*, Pisa, Pacini, 1994.



Fig. 5. Taddeo di Bartolo. Last Judgement cycle (c. 1393) – Collegiata, San Gimignano. Provenance of the image: IMBERCIADORI, J. V., e TORRITI, M. *La Collegiata di San Gimignano*, Poggibonsi, Nencini, s/d. Assembling: Tamara Quírico.

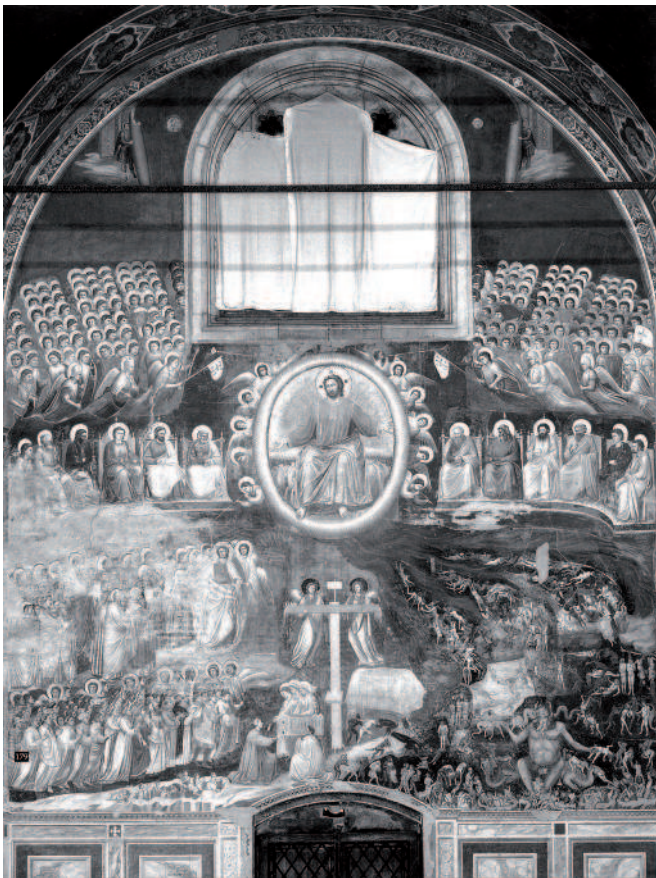


Fig. 6. Giotto. Last Judgement (1305-1307) – Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua. Provenance of the image: CHRISTE, Y. *Il Giudizio universale nell'arte del Medioevo* (trad. M. G. Balzarini), Milan, Jaca Book, 2000.