

CUZCO'S VIRGEN DE LA DESCENCIÓN
THROUGH A CARMELITE OPTIC

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On the 12th of February 1727 Cuzco's new bishop Fray Bernardo Serrada y Villatre, of the Order of Carmelites, entered the city and took possession of the diocese to which he had been appointed in 1725.¹ Within two years' time of his arrival in the former Inca capital, contrary to the wishes of his cathedral chapter and despite some vociferous public protest, Bishop Serrada made the controversial decision to drastically modify an admired 17th century open chapel called *El Triunfo*, adjacent to the epistle side of the cathedral, in order to create an enclosed structure suitable for use as the *sagrario* or parish church for

¹ Fray Bernardo Serrada y Villatre was born in Madrid on 20 February 1672. He entered the old Order of Carmel in that city on 2 July 1688 and was a member of the Province of Castilla, pace VARGAS UGARTE, RUBÉN, S. J., *Historia del culto de María en Iberoamérica y de sus imágenes y santuarios más celebrados*, 2 vol., Madrid, Tercera Edición, 1960, t. III, 76. Admitted to the degree of Doctor of Theology at the University of Alcalá de Henares in 1697, he was later a professor in that university. Serrada was named bishop of Panama in 1720 and promoted to the see of Cuzco in 1725. He arrived in Cuzco on 12 February 1727, accompanied by two Carmelite priests, pace VARGAS UGARTE (1960, t. III, 76). One of these men, Fray Miguel de los Angeles Menchaca, according to Esquivel y Navia, was responsible for convincing Serrada to rebuild *El Triunfo*, counseling him, because of the existence of underground springs, not to complete the construction already underway of the church of the Holy Family, on the opposite side of the cathedral. Esquivel y Navia noted that Menchaca made a boast of being versed in architecture but that his training was gained "*naturalmente y sin subsidio del arte*". Serrada's other companion was Fray Juan de Villarreal who served as the bishop's secretary and who would eventually deliver the bishop's funeral oration. Both men had accompanied their confrère in Panama. Serrada governed the diocese of Cuzco until his death in the former Inca Capital on 2 March 1733. He was buried on 6 March 1733, in Cuzco, in the church of the Carmelite Monastery of Santa Teresa (cf., ESQUIVEL Y NAVIA, DIEGO DE, *Noticias cronológicas de la gran ciudad del Cuzco*. 2 vols., Félix Denegri Luna (ed.), Lima, Fundación Augusto N. Wiese, 1980, t. II, 252f.; FERNÁNDEZ MARTÍN, JUAN, O.CARM., *Apuntes y documentos para la historia del Carmen calzado en Madrid*, Madrid, 1950, 133-135; BALBINO VELASCO BAYÓN, BARTOLOMÉ, O.CARM., *Nota a la "Defensa que hace el obispo Serrada de los clérigos del Obispado del Cuzco en un informe que envió al virrey en 1729"*, in *Missionalia Hispanica*, año XIX, num. 55, 1962, 103.

the *parroquia matriz* or cathedral parish (Esquivel y Navia 1980, t. II, p. 245). A notable facet of this bold endeavor was the decorating of the reconstructed *El Triunfo* with a series of five large paintings, at least four of which were sponsored by affluent members of Cuzco's Inca nobility. Their portraits appear in the classic pose of *donantes* or patrons in the foreground of four of these monumental canvasses. The aim of this brief study is to analyze the iconography of the central painting in this series that is contemporary to Bernardo Serrada's episcopacy in Cuzco. The painting, usually referred to as *La Virgen de la Descensión*, depicts the Virgin Mary surrounded by angels and descending on a cloud onto the roof of a burning building, flanked by the Apostle Saint James the Great, on the Virgin's right, and the Prophet Elijah, on her left. It is my contention that it is probable that Bernardo Serrada himself was a key intellectual author of this composition and of the entire iconographic project of the series to which it belongs. The iconography of the central painting of the series in *El Triunfo* is unique in American colonial art, and, as will be argued, represents a radically novel nuance in the interpretation of the Spanish Conquest of Peru as an act of Divine Providence. I will attempt to demonstrate that it is a distinctly Carmelite variation on this theme that until now has not been recognized in the scholarly community. As preamble to my central argument it is important to review the history of the distinct phases in the architectural development of the church *El Triunfo* and the significance of the space it occupies on the main square of the city of Cuzco, a location directly associated with the investment of the city of Cuzco by Manco Inca in 1535-1536. It is also necessary to examine basic notions of the providential interpretation of the Conquest of Peru and to discuss an important instance of this concept which was the Spaniards' deliverance from the siege of Manco Inca through the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary accompanied by Saint James the Apostle.

I. FROM GALPÓN TO EL TRIUNFO

The 17th century open chapel and Bernardo Serrada's 18th century church that enclosed and enlarged the area it occupied, both called *El Triunfo*, were directly associated with events that transpired on this site during Manco Inca's several-month-long siege of the city of Cuzco in 1535 and 1536. In 1535 architecturally Cuzco was still an entirely indigenous city, with all of its buildings constructed of stone and roofed in the traditional Andean manner with grass thatch. During the siege, Manco's forces set fire to these highly inflammable roofs, forcing

the Spaniards to take shelter in ever increasingly reduced space, finally relegating the beleaguered remnant to an elegant Inca building referred to by the chroniclers as a *galpón*, then in use as a church and which would subsequently become the city's first cathedral.² As will be discussed below, this is the building referred to in the inscription on the painting *La Virgen de la Descensión* as the place where the Virgin Mary descended from heaven to come to the aid of the besieged Christians. Garcilaso Inca de la Vega ([1609, 1ra Par., Lib. 7, Cap. IX] 1960:260) left a brief eye-witness description of the building in which the Spaniards took refuge, in Garcilaso's time still in use as the cathedral of Cuzco, which, he noted, "*en tiempo de los Incas era un hermoso galpón*".³ Moreover, we have a visual image of this Inca *galpón* in a painting now preserved in a lateral chapel on the gospel side of the cathedral of Cuzco. The painting shows events associated with the major earthquake that struck the city in 1650 and is contemporary to that event. Here one clearly sees, depicted along the epistle side of the present-day cathedral, that in 1650 was nearing completion, the original cathedral of Cuzco, the modified Inca *galpón*, which in 1650 still functioned as the city's cathedral. From this painting it is clear, as reported by Garcilaso, that the original Andean thatched roof had been replaced by European-style terra-cotta tiles, and also that an addition had been made of a curved presbyterium, modeled on the design of a Roman basilica. The Inca building originally had the form of a large rectangular hall. A section of one of the *galpón's* lateral walls is extant and clearly visible along Calle El Triunfo, incorporated into what are two separate colonial buildings, directly behind *El Triunfo*.⁴ This relic

² *Galpón* comes from the Nahuatl *calpúlli* meaning a *large house*. The term was used in colonial literature from Peru for what contemporary archaeologists refer to as the Inca *kallanka*, a large, carefully built covered ritual space, rectangular in form (vide Meinken 2005). Hence, in literature from colonial Peru the term *galpón* in no way was associated with its contemporary Spanish synonyms *barracón* or *cobertizo*, which, in English, might translate as *shed*.

³ Luego está la iglesia catedral que sale a la plaza principal. Aquella pieza en tiempo de los Incas era un hermoso galpón, que en días lluviosos les servía de plaza para sus fiestas. Fueron casas del Inca Viracocha, octavo rey. Y no alcancé de ellos más del galpón. Los españoles cuando entraron en aquella ciudad se alojaron todos en él por estar juntos para lo que se les ofreciese. Yo la conocí cubierta de paja y la vi cubrir de teja.

⁴ Thanks to R.T. Zuidema for pointing out that this Inca wall is, in fact, the remnant of the Inca *galpón*/proto-cathedral. One of the two colonial buildings that incorporates this relic is now used for the offices of the Jesuit parish and for the Jesuit residence; the other is the residence of the Archbishop of Cuzco, built by Bishop Manuel de Mollinedo y Angulo.

reveals that the *galpón* was a carefully constructed Inca structure with walls of elegantly cut ashlar stone.

By the 1660s the construction of the present cathedral of Cuzco was completed. At this time, then no longer needed for the celebration of the liturgy, the Inca *galpón* was partially razed and replaced, on the same site, with an unusual "open chapel" which was named *El Triunfo*. The project, attributed to Diego Arias de la Cerda, canon of the cathedral of Cuzco, was expressly intended to commemorate the miraculous victory, *el triunfo*, of the Christians over the army of Manco Inca. Diego de Esquivel y Navia (1980, t. II, p.144f.), also a canon of the Cuzco cathedral and a contemporary of Bernardo Serrada, described the 1664 *El Triunfo*, mentioning its association with the miracle of the descent of the Virgin.

"[Arias de la Cerda] levantó una bóveda grande o media naranja de cantería de cuatro arcos, sobre columnas, y dentro un tabernáculo hermosísimo de piedra, que constaba de cuatro facies de igual primor, y en la principal que miraba a poniente colocó una imagen de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción titular de esta iglesia, de piedra blanca de singular belleza,⁵ en memoria de haber descendido la Soberana Reina de los Cielos sobre el galpón favoreciendo a los españoles, a 21 de mayo de 1536, en el cerco y guerra de Manco Inca, de donde tomó este sitio el nombre de Triunfo, cuya obra con su baluarte de tres puertas se acabó el año de 1664."

A partial view of the 1664 open chapel, as it was found by Fray Bernardo Serrada in 1727, can be seen in one of the paintings of the famous series of the late 17th century Cuzco procession for the feast of Corpus Christi, painted during the time of Bishop Manuel de Mollinedo y Angulo, who governed the diocese from 1673 to 1699. A section of the open chapel is visible in the background, on the canvass's left, in the scene depicting the beginning of the procession as it leaves the cathedral.

II. YA MARÍA EL FUEGO APLACA

Manco Inca, a son of the Inca king Huayna Capac, was crowned in Cuzco by the Spaniards with the intention that he would serve Spanish interests in Peru as a puppet prince. According to Juan de

⁵ This statue of the Virgin is now preserved in the niche over the entrance of the *Compañía*, the Jesuits' church on the main square of Cuzco (R.T. Zuidema, personal communication).

Betanzos ([1551]1987:291), *siendo ansi que él tenía el nombre de ynga y no lo era*, Manco Inca, humiliated and angry, in 1535, began an ill-fated rebellion with the aim of expelling the foreign invaders from his domain. Under three successive Inca rulers with their court in Vilcabamba, located in the eastern slopes of the Andes descending down toward the Amazon rainforest, Inca resistance would continue for almost forty years, finally ending with the capture and execution of Tupac Amaru, the last Inca king, in 1572.

In 1535, the *conquistadores* Diego de Almagro and Hernando Pizarro and their troops were absent from the city of Cuzco. With the Spanish presence in Cuzco reduced to not more than 250 people, including noncombatants, Manco Inca managed to escape house arrest and leave the city to raise an army, presented in the chronicles as enormous in number, of some 100.000 men-at-arms. Returning to the Inca capital with these armed forces, he invested to the city of Cuzco for a period of several months. Pedro Cieza de León's description reflects the generalized appraisal of the magnitude of Manco's forces as found in contemporary Spanish sources:

"Hera tanta la gente que aquí vino que cubría los campos, que de día parecía un paño negro que los tenía tapados media legua alrrededor desta çiudad de Cuzco; pues de noche eran tantos los fuegos que parecía un çielo muy sereno lleno de estrellas."⁶

Against what were presented in colonial accounts as these overwhelming odds, the beleaguered Spanish remnant was forced to hold out for months until the arrival of re-enforcements. As mentioned above, the Spaniards finally sought refuge in an Inca *galpón* then use as a church located on the city's main square. The building's roof was repeatedly set afire by Manco's troops but did not burn. The dénouement came with the arrival of Spanish troops along with a multitude of their Indian allies. Thus, the siege was broken, the Inca and his host expelled, and the Spaniards saved.⁷ Alaperrine-Bouyer

⁶ PEDRO CIEZA DE LEÓN, *Relación del descubrimiento y conquista del Perú*, Lima, Ed. Guillermo Lohman Villena, 1978, 124 (cited in Alaperrine-Bouyer 1999, 26).

⁷ GARRETT (2009, 44) offered a contemporary historical point of view that serves as a necessary corrective to the colonial appraisal of these events: "Después de un año, Manco orquestó un cerco de la ciudad que se prolongó durante meses, hasta que refuerzos españoles e indios llegaron de todo el Perú para combatir a las fuerzas de Manco, lo que nos recuerda que en 1536 eran muchos los andinos que preferían a los españoles antes que a los incas. Los grupos no incas del Cuzco – en especial los chachapoyas y los cañaris – se unieron a los españoles y no a Manco Inca; don

(1999:25ff.) noted that almost all the earliest accounts interpreted this outcome as miraculous, but that none of these earliest sources made mention of an apparition of the Virgin Mary.⁸ Some fifteen years on, the generalized miraculous aura surrounding the Spaniards' deliverance from the army of Manco Inca would be concretized into detailed accounts of apparitions in Cuzco of both the Virgin Mary and the Apostle Saint James the Great,⁹ to whose miraculous presence would be attributed the triumph over Manco Inca and his troops. These stories constitute a subset of a widely diffused interpretation of Spain's Conquest of the New World as a phenomenon ordained by Divine Providence. According to the distinguished 17th century Spanish jurist Juan de Solórzano Pereira, in his *Política indiana* (1648), at the very moment Luther had led the peoples of northern Europe into heresy, the Spaniards, assisted by the Virgin Mary and Saint James, had conquered new lands for the Church (cf., Brading 1991:216).

Various accounts of the miraculous assistance of the Virgin Mary and Saint James are found in the literature about the Spanish conquest of Mexico and of other parts of the New World.¹⁰ For example, Francisco López de Gómara, the chaplain of Hernán Cortés, in his *Historia de la conquista de México*, published in 1552, described how the conquerors had been assisted in battle by the appearance of Saint James and the Virgin Mary (cf., Brading 1991:52). Gonzalo de Illesacas, in his *Historia pontifical y católica*, published in 1578, echoing Gómara, recounted that upon returning to Vera Cruz, Cortés

Francisco Chilche, el curaca cañari, sería un enemigo implacable de la realeza incaica de la ciudad durante las siguientes décadas. Estas fuerzas quebraron el cerco y expulsaron a Manco y sus aliados, quienes se retiraron a la remota Vilcabamba y establecieron allí un nueva corte real."

⁸ Thanks to Monique Alaperrine-Bouyer for her kindness in generously providing me with a copy of her insightful publication, *La vierge guerrière: symbolique identitaire et représentation du pouvoir au Pérou (XVIe et XVIIe siècles)*, to which I am indebted for stimulating the development of the ideas expressed in this study.

⁹ For a thought-provoking treatment of the apparition of Saint James during the siege of Manco Inca, vide Estensorro, 2003, 445ff.

¹⁰ ALAPERRINE-BOUYER (1999) demonstrated that stories of the miraculous assistance of the Virgin Mary and Saint James have a long history in Spain and first appear in accounts of battles fought against the Moors during the Reconquest. She observed that these accounts, which exhibit the characteristics of myth, always display the following two motifs: 1) the Spaniards are greatly outnumbered by the infidel, and 2) the Spaniards are fighting in defense of the faith. The accounts of apparitions of the Virgin Mary and Saint James during the conquest of the New World are variants of the same myth.

learned of the difficulties the Spaniards had endured in his absence and of the assistance received for the Virgin Mary and Saint James (cited in Alaperrine-Bouyer 1999:43):

“Holgóse Moteçuma con su llegada; pero mucho más se holgaron los suyos, con verle volver tan bien acompañado. Contáronle los trabajos que avían passado y afirmavan (y es cosa de creer) que muchas vezes avían visto a Santiago y a Nuestra Señora que pelaban por ellos y los indios decían que no se podóan defender de una mujer: y de uno de un cavallo blanco y que la muger los cegava con polvo que les echaba sobre los ojos.”

Alaperrine-Bouyer (1999:56-58) opined that these stories represent the foundational myth of Spain's colonial order in America and that they served the purposes of both Native Americans and Spaniards. From the Native-American perspective, their defeat by Spain, if ascribed to a miracle, would not need to be accredited to shameful historical fact. In particular, the markedly unpleasant reality of intra and interethnic rivalries, which led many native princes into alliance with the Spaniards against other Native Americans, could be overlooked. According to this logic, the Indians of America were not conquered by the Spaniards but by God, as part of a providential plan which miraculously brought the native peoples of the New World into communion with the Catholic Church throughout the world and offered them the promise of eternal salvation. Seen from the vantage point of the Spaniards, attributing the Conquest to a miracle obviated the need to remember their own fear and limitations in confronting the vastly superior numbers of Native-American warriors and permitted the Spaniards to omit entirely, or at least gracefully gloss over, their dependence on Native-American allies without whose help the conquest of the New World would not have been possible. Moreover, miraculous assistance provided dramatic signs of divine approbation for the beginnings of the Spanish Empire.

In colonial descriptions of the conquest of Mexico, stories of the miraculous assistance of Saint James and the Virgin Mary appear in sources that have no particular pro-Native-American bias. By contrast, data from Peru indicate that accounts of miraculous assistance are only found in certain sources and not in others. Alaperrine-Bouyer (1999:25ff.) observed that in the literature about Manco Inca's siege of Cuzco there is no mention of miracles associated with apparitions of Saint James and the Virgin Mary in the earliest Spanish accounts, including that of Pedro Pizarro who was present in Cuzco during the siege. Nor is there mention of apparitions

of the Virgin or of Saint James in the earliest indigenous account by Sayri Tupac, a son of Manco Inca, an account written in 1570 and presented to the Spanish crown for the purpose of seeking preferment within the new colonial order. In Peruvian colonial literature, accounts of apparitions of the Virgin Mary and Saint James at the siege of Manco Inca seem to have originated exclusively in the writings of authors who exhibited marked pro-Indian as opposed to pro-Spanish biases. Furthermore, each of the authors that left accounts of these apparitions spoke Quechua, and each appears to have had privileged access to native informants from the city of Cuzco.¹¹ These facts suggest that stories of the miraculous help of the Virgin Mary and of Saint James were originally part of the oral tradition of the Native-American population of the former Inca Capital.

Alaperrine-Bouyer was the first to note that the theme of the apparition of the Virgin Mary in Cuzco appeared for the first time in the written record in Juan de Betanzos' *Suma y narración de los incas* from 1551. In his account of the siege of Manco Capac, Betanzos ([2da Par., Cap. XXXII] 1987:300) wrote:

"[Los indios] quemaron ... todos los depósitos y todas las demás cosas que pudieron de la ciudad en tanta manera que pusieron a los cristianos en tanta estrechura que no poseían si no la mitad de la plaza y la iglesia la cual no habían podido quemar aunque era de paja cubierta y echaban fuego en ella atado en unas flechas y encendíase un poco en la plaza de la iglesia y tornábase a matar y decían los indios que venían que como se encendía esta paja que una señora de Castilla vestida toda de blanco la veían estar sentada sobre la iglesia y que mataba este fuego con unas mangas largas y blancas que traía y que todo el tiempo que el cerco tuvieron puesto sobre el Cuzco siempre la vieron a esta señora encima desta iglesia asentada."

Here the author clearly, perhaps intentionally echoed the decidedly native and naive voice of his informant, speaking of the Virgin Mary as the *señora de Castilla vestida toda de blanco*. Similar accounts of the miraculous assistance of the Virgin Mary during the siege of Cuzco are found in Pedro Gutiérrez de Santa Clara ([1544-1548] cited in Alaperrine-Bouyer 1999:35), the mestizo Garcilaso Inca

¹¹ Besides the pro-Indian authors listed in the next paragraph, José de Acosta, the famous Spanish Jesuit missionary to Mexico and Peru, also included an account of the miracles under discussion. His account is quoted verbatim by Garcilaso in the text indicated below. Although Acosta may not have been fluent in Quechua, he no doubt had contact with Native-American informants.

de la Vega ([1617, *Hist. Gen. del Perú*, 2da parte, lib. 2do, cap. XXV] 1960:25ff.)¹², and in the indigenous Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala ([1615:400,401]1980:72f.).¹³

III. A CARMELITE OPTIC

La Virgen de la Descensión depicts, in the dominant central space, a large image of the Virgin Mary, dressed in a scarlet gown with a deep blue cloak draped over her shoulders. The blue cloak and red gown are standard iconographic conventions for the Immaculate Conception, commonly seen in paintings from the Viceroyalty of Peru. The Immaculate Virgin Mary stands on a cloud containing five cherubs and is flanked on either side by six angels. She is shown descending onto the roof of a smoking building. The legend at the building's base reads: *Nuestra Madre y Señora de la Dessención que Bajó de los Cielos a este*

¹² Estando ya los indios para arremeter con los cristianos, se les apareció en el aire Nuestra Señora con el niño Jesús en brazos, con grandísimo resplandor y hermosura y se puso delante de ellos. Los infieles, mirando aquella maravilla, quedaron pasmados; sentían que les caía en los ojos un polvo, ya como arena, ya como rocío, con que se les quitó la vista de los ojos, que no sabían dónde estaban. Tuvieron por bien volverse a su alojamiento antes que los españoles saliesen a ellos. Quedaron tan amedrentados, que en muchos días no osaron salir de sus cuarteles. [...] Demás de la Providencia divina, también es prueba del amor y lealtad que atrás dijimos, que aquellos indios tienen a los que les rinden en la guerra; que como todos éstos eran rendidos en ella en las batallas y rencuentros pasados (por su natural inclinación y por su milicia, demás de la voluntad divina) tenían aquella fidelidad a sus amos que murieran cien muertes por ellos. *Y de aquí nació que después de apaciguado aquel levantamiento de los indios los naturales del Cozco y demás naciones que se hallaron en aquel cerco, viendo que la Virgen María les venció y rindió con su hermostísima vista y con el regalo del rocío que les echaba en los ojos le hayan cobrado tanto amor y afición ...* [emphasis added].

¹³ Estando sercado todos los cristianos en la plasa del Cuzco, estando haziendo oración, hinchado de rrodillas, dando boses y llamando a Dios y a la Uirgen María y a todos sus sanctos y sanctas ángeles y dezía: Uálgame la Uirgen María, Madre de Dios en este rreyno, que lo uieron a uista de ojos los yndios deste rreyno y lo declaran y dan fe de ello, como en aquel tiempo no auía nenguna señora en todo el rreyno ni jamás lo auían uisto ni conocido, cino primera señora le conoció a la Uirgen María. Santa María de Peña de Francia, una señora muy hermosa, toda bestido de una bestidura muy blanca, más blanca que la nieue, y la cara muy rresplandeciente, más que el sol. De uelle se espantaron los yndios y dizen que le echaua tierra en los ojos a los yndios ynfielos. Cómo hizo Dios milagro para hazelle merced y su madre bendita a los españoles cristianos, *por mejor dezir que más quizo hazer merced la Madre de Dios a los yndios porque fuesen cristianos y saluasen las ánimas de los yndios, rogando a su hijo precioso y a la Santícima Trinidad, Dios Padre, Dios Hijo, Dios Espíritu Sancto, un solo Dios.* [emphasis added].

lugar sagrado de Sundorquaci.¹⁴ The painting is semicircular in form and was designed to decorate a lunette in a wall along the gospel side of El Triunfo where it is still preserved. It is the central piece of an iconographic project that includes five large canvasses of similar dimensions.¹⁵ The series is attributed either to the prominent Cuzco

¹⁴ The question of what appears to be the peculiar 18th century use of the term *Sundorquasi*, *Suntur Wasi*, "Round House", for the *galpón* that became the first cathedral of Cuzco, a confusion in terms that persists to the present day, is a complex issue beyond the scope of this brief study. Suffice it to note here 1) that the Inca building called *Suntur Wasi*, according to Garcilaso and Guaman Poma, was located in a totally different location in the city from the location of the *galpón* that became Cuzco's first cathedral; 2) that the iconography of the miracle of the *Virgen de la Descensión*, in its various known examples, including the painting representing the miracle in *El Triunfo*, depicts the Virgen Mary descending onto the roof of a square or rectangular building, consistent with the shape of the *galpón*, and not onto a round structure, as the name *Suntur Wasi* implies; and 3) that, to the best of my knowledge, the use of the term *Suntur Wasi* to refer to the *galpón* first appeared in the legend of the painting of the *Virgen de la Descensión* in *El Triunfo* from the 1730s and is found in no earlier source that discusses the miracle.

¹⁵ In four of these paintings, in the foreground, along the base, one sees a row of three, or, with one exception, two noble Inca male *donantes*, opposite a row with the constant number of three noble Inca female *donantes*. It can be presumed that these opposite rows of male and female figures were intended to represent three married couples or three households. In the exceptional example of two males opposite three females, I would suggest that the absent male figure was intended to imply a deceased husband who relates to the widow he left behind portrayed on the opposite side. Unlike the *Virgen de la Descensión*, which is painted on a single canvas and was designed to decorate a lunette that has no window, the other three paintings are constructed in two sections that join in such a manner so as to leave a space for the window around which the paintings are hung. The second member of the series is a composition depicting two separate scenes, on one side the Annunciation and on the other the Dream of Saint Joseph. The painting decorates the lunette on the south wall, directly opposite the *Virgen de la Descensión*. The third and fourth paintings of the series decorate two lunettes on the chapel's west wall. The third painting depicts the Adoration of the Magi. The fourth, the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, is the seeming anomaly, mentioned above, with a row of two male *donantes* opposite the series' standard number of three females. In fact, the physical limitation of the space available between the window and the wall on the side where the artist depicted the row of males does not permit the inclusion of a third man. But, as suggested, the third male can be seen as present through his absence. Thus, although the series physically depicts eleven Inca noblemen and twelve Inca noblewomen, it can be understood to represent the structural equivalent of twelve married couples. A third lunette on the west wall of *El Triunfo* has been left unadorned. It is reasonable to presume that there should have been a fifth member of the series for the decoration of that space, possibly depicting the Birth of the Lord, which either was lost or was never painted. Thus it is feasible that the entire project which seemingly remained incomplete was intended to involve the patronage of fifteen noble Inca households. Data from 1765 indicate that at that time, some thirty years after the painting of the works of art under discussion, thirteen indigenous nobles were counted as members of Cuzco's *parroquia matriz* (Garrett 2009:125). The similarity of this

artist Marcos Zapata himself or to members of his circle (Mesa y Gisbert 1982, t. I, p. 212). The artist's family belonged to the indigenous nobility and their original surname was *Sapaca* (Wuffarden 2005:209). It is generally held that the series was completed sometime after 24 November 1732, when the three-year *El Triunfo* reconstruction project was completed, and before 2 March 1733, the date of the death of Bishop Serrada (cf., Mesa y Gisbert 1982, t. I, p. 212; Vargas Ugarte 1956, t. II, p. 239). In *La Virgen de la Descensión*, the Apostle Saint James the Great, patron of Spain, depicted in the habit of a pilgrim to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, is placed on the painting's right. On the painting's left, one sees the Prophet Elijah, dressed in the brown and white habit of the Carmelites, with the Order's shield emblazoned on the front of the scapular.

In the foreground, along the base, there are six figures of Inca nobles, kneeling in a reverential pose with their gaze directed toward the Virgin, all holding lighted candles in their right hands. The three men wear a colonial-style Inca *unku* or tunic and a version of the Inca imperial headgear that also had developed in colonial Cuzco. In their left hands each man holds a type of halberd or *champi*, another element of Inca imperial regalia seen in colonial representations of Inca kings. The *unku* and the elaborate headgear were worn in colonial Cuzco on ceremonial occasions by members of Inca royal lineages (cf., Dean 1999). Each of the three noblewomen holds a red heart in her left hand, as if each is symbolically offering her heart to the Virgin Mary. These six figures are positioned in opposite rows of three: the three men to the Virgin's right, and the three women, presumably the wives of the latter, to her left. Their posture, following established artistic convention, indicates that the three couples were the *donantes* or patrons of this work of art.

What is unique to *La Virgen de la Descensión*, in contrast to all known representations of the apparition of the Virgin during the siege of Manco Inca, is the entirely peaceful tone of the composition, discussed below, and the addition of the image of the Prophet Elijah dressed in the Carmelite habit. Mesa and Gisbert (1982:212) suggested

number to that of the *donantes* suggests that the patrons of the *El Triunfo* series were members of the cathedral parish. An additional painting that Mesa and Gisbert, 1982, t.1, 121 considered part of the same series was designed to decorated the space underneath the choir. Appropriately it depicts the musicians King David and Saint Cecilia. Instead of noble Inca *donantes*, here the artist portrayed two humble indigenous musicians: a man with a *pututu* or conch shell used as a horn, next to King David, and a woman with a tambourine next to Saint Cecilia.

that the inclusion of the image of Elijah can be attributed to the fact that Bernardo Serrada, the bishop of Cuzco responsible for the remodeling of *El Triunfo*, was a Carmelite, and Elijah is the Order's "patron". An analysis of the iconography of this painting that takes into account the medieval Carmelite tradition about Elijah yields a more interesting explanation. According to medieval Carmelite tradition, Elijah, the Prophet of Carmel, was regarded not as the *patron* but rather as the *founder* of the Carmelites, the Order's *Pater et Dux*. The Carmelites arrived in Europe from Mount Carmel toward the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries, in the aftermath of the fall of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1293. An unknown band of hermits from the Levant, soon to transform themselves into friars, the Carmelites were faced with the necessity of explaining their origins in a new and unwelcoming milieu.¹⁶ To this end the Carmelites began presenting themselves as the "sons of the Prophet Elijah". By means of an intricately crafted legend that functioned as the Order's origin myth, medieval Carmelites demonstrated that their direct forebears were Jewish and later Christian hermits who had lived on Mount Carmel as followers of the Prophet Elijah, maintaining a continuous presence on Mount Carmel from the time of Elijah on. Consequently the Carmelite Order was not an exotic novelty in Christian monasticism, but, in reality, it was the oldest religious order in the Church.

The most important source that connected the Carmelites with the Prophet Elijah is the work entitled *The Ten Books on the Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelites* by the Catalan Carmelite Felip Ribot that appeared sometime after 1379:

Ribot's work became the sourcebook and "bible" for all Carmelite writing. [...] Many of the stories in Ribot's work are quoted extensively elsewhere, and his vision of the Order coloured Carmelite spirituality for centuries to come. In fact, it is Ribot's portrait of Elijah which transforms the prophet's status from a brief mention in the first chapter of his histories of the Carmelites into becoming a significant spiritual figure in

¹⁶ RIBOT, FELIP, O.CARM., *The Ten Books on the Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelites (including The Book of the First Monks)*, Richard Copsey, O.Carm. (ed. and transl.), Faversham – Kent, Saint Albert's Press, 2005, vii, observed: "The fact that they were unknown in the West, and their strange dress (they wore a striped cloak), meant that many bishops were reluctant to have them in their dioceses or to grant them permission to undertake any public functions." On the medieval European aversion to stripes and, specifically, to the early Carmelites because of their striped cloak, vide PASTOUREAU, 1991, 7ff.

Carmelite life. A copy of Ribot's work, translated into Spanish, was in the convent of the Incarnation in Avila, and was read by St. Teresa of Jesus in that town. It gave her a vision of how the Order had lived during the early years of its existence and was a seminal influence on her ideas for the reform of the Carmelite Order.¹⁷

There can be no doubt that Ribot's work was also a formative influence on Fray Bernardo Serrada.

In regard to the presence of the image of the Prophet Elijah in the painting *La Virgen de la Descención*, Ribot's treatment in *The Ten Books* of Elijah's vision of a "little cloud rising from the sea" is central to this issue. The pertinent biblical scene, discussed at length in Ribot's work, is found in the First Book of Kings [Third Book of Kings (Douay Bible)], Chapter 18, Verses 42-45:

Elias went up to the top of Carmel, and casting himself down upon the earth put his face between his knees, and he said to his servant: Go up, and look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said: There is nothing. And again he said to him: Return seven times. And the seventh time, behold, a little cloud arose out of the sea like a man's foot. And he said: Go up and say to Achab: Prepare thy chariot and go down, lest the rain prevent thee. And while he turned himself this way and that way, behold the heavens grew dark, with clouds, and wind, and there fell a great rain.

Ribot (2005:82) began his lengthy commentary on this text as follows:

What pledge of future events, apart from its historic occurrence, that vision intrinsically contained; and what mystery God intended to convey through it to the prostate Elijah, Elijah himself deigned to reveal, not openly to everyone, but secretly to his companions. From them, we hold that God revealed to Elijah through the details of his vision, at that time, four mysteries, which I shall explain in order. First, *that a certain baby girl would be born, who from her mother's womb would be free from all stain of sin*. Second, the time when this would be fulfilled. Third, that this child would dedicate herself to perpetual virginity after the example of Elijah. Fourth, *that God, joining his nature with human kind, would be born of that virgin*. [emphasis added].¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ix, xiv-xv.

¹⁸ R. COPSEY, 2005, xiv, commented that: "the identification of Mary with the cloud is earlier than Ribot, and is found in the Fathers. The complicated exegesis of this passage into a prediction of Mary's immaculate conception and the date of Christ's incarnation bears all the marks of a passage adapted from elsewhere."

Ribot's exegesis of the "little cloud" as a prophesy of the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception and of the coming of Christ is but another expression of the Carmelite tradition of promoting the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, albeit an important example of this tradition which would have long-lasting impact on the development of a specifically Carmelite Marian iconography in which Elijah's vision of the "little cloud" is emblematic and unique to Carmelite contexts. It must be understood that the Carmelites' support of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception has deep roots in the history of the Order. The feast of the Immaculate Conception had been celebrated by the Carmelites since 1306. In the 14th century, in Avignon, the feast was celebrated with great pomp by the Order's general curia with a sermon preached before the cardinals of the papal court. This solemn event became so costly that a tax was levied on the entire Order to finance it (Smet 1988:56). The defense of Mary's Immaculate Conception was indelibly fixed as the Order's official theological position through the centuries-long intellectual influence of the writings of the English Carmelite theologian John Baconthorpe (d. 1348) (Carroll 2002:58f.). It is significant that among the artistic patrimony created for the cathedral of Cuzco under Bernardo Serrada's patronage is a painting of the Immaculate Conception with the portrait of Bishop Serrada himself kneeling at the Virgin's feet in the pose of the *donante*.¹⁹

It is my contention that Fray Bernardo Serrada, inspired by his Order's longstanding and noteworthy Marian tradition, creatively reinterpreted the apparition of the Virgin Mary during the siege of Manco Inca in light of Felip Ribot's influential commentary on "the little cloud rising from the sea". Seen through Serrada's peculiarly Carmelite optic, *el triunfo* over Manco Inca was not only the result of a miraculous intervention of Divine Providence, a theme, as discussed

¹⁹ This painting now hangs in the cathedral of Cuzco on the wall opposite the door to the sacristy. An impressive example of 18th century Cuzco silverwork left by Serrada in the cathedral of Cuzco is the beautiful silver chariot used to transport the Blessed Sacrament during the procession of Corpus Christi and which is still in use. The throne in which the monstrance is displayed has the structure of the dome and supporting arches of the original open chapel *El Triunfo*, as it appeared before Serrada's radical reconstruction. The throne's design may have been intended by the Bishop as a memorial of the 1664 *El Triunfo*, perhaps with the intention that it serve as an act of reconciliation after Serrada's offending the sensibilities of his cathedral chapter and other segments of Cuzco society by what was perceived as the destruction of an admired landmark.

above, already fixed in popular consciousness, especially among Cuzco's indigenous population. With Serrada's unprecedented inclusion of the Prophet Elijah into the iconography of the *Virgen de la Descensión* and with Mary obviously identified as the Immaculate Conception, the Carmelite Bishop of Cuzco clearly implied that the descent of the Virgin Mary on a cloud with rain to extinguish the flaming roof of the *galpón* was part of God's eternal plan for the coming of Christ to the Incas that had been revealed long ago to the Prophet Elijah through the vision of the "little cloud" which in ancient times had brought rain to the parched earth. Thus, the iconography of the *Virgen de la Descensión*, grounded in the medieval Marian tradition of Serrada's Order, provided the potential for greater persuasive power, based on the authority of biblical prophesy, in support of existing notions of the conquest of Peru as the result of an intervention of Divine Providence, and for the important corollary of these ideas that posited the divine election of the Incas as members of the Church and heirs to eternal life.

Estensorro (2005) and Wuffarden (2005) noted the depiction of Saint James as *pilgrim* as opposed to the well-known and widely diffused image of Saint James as *warrior*, usually associated in art with of the siege of Cuzco. The composition in *El Triunfo* displays no reference to violence, while all other known representations of the apparitions of Saint James and the Virgin Mary during the investment of Cuzco depict scenes of pitched battle. I would add that the representation of the Apostle James as pilgrim is not unusual in colonial Peruvian iconography.²⁰ There can be no question, however, that the entirely pacific tone of the composition is highly significant. The absence of any reference to armed conflict underscores the notion of the providential nature of the coming of Christianity to Peru, which, as discussed above, was a reading of Peruvian history that had especial appeal to the indigenous population of colonial Cuzco. The Incas were conquered, not by Spanish arms but through an act of maternal love of the Virgin Mary, *Nuestra Madre*, i.e., the Mother of the Incas, as declared in the painting's legend, and through

²⁰ The representation of Saint James as Pilgrim is not unusual in art from the Viceroyalty of Peru, although other examples known to the author are earlier than the painting in *El Triunfo*, for example, an image in bas-relief in the 16th century Renaissance-style reredos in the former Mercedarian church in Calle Azurduy, Sucre, Bolivia; a 17th century statue in the church of Checacupe, Canchis, Cuzco, Peru, and a 17th century painting in the Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz, Bolivia.

the humble presence of Saint James, who came to the Andes to spread the gospel as if on pilgrimage. It is reasonable to suggest that Serrada's iconography for the *Virgen de la Descensión*, which symbolically intensified the providential interpretation of the conquest of Peru in light of medieval Carmelite Marian tradition, developed and matured in the bishop's own thinking through dialogue with articulate elements of Cuzco's Inca elite, perhaps some of the patrons of the series themselves, who cherished the popular tradition of Mary's apparition to their ancestors and whose portraits are preserved as the series' *donantes*.²¹

I would also contend that Ribot's classic treatment of the "little cloud" may well have inspired the entire iconographic project for the decoration of *El Triunfo*, and not only the iconography of the *Virgen de la Descensión*. This is strongly suggested by the choice of themes depicted in the series (vide footnote n. 15). As has been discussed above, the central piece shows the Immaculate Conception. With the exception of one canvass depicting the musicians King David and Saint Cecilia, designed for the space under the choir, the other three compositions of the series depict scenes related to the Birth and Infancy of Jesus. The no-doubt intentional association of the Immaculate Conception with scenes related to the Birth and Infancy of Jesus corresponds precisely to Ribot's exegesis of Elijah's vision of the "little cloud" as a prophesy of the Immaculate Conception and the coming of Christ.

Whether the potential of Serrada's iconographic statement was generally recognized by the majority of his contemporaries who contemplated these works of art is impossible to ascertain given the silence of currently known sources. There can be no doubt that if Serrada's intentions were recognized and understood by members of his flock during Serrada's years in Cuzco, with the passage of time and especially with the shift in the role of the indigenous nobility in the

²¹ Based on documents preserved in the *Archivo de Indias* in Seville it is known that Serrada empathized with his diocese's Indian population. Specifically, he was incensed by the *corregidores*' misuse of the *reparto* or forced distribution and sale of goods to Indians and was a tireless and impassioned critic of these injustices. Some ten years after the death of Serrada, in a letter dated 26 November 1744, denouncing these same abuses to the secretary of the *Consejo de Indias*, the then bishop of Cuzco Pedro Morcillo Rubio y Auñón made extensive reference to Serrada's repeated denunciations in this regard as authoritative precedents (Glave 1992:122). Bernardo Serrada's empathy with the indigenous population and stature as a champion of indigenous rights might explain his success in eliciting the patronage of Cuzco's wealthy indigenous nobility for the series of paintings that decorates *El Triunfo*.

colony following the Rebellion of Tupac Amaru II in 1780, they were perhaps intentionally forgotten.²²

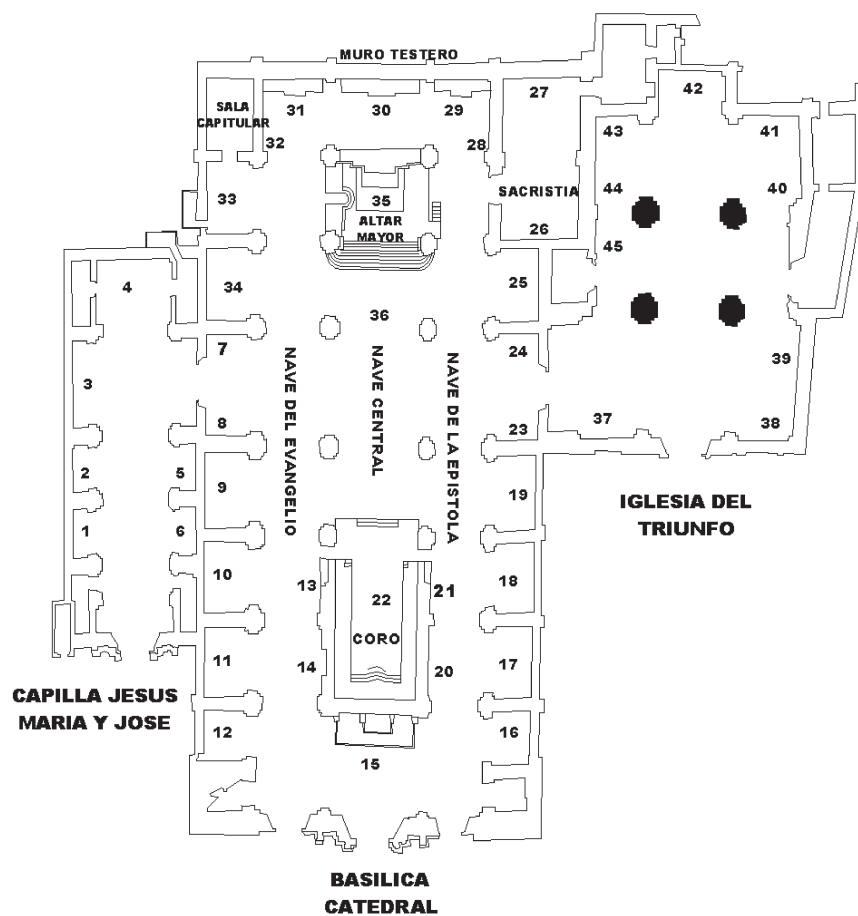
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²² Serrada's project for *El Triunfo* in the Viceroyalty of Peru needs to be investigated in greater depth and compared and contrasted with the development of the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the 17th and 18th centuries in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. It should be noted that the reredos of the main altar of Serrada's *El Triunfo* displays the Cross of the Conquest, the first cross brought by the Spaniards to Peru, which, according to tradition, was brought to Cuzco by the city's first bishop Vicente de Valverde, O. P., the chaplain of Francisco Pizarro (cf., VARGAS UGARTE, RUBÉN, S. J., *Historia del culto de María en Iberoamérica y de sus imágenes y santuarios más celebrados*, 2 vol., Madrid, Tercera Edición, 1956, t. 2, 238ff.). I would venture the hypothesis that Serrada may have intended to intensify the link between the coming of Christianity to Peru and an apparition of the Virgin Mary, an idea that was already part of the consciousness of the indigenous population of Cuzco, with the explicit object of promoting devotion to the Virgen de la Descención, so that this Marian devotion would take on a similar appeal for the Indians of Peru as the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe had for the Indians of Mexico. His reconstructed *El Triunfo* may have been intended to function as a shrine of importance for the entire Viceroyalty at which the Indians of Peru could celebrate the coming of Christ to the native peoples of the Andes.

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