

The Last Judgments in the Armenian Churches of New Julfa

by

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In this essay we shall attempt to throw some light upon the XVIIth century wall-paintings of the Last Judgment in the Armenian Churches of New Julfa, south of Isfahan in Iran. Altogether there are three churches which are adorned with wall-paintings of this theme, namely, the Cathedral of All Saviour (Surb Amenaperkitch), the Church of St. Menas (Surb Minas or Surb Lusavoritch) and the Church of Bethlehem (Meydani Betghahem).

When Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629) transferred his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1589, many Armenians were subsequently moved from the regions around Julfa on the River Araxes on the border of Persia and Armenia to his new capital. During the first few years of the XVIIth century, the new arrivals were offered land by the Shah to settle south of Isfahan across the River Zanderood, and it was here that New Julfa was established, named after the old town from which they had come. The enforced migration from Armenia continued for several years even after 1604. Once settled in and around Isfahan, however, the Armenians profited by the Shah's liberal attitude towards them. He relieved them of certain taxes, and in disputes involving Muslims he was quite likely to give judgment in favour of the Armenians if he felt that their cause was just¹. He allowed them to erect churches in Isfahan and New Julfa, and they seemed to have practised their religion without interference from the State. In New Julfa thirteen Armenian churches have survived to this day. Most of these churches were constructed between 1606 and 1650, and were adorned with wall-paintings. The best preserved wall-paintings, however, are those in the Cathedral of All Saviour, the Church of Bethlehem and the Church of St. Menas².

There is no doubt that these paintings, especially those of the Last Judgment, are the work of European rather than of Persian or Armenian

¹ An account of the Armenian emigration is given in detail by Arak'el of Tabriz, who wrote his *Livre d'Histoires* in the middle of the XVIIth century. The original work in Armenian, published in Amsterdam in 1669, was translated by M. Brosset, St. Petersburg, 1874.

² Traces of wall-paintings also remain in the Churches of St. Stephen, St. Catherine, St. Sargis and St. Gregory the Illuminator. Carswell, John, *New Julfa. The Armenian Churches and Other Buildings*. Oxford, 1968, p. 21.

artists. The dependence of the Armenians upon non-Armenian artists in the XVIIth century is an interesting phenomenon, especially in view of the traditional iconoclastic tendencies and the anti-Byzantine attitudes of the Armenians³. It seems that we may even observe a certain reciprocity in the cultural fertilization of the XVIIth century Armenians by the European artists. For just as centuries ago Armenian architectural forms and patterns had found their way into Europe, now European art penetrated and was accepted in at least one Armenian settlement, namely in New Julfa. We know that the Safavid court engaged European artists and the presence of European painters in Isfahan in the XVIIth century is well documented by the contemporary writers⁴. Thus, for example, Pietro della Valle (1617) travelled from Venice with a Flemish painter, a certain Giovanni, who left his service in Isfahan to work for Shah Abbas I. Later the Shah sent Giovanni back to Flanders and France with a commission to find other painters to work in Persia⁵. Sir Thomas Herbert (1628) also mentions 'John, a Dutchman' who had long served the Shah and practised his art⁶. Taverniers (1633) refers to two Dutchmen in Shah Abbas II's service, who instructed him how to draw⁷, and de Bruyn recorded that there was a German painter in Isfahan who had studied painting in Italy⁸. As Carswell correctly points out, any foreigner working in Isfahan would have lived in New Julfa together with the other foreigners, and would have naturally come in contact with the Armenians, who in the XVIIth century constructed their churches there⁹.

It is, therefore, very likely that with the intimate economic and cultural relations between the Dutch and the Armenians of New Julfa, a Dutch artist or artists, together with Armenian assistants, painted the wall-paintings of the Last Judgments under discussion.

In terms of procedure, we shall first discuss the wall-painting of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour, then that in the Church of St. Menas, and thirdly the wall-paintings of the same theme in the Church

³ Strzygowski, Josef, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*. Wien, 1918, vol. II, pp. 530-532.

⁴ Carswell, J., *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁵ Della Valle, Pietro, *Les fameux voyages de Pietro della Valle*. Paris, 1663, vol. III, p. 74. *Idem*, *Della Conditioni di Abbas Re di Persia*. Venice, 1628, pp. 42-43.

⁶ Herbert, Sir Thomas, *Somes Yeares Travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique. Describing especially the two famous Empires, the Persian and the great Mogull*. London, 1677, p. 175.

⁷ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, *The Six Voyages through Turkey, into Persia and the East Indies, for the space of forty years*. London, 1677, vol. IV, p. 183.

⁸ De Bruyn, Cornelis, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and part of the East Indies*. London, 1737, p. 220.

⁹ Carswell, J., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

of Bethlehem. The descriptions of these paintings will then be followed by two analytical chapters on the artistic influences upon the paintings, the Byzantine Canon and the Woodcuts of Christoffel van Sichem¹⁰.

The Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour

This XVIIth century wall-painting adorns the western part of the north wall of the nave of the Cathedral of All Saviour. With respect to the date of this painting, the *terminus ante quem* is set by the date of the general remodelling of the Cathedral, which, according to Dr. Minasian, occurred between 1655 and 1664¹¹. Carswell points out that the part of the painting on which Christ is portrayed shows evidence of a blocked window, which corresponds to the window in the south wall opposite. This adjustment is ascribed to the period of the remodelling of the sanctuary.

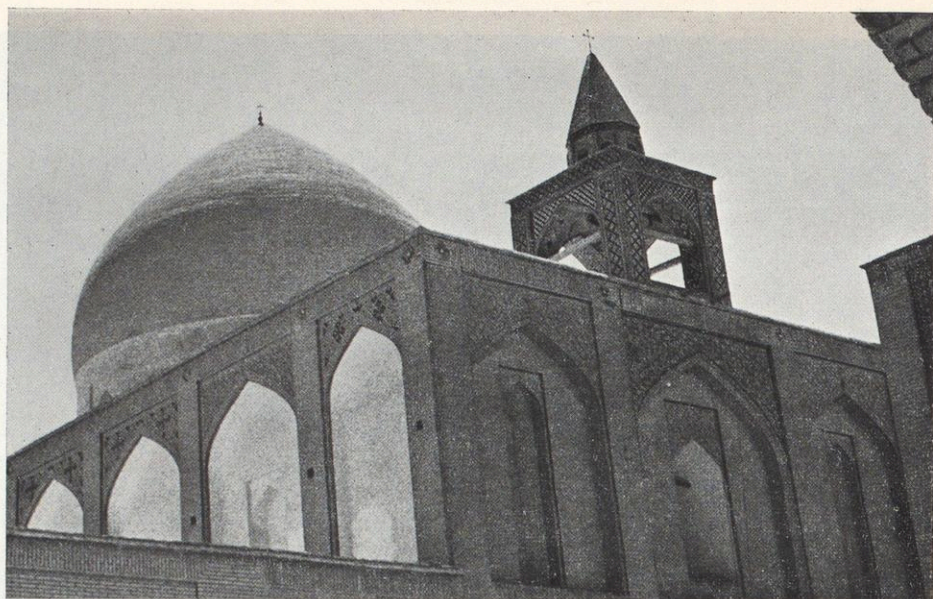
The wall-painting has the form of a slightly pointed arch, and is divided into four horizontal zones. The first or the uppermost zone portrays Heaven. At the very top, there is the half-figure of God the Father, depicted as an old man with a grey beard and grey hair and a bright light around His head. The image of God the Father corresponds to the description of the Ancient of Days in *Daniel* vii:9. His right hand is raised for a blessing. He is shown standing in front of a reversed rainbow. Immediately below the Ancient of Days, there is the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove 'proceeding from the Father'. The dove is shown in an elongated cloud, which is supported by two angels. To the right and left of the supporting angels, there is respectively the sun with its rays and the moon, both being presented with human faces. On either side of the elongated cloud, there are two choirs of angels with three and four angels each, a total of fourteen angels. Below the cloud with the dove, there is Christ the Pantocrator with the upper part of His body bare, wearing merely a kind of *tunica exomis*. He is seated on a double rainbow (*Ezekiel* i:28). Both his arms are raised, and His hands are turned upwards, thereby demonstrating His reception of the believers. The head of Christ is surrounded by a double nimbus. On the left, there is the Holy Virgin kneeling in supplication, on the right, we see St. John the Baptist 'in his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins' (*Matthew* iii:4). He too kneels and has his hands stretched forth in supplication. This Renaissance Deesis is supported by a white cloud. On either side of the Deesis,

¹⁰ Christoffel van Sichem (1581-1658) was born in Delft. As a pupil of Goltzius he produced most of his Scriptural cuts for Armenian works printed in Amsterdam. Cf. Funck, M., *Le Livre Belge à Gravures*. Paris, 1925, p. 257. Hind, A.M., *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut with a detailed Survey of the work done in the XVth century*. Boston, 1935, pp. 10, 12, 43. Musper, H.Th., *Der Holzschnitt in fünf Jahrhunderten*. Stuttgart, 1964, p. 279.

¹¹ Carswell, J., *op. cit.*, p. 30, n. 1.



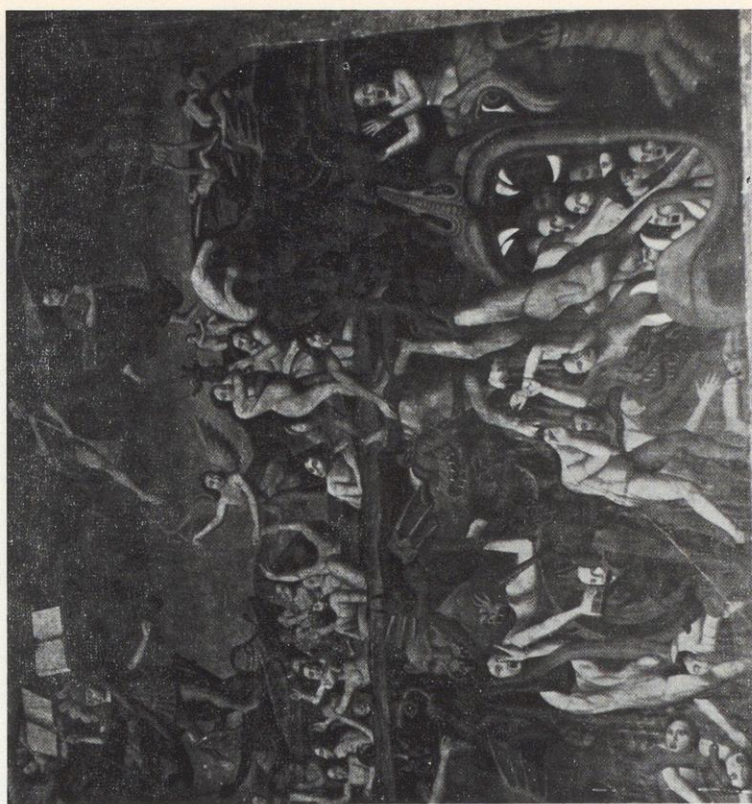
Church of Bethlehem : Heaven and Hell



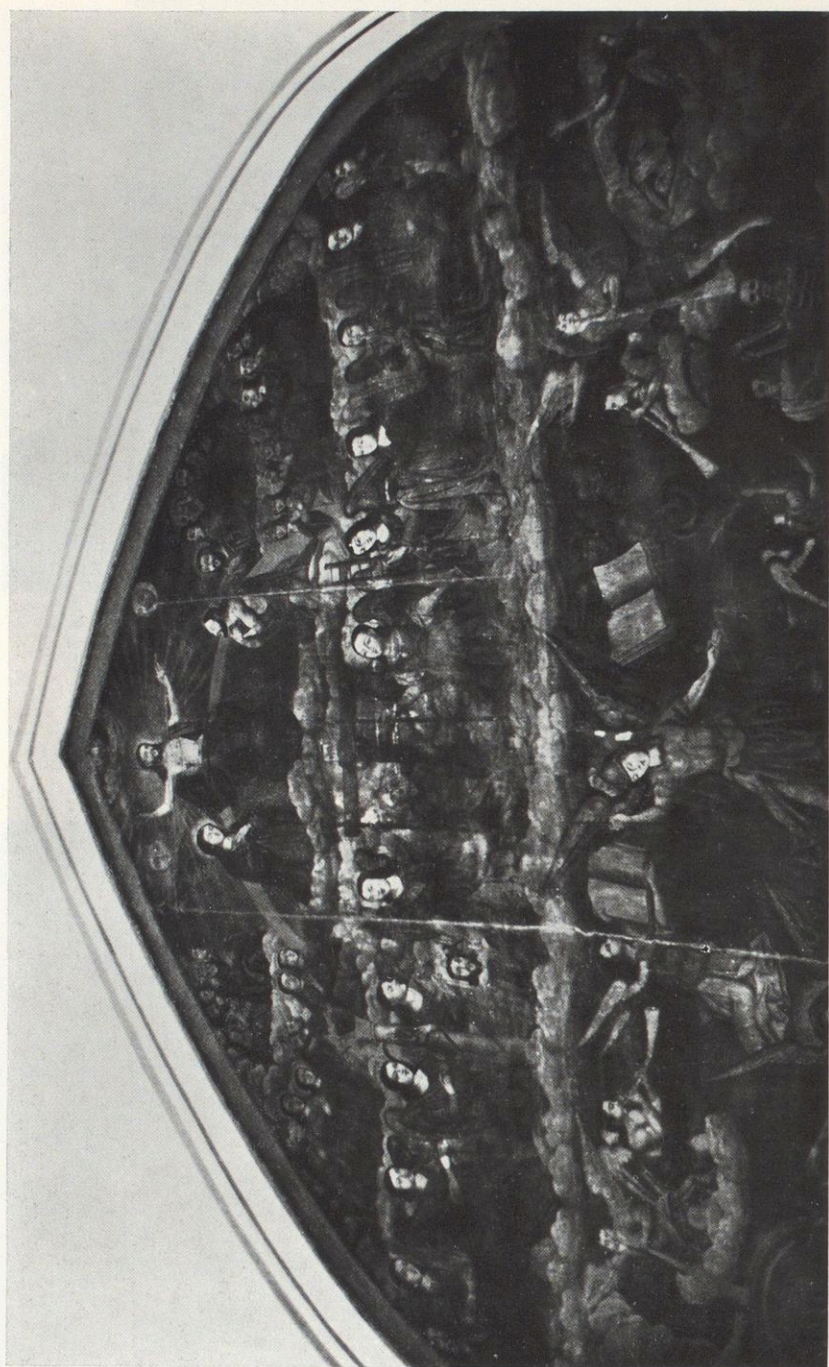
Cathedral of All Saviour, New Julfa



Cathedral of All Saviour : First and Second Zones



Cathedral of All Saviour : Third and Fourth Zones



Church of St. Menas, New Julfa : First and Second Zones



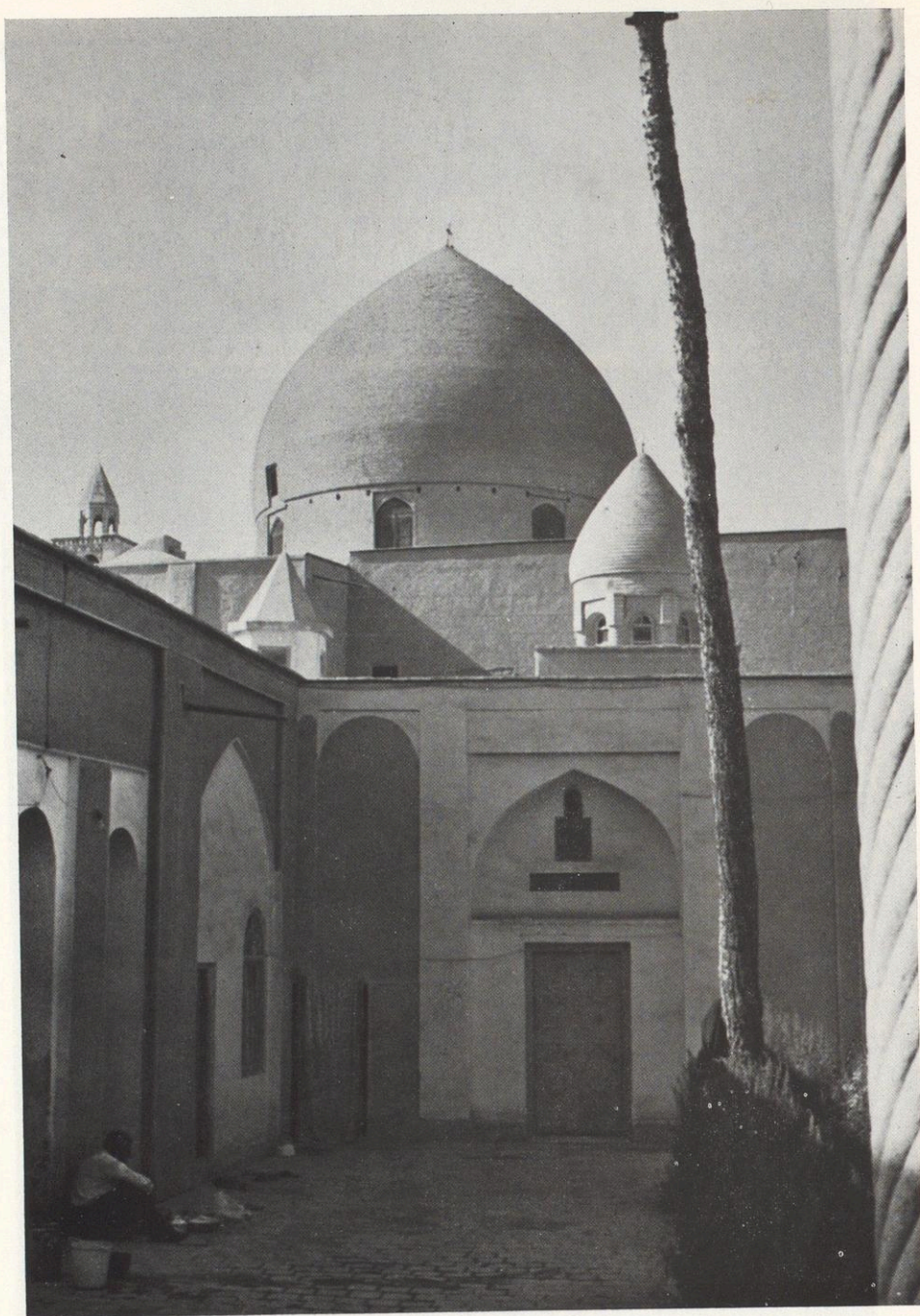
Church of St. Menas : Third Zone



Church of St. Menas : Fourth Zone



Woodcut by Christoffel van Sichem : Matthew XXV



Church of Bethlehem, New Julfa

there are seated six Apostles with three church-fathers (?) standing at the ends of the sides of the rows.

Below the Pantocrator in the centre, there is a large Cross with a crown of thorns and a superscription. To the left of the Cross, there are twenty-three persons, all men, representing various professions and classes of society. Among these, there are members of the clergy, the aristocracy as well as simple people. To the right of the Cross, there are twenty-nine persons, all women, again representing all walks of life. These two groups are the 'redeemed'.

The second zone should be entitled 'Redemption', and is separated from the first zone by a horizontal white cloud. Kneeling to the left of the Cross, which extends from the first to the second zone, and looking upwards to the Pantocrator, is the donor, Hodja Avetik Stepanosian¹². Placed in front of him is his turban¹³. On either side of the Cross there are six angels. From left to right, we see an angel sounding a trumpet, an angel in prayer, another angel sounding a trumpet, an angel holding with his left hand the *opprobrium* and with his right hand pointing to the column, an angel holding the *sudarium Christi*, an angel holding in his right hand a hammer and in his left hand a staff with a sponge dipped in vinegar. These angels face the Cross by being turned to the right. To the right of the Cross we see an angel with a spear, an angel holding a ladder, an angel with a scourge, an angel sounding a trumpet, an angel in prayer and another angel sounding a trumpet. These angels face the Cross being turned to the left.

The third zone, which should be called the Judgment, is separated from the second zone by a horizontal white cloud. In the centre of this zone, there is St. Michael dressed in an ancient Roman armory, wearing over his left shoulder a chlamys. His helmet is decorated with five feathers. In his right hand he holds a spear, while in his left hand he holds the scales for the weighing of souls. The feathers on his helmet as well as the position of his legs indicate a close resemblance to Mercurius¹⁴. With his left foot he steps upon the devil, which is depicted with a long tail, his two arms are stretched out so as to indicate his state of intense agony. Above the head of St. Michael, there is an angel holding an open book in which the good deeds are recorded. To the right of St. Michael, a devil holds an open book

¹² One of the earliest representations of a penitent in the proskynesis before Christ is shown in the famous mosaic in the Church of Haghia Sophia, where Leo VI presents himself before the Pantocrator. Stepanosian is not to be confused with the priest Stepanos, who is mentioned in the colophon of an illuminated ms. of 1658 in the Armenian Museum in New Julfa. Carswell, J., *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹³ The donor wears the same garments in which he is portrayed on the painting in the northern exonarthex of the Cathedral of All Saviour.

¹⁴ Didron, Alphonse, N., *Christian Iconography*. New York, 1886, vol. II, pp. 179-181.

in which the sins are recorded. Four angels sounding the trumpet fly above the judgment scene. Just below St. Michael, we see the Resurrection of the Dead (*I Cor.* xv:52; *John* v:28,29). The tombs are opened and twelve persons holding up at least one arm are among the redeemed. An angel holding in his left hand a whip forces the damned into hell. Here we see the naked bodies of men and women, some of them in a state of anxiety, others in a state of apparent resignation. Further to the right, a skeleton, representing Death, whips three sinners.

To the left of St. Michael, the artist depicted Paradise in the form of a tower with a gate, in front of which twenty Armenian members of the clergy and four women — most of them carrying candles — are assembled. The majority of these clergymen are undoubtedly monks because of their tonsured heads¹⁵. The person with the cross on his habit is an Armenian subdeacon¹⁶. The prelate standing in front of the gate is an Armenian bishop¹⁷. The tunics of the monks give the impression of representing celestial habits because of their bright colour. Did the artist perhaps even suggest a messianic banquet in so far as the habits with the fur collars are very similar to the honorary caftans which the Shah presented to the foreign ambassadors and notables before inviting them for a banquet? The women to the left are certainly not nuns, who we would expect to be veiled. The general theme of the assembly of members of the clergy in front of the tower-gate is strangely reminiscent of Stephen Lochner's 'Last Judgment' of 1450 at the Cologne Museum, which is most impressive in the part which depicts the procession of Saints passing through a late Gothic portal leading to Paradise¹⁸.

On either side of the tower there is an angel sounding the trumpet. Four smaller angels sit on the battlements of the tower. The person on the left

¹⁵ This is of special interest in view of the hostility which existed between the Armenian Catholics and the Gregorians. The fact that there should be latinizations among the Armenian clergy is not surprising. In Isfahan and in New Julfa in the XVIIth century, the Jesuits maintained the Church of St. Joseph and a college, the French Capuchins had a beautiful monastery in Ghalatabaruk, the Portuguese Augustinians as well as the Italian Carmelites (Church of St. Elias) operated missions, and the Dominicans had a monastery in the Kotcher quarter. Tavernier, J.B., *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 160. Deslandes, D.A., *Les Beautés de la Perse* ... Paris, 1673, p. 22. Fryer, John, *A new Account of East India and Persia, in eight letters ... being nine years Travels begun 1672 and finished 1681*. London, 1698, pp. 262-263. De Bruyn, C., *op. cit.*, p. 232-233.

¹⁶ Cf. the illustration of 'an Armenian deacon and subdeacon' in De Tournefort, Joseph Pitton, *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant, etc.*, Paris, 1717.

¹⁷ During the Crusader period, the Armenians adopted many Latin customs, including the Latin mitre, while the former Armenian episcopal crown is worn by priests.

¹⁸ Scheibler, L. and Aldenhoven, C., *Geschichte der Kölner Malerschule*. Lübeck, 1902.

of the tower is a grey-haired sage, the person on the right holds in his right hand an open book and in his left hand a short ladder. His head is surrounded by a nimbus.

The fourth zone represents the state of Hell with all the imaginable mediaeval apocalyptic imagery. In the lower right hand corner, there is a winged devil with two horns just in the process of grabbing a victim and pushing him into the 'mouth of hell'. Hell is portrayed by the head of a beast with a wide open mouth, very similar to the representation of Hell in the Missal of Poitiers¹⁹. Riding on this beast there is the Great Whore of the Apocalypse²⁰. Fourteen sinners are being swallowed up by the beast. To the left and in the centre of the fourth zone, there are eight winged devils as well as a lion, a unicorn, a dragon, a wolf, — all of these beasts being occupied in torturing the sinners. While some women in the lower left corner suffer from the flames of fire, another person is depicted in the claws of a devil. The winged devil in the lower left corner has cut open the belly of a sinner and rolls up the intestines like a rope. Others suffer from vipers which spin around their legs and arms, while again others are branded with hot irons or have their teeth pulled out of their mouths. The presentation of Hell has all the marks of the mediaeval imagination of torment and cruelty.

There is no doubt that the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour like that in the Church of St. Menas was inspired by a combination of Renaissance and Byzantine models. In fact, certain parts of this Last Judgment, as for example the fourth zone of Hell, appear in cruder and more dramatic and extreme forms in the Last Judgment in the Church of St. Menas. The numerous similarities between these two wall-paintings are very obvious and Carswell's suggestion that 'perhaps the artists were inspired from the same source, such as an engraving' is very likely²¹. The argument for the existence of one or rather several Western models for both paintings is even more convincing as the period of the construction of these two churches falls within the same years²². In many respects, the details of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour are not as crudely represented as those of the painting in the Church of St. Menas.

¹⁹ Didron, A.N., *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 118.

²⁰ *Apocalypse* XVII:3.

²¹ Carswell, J., *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²² The dates of the construction and completion of the Cathedral of All Saviour and the Church of St. Menas in New Julfa are identical. The building of the two churches was begun in 1108 (A.D. 1658-1659) and completed in 1112 (A.D. 1662-1663).

The Last Judgment in the Church of St. Menas

The Last Judgment in the Church of St. Menas is painted on the north wall of the nave between the first and the second pilasters. The painting, which covers approximately thirty square metres, has the form of a slightly pointed arch, and is also divided into four horizontal zones. The first zone, which occupies the uppermost part of the wall-paintings, portrays Heaven with Christ enthroned on a rainbow. His head is surrounded by a bright light with rays of light emanating, and is turned to the right. The upper part of His body is bare, and on His right side one sees the wound pierced by the soldiers with a spear (*John XIX:18*). Over His left shoulder He wears a *tunica*. On the left of Christ, there is the Holy Virgin, holding her left hand in front of her breast, her eyes are cast down. Her head is surrounded by a nimbus. To the right of Christ, St. John the Baptist is depicted in supplication. He is looking up to Christ and he has his hands folded. Above Christ there is a cloud which encloses a dove representing the Holy Spirit. To the left of Christ, above the Holy Virgin, there is the sun, to the right, above St. John the Baptist, there is the moon. Both celestial bodies are depicted with human faces.

The Deesis is flanked on the left side by four, on the right side by five Apostles. Originally, the artist intended to portray all Twelve Apostles, and merely the lack of space determined the elimination of the other Apostles. Below the Apostles, there are seven persons portrayed to the left of the Holy Virgin. They include men and women, and two of them wear crowns. To the left of St. John the Baptist, there are eight persons, again both men and women, all of whom are crowned.

The second zone is separated from the first zone by a horizontal cloud. This zone portrays the event of Redemption. In the centre, below Christ, there is the Cross with the Crown of Thorns and a superscription. Kneeling to the left of the Cross and holding it with his hands is the donor. The presentation and the arrangement of the six angels on either side of the Cross is almost identical to that of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour. Beginning from the left, an angel sounds a trumpet, the next angel plays a harp, the third angel from the left sounds a trumpet. The following two angels hold in their hands the Instruments of the Passion, namely the *opprobrium* and the *sudarium Christi*. A seraph guards the Cross. To the right of the Cross, there is another seraph guarding the Cross, and two angels, one of them holding in his hands a spear, the other a ladder and a scourge. Two other angels sound the trumpet, while one angel plays a harp.

The third zone is separated from the above zone by another horizontal cloud. Its theme is that of Judgment. In the centre there is the Archangel

St. Michael wearing a helmet, a breast-plate and a long skirt, his head is turned to the left. In his right hand he holds a spear with which he defeats the devil, in his left hand he holds the scales. With his left foot he steps upon the devil, whose eyes are already blindfolded with a rope. To the left of the head of the Archangel, there is another angel holding an open book in which the good deeds are recorded. To the right of the Archangel, there is a winged devil holding an open book in which the sins of the wicked are recorded. The left section of this zone represents Paradise, which is quite different from the portrayal of Paradise in the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour. Here Paradise is depicted as a large shell — or better even as a tunnel-like cylinder — guarded by an angel. Men and women crowd into the cylinder, which is illuminated by a shining light, while some redeemed persons are shown on their way to Paradise. In the foreground, there is an angel who assists a person out of his tomb for the *iudicium generale*. Others who are resurrected lounge in front of Paradise. The three nudes on the left are clearly adopted from Christoffel van Sichem's woodcut. The composition of these three persons, however, is sufficiently altered so as to cause speculation regarding the intent of the artist. It is probably vain to attempt an identification of these three nudes to the left of Paradise. The awkward posture of these figures, the otherworldly expression on their faces, the unintelligible use of their arms lead one to wonder whether the artist thought of anything else beyond 'filling the space'.

To the right of the Archangel, there is an angel with a whip beating and chasing a chained person, who is being pulled by a devil into hell. The posture of this angel is undoubtedly inspired by the angel chasing the wicked in the painting of the 'Fall' by Lucas Cranach the Elder²³. Whereas the sinner in the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour is undoubtedly a woman, in this painting it is a man who is covered with a shirt. In both paintings the posture of the person is identical. In fact, it seems that either the artists or the donors might have had a particular person in mind when they portrayed this sinner. In both instances, this person stands out and dominates the right side of the Judgment scene. Behind this person, there is shown a skeleton representing Death holding in his hands a sickle. Above Death, two angels blow the trumpet, while to the right of them, Lucifer dressed in black and with broken wings reclines on a cloud.

The fourth zone portrays Hell in an almost identical manner to that of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour. The persons and the beasts are more closely interlinked which gives the impression of increased chaos and violence. The expressions of the faces of the sinners indicate

²³ This painting is in the possession of the Art Gallery in Vienna.

intense agony and pain, while the faces of the devils and beasts are more ferocious than on the other painting. A comparison of the presentations of Hell of the Last Judgments in these two churches shows clearly their dependence upon each other as well as their mutual dependence upon a Western Renaissance model.

In the lower right corner, there is the head of the beast with its mouth wide open swallowing up seven sinners. A devil holding in his right hand a whip consigns four women to the beast. Other sinners are shown weeping and gnashing their teeth (*Matth.* VIII:12). The wheel of torture and several monsters cause unbearable suffering to the condemned. The lower left corner is filled with sinners who are embraced by vipers which bite into the breasts of the women. A devil pierces with his pike the breasts of another woman, whose lower part of the body is surrounded by the flames of hell. Another monster bites into the genital of a man. Eighteen devils and monsters as well as a large number of vipers torture twenty-eight sinners. There is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

The Last Judgment in the Church of Bethlehem

The Church of Bethlehem close to the Great Maidan in New Julfa was built by Hodja Petros Velidjanian in 1627-1628. The paintings of the Last Judgment adorn the west wall of the sanctuary and are quite different from those in the two above mentioned churches. The inclusion of these paintings in this particular study is merely for the sake of completion rather than for the purpose of analysis. It is obvious, that also these paintings were inspired by a Western model. In this church, the theme as such is divided into three separate paintings, namely that of Christ as Pantocrator, which is situated above the western door, the representation of Heaven to the south, and the painting of Hell to the north of Christ. Christ is shown supported by clouds, standing erect and having both arms raised for the blessing. He is clothed in elaborate garments. His head is surrounded by a nimbus.

The painting of Heaven to the south of Christ portrays Paradise in the form of a landscape with three large trees in the foreground; and woods, hills and a bridge in the background. A large cloud and a bird are depicted in the sky. The personages in Paradise include angels, saints and the donor. In the lower left corner, two bearded saints are shown, probably SS. Peter and Paul. Next to them, there are two angels in long white robes in the posture of devotion. To the right of these two angels, there is another angel bestowing upon a virgin-martyr the crown of life. Two of the three girls in the lower right hand corner hold in their hands lillies, symbols of their

virginity. In the upper right hand corner, another angel admits three saints into Paradise. In the upper left hand corner, there is an angel holding in his left hand a scroll and in his right hand a staff. He faces a saint, who is clothed with a loin cloth. On the left hand we see the donor kneeling in front of an angel. He wears the customary turban and his hands are folded²⁴.

To the north of Christ, there is the painting of Hell with devils and sinners. Six heads of sinners are surrounded by the flames of fire. The devils are shown employing hooks to pierce the breasts of women, while vipers bite into the breasts, the ears, arms and the faces of the bound victims²⁵. One devil pulls the hair of a woman, another devil sits on a woman, resting one foot on her breasts. In the upper left hand corner we see the head of a dragon with a number of liliputian sinners whom he intends to devour.

Artistic Influences on the Last Judgments in the Churches of New Julfa

The Byzantine Canon

The Last Judgments in the Cathedral of All Saviour and in the Church of St. Menas are iconographical hybrids reflecting a variety of traditions and schools, of which the traditional Byzantine representation of the Last Judgment should be regarded as merely one aspect. Although there are significant differences between these two wall-paintings of the Last Judgment, there are, at the same time, sufficient similarities to discuss these two paintings together with respect to their relationship to the Byzantine Canon.

In terms of the structure of both of these paintings, we notice the four-zonal scheme as found already in the XIIth century mosaic of the Last Judgment of Torcello. According to the Byzantine Canon, Christ as Pantocrator is the one and only righteous Judge of the Last Judgment. It is of interest, therefore, to notice that in the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour, the Holy Trinity is portrayed with the Eternal Father clothed in a dark garment. The placing of the Eternal Father in the painting of the Last Judgment is very infrequent, for this motif is neither found in the Athonite paintings of this theme nor in most Bucovinian frescoes. A parallel to our motif is found in the topmost zone of the XVIth century Last Judgment of the church in Voronet, Bucovina²⁶. In the Last Judgment in the Church of St. Menas only the Deesis is portrayed. Instead of showing Christ's right

²⁴ Another painting of Hodja Petros Velidjanian adorns the north wall of the Church of Bethlehem.

²⁵ The iconographic use of snakes biting the breasts of female sinners can be traced at least to the XIIIth century. Cf. the Last Judgment in the Monastery Sopoćani.

²⁶ Nandris, Grigore, *Christian Humanism in the Neo-Byzantine Mural-Painting of Eastern Europe*. Wiesbaden, 1970, p. 237.

hand turned with the palm towards the onlooker, symbolic for His receiving of the just, and His left palm turned away, symbolic of His casting out of the wicked, Christ is portrayed in both paintings with His hands stretched out for the blessing. The arrangement of the Holy Apostles, the Angelic Host and the Assembly of the Saints follows essentially the Byzantine Canon, this is especially true with respect to the seating of the Holy Apostles in the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of All Saviour. Yet, in both paintings, the Holy Apostles hold neither scrolls nor books. Halos, which are so characteristic for the representation of saints in Byzantine art, are almost altogether omitted. Most Byzantine paintings of the Last Judgment divide the saints according to their vocations, *e.g.* anchorites, martyrs, bishops and kings. In the Last Judgment in the Church of All Saviour, saints of the various vocations are shown, however, they are separated according to their sex, the men on the left, the women on the right side of Christ, thereby following the opposite arrangement of Albrecht Dürer's 'All Saints' of 1511, where also the saints are allocated according to their sex²⁷.

Instead of the Hetimasia, the Preparation of the Throne, our paintings merely show a Cross with two guardian angels on either side of it. This arrangement is clearly adopted from Christoffel van Sichem's woodcut illustrating *Matthew XXIV* in *Der Zielen Lust-Hof*²⁸. Whereas we should have expected Adam and Eve kneeling at the foot of the Cross, our paintings show the respective donors. The Byzantine Canon incorporates the Instruments of the Passion in the Hetimasia, in these paintings, however, they are portrayed separately, guarded by angels, except for the Crown of Thorns, which is hung on the Cross. The model for the angels' holding the Instruments of the Passion is provided in Christoffel van Sichem's woodcut illustrating *Matthew XXV* in the *Biblia Sacra*²⁹. Here the angels are shown supporting a ladder, the *opprobrium*, a cross, *et al.* Noteworthy is the very prominent presentation of the *sudarium Christi* among the Instruments of the Passion³⁰.

In the third zone, the basic Byzantine Canon is observed with St. Michael in the battle-dress of a Roman soldier in the centre spearing the devil with his left hand and weighing the souls with his right hand. Following the

²⁷ This painting is in the possession of the Art Gallery in Vienna.

²⁸ *Der Zielen Lust-Hof, Inhoudende Het leven ende lyden onse Heeren Iesu Christi, etc.* Louvain, Jacobsz, 1629, p. 137.

²⁹ *Biblia Sacra*, Anvers, J. Paets, 1657, vol. I. I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Ray Teeuwissen of Brussels, who has kindly assisted me in locating the woodcuts of van Sichem in the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels.

³⁰ Cf. Grabar, A., *La Sainte Face de Laon, Le Mandylion dans l'art orthodoxe*. Prague, 1931. Dobschütz, Ernst von, *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der althechristlichen Literatur*. N.F. III, 1899.

traditional arrangement of the *separatio iustorum a reprobis*, the righteous are assembled on the left, the wicked on the right side of the painting. Omitted are the river of fire flowing beneath Christ's feet and the Angel of the Lord rolling up the Heaven as a scroll. In both paintings, there is the Resurrection of the Body, the dead rising from the open tombs, but instead of being covered in their burial shrouds, they are naked. Neither animals nor beasts cast from their mouths parts of the peoples whom they have devoured. Also the representations of the Earth and the Sea are omitted.

In both wall-paintings, the concepts of Paradise are far removed from those of the Byzantine models, 'which are surrounded by a wall of crystal and pure gold, adorned with trees filled with bright birds'. Normally, Byzantine art assigns the left side of the lower zone to Paradise, the right side to Hell. In both paintings all of the lower zone is devoted to the portrayal of Hell as in the case of George Klontzas' icon of the Last Judgment³¹. There is little that can be added to the description of Hell as given by the author of 'The Byzantine Guide to Painting', who speaks about 'demons casting the wicked and uncharitable into it, and torture them horribly with divers instruments of torture, with harpoons and lances. Others drive them into the flames with pikes, others encircle their bodies like fiery serpents'.

The artists, children of their time, must have been acquainted with both, Byzantine and Renaissance paintings of this theme. Since they felt themselves closer to the Renaissance masters than to the Byzantine Manuel, only the frame and the principal personages are adopted from the Byzantine Canon. The portrayal of the persons, the angels, the righteous and the wicked, the expressions on their faces, the style of their clothes as well as their nakedness are adaptations from the Renaissance world.

The Woodcuts by Christoffel van Sichem

The use of Western woodcuts from the illustrations of the Holy Scriptures as models for wall-paintings is well known to the student of Byzantine mediaeval wall-paintings of the Last Judgment. Ludwig H. Heydenreich³² and Juliette Renaud³³ have demonstrated that the woodcuts of Lucas

³¹ Embiricos, Alex., *L'école Crétoise dernière phase de la peinture Byzantine*. Paris, 1967, p. 188, pl. 94. This icon is in the Institut Hellénique de Venise.

³² Heydenreich, L.H., 'Der Apokalypsen-Zyklus im Athosgebiet und seine Beziehungen zur deutschen Bibelillustration der Reformation', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, VIII, 1939, p. 2 ff. Heydenreich argues that the cycle in the Monastery of Dionysiou is dependent upon the model provided by the woodcuts of Hans Holbein.

³³ Renaud, Juliette, *Le cycle de l'Apocalypse de Dionysiou. Interpretation byzantine de*

Cranach the Elder (1522) and those of Hans Holbein (1523) provided inspiration for the paintings of the cycle of the Apocalypse in the Mount Athos monasteries of Dochiariou, Dionysiou, Xenophontos, and others³⁴. Dr. T.S. Boase has described the arrangement of the wall-paintings in the Cathedral of All Saviour in New Julfa, although for some reason he omitted the Last Judgment. With the exception of the two lower rows of paintings, Boase identified them stylistically as a work of an artist, or a group of artists, belonging to the Italo-Flemish schools of the late XVIIth century. In conclusion of his interesting study, he points out the similarity between many of the Cathedral wall-paintings and Christoffel van Sichem's engraved illustrations to the first printed Armenian Bible, published in Amsterdam in 1666³⁵.

There is no question that van Sichem's woodcuts also provided inspiration if not even a model for the execution of the Last Judgments in the Cathedral of All Saviour and especially in the Church of St. Menas³⁶. The woodcut illustrating *Matthew XXV* in the *Biblia Sacra*³⁷ was undoubtedly employed by the artist for the painting of the Last Judgment in the Church of St. Menas. For the sake of comparison, we shall list those figures in the Last Judgment, which are directly related to van Sichem's woodcut.

In the first zone : The Deesis, note the posture of the three figures.

In the second zone : The angels with the Instruments of the Passion appear in the woodcut on either side of the Deesis.

In the third zone : The group of the three persons on the left, which are somehow rearranged in the wall-painting. The cylindrical Paradise guarded by an angel, which van Sichem might have borrowed even from the famous painting of 'Heaven' by Hieronymus Bosch (1521)³⁸. The angel who extends his left hand to assist a person out of the tomb.

In fact, the influence of the Dutch master on the wall-paintings of the Last Judgments in New Julfa seems to be established beyond any doubt.

gravures occidentales. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses, LIX, Paris, 1943, p. 1 ff. Renaud feels that the cycle in the Monastery of Dionysiou reflects the woodcuts of Lucas Cranach the Elder.

³⁴ Huber, Paul, *Athos, Leben, Glaube, Kunst*. Zürich, 1969, pp. 365-382. Huber sees Cranach's woodcuts as models for the paintings in the monasteries of Dionysiou and Xenophontos, Holbein's woodcuts as models for the paintings in the Monastery of Dochiariou.

³⁵ Boase, T.S.R., 'A seventeenth-century typological cycle of Paintings in the Armenian Cathedral in Julfa', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XIII, 3-4, 1950, pp. 323-327.

³⁶ For an understanding of the mediaeval practice of copying from the masters, cf. Maïson, K.E., *Themes and Variations. Five centuries of master copies and interpretations*. London, 1960.

³⁷ I am indebted to the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels for the permission to publish this woodcut.

³⁸ This painting is in the Ducal Palace in Venice.