



## The life of Saint Ildefonsus and the imaginary linked to the Marian cult in the Visigoth Kingdom of Toledo (VII-VIII centuries)

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**ABSTRACT.** The Hagiography, a privileged source for the analysis of the medieval imaginary, can show us elements that concerning daily life, practices, the history of the hagiographic characters and its social environment, and is an instrument often used pedagogically in the religious education of members of the clergy and the whole audience, by the example of holiness and the actions of man or woman who becomes a mediator of the causes of God. This work aims to analyze, through the mediaeval imaginary and Critical Discourse Analysis, one of the shorter and less explored hagiographies produced on one of the great bishops of the Visigothic Kingdom of Toledo (7-8th centuries A.D.), the *Vita Vel Gesta Sancti Ildefonsi Toletanae Sedis Metropolitanis Episcopi*, the Life of Saint Ildefonsus of Toledo. Beyond the authorship and tradition of the work, the political quarrels that involved the monarchy and the Visigothic clergy in the period, the supernatural and symbolic elements that had the purpose of impressing and embracing the hearers and readers, we see in this *Vita* a direct intention to expand at Toledo and, later in other places of Europe, the Marian cult and the figure of one of its most faithful devotees, Ildefonsus of Toledo.

**Keywords:** Ildefonsus of Toledo; Marian cult; imaginary; critical discourse analysis.

### A vida de Santo Ildefonso e o imaginário ligado ao culto Mariano no Reino Visigodo de Toledo (séculos VII-VIII)

**RESUMO.** A hagiografia, fonte privilegiada para a análise do imaginário medieval, pode-nos mostrar dados referentes ao cotidiano, as práticas, a história dos personagens hagiográficos e seu entorno social, além de ser um instrumento muitas vezes usado pedagogicamente na educação religiosa de membros do clero e de todo o público ouvinte, por meio do exemplo da santidade e das ações do homem ou mulher que se torna um mediador das causas de Deus. Este trabalho tem como foco analisar, por meio da via do imaginário medieval e da Análise Crítica do Discurso, uma das mais breves e menos exploradas hagiografias produzidas acerca de um dos grandes bispos do Reino Visigodo de Toledo (séculos VII-VIII d.C.), a *Vita Vel Gesta Sancti Ildephonsi Toletanae Sedis Metropolitanis Episcopi*, a Vida de São Ildefonso de Toledo. Para além da autoria e tradição da obra, das querelas políticas que envolviam a monarquia e o clero visigodo no período, dos elementos sobrenaturais e simbólicos que tinham como finalidade impressionar e atrair ouvintes e leitores, vemos nessa *Vita* uma intenção direta de expandir pela sede toledana e, posteriormente, por outros lugares da Europa o culto mariano e a figura de um dos seus mais fiéis devotos, Ildefonso de Toledo.

**Palavras-chave:** Ildefonso de Toledo; culto Mariano; imaginário; análise crítica do discurso.

### La vida de San Ildefonso y el imaginario ligado al culto Mariano en el reino visigodo de Toledo (siglos VII-VIII)

**RESUMEN.** La hagiografía, fuente privilegiada para el análisis del imaginario medieval, puede mostrarnos datos referentes al cotidiano, prácticas, la historia de los personajes hagiográficos en su entorno social, además de ser un instrumento muchas veces utilizado pedagógicamente en la educación religiosa de miembros del clero y de todo el público oyente, por medio del ejemplo de la santidad y de las acciones del hombre o mujer que se convierte en mediador de las causas de Dios. Este trabajo tiene como foco analizar, por medio de la vía del imaginario medieval y del Análisis Crítico del Discurso, una de las más breves y menos explotadas hagiografías producidas acerca de uno de los grandes obispos del Reino Visigodo de Toledo (siglos VII- VIII d.C.), la *Vita Vel Gesta Sancti Ildefonsi Toletanae Sedis Metropolitanis Episcopi*, la

Vida de San Ildefonso de Toledo. Además de la autoría y tradición de la obra, de las querellas políticas que envuelven la monarquía y el clero visigodo en el período, de los elementos sobrenaturales y simbólicos que tenían como propósito impresionar y abarcar a los oyentes y lectores, vemos en esa *Vita* una intención directa de expandirse por la sede toledana y, posteriormente, por otros lugares de Europa, el culto mariano y la figura de uno de sus más fieles devotos, Ildefonso de Toledo.

**Palabras-clave:** Ildefonso de Toledo; culto Mariano; imaginario, análisis crítico del discurso.

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## Introduction

From studies on the Visigoth Kingdom of Toledo, taking as chronological outline the period from the beginning of the seventh century and the second half of the eighth century in the Hispanic region, our gaze turns to a set of sources that have a large significance for the period: hagiography. Therefore, we find that these works, given a social intention and function, were fundamentally focused on the propagation of theological conceptions, models of behavior aimed at religious education, moral standards and values. These characteristics were expounded by narrating the deeds of a man who is regarded as a saint and the elements that are vividly embedded in or on the margins of his life. Furthermore, these lives of saints offer the historian data of great interest for they reflect the pictures of the social environment with great liveliness and brilliance, thus allowing a safer and more direct entry into the actual conditions of society's existence than other types of sources, such as legal ones (García Moreno, 1989).

With these brief considerations in mind, our focus is on Hispanic hagiographic production, more precisely on an account that, according to Guance (2009), despite its brevity, became very popular during the period: the *Vita Vel Gesta Sancti Ildefonsi Toletanae Sedis Metropolitanani Episcopi*.

## Ildefonsus of Toledo in his time

Saint Ildefonsus was considered one of the most influential bishops of Visigothic Hispania in the period and later as a model to be followed. He was born in 607, during the reign of Witerico in Toledo. Son of Visigoth parents and devout since childhood, he studied at the monastery of Agali, where he was pupil of Eugene II. According to Rodrigues (2010), according to tradition, some of the most influential bishops of the Visigoth kingdom would have emerged from the Agali monastery. The author relates this fact to the possibility that representatives of the nobiliary groups linked to the south of the Peninsula would be gathered there, which would explain the intermittent ascendancy to the the high spheres of power (Rodrigues, 2010)<sup>1</sup>.

Ildefonsus is known for his works, some masses and hymns, poems and epitaphs, but largely for his devotion to Mary in the *De virginitate perpetua beatae Mariae* (Bernardino, 2002). He succeeded Eugene II at the Toledana see in the year 657 AD (Fear 1997). As Fear shows us, he is one of the few Hispanic Fathers to devote himself directly to theological studies (Fear 1997). He died in 667 and was buried in the church of saint Leocadia of Toledo at the feet of his predecessor Eugene II (Fear, 1997).

Regarding the *Vita Ildephonsi*, a first problem presents itself with great relevance, that is, the question of authorship. This leads us to understand two different moments and two authors for the *Vita*: Cixila or Eladius. As Ariel Guance (2009) shows us, the first figures in two of the manuscripts in which the text is found: in the *Escorialense DII* (by Saint Milão of Cogolla, written in 994, although with additions from the mid 11th century), and in another conserved by the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, also of the eleventh century. The second name, Eladio (or Helladio), appears in some remaining codices and, according to Dominguez Del Val (1971), it is unknown today who could be this Eladio.

This controversy over dating and production of the *Vita* is justified, according to Canal Sanchez (1967, p. 437-462), because “[...] if the attribution to Cixila was earlier, it does not explain why contemporary foreign codices, situated in different places, such as those of Cluny and Benevento, agree with the attribution of Heladio [...]”, however, as the author completes, “[...] the original wording was the latter (but) some copyist

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the prestige enjoyed by the prelates of Toledo, Leila Rodrigues gives a brief exposition showing that it has been registered since the reign of Recaredo (586-601), with Eladio's participation, who came from that monastic foundation, in the Royal Class. In the following years, his ascent to the bishopric of Toledo (615-633), as well as of other figures coming from Agali, would cater to the intent of monarchs such as Sisebuto (612-621) and later Suintila (621-631) to contemplate the southern aristocracy in the new power relations established since the conversion period.

aware that the only Heladio bishop of Toledo was dead long before Ildefonsus was bishop made the [...] exchange that appears in the *Emilianenses* codices (Cixila)”.

Other scholars also debate the issue of authorship of *Vita Ildefonsi*. Dominguez Del Val in his study *Personalidad y herencia literaria de S. Ildefonso de Toledo* did not decide either by Cixila or by Eladio and ends up not proposing any possible author for the *Vita*. Collins (1989), in turn, relies on the *Emilianenses* codices, as he recognizes that the *Vita* was composed by the Toledan bishop Cixila in the years before 737, before his ascension to the see of Toledo. Gil (1973) attributes the authorship of the *Vita* to Cixila without entering into discussions about the theme, as we see in the title of his edition *Cixilianis Vita Ildefonsi*.

With a more direct positioning, Urquiola (2006) agrees with Vega that the author of the *Vita Vel Gesta Sancti Ildefonsi* did not belong to Toledo, being someone who, coming from elsewhere, had been in the city for some time, not belonging to Hispania, but to France, more specifically a Cluny monk who, knowing some codices, such as the *De Virginitate*<sup>2</sup> and the *Elogium* of Julián of Toledo, visits Hispania in the eleventh century in search of a fantastic biography that propagates Marian worship and that further enhances the figure of the Toledan Archbishop. This proposition makes Valeriano claim that the authorship of the *Vita* should not be attributed to the Toledan Cixila, but rather as belonging to Eladio (Urquiola, 2006).

In fact, as stated by Guance (2009), the information that put Eladio as author of the source is scarce and studies show that the work is credited to Cixila, archbishop of Toledo between 774 and 783. However, Manuel Díaz y Díaz (1957) shows us that Cixila may not be the aforementioned Archbishop of Toledo, but some tenth or early XI author, possibly a monk, probably of Mozarabic origin, who was in charge of the Monastery of Saint Cosmas and Damian, in Abéllar, around the early tenth century, on the outskirts of the city of León. Following this proposition, Cixila appears as abbot of the monastery of Abéllar and bishop of León between 914 and 940, year of his death<sup>3</sup>.

Regarding the production and legacy that the hagiographer left during his stay in the monastery, we have a series of objects and texts that made the library of Abéllar a reference point for Hispanic culture in the tenth century, showing a strong dedication of the abbot to the letters and the education of his pupils. Among the inventoried items, we find works by various writers, such as Saint Augustine; John Cassian; Ephrem the Syrian; Isidorus of Seville; Prosperous of Aquitaine; John Chrysostom; Claudius; Eucherius of Lyon, Maurus Servius; Donatus; Avitus of Vienna; Aldhek from Malmesbury; Pompeius Trogus; Juvenal; Dracontius; Virgil; Prudentius; Eugene of Toledo; Cato, and Ildefonsus de Toledo. In addition, there are still a number of items that are also inventoried and belong to the monastery: a large collection of chalices, crosses and other objects used in the liturgy, made of gold, silver and precious stones, liturgical garments and other objects (Guance, 2009).

To begin the analysis of the hagiographic text, some important considerations deserve our attention. As Frazão da Silva (2001) shows us, works of hagiographic content can be an important instrument for the analysis of daily life and medieval imagery concerning the period in which they are elaborated<sup>4</sup>. To this we add the study by the precursor of hagiographic analysis, Delehaye (1973), who clarifies, in *Les légendes hagiographiques* (1973), that these are works privilege the actors of the sacred (the saints) and aim at edification (an exemplarity).

In this way, there is a complex relationship between the author and his audience. Heffernan (1988), explains that the aesthetics in the hagiographic text must have its value diminished, the art of the text is not designed to reflect individual skills, virtuosity, but as part of a tradition that postulates a different orientation between author, text, and audience. How much the text reflects the tradition that has its *locus* in the community is what unites the author and his audience. The nature of this complex relationship between author and audience can reveal much about the work we are working with (Heffernan, 1988).

So that we can approach hagiography from the point of view of its producer's discourse, we will work with 'discourse analysis', more specifically, 'critical discourse analysis'.

<sup>2</sup> *De Virginitate perpetua Sancta Mariae*, 12: PL 96, col. 106

<sup>3</sup> According to Ariel Guance (2009), if we accept this hypothesis, the description of this character is possible, despite some difficulties in relation to the chronology of his life. First, the author adds, he appears to have been a Mozarabic who can be identified as a fugitive from Cordoba, although in this case we do not know to which monastery he belonged. He appears as founder of the monastery of Abéllar, being first elected abbot of this monastery and later appointed bishop of León (perhaps succeeding Saint Froilan), an appointment in which apparently Alfonso III intervened favorably. He appears under the episcopal title in the first diploma signed by the successor of Afonso, Garcia I, on February 15, 911. Cixila no longer appears as bishop of León in mid-914, being succeeded by Fruminio II.

<sup>4</sup> Thus, the author explains, the hagiographies are “[...] works aimed, fundamentally, at the propaganda of pilgrimage centers and the edification of the faithful, as they aim at public and, in the vast majority of cases, written by educated and church-bound men, become border texts. At the same time as transmitting the points of view and teachings elaborated by intellectuals, such works incorporate elements of people's daily lives so that their messages become more appropriate and understandable” (Frazão da Silva, 2001, p.167).

Our approach privileges the connection between discursive practices and social structure. Therefore, it is up to us, at first, to distinguish between language and speech. Discourse is language as a social practice determined by social structures (the rules and/or sets of transformative relationships organized as properties of social systems). By accepting this premise, we are also accepting that the social structure thus determines the conditions of discourse production and diffusion. As Iñiguez (2004) points out, discourse is determined by socially constructed orders. By orders of speech we mean the sets of conventions associated with social institutions (thus, orders of speech are ideologically formed by power relations in social institutions and society as a whole).

In order to approach the source directly, we will use the methodological framework described by Melo Rezende and Ramalho (2009) concerning the discourse analysis that composes the criteria of 'reflexivity'<sup>5</sup>, 'hegemony'<sup>6</sup>, 'ideology' (and its *modus operandi*)<sup>7</sup>, 'legitimization'<sup>8</sup> (and its *modus operandi*), the 'dissimulation'<sup>9</sup>, the 'unification'<sup>10</sup>, a 'fragmentation'<sup>11</sup> e a 'reification'<sup>12</sup>.

With these methodological premises in mind, we can begin the analysis of the *Vita Sancti Ildefonsi*. In the first passage, we see the following:

Here are the sweet delicacies of master Ildefonsus, who, having gathered them from the garden of God and distributed them all over Hesperia, quenched our hunger with his enormous eloquence. Ildefonsus was not inferior in merit to the most holy master Isidore, from whose source, as a student, he drank clear waters. Sent, in effect, by the holy and venerable Father Eugene, metropolitan bishop of the see of Toledo, to the above-mentioned master, metropolitan bishop of Seville, although he considered himself to be very knowledgeable, until then had been dominated and polished by him and, they say, imprisoned with a chain of iron for a while, which, if he had not yet known anything, was then completely enlightened, and having returned to his teacher, master Eugene, after not long performing the office of deacon, was appointed abbot of the Church of the Saints Cosmas and Damian, which is located in the suburb of Toledo, where, distinguishing himself quickly in his position, composed, with admirable sense of harmony, two masses in honor of the saints, so that they could sing in their festivities, masses that we have recorded further up (Gil, 1973, p. 61)<sup>13</sup>.

In introducing Saint Ildefonsus into the account, we see that the hagiographer works with one of the best-known hagiographic *topoi*, the one in which the saint appears as enlightened by God and possessed of the gift of oratory. He does so by listing two other prominent names within the Hispano-Visigoth ecclesiastical context, Isidore of Seville, which presupposes his stay in Seville as a pupil of this saint, and Eugene I of Toledo, referring to his post as abbot of the Agaliense monastery. Moreover, by listing Isidore and Eugene as masters of Ildefonsus, he places him in a privileged position in the Hispanic spiritual context, which results in a legitimation of his post as abbot of the Agali monastery and, subsequently, in the position of saint to be venerated in relation to the other prelates and saints mentioned above, in honor of whom he composed two masses.

Thus, regarding the criteria established by the CDA<sup>14</sup>, we see that the hagiographer, with regard to reflexivity, builds the image of Ildefonsus and legitimates it by citing two other important prelates, in a pupil and master relationship, sustaining his position through unification, symbolically building the unity of the Church through standardization, a shared reference between the three bishops, and symbolization,

<sup>5</sup> It refers to the possibility of the subjects construct their self-identities actively in reflective constructions of their activity in social life. Thus, identities are constructed and/or contested in the discourse.

<sup>6</sup> It is characterized as the dominance exercised by the power of one group over the others, based more on consensus than on the use of force. Domination, however, is always in unstable equilibrium, hence the notion of hegemonic struggle as the focus of struggle over points of instability in hegemonic relations.

<sup>7</sup> It is hegemonic in the sense that it necessarily serves to establish and sustain relations of domination and, therefore, serves to reproduce the social order that favors dominant individuals and groups.

<sup>8</sup> It establishes and sustains relationships of domination because they are presented as just and worthy of support: "rationalization" - the legitimation strategy that is based on rational foundations in legality; "universalization" - partial representations are legitimized through their presentation as serving general interests; "narrativization" - legitimation is built through the recurrence of stories that seek in the past the legitimation of the present.

<sup>9</sup> Establishes and sustains relations of domination through its negation or obfuscation (can be accomplished by symbolic constructions of displacement, euphemization and trope).

<sup>10</sup> The *modus operandi* of ideology by which relations of domination can be established or sustained by the symbolic construction of unity. It is comprised by two symbolic construction strategies: "standardization" (adoption of a shared standard reference) and "symbolization" (construction of collective identification symbols).

<sup>11</sup> Relationships of domination can be sustained by segmenting individuals and groups that, if united, could construct obstacles to maintaining power. Two strategies: "differentiation" (emphasis on characteristics that disrupt and prevent the formation of a cohesive group) and "purge of the other" (in which it aims to represent symbolically the group that can construct an obstacle to hegemonic power as an enemy that must be fought).

<sup>12</sup> A transitory situation is represented as permanent, hiding its socio-historical character. Their strategies: "naturalization" - a social creation is treated as if it were natural; "eternalization" - strategy by which historical phenomena are portrayed as permanent; "nominalization" and "passivation" - make it possible to erase actors and actions.

<sup>13</sup> The Latin text is found in: Gil, I. *Corpus Scriptorum muzarabicorum*. Consejo Superior de investigaciones Científicas. Manuales y anejos de Emerita XXVIII. Madrid. Instituto Antonio de Nebrija, 1973, p. 61-65: "Ecce dapes melliluae illius domni Ildefonsi, quas de paradiso Dei rapiens et per totam Hesperiam dispergens in ediam nostram ingenti satiauit eloquio. non inpar meritis Sanctissimi illius domni Ysidori, de cuius fonte adhuc clientulus purissimos latices bibit. Nam directus a sancto ac venerabili papa Eugenio, Toletane sedis metropolitano episcopo, ad supradictum doctorem, Spalensem metropolitano episcopum, cum sibi iam sciolus uidebatur, adeo ab eo tentus et elimatus est et, ut ferunt, temporali ferro constrictus, ut, si quid scientiae deerat, plenius instructus ad paedagogum suum domnum Eugenium remeans, non post multos dies adhuc diaconii officium peragens, in ecclesia sanctorum Cosmae et Damiani, quae sita est in suburbio Toletano, abba praeficeretur, ubi statim in officio clarens duas missas in laude ipsorum dominorum, quas in festiuitate ipsorum psallerent, miro modulationis modo perfecit. Quas missas infra adnotatas habemus."

<sup>14</sup> We shall utilize CDA to refer to Critical Discourse Analysis.

writing about a saint whose profile he intends to be a model for the faithful, thus listing symbols with which Christians identify with each other.

Continuing the report, we see the moment when Ildefonsus becomes the metropolitan bishop of Toledo after the death of Eugene:

Then, dying, after a long time, master Eugenio, he is appointed bishop in his own see. Then his austere moral perfection shone in the royal seat, acquiring fame, and illuminated his entire Hispania like a small burning torch. By his wisdom, the Church shines to this day as the sun and the moon. His memory is kept tied to the gift of perfume and the elements of incense. From the cradle, he established a great abode within himself for the Lord, remaining a eunuch from an early age. Moreover, he suffered no such mutilation by human hands, but by the divine sword, and did not curb the natural passion with the iron instrument, but attained holiness through the divine gift. Inspired promptly by the heavenly gift and equal with those so great and eminent as his predecessors, to him was revealed what had been concealed from others (Gil, 1973, p. 62)<sup>15</sup>.

In this passage, as already mentioned, we see again the hagiographer going through another stage of Ildefonsus' life, more precisely his ascension to the metropolitan see of Toledo, which becomes a prominent place in the face of all the blessings that the saint brings in assuming such post. In this way, characteristics related to his moral and mental perfection are listed, which make the saint shine before all the people of Hispania as a model to be followed, because, as we see, the Church shines 'until today, as the sun and the moon', according to the hagiographer, thanks to his deeds.

Continuing to list his magnificent virtues, the hagiographer shows us that from an early childhood Ildefonsus had already made his body a dwelling place for the Lord, becoming a eunuch not by human hands but by the will and the cutting of the divine sword, which so desired, a classic hagiographic *topos* that shows that holiness accompanies the holy man at all times of his life. With regard to this passage, the description that the hagiographer is concerned with is that of the saint's moral portrait, which is idealized. Thus, in relation to ideology, it legitimizes the description through universalization, once again symbolically building its protagonist, always citing the supernatural character linked to Ildefonsus' life.

This brief account serves as a prologue to one of the most important events within the *Vita*: Saint Leocadia's miraculous apparition. Therefore, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who, according to the hagiographer, already inhabited the interior of the saint in all areas, appearing as a helper, intending to make known the merit of his faith before men and not depriving of his aid those who suffered in spiritual warfare, the miraculous apparition of Saint Leocadia happens. Let us see:

Thus the Holy Spirit for the first time showed him what had not yet been taught to the people who had desired it for so many years, that is, in the presence of all showed the remains of Leocadia, holy virgin and consecrated to God and his confessor, in celebrating at the royal headquarters the day of her feast, and, being prostrate Ildefonsus before her sepulcher, she jumped from the tomb, where her holy body had been buried until today, and the lid, which thirty young men could barely move, lifted not by human but angelic hands, the veil that covered the members of the holy virgin was thrown out with life, and, having been displayed as by human hands to be able to contemplate her, came the beautiful complacent virgin, while the bishops, the royal dignitaries, presbyters and deacons, the clergy and all the people shouted, 'Thank God in heaven, thank God on Earth', no one remaining in silence. Immediately, Ildefonsus taking and holding the veil in his hands, it is said that this praise was shouted, exclaiming with the people: 'Thank God! My Lady is alive for the life of Ildefonsus!'. And the clergy, having repeated the same sentence, vehemently chanted the hallelujah and the song that master Ildefonsus himself had carefully composed: 'You have made yourself beautiful, hallelujah' and other songs that were included in the praise of her at the mass noted below (Gil, 1973, p. 63, emphasis in the original)<sup>16</sup>.

We see that the virgin Saint Leocadia comes back to life as if in honor of the presence of Ildefonsus in her basilica. The hagiographer endeavors to present supernatural elements in the apparition of the saint, listing

<sup>15</sup> «Deinde, post multum tempus decedente domno Eugenio, in sede sua episcopus praeficitur. Cuius statim uirtus enucleata cluens in sede romulea refulsit, et ueluti facula ardens omnem suam Hispaniam perlustrauit. Cuius doctrina usque hodie fulget ecclesia ut sol et luna. Cuius memoria in benedictione odoris et in compositione incensi habetur. Qui ab ipsis cunabulis, ab ineunte aetate eunuchus permanens, magnum in se habitaculum Domino praeparauit. Qui non manubrio humano, sed diuino secatus est gladio, nec ingenio ferramentorum resecauit libidinem, sed munere caelesti promeruit Sanctitatem. Qui, subito dono superno afflatus, his tantis talibusque praedecessoribus suis aequiter clarens, quod illis clausum fuerat, isti reuerat est».

<sup>16</sup> «Sic enim egit ut quod per totis annis populis desiderantibus necdum ostensum fuerat illis, isti patefaceret primum, et reliquias Sanctae ac Deo dicatae uirginis et confessoris suae Leocadiae, adueniente in sede regia sua festiuitate, omnibus adstantibus praesentaret, et ante sepulcrum eius genibus prouolutus, tumulus, in quo sanctum eius corpusculum usque hodie humatum est, exiret, et operculum, quod uix triginta iuuenes mouere possent, non humanis manibus sed angelicis eleuatum, uelum, quod Sanctae martyris membra tegebat, uiuens foris submitteret et, ueluti manibus hominum extensum conspectui eius, uirgo pulcherrima obsequens aduentaret, clamantibus episcopis, principibus, presbiteris, diaconibus, clero atque omni populo: «Deo gratias in caelo, Deo gratias in terra», nemine tacente. Ipse uero manibus statim complexans et adstringens, talia fertur depromere uota, uociferans cum omni populo et clamans: «Deo gratias. Viuit mea domina per uitam Ildefonsi!». Er ipsud repetens clerus uehementer psallebat Alleluia et canticum quem ipse dominus Ildefonsus nauiter fecerat: «Speciosa facta es, alleluia», et alia quae in ipsa missa quae subter est adnotata in laude eius deprompserat»

the will of the Holy Spirit, the angelic hands that lift the lid of the tomb, which could only be moved by the force of thirty men, and the veil that covered her face, which eventually rests in the hands of Ildefonsus. Once again, we see the author's intention to legitimize the figure of his protagonist using ideology and its means of operation, specifically legitimation through narrativization seeking the past to legitimize the present and, through unification, understanding the standardization, listing as a key piece the figure of the Holy Spirit, and symbolization, placing Saint Leocadia as a symbol of collective identification within the context in question.

As Guiance points out (2009), the appearance of Leocadia gave rise to a curious event: kneeling before the virgin, the saint begged someone to give him 'a sharp instrument to cut' her veil, which he apparently had in his hands while frantic crowd paid no attention to the bishop's appeal and Leocadia threatened to leave. Therefore,

Recesvinto, who was (king) at that time after abandoning earthly fame and arrogance, and who, having been reprimanded for his iniquities by Ildefonsus, observed him with a dreadful look, tearfully offered him a small knife which was in a box and, with his neck bent and his hands outstretched to the throne, begged them to take it immediately, praying that they would not consider him unworthy, that he was offering something with tears (Gil, 1973, p. 63)<sup>17</sup>.

The author of the *Vita* surely knows how some data related to the history of Toledo are viewed. He knows about the great prestige that Saint Leocadia had between the clergy and the people, and he also knows about the masses that Ildefonsus had composed, of which, according to the author, one would be in honor of the Toledan saint. Moreover, in fact, the bad relations between Ildefonsus and Recesvinto (653-672) correspond to reality, but, as we see, lack concrete reasons and justifications.

In view of this, the saint was soon forced by Recesvinto to rise to the episcopal chair and, during his stay as bishop (657-667) no council was convened, which had to be called by the figure of the monarch. Thus, we see how the author of the *Vita* was aware of the incompatibility between the bishop and the monarch, explaining the cause: the bishop had disapproved of the monarch's misbehavior. This statement, as presented in the report, seems to reinforce the hagiographer's willingness to enhance the figure of the Church's representative when compared to the civil power exercised by the monarch.

To shed light on this issue, Urquiola (2006) shows us that the bad relations between the Toledan Church and the monarch stemmed from the time when Chidasvinto (642-653) and his son Recesvinto, associated with his father's throne in 653, ruled. At the Council held in the same year, the VIII Council of Toledo, which places Ildefonsus as Abbot of Agali, the nobles and bishops make very harsh accusations against the Recesvinto for two reasons: firstly, for the inordinate enrichment of his personal and family heritage as a consequence of the numerous confiscations of the nobles made by his father and, secondly, by the confirmation of the council that kings were to rise to the throne by election carried out by the bishops and palatine nobles after the death of the former monarch, which was a direct criticism to the way Recesvinto had ascended the throne by hereditary succession, without going through the royal election.

Regarding the CDA criteria, we see that the hagiographer strives to, as said before, negatively characterize King Recesvinto. Therefore, the criterion of reflexivity is evidenced, in which the king, according to the author's words, is aware of his own identity and, linked to the ideology, that of fragmentation, in which, visibly, the monarch is not raised to the status of deserving to attend such a solemnity. These characteristics are visible in the differentiation, characterization of the saint from the monarch, and the purging of the other, with Recesvinto seen as an obstacle to the unity of the kingdom.

Interestingly, the report goes unanswered: What happens to Saint Leocadia? Had she returned to her grave? As shown by Urquiola (2006), as so often appears in the hagiographic genre, the silence about certain characters contributes to creating an atmosphere of illusion and mystery that should not be broken with rational explanations and arguments. The hagiographer still refers to other miracles that the Holy Spirit had bestowed upon Ildefonsus on Advent Sunday, a few days after the appearance of Leocadia, as well as other deeds recounted in his time by Urbano and Evancio in Toledo, but justifies that he will only report a few, given the vast amount of fantastic feats he performed.

A short paragraph serves as an introduction to what constitutes the central account in the *Vita*, also characterized as an appearance with a supernatural imprint:

<sup>17</sup> "Sed princeps quondam Recesuintus, qui eius tempore erat, gloria et ferocitate terrena deposita, qui eum ob iniquitates suas increpatus superbo oculo intuebatur, cultrum modicum quem in teca tenebat, cum lacrimis offerebat, et collo submisso, supplicibus manibus a trono suo extentis, ut eum illi deferrent instantius deprecabatur, postulans ut indignum non iudicaret sua cum lacrimis offerentem"

When the day of the holy and ever-virgin Mary was near, three days before the festival [Ildefonsus] finished composing the litany and, in these three days, managed to conclude the previously mentioned Mass, which is the seventh, to be sung in praise of her (Gil, 1973, p. 63)<sup>18</sup>.

The feast quoted corresponds to the Annunciation of Mary, which, due to the 10th Council of Toledo, in the year 656, had been moved from March to December 18, because there would be problems with the date referring to the Holy Week (Urquiola, 2006). According to Madoz (1952), the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary, on December 18, was the most solemn of all Marian festivities in the Mozarabic rite. Regarding this passage, we see that the hagiographer does know the date, even without mentioning it directly, highlighting this day as the most important of the account, but without accuracy, as it does with some important passages, which exemplifies another feature of the hagiographic genre: not giving primacy to the space-time relationship.

The following account again quotes the figure of King Recesvinto: "And when his holy solemnity came, the aforementioned king, little concerned with the fear of God and unaware of his own wickedness, began to hear the solemn ceremony following the royal custom" (Gil, 1973, p. 63)<sup>19</sup>.

This short passage shows us yet another negative connotation about King Recesvinto, characterized by his lack of faith in divine justice and being averse to its practices, it seems to us, further increasing the distance in the relationship between monarchy and Church in the period. Recesvinto's indifference in participating in the celebration, being only a royal protocol, broadens his characterization as a bad monarch, since this is an argument that the author pursues in two important moments of the hagiographic account. Again, we see in the hagiographer's discourse the referentials linked to ideology, which in turn leads us to fragmentation and repetition, quoting Recesvinto again, depriving him of his legitimacy as both a good monarch and as a good Christian.

And so we come to the passage concerning the feast of the Virgin:

Ildefonsus, for his part, devoted himself more fully to the affairs of God, after enthusiastically assuming the task of his Lady's day, whom he served with God's protection, and having enriched himself with music in praise of the mother of God, as before we had indicated, composing with the passion of his heart a harmonious melody, and, after elegantly writing, according to the method of synommy, the treatise on virginity, full of testimonies of the Old and New Testament, leaving it beautified with eloquence and brilliance worthy of the above-mentioned Lady, having risen at dawn, as he usually did, to present his submission to God, and willing to devote his watches to the Lord, and the deacon, subdeacon, and clergy came before him with small torches as they opened the doors and looked at the church and fixed their eyes on the brightness of heaven, fleeing from a light they could not bear, they left the torches in their hands and, returning their steps to whence they came, they came back almost dead with their companions, the whole group wondering uneasily what the servant of God was doing among the choir of angels, as they had so suddenly frightened the guards and, turning around from the church door, returned to their homes (Gil, 1973, p. 63-64)<sup>20</sup>.

At first, the hagiographer once again extols the saint's character by characterizing him as enthusiastic about heading the celebration, placing music that he himself had composed for the Mass and presenting the treatise. *De Virginitate* in honor of Mary, which he had written elegantly with testimonies of the Old and New Testaments, which shows us his scholarship and dedication to love and respect for her Lady. Subsequently, as the ceremony commences, celebrating the festival's vigil, the members of the clergy, in the company of Ildefonsus, encounter a supernatural phenomenon: upon entering the church, which the hagiographer does not identify, a light that refers to the splendor from heaven and that ends up almost decimating everyone, shows only the saint as chosen for the apparition of the Virgin.

This passage seems to reinforce Ildefonsus' position as, as we said above, chosen from among other members of the clergy, for in view of this fact he becomes the only one to enter the church while the others return to their homes. Thus, still guided by the precepts of the CDA, we see the criterion of ideology, which

<sup>18</sup> "Superueniente uero die Sanctae et semper uirginis Mariae, ante tres dies laetantias peregit, et missam suprascriptam, quae in eius laude decantaretur, perfecit, quae est septima".

<sup>19</sup> "At ubi uentum est in eius sancta sollempnitate, supradictus rex minus timore Dei sollicitus et de suis iniquitatibus male conscius, ad audienda sollempnia regali de more paratus accessit".

<sup>20</sup> "Nam seruus Dei Ildefonsus maiori adhuc munere fretus, dum diem Domine suae, cui Deo praesule seruiebat, ouans susciperet, et in laude Genitricis Dei hoc quod supra praenotauius, summo cum cordis affectu armoniae modulatione composita, musica appararet et libellum Virginitatis more sinonimiae testimonies ueteris ac noui testamenti plenum compe ederet, et digna facundia ac magnificentiam iam prefatae Domine suae exornaret, dum ante horas matutinas solito more ad obsequia Dei peragenda nsurgeret et igillias suas Domino consecraret, diacono uel subdiacono atque clericis ante eum cum faculis praecedentes, subito ostia atrii aperientes et ecclesiam intrantes atque splendori caelesti oculos defigentes, lumen quod ferre non ualuerunt cum tremore fugientes, lampadas, quas manibus tenebant, reliquerunt et sua uestigia per quae uenerant adeuntes prope mortui reuersi sunt ad sodales, sollicito omnis congregatio requirens quid de Dei seruo ageretur cum angelicis choris, quod tam subito expauerant custodes et, terga ab ostio ecclesiae dantes reuertebant ad proprias sedes".

refers us to reification through naturalization, describing Ildefonsus as the only member worthy of entering the church.

Continuing, the saint approaches the altar and, kneeling before it, he sees the Virgin sitting on the ivory episcopal seat. From that moment on this chair became the most revered object, to the point that no one tried to sit on it, nor did the bishops. Interestingly, the hagiographer showed us that only one would have sat in this chair, Sisiberto, bishop of Toledo from 690 to 693, and that as a result of this act he lost command of his seat and was sent into exile. The justification on the part of the author of the *Vita* mixes real and fictitious events, since Sisiberto was effectively bishop of Toledo in the aforementioned period, but did not lose his seat for the reason that the author presents in his report, but for being part of a conspiracy to dethrone King Egica (687-700), information also present in the minutes of the XVI Council of Toledo (693), which decreed the removal and exile of the bishop.

At this point we come to the climax of the hagiographic report:

And looking up, Ildefonsus looked around and saw the whole apse of the church full of groups of virgins singing some songs of David with harmonious softness. And turning his gaze to her [Mary], as he himself told his confidants and intimates, she spoke to him thus: 'Come quickly to meet me, you, the most righteous servant of God, receive from my hand the little gift that I brought to you from my son's treasure. The gift, the clothing given to you, can only be worn in my day; and since you have always remained with the eyes of faith fixed on my service, and having sweetly constituted the praise of me in the hearts of the faithful, the beauty of your lips pouring forth, you will in this life be adorned with ecclesiastical garments and in the future you will find yourself happy in my estates with other servants of my son'. And, saying this, she disappeared from his vision with the virgins and the light with which she had presented himself (Gil, 1973, p. 64-65, emphasis in the original)<sup>21</sup>.

As we see, it is in this passage of the account that the greatest number of fantastic elements related directly to the apparition of the Virgin Mary is concentrated. Again, the hagiographer endeavors to characterize Ildefonsus as a holy man, who dedicates himself exclusively to the praise of Mary, a fact that justifies his sanctification already in life by the Virgin, for the gift he receives, which in turn belongs to the treasury of her son, and by the promise of a sanctified life in the hereafter beside the servants of Christ.

Regarding the CDA, in this passage the author uses the criterion of legitimation through narrativization, in which the episode is legitimized using David's songs to emphasize the account, the unification, symbolically constructing the celestial unity by through the standardization and symbolization found in the figures of the virgins, of Mary and of Christ.

This particular excerpt, as Guiance (2009) points out, is analogous to another source somewhat distant from the works conceived in the same context within the Iberian Peninsula. According to the author, this passage finds its correlate in the medieval literature of Ethiopia, more precisely the three fundamental elements, the apparition of the Virgin, the gift given to Ildefonsus, and the theme of the episcopal chair, may have been taken from the life of a popular saint in the East: Saint Nicolas of Mira. For Guiance (2009), in this source, which is probably prior to the *Vita Ildefonsi*, in the first place, there is a clear coincidence about the reasons for the appearance of the Holy Spirit to Nicolas and Ildefonsus. In either case, the Virgin appears as the protagonist of the wonders, but it is the Holy Spirit who performs various miracles in the name of the saints. Cerulli (1957) also agrees with the hypothesis that the miracle of the vestment had its antecedent in the life of Saint Nicholas of Bari, written by Nicolas the Zionite, miracles of which remain in the Greek testimonies, at least one of the tenth century and another of the eleventh century. These combined elements give the impression that Ildefonsus' hagiographer knew the story of Nicolas of Zion and adapted it for his account.

Dominguez del Val (1971), in turn, compares the passage of the Marian apparition with another of French origin, which results in an exact correlate of the miracle that Ildefonsus' hagiographer tells us. In this case, the protagonist is also a prelate, Saint Bonnet, bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, killed in 705, and a great devotee of Mary. However, with regard to dating this *Vita*, the data are somewhat obscure.

<sup>21</sup> «*Et eleuatis oculis suis suspexit in circuitu eius et uidit omnem absidam ecclesie repletam uirginum turmis de canticulis Dauid modulata suauitate aliquid decantantes. Aspiensque in eam, ut ipse sibi bene consciis et bene carissimis referebat, sic eum adloquuta est uoce: «Propera in occursum, serue Dei rectissime, accipe munusculum de manu mea, quod de thesauro Filii mei tibi adtuli; sic enim tibi opus est ut benedictione tegminis, quae tibi data est, in mea tantum die utaris; et quia oculos fidei fixos in mea semper seruitio tenens permansisti, et laudem meam, diffusa in labiis tuis gratia, dulciter in cordibus fidelium depinxisti, ex uestimentis ecclesiae iam in hac uita ornatus eris et in futuro in promptuariis meis cum aliis seruis Filii mei lateris». Et haec dicens ab oculis eius una cum uirginibus et luce, qua uenerat, rerneauit*».



## Final considerations

As Le Goff explains,

[...] parchment, ink, writing, stamps etc., express more than a representation: they also express an imagination of culture, of administration, of power. The imaginary of writing is not the same as the word, the monument or the image. The formulas of the initial protocol, the final clauses, the dating, the list of witnesses - not to mention the text itself - reflect not only concrete situations but also an imaginary<sup>22</sup> of power, society, time, justice etc (Le Goff, 1994, p. 13).

We believe, therefore, that hagiography, as a literary document, can inform us about the most feasible historical data of the material and mental life of the society that produced it, becoming largely a pedagogical instrument for the period itself and for future generations as well, showing an ideal model to follow, holiness. As we intend to demonstrate, and this seems to us to be essential, the literary work and its circumstances become especially useful and pertinent to the historian when, in some way, they inform us about societies beyond the text itself, albeit starting from it and running through it.

Therefore, we see that the elaboration of the *Vita* corresponds to a direct intention to expand throughout the Toledan see, and elsewhere in Europe, the Marian cult and the figure of one of its most faithful devotees, Ildefonsus of Toledo. The author of the report, regardless of its precise characterization, Cixila or Eladio, insists on extolling Ildefonsus' figure, equating him, as it turns out, with a renowned personality inside and outside Hispania, Isidore of Sevilla, and equating him to his predecessors in the Toledan see. For this, it was necessary, as we see in other hagiographic reports of the time, the supernatural and symbolic element with the purpose of impressing and embracing listeners and readers, highlighting the relationship between two great characters: Ildefonsus and the Virgin.

In conclusion, with this brief study we see that the account, which has the appearance of Saint Leocadia and the Virgin to Ildefonsus, regarding the Christian ideology, religiosity and the imaginary of the time, as stated by Dominguez del Val (1971), comes to considerable success in spearheading collections of Marian legends, for even though the *Vita* represents a local tradition, there is a real latent background in it, which is Ildefonsus' pastoral and theological effort to defend and promote Marian worship in Christendom, and the importance of this hagiography is determined by the fact that almost all collections of Marian legends, both in Vulgar and Latin, begin with the *Vita Ildefonsi*.

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<sup>22</sup> In this paper the definition of the imaginary given by Franco Júnior (1998, p. 16) is used as theoretical reference: "[...] by imaginary we mean a set of visual and verbal images generated by a society (or part of it) in its relationship with itself, with other human groups, and with the universe in general".

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