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## **Reframing a Medieval Miracle in Early Modern Spain:**

### **The Origins of Our Lady del Sagrario of Toledo**

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This chapter studies the transformation of the image of *Our Lady del Sagrario* into the contact relic of the Virgin's Descent on Toledo Cathedral. The archbishops and cathedral canons of Toledo, who requested that such transformation to the relic status be effected, accomplished a twofold goal: to supply the Spanish Cathedral with relics after centuries of relic scantiness due to the Muslim occupation; and to fulfill the increasingly compelling need for miraculous cult images in late sixteenth-century Spain. At least from the thirteenth-century to approximately the turn of the seventeenth-century, Toledo Cathedral lacked a preeminent relic by means of which to venerate the Virgin's Descent on the local space. A series of cultic reconsiderations, relic inventions, artistic retoolings, and spatial relocations within Toledo Cathedral reconfigured the Sagrario as a contact relic of the Virgin's touch. Consequently archbishops and canons reassigned *Our Lady del Sagrario* as the quintessence of the sacred objects, liturgical spaces, and historical narratives related to the architecture of the new chapel of Toledo Cathedral.

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In 1584, the medieval sculpture of the Virgin and Child that was traditionally displayed in a niche over the entrance to the old relic chapel or *sagrario* of Toledo Cathedral became the most prominent cult image of the city (fig. 1). That very year, a new legend proclaimed that the Virgin had embraced this image during her corporeal visit to Toledo Cathedral in 665.<sup>2</sup> This legend established that the miraculous power of *Our Lady del Sagrario* was due to the Virgin's direct touch, and thus it effected a boost to devotion for this image in Castile. With the support of the Cardinal-Archbishops Gaspar de Quiroga (r. 1577-1594) and Bernardo de Sandoval (r. 1599-1618), local historians and writers disseminated rapidly the renewed prestige of the Sagrario, while artists were commissioned to create new material framings to respond to the novel status of the image. By 1616, the sculpture of *Our Lady del Sagrario* was enshrined in a magnificent new chapel and venerated as the foremost cult image of Toledo Cathedral.

Although numerous cases of inventions, discoveries, and apparitions of miraculous images of the Virgin and Child had been documented in sixteenth-century Spain,<sup>3</sup> the case of the Sagrario warrants a deeper examination. Two interrelated circumstances make this case a unique, or at least rather unusual, invention of a miraculous cult image. Firstly, that it was intended to fulfill the need for relics to support and at the same time reinvigorate an existing and well-known legendary Marian apparition. Secondly, that the dignity of this image was rooted in its direct contact with the divine prototype, namely, the physical and tangible appearance of the Virgin. This type of unmediated contact between a sacred image and its prototype, as established in late sixteenth-century Toledo, superseded the Catholic understanding of the relationship

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<sup>2</sup> Alonso de Villegas, *Flos Sanctorum. Segunda parte y Historia General en que se escribe la vida de la Virgen* (Toledo: Juan de Salazar, 1584), 100.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Christian Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 75-91.

between the holy and its representations.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, I will investigate the historical circumstances elucidating the cult of *Our Lady del Sagrario* over the centuries and the popularity it still enjoys in the present.

Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, numerous images of little aesthetic interest of the Virgin and of Christ developed into miraculous cult images in cities and villages across the Italian states and the Iberian Peninsula. Drawing on their significance, recent scholarship has reevaluated Hans Belting's consideration of a crisis underwent by the sacred image beginning in the fifteenth century, the so-called age of art.<sup>5</sup> Belting depicts the cult image as a relic of the medieval past, while, in fact, there are numerous examples of creativity, adaptation, and invention of the religious image in the early modern Catholic world. This is seen in devotional practices but also in aesthetics, as various scholars have shown for Renaissance Italy and early modern Spain.<sup>6</sup> The early modern vitality of the religious image in terms of cult and aesthetics can be particularly witnessed with regard to what may be termed 'reframing'. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have suggested that the aesthetic value of the cult image may be understood by its simultaneous positioning within multiple

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<sup>4</sup> Cloe Cavero de Carondelet, "The Virgin Embracing the Virgin. Eugenio Cajés' Short-Lived Iconography of Our Lady del Sagrario in Counter-Reformation Toledo" (forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), here see especially 14-15, 470-490.

<sup>6</sup> Amongst many others, see Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy, from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013); Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013), esp. 157-162; Megan Holmes, "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence," *Art History* 34, no. 3 (2011): 432-65; Felipe Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia: política y poética de la imagen sagrada en la España del cuatrocientos* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), esp. 249-373; the essays contained in the fundamental volume edited by Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf, *The miraculous image: in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Rome: Erma di Bretschneider, 2004); and Michele Bacci, '*Pro remedio animae*': *immagini sacre e pratiche devozionali in Italia centrale (secoli XIII e XIV)* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2000). For studies dealing with miraculous images in early modern Spain see the essays contained in *La imagen religiosa en la monarquía hispánica: usos y espacios*, ed. María Cruz de Carlos Varona, Pierre Civil, Felipe Pereda and Cécile Vincent-Cassy (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2008); Jeffrey Albert Schrader, "The Virgin of Atocha and Spanish Habsburg Devotion to Miraculous Images" (PhD diss., New York University, 2003).

temporalities.<sup>7</sup> Scholars have also explored the effects that architectural enshrinements, tabernacles and elaborate frames had on the reception of miraculous images.<sup>8</sup> The aura of the miraculous image was thus not lost or superseded with the development of artistic discourse in the Renaissance, but rather it persisted and was reinvigorated through replication and reframing.

Miraculous images were reframed with material elements, and also through literary narratives. Religious communities and ecclesiastical institutions rivaled for the authority of their own cult image while fabricating marvelous legends of its holy origins and attendant, even more sensational accounts of its miracle-working powers. Some recurrent narrative elements in their legends may be determined to support their predominating role. Claiming that the image was produced by saints and angels, or that it maintained to a certain degree privileged interaction with the divine, were indeed common tropes for establishing the authority of a miraculous image in Renaissance Italy.<sup>9</sup> In Spain, one of the most widespread legends was that cult images had been made, at least in part, by angelic intercession. The earliest example, and model for later elaborations, was the medieval legend of the angelic making of the *Cruz de los Angeles* in Oviedo. Angelic intervention also confirmed the authority of Marian images such as *Our Lady de la Antigua* and the *Virgin de los Reyes* in Seville, and the *Virgin de los Desamparados* of Valencia.<sup>10</sup> A different case of image interaction with the miraculous appearance of the saintly figure refers to the *Virgin del Pilar*, a wooden Marian

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*. New York: Zone Books, 2010, here see especially pp. 29-34.

<sup>8</sup> Kirstin Noreen, "Time, Space, and Devotion: The Madonna Della Clemenza and the Cappella Altemps in Rome," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 47, no. 4 (2016): 883-914; Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*, 211-255; Kirstin Noreen, "The High Altar of Santa Maria in Aracoeli: Recontextualizing a Medieval Icon in Post-Tridentine Rome," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 53 (2008): 99-128.

<sup>9</sup> Megan Holmes, "The Elusive Origins of the Cult of the Annunziata in Florence", in *The miraculous image in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004), 97-122. For the case of Lucan icons, see: Michele Bacci, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista: storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Javier Portús, *Metapintura: un viaje a la idea del arte en España* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2016), 29-34, 54-61. Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia*, 150.

sculpture placed on top of a small jasper pillar now preserved in the basilica of Zaragoza. Some seventeenth-century legends established that the Virgin had brought the cult image and its column to Zaragoza during her visit to Saint James the Apostle in the year 40. This circumstance turned the *Virgin del Pilar* into one of the earliest portraits made of the Virgin as well as into one of her most privileged contact relics.<sup>11</sup> The extent to which the literary reframing of miraculous images affected its material reframing merits further consideration.

Arguably, the transformation of *Our Lady del Sagrario* into a contact relic of the Virgin's embrace during her visit to Toledo constitutes one of the most original inventions of a cult image of Mary in early modern Spain. The particularities of the Sagrario should be understood, I argue, in the local circumstances of Toledo. The legend of the Virgin's Descent upon Toledo Cathedral to place a divine chasuble over Archbishop Ildefonso (r. 657-667) was first recorded in a text from around the eleventh century and attributed to an obscure prelate, Cixila.<sup>12</sup> The Virgin's Descent was the foremost miracle of the Toledan church, yet Toledo Cathedral, the very place in which the Virgin appeared, did not preserve a relic to document the corporeal presence - owing to the scantiness of relics in central and Southern Spain ever since the Muslim conquest. During that period, the body of Saint Ildefonso had been transferred to Zamora, and the divine chasuble, also attached to the Virgin's Descent within Toledo Cathedral, had been moved to Oviedo. As a result, the city of Toledo was bereft of notable relics. María Tausiet and Tom Nickson have demonstrated that the insufficiency of relics compelled the cathedral chapter to propose creative solutions for retooling the cult of

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<sup>11</sup> María Tausiet, "Zaragoza celeste y subterránea. Geografía mítica de una ciudad (siglos XV-XVIII)", in *L'imaginaire du territoire en Espagne et au Portugal (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)*, ed. François Delpech (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2008), 141-170 (pp. 163-165). Diego Murillo, *Fundación milagrosa de la Capilla Angelica y Apostolica de la Madre de Dios del Pilar y Excelencias de la imperial ciudad de Çaragoça* (Barcelona: Sebastian Mateuad, 1616), 96-98.

<sup>12</sup> Juan Francisco Rivera Recio, *San Ildefonso de Toledo: biografía, época y posteridad* (Toledo: Estudio Teológico de San Ildefonso, 1985), 8-16.

the Virgin's Descent in accordance with established devotional and liturgical practices.<sup>13</sup> The need to reaffirm the relic status became imperative more especially after 1561, when Philip II's order to establish his court in Madrid marked a shift from Toledo's old imperial identity to its novel role as a sacred city.<sup>14</sup> The crafting of a compelling Toledan history with demonstrated sacred origins became instrumental in establishing the early modern identity of the city.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter analyzes the replacement around the fifteenth century of the medieval pillar shrine of Our Lady with the stone relic of the Virgin's footprint, and then evaluates the various enshrinements of the image of *Our Lady del Sagrario* after 1584. By examining this cult image as a contact relic of the Virgin's touch, this chapter will also shed new light on the motivations for renovating the Toledo chapels of Descent and Sagrario in the early seventeenth century. The chronological analysis of the literary and material reframings of the Descent allows us to notice a gradual evolution from medieval ritual practices to the cult practices ensuing in the post-Tridentine decades. Toledo, as the primatial church of the Spanish kingdoms, emerged as a sacred city with a profound awareness of material framings that underscore the interaction of art, chapel architecture, and relics.

### **From Our Lady of the Pillar to the Stone Relic of the Descent**

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<sup>13</sup> Tom Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral: Building Histories in Medieval Castile* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 143, 145-146. María Tausiet, *El dedo robado: reliquias imaginarias en la España moderna* (Madrid: Abada, 2013). María Tausiet, "Trois saints en un: l'héritage légendaire de saint Ildefonse", in *La cour céleste. La commémoration collective des saints au Moyen Âge et à l'époque moderne*, ed. Olivier Marin and Cécile Vincent-Cassy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 185-198.

<sup>14</sup> Fernando Martínez Gil, *La invención de Toledo: imágenes históricas de una identidad urbana* (Ciudad Real: Almud, 2007), 113-147. Also see: Julian Montemayor, *Tolède entre fortune et déclin (1530-1640)* (Limoges: PULIM, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> For the development of local history in early modern Toledo, see: Richard Kagan, "La corografía en la Castilla moderna. Género, historia, nación", *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna* 13 (1995): 47-59. Katrina Olds, *Forging the Past: Invented Histories in Counter-Reformation Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 234-259.

The earliest mentioning of a specific space dedicated to the cult of the Descent of the Virgin on Toledo Cathedral refers to a pillar near which the Virgin was believed to have descended from Heaven to bestow the chasuble over Saint Ildefonso, and which corresponded to the main altar of the Visigoth church. By 1214, this sacred space was marked by a pillar shrine.<sup>16</sup> Starting in 1431, or more plausibly at the turn of the thirteenth century, an image known as *Santa María del Pilar (Our Lady of the Pillar)* was venerated in the shrine from which it took its name.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have identified this image with the image of the Virgin of the Sacristy and with the Marian sculpture at the entrance of the chapel of Saint Ildefonso in Toledo Cathedral.<sup>18</sup> The fact that an image of the Virgin was the first cultic object of the miraculous Descent has remained understudied, despite the fundamental claim it establishes for fully understanding the problems that the cathedral chapter encountered when trying to promote the cult of the Virgin's Descent in the sixteenth century and the solutions that they proposed.

Pillar shrines were common in medieval cathedrals and it seems plausible that this enshrinement was related to the medieval *topos* of images of virgins painted on pillars or columns. According to a medieval legend, an image of the Virgin and Child had appeared miraculously in one of the four columns of the Virgin's tabernacle in Gethsemane. Similar images of the Virgin and Child in columns are documented in the church of Nativity in Bethlehem as early as the twelfth century. This miracle was disseminated throughout Spain a century later, through the *Cantigas de Santa María* attributed to King Alfonso X (r. 1252-1284) and the *Cantiga del Rey Sabio* by Juan Gil de Zamora (ca. 1240-1318). Felipe Pereda relates this legend with the cultic origins of

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<sup>16</sup> Tom Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral*, 143.

<sup>17</sup> I use the English version of this image's name, *Our Lady of the Pillar*, in an effort to distinguish it from the more famous and homonymous cult of the *Virgin del Pilar*, named after the Virgin's apparition on top of a pillar to the Apostle Saint James in Zaragoza.

<sup>18</sup> David Nogales Rincón, "La representación religiosa de la monarquía castellano-leonesa: la Capilla Real (1252-1504)" (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2009), 64. Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral*, 137.

the image of *Our Lady de la Antigua* of Seville Cathedral. This painting was firstly conceived to ornate the pillars of the newly consecrated mosque of Seville in the mid-thirteenth century. Arguably, it was the Antigua's visual relationship with the column virgins represented in the *Cantigas* what facilitated its transformation to miraculous cult image around the fourteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In 1549, an old sculpted replica of *Our Lady de la Antigua* was documented in Toledo Cathedral.<sup>20</sup>

The Castilian kings most especially venerated the space of the Descent of the Virgin and its shrine of *Our Lady of the Pillar* in Toledo Cathedral. In 1374, Enrique II Trastámara (r. 1366-1379) decided to establish his burial chapel in the proximity of this most sacred space. In his will, he expressed the desire to be buried “in front of that place where the Virgin Mary walked, and placed her feet when she gave the vestment to Saint Ildefonso”.<sup>21</sup> A late-sixteenth century drawing documents the original disposition of this funerary chapel, known as the chapel of the Reyes Nuevos,<sup>22</sup> before its was relocated to a different part of the cathedral in the 1530s. It was a longitudinal space with a twofold altar, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin and to the Virgin bestowing the chasuble on Saint Ildefonso. The sepulchers of Enrique II and Doña Juana and of his son and successor Juan I (r. 1379-1390) with his wife Doña Leonor were placed in the middle of the chapel facing the main altar. The tomb of Enrique II was the closest to the pillar and its surroundings, the place where the Virgin was believed to have walked. The funerary monuments of their successors Enrique III (r. 1390-1406) and Doña Catalina

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<sup>19</sup> Pereda, *Las imágenes de la discordia*, 148-173.

<sup>20</sup> Ramón González Ruiz and Felipe Pereda, *La catedral de Toledo, 1549, según el Dr. Blas Ortiz: Descripción gráfica y elegantísima de la S. Iglesia de Toledo* (Toledo: Antonio Pareja Editor, 1999), 246. This sculpture was believed to predate the Muslim occupation, and to have been miraculously found in a well after the Reconquest of Toledo.

<sup>21</sup> Cayetano Rosell López, *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla desde don Alfonso el Sabio hasta los Católicos don Fernando y doña Isabel* (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1877), 39: “delante de aquel lugar do[nde] anduvo la Virgen Sancta Maria é puso los piés cuando dió la vestidura a Sancto Alfonso.”

<sup>22</sup> Plan of the Chapel of the Reyes Nuevos in the Cathedral of Toledo, 1587, in Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), MPD, 19, 132. Further information on the date and authorship of this drawing in Mario Arellano, “Las Capillas Reales de la Catedral Primada: Sancho IV,” *Toletum* 57 (2010): 9-35.



were placed in two wall chapels, dedicated to Saint James, the patron of Castile, and to the offering of the chasuble to Saint Ildefonso, respectively.<sup>23</sup> Decades later, in 1431, King Juan II of Castile (r. 1406-1454) also manifested his veneration to the *Virgin of the Pillar* by performing in front of it the ceremony of the blessing of the weapons.<sup>24</sup>

Although the Descent of the Virgin was venerated in earnest from the early thirteenth century onwards, the historic moment after which Toledo's devotees began to venerate the stone where the Virgin allegedly stepped remains undetermined. Nevertheless, this relic stone has continued to be a fundamental object of devotion in Toledo Cathedral. Tom Nickson has convincingly argued that the late medieval cathedral chapter of Toledo decided to overcome a perceived relic scarceness by materializing the cult of the Descent into a relic stone. Nickson suggests that this idea was inspired by many analogous discoveries of sacred footprints circulating across medieval Europe and especially in Spain.<sup>25</sup> While I fully agree with Nickson's argument, his translation of Enrique II's instructions to be buried in "that place where the Virgin Mary stood (*anduvo*) and placed her feet" as evidence of the existence of the relic stone, which was venerated as early as 1374, is problematic.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, I maintain that the more accurate translation for *anduvo* is "walked," a verb that evokes the Virgin's movement around the cathedral interior; however, the existence of the relic stone is not proved convincingly. Furthermore, the drawing of the funerary chapel aforementioned does not include any shrine or any tabernacle devoted to a stone.

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<sup>23</sup> The location of the royal sepulchres shown in this drawing contradicts the legend, repeated by many seventeenth-century scholars, that King Enrique II had been buried with a naked shoulder (or a naked arm) in direct contact with the divine pillar: Pedro Salazar de Mendoza, *El glorioso doctor San Ildefonso, Arzobispo de Toledo, Primado de las Españas* (Toledo: Diego Rodríguez, 1618), 85. Antonio de Quintanadueñas, *Santos de la imperial ciudad de Toledo y su arzobispado* (Madrid: Pablo del Val, 1651), 476.

<sup>24</sup> Nogales "La representación religiosa", 64-65, 1575-1576.

<sup>25</sup> Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral*, 143. Cristóbal Lozano, *Los reyes nuevos de Toledo* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1667), 86.

<sup>26</sup> Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral*, 143: "in front of that place where the Virgin Mary stood, and placed her feet when she gave the vestment to Saint Ildefonso."

At the turn of the sixteenth century, the chapel of the Pillar was remodeled and transformed into the Capilla de la Descensión, the Chapel of the Descent. This renovation confirms that, by that time, devotion to the stone relic unquestionably superseded the appeal of *Our Lady of the Pillar*. This change included a retooling of the Marian shrine to include Saint Ildefonso, the archbishop who had witnessed the sacred advent. Several interventions have been documented since 1502,<sup>27</sup> but the most important element was the magnificent white alabaster altarpiece carved by the Burgundian sculptor Felipe Bigarny (fig. 2). Described decades later as a “figure carved in truly candid alabaster that designs the Virgin Mary draping her Ildefonsus with the sacred garment,”<sup>28</sup> this altarpiece is an exceptional example of Renaissance sculpture in Spain. The contract was officially settled in February 1524, under the episcopate of Cardinal-Archbishop Fonseca (r. 1523-1534). However, the choice of Bigarny was probably motivated by the canon *obrero* Diego López de Ayala, who knew the artist through his previous commissions from Cardinal Cisneros.<sup>29</sup> The altarpiece was finished in 1526 and surrounded by a gilded iron screen, which formed a closed chapel.<sup>30</sup>

Cardinal Fonseca’s decision to transform the altar of *Our Lady of the Pillar* into an altarpiece devoted to Saint Ildefonso must have been related to the resurgence of Toledo Cathedral’s claim to receive from the church of San Pedro in Zamora the bodily

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<sup>27</sup> In 1502, sixteen small images in white stone and an image of Our Lady in wood were commissioned. These small sculptures may be those that are in the canopy today, though the destiny of the wooden Mary is unknown. Francisco Pérez Sedano, *Notas del archivo de la catedral de Toledo, redactadas sistemáticamente, en el siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Imp. de Fortanet, 1914), 26-27. An iron screen was commissioned between 1507-1509. Manuel R. Zarco del Valle, “Documentos para la historia de las Bellas Artes en España”, in *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España*, vol. LV (Madrid: Imprenta de la Viuda de Calero, 1870), 520-521. Elías Tormo, ed., *Datos Documentales para la Historia del Arte Español: Documentos de la Catedral de Toledo ... donada al centro en 1914 por D. Manuel R. Zarco del Valle*, vol. I (Madrid: Imprenta Clásica Española, 1916), 102-104.

<sup>28</sup> González and Pereda, *La catedral de Toledo*, 259-260: “una figura entallada en candidísimo alabastro que dibuxa a la Virgen María vistiendo a su Yldephonso la vestidura sagrada.”

<sup>29</sup> Isabel del Río de la Hoz, *El escultor Felipe Bigarny (h. 1470 - 1542)* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2001), 194-199.

<sup>30</sup> Tormo, *Datos Documentales*, vol. I, 147-150. Pérez Sedano, *Notas del archivo*, 45 and 47.

relics of their archbishop. This ongoing demand would gain momentum in 1496, when the church of San Pedro inaugurated a new chapel to display Ildefonso's body and to activate its miraculous intercessory powers in their region. This action elevated the tension between the two churches, and in subsequent years Toledo tried repeatedly, yet unsuccessfully, to secure the return of their relics.<sup>31</sup> By incorporating the image of Ildefonso as a central character in what had been until then a fundamental Marian space, Fonseca probably wanted to create a visual reminder of the saint's privileged connection to Toledo, and of their right to claim his bodily relic.

The central scene of Bigarny's altarpiece features the Virgin, assisted by three angels and two female saints, placing the chasuble over Ildefonso. In the presentation mode of divine apparitions, this group holds the central space of a sculpted architectural altarpiece decorated with reliefs. Ildefonso's terrestrial status is accentuated by his direct contact with the ground, while the Virgin and her divine entourage hover on low clouds of *putti*. The four saintly bishops sculpted in the lateral niches turn their gaze and bodies towards the miracle, and so do the heads of the *putti* in the entablature. In the lower *predella*, there are two scenes from the life of Ildefonso: the archbishop preaching and the apparition of Saint Leocadia; between these two scenes, a small movable cylinder is framed by the sculptures of Saint Michael and the tree of Paradise. The cylinder bears four successive carved scenes, divided by undecorated frames: the *Annunciation*, the *Visitation*, the *Nativity*, and a Eucharistic inscription on a marble scroll. The entire arrangement of the Ildefonso altarpiece is surmounted with a *tondo* of the Assumption of the Virgin held by *putti*, an invention that combines the two dedications of the former high altar of the old chapel of Reyes Nuevos.

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<sup>31</sup> Cardinal Cisneros did so in 1505, and some sources claim that a priest from Toledo in a costume tried to steal the head of Ildefonso in 1518. In any case, the tension was such that it seems that in 1522 the Emperor Charles V asked to be shown the relics to prove that they were still there. Edward Cooper, "La revuelta de las comunidades. Una visión desde la sacristía," *Hispania* LVI/2, no. 193 (1996): 471-481. María Tausiet, *El dedo robado*, 45.

The prominent materiality and luminosity of Bigarny's alabaster altarpiece evokes and concurrently calls attention to the devotional center of the new chapel of the Descent: a venerated piece of white marble "whereby the Very Blessed Virgin Mary put her feet".<sup>32</sup> This stone, which seems to bear the Virgin's footprint, became the material vehicle through which to venerate Mary. In fact, replicas of the Virgin's footprints were printed in Toledo in the late seventeenth century.<sup>33</sup> Bigarny represents the miracle in its most climatic moment, hinting at the instant when the Virgin's foot was about to step on to the marble floor. The prominent position of the Virgin's foot enhances the symbolic association between the alabaster altarpiece and the petrified footprint that was venerated, touched, and kissed.<sup>34</sup> The stone was placed on the northeast corner of the altar, as it is still today, and was surrounded by explicatory inscriptions guiding the sixteenth-century citizens of Toledo to perform the normative kissing ritual of devotion on the marble relic: "When the Queen of Heaven / Placed her feet on the ground / She placed them on this stone. / Kissing it serves / To better console you".<sup>35</sup> By touching and kissing the cold and white surface of the stone, the beholder was also interacting with the alabaster image located just a few centimeters away. A modern copy of this inscription can be seen today on a ceramic tile hung from the pillar.

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<sup>32</sup> González and Pereda, *La catedral de Toledo*, 259: "en la qual pusso los pies la Beatíssima Virgen María".

<sup>33</sup> Michael Bury, "The Measure of the Virgin's Foot", in *Images of Medieval Sanctity: essays in honour of Gary Dickson*, ed. Debra Higgs Strickland (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 121-134. Also see Akira Akiyama, "The Sacred Footprint, examined from comparative perspectives", in *The Power of Line: Linea III*, ed. Marzia Faietti and Gerhard Wolf (Munich: Hirmer, 2015), 96-103. I wish to thank James Clifton for having generously provided me with a copy of his text "Human and Divine in Sacred Footprints and Their Representations," paper delivered at CIHA Beijing 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, no sources indicate that popular devotion to the Descent in Toledo was directed to the Virgin's foot. On this respect, see Joanna Cannon, "Duccio and the Devotion to the Virgin's Foot in Early Sieneese Painting," in *A wider Trecento studies in 13th- and 14th-century European Art presented to Julian Gardner*, ed. Louise Bourdua (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 39-61.

<sup>35</sup> González and Pereda, *La catedral de Toledo*, 259: "Quando la reyna del cielo / pusso los pies en el suelo / en esta piedra los pusso / de besarla tener usso / para más vuestro consuelo. Por lo qual los ciudadanos de Toledo besan con gran devoción esta piedra, como quien ha sido escabel y peana de los sagrados pies de la Virgen María."

To assess the extent to which this shrine of the Virgin's Descent was venerated remains difficult, but, in all probability, it never became a fundamental center of pilgrimage in sixteenth-century Spain. Although revered by the Toledans, no evidence demonstrates the existence of a pilgrimage route. In any case, by the sixteenth century, Spaniards were turning their devotion towards cult images of Mary, rather than to saintly relics.<sup>36</sup> I argue that the lack of both a prestigious saintly relic and a miraculous image impacted the appeal of the cult of the Descent by the late sixteenth century. The lack of a cult object also affected the sacred prestige on which Toledo Cathedral relied to maintain its primacy over other Spanish churches. Despite the much-celebrated arrival of the bodily relic of Archbishop Saint Eugenio (r. 646-657) in 1565, the painful absence of Saint Ildefonso's bodily relics from the cathedral remained unresolved matter.<sup>37</sup> In 1584, the incorporation of the miraculous, medieval sculpture of *Our Lady del Sagrario* into the legend of the Descent invigorated the established devotional practice and also prompted a modernization of the material framing of the miracle.

### **Transforming Our Lady del Sagrario into a Contact Relic**

The conferring of novel divine origins upon the sculpture of *Our Lady del Sagrario* took effect under the guidance of the learned canon García de Loaysa y Girón (1534-1599), and the Cardinal-Archbishop Gaspar de Quiroga, who brought the diocese in line with the tenor of the post-Tridentine decades. The renewed version of the miracle of the Descent was inaugurated in the second part of Alonso de Villegas' successful *Flos Sanctorum* (1584), in a section dedicated to the most important Marian shrines of

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<sup>36</sup> Christian, *Local religion*, 126 and 182. William A. Christian Jr., *Apparitions in late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1981), 13-14.

<sup>37</sup> María Tausiet, "Trois saints en un". Jean-Marc Depluvrez, "Les retours de Saint Eugène et Sainte Léocadie a Tolède en 1565 et 1587 (analyse de deux translations)", in *Les Signes de Dieu aux XVIe and XVIIe siècles*, ed. Bernard Dompnier and Geneviève Demerson (Clermont-Ferrand: Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Clermont-Ferrand, 1993), 113-132.

Catholicism. Based upon Loaysa's testimony, Villegas argued that the Virgin stopped at the high altar of Toledo Cathedral after offering the chasuble to Saint Ildefonso, and embraced the image of Mary that was displayed there. Villegas identified this Marian image with the thirteenth-century sculpture of the Sagrario that was located in a niche over the door of the old relic chapel. According to Villegas, the image was clearly "of the aspect and form and dress that is understood to be work of the Visigoths".<sup>38</sup> By adapting the established narrative in local Spanish histories to the cathedral's context, Villegas explained how the Marian sculpture survived the Muslim occupation by being hidden in a niche of the pavement, before being miraculously found through the intercession of angels and extraordinary lights.<sup>39</sup>

*Our Lady del Sagrario* is a wooden sculpture gilded in silver and cabochons, and its location in the cathedral was probably documented in 1257 as one of two images of Mary and Child covered in silver recorded in the cathedral inventories.<sup>40</sup> In 1549, it was described as "an image of the Virgin Our Lady honestly dressed, with her son close to her breasts, held by us in great veneration".<sup>41</sup> As other Marian images of the time, the Sagrario had no established origins. Throughout the centuries, the cathedral chapter of Toledo crowned the image and covered it with silver and textile garments.<sup>42</sup> Yet after its divine origins were outlined, the devotion towards this image appeared to have increased. The Toledo Cathedral took it on procession to pray to God for rain,<sup>43</sup> and for

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<sup>38</sup> Villegas, *Flos Sanctorum. Segunda parte*, 100: "del aspecto y forma y vestido que tiene se entiende ser obra de los Godos." To the best of my knowledge, the anachronistic description of the sculpture was never challenged.

<sup>39</sup> Honorario Velasco, "Las leyendas de hallazgos y de apariciones de imágenes. Un replanteamiento de la religiosidad popular como religiosidad local", in *La religiosidad popular. II. Vida y muerte: la imaginación religiosa*, ed. Carlos Álvaro Santaló, María Jesús Buxó i Rey and Salvador Rodríguez Becerra (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1989), 401-410.

<sup>40</sup> Nickson, *Toledo Cathedral*, 136-137.

<sup>41</sup> González and Pereda, *La catedral de Toledo*, 196: "una imagen de la Virgen Nuestra Señora vestida honestamente, con su hijo a los pechos, tenida de nosotros en gran veneración."

<sup>42</sup> Zarco, "Documentos para la historia", 489-491 (1425, crown); 499-500 (1466, silver vestment). Tormo, *Datos Documentales*, vol. I, 130 (18 angels for her throne for the feast of the Assumption, 1514).

<sup>43</sup> Archivo Capitular de Toledo (hereafter ACT), Libro de Actas Capitulares (hereafter LAC) 18 (1584-1586), ff. 34-35: 27-28 April 1584. ACT, LAC 19 (1587-1589), ff. 192v-194: 5 and 13 May 1589.

his divine intercession in the war with England.<sup>44</sup> They also displayed it in the feast of the Ascension in 1588, and took it on procession to San Juan de los Reyes. For that matter, the cathedral chapter argued that “it is very pertinent that the image of Our Lady is displayed in public in order to win the people, because with the devotion that people place on her it is undoubted that the hearts will move, and with more efficacy and more purity of spirits will they plead the Divine Majesty for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith, and for the eradication of its enemies.”<sup>45</sup>

With the decree *De invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis sanctorum et sacris imaginibus* (1563), the Catholic Church reaffirmed that sacred images were to be venerated for what they represented and confronted Protestant criticisms against the use of sacred images. However, no specific guidelines for dealing with sacred images were defined in the Tridentine Council. Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti made an attempt to define them and to categorize them in his *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*, published in 1582. In this text, Paleotti established that the most valuable images were the *acheiropoieta* that had come into being through physical contact with God or saints; followed by those made by saints and by other miraculous means; and by those images on which divine goodness had been manifest through miracles or signs.<sup>46</sup> Despite the unique details and variations present in each case, early modern invention of miraculous images systematically corroborated the categories outlined by Paleotti. Conveniently, Toledo Cathedral created a new category of sacred image that was rare and higher in status than that of the more widespread case of miraculously discovered images, but lower in status than Lucan icons and Christ’s *acheiropoieta*. At the same time, the novel

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<sup>44</sup> ACT, LAC 19 (1587-1589), ff. 117v, 125: June and July 1588.

<sup>45</sup> ACT, LAC 19 (1587-1589), f. 109r: 11 May 1588, “Y es muy a proposito que la ymagen de nuestra señora este puesta en publico para ganarle porque con la devocion que el pueblo con ella tiene es cosa cierta que los coraçones se moveran, y con mas efficacia y puridad de consciencias supplicaran a la divina Magestad por la exaltacion de su fee catholica, y extirpacion de los enemigos della.”

<sup>46</sup> Gabriele Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, ed. Paolo Prodi, trans. William McCuaig (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2012), 99-102. Also see Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*, 6-7.

legend launched by Toledo Cathedral maintained the iconic parameters while at the same time challenging, expanding, and developing the Catholic definition of sacred images.

The idea of contact between a holy body and its own image was related to the specific case of Christ's authentic relics, including the *Mandyllion* of King Abgar, the Veil of Veronica, and the Shroud of Turin. In these relic-images, the portrait of Christ comes into being via a miraculous impression.<sup>47</sup> Other cases of interactions with the divine included the Virgin's portrait painted by Saint Luke, images made or carried by angels, and saints undergoing visionary experiences of holy images. None of these images correspond to *Our Lady del Sagrario*, which was man-made and enjoyed the divine contact only later. As I argued elsewhere, the virtual absence of sculpted and painted images of the Virgin's embrace of the Sagrario confirms an awareness of its potentially controversial message in early modern Spain. The only representation of the Virgin touching the image of the Sagrario that I have been able to trace is a drawing, produced by the royal painter Eugenio Cajés after 1616 for an unknown location (fig. 3). To the best of my knowledge, a painting based on this drawing was never carried out and no other image on this iconography has been carried out or preserved in Spain.<sup>48</sup>

The episode of the Virgin's embrace of the Sagrario was also a rare case in Marian literature, because it was not an independent legend created exclusively for contextualizing a miraculous image. Rather, it was incorporated as a secondary narrative to the well-known legend and foremost miracle of Toledo Cathedral: the Descent of the Virgin to place a miraculous chasuble on Archbishop Ildefonso. As accompaniment to a cult fabricated by local ecclesiastical patrons to serve in the

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<sup>47</sup> On the problems of Christ's images, see the essays contained in *The Holy Face and the paradox of representation: papers from a colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998).

<sup>48</sup> Cavero de Carondelet, "The Virgin Embracing the Virgin" (forthcoming).



accretion of an existing legend, the episode was an exception to the norm. Frequently, new cult images developed because a given image demonstrated active powers by performing miracles or through movement, which engendered a boost in popular devotion. In fifteenth-century Florence and sixteenth-century Castile, devotees believed that Marian images performed miracles, and thus votive offerings and popular veneration increased. The growth of popular devotions prompted the religious authorities to control the rise of such cults by providing a legend of the image's divine origins and by commissioning a tabernacle or shrine to restrict access to it.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the elevation of the Sagrario Virgin to a more privileged status in 1584 was not based on an increase in popular belief of the image's active miraculous powers, but on the decision of Cardinal-Archbishop Quiroga and his collaborators to provide evidence of the image's manifest intimacy with the divine. The invention of the Virgin del Sagrario was unquestionably successful, and from 1584 onwards, this sculpture became the foremost image of the primatial see of Toledo.

### **A Discarded Project for the Chapel of the Descent**

The late-sixteenth century consecration of *Our Lady del Sagrario* as a contact relic of the Descent overcame frustrations with the absence of notable relics and at the same time supplied a local cult image in Toledo Cathedral. Thus, there existed an ancient and miraculous image of Mary through which to venerate the Virgin and to celebrate the honor she bestowed with her appearance in Toledo Cathedral. But even though the conceptual reframing of the image was well orchestrated, an adequate material frame was necessary to complete its transformation. After May 1586, the cathedral chapter became particularly preoccupied with the image's location in the cathedral.<sup>50</sup> Various

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<sup>49</sup> Holmes, "Miraculous Images". Christian, *Apparitions*, 10-26. Christian, *Local religion*, 70-125.

<sup>50</sup> ACT, LAC 18 (1584-1586), f. 243: 17 May 1586

solutions were proposed to Archbishop Quiroga, some canons argued that the image should be permanently placed in the chapel of Saint Marina, where it was then temporarily hosted due to some works; others argued that it should be moved back to its original location in the relic chapel.<sup>51</sup> In the first few months of 1587, the cathedral chapter also asked Quiroga to send them the *traza* (draft) of a new tabernacle for the Sagrario image.<sup>52</sup>

This context of cult changes and artistic renewal motivated the cathedral chapter of Toledo to conceive of an inventive, yet unsuccessful, project to combine the three main relics of the miracle - the stone, the Sagrario, and the bodily relic of Ildefonso - in a renovated chapel of the Descent. Largely overlooked by scholarship, the manuscript of the project is preserved in a miscellaneous volume in the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid.<sup>53</sup> The project included a plan of the chapel (fig. 4), an explicative report, and an introductory letter sent by the canon and later head of the royal chapel, Rodrigo Dávalos<sup>54</sup> (or de Ávalos) to García de Loaysa probably in 1587. That the project was addressed to Loaysa, who, as shown in this chapter, was an active promoter of the Virgin's embrace, endorses his possible involvement in this idea. Dávalos and the architect provided an eloquent window through which to understand the liturgical, devotional, and political questions that lie behind the invention of frames for miraculous

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<sup>51</sup> ACT, LAC 18 (1584-1586), ff. 257, 266v-267r: 4 July and 22 August 1586.

<sup>52</sup> ACT, LAC 19 (1587-1589), f. 4v: 16 January 1587. ACT, LAC 19 (1587-1589), f. 18r: 23 March 1587. However, sources are silent on the fortune of this tabernacle.

<sup>53</sup> Biblioteca Nacional de España (hereafter BNE), MSS/5785, *Papeles varios* (16th century), ff. 42v-46v. This project was included in Tormo, *Datos Documentales*, vol. II, 307-310. Tormo dates the document in 1578, a date that is incompatible with the dedication to García de Loaysa as *maestro* (tutor) of the young Prince Philip (future Philip III), an office to which he was appointed in 1585. Although the manuscript's tight binding conceals the date, I propose to date it in 1587, a date that is compatible with the evidence I am analyzing on this essay, and that suggests that Tormo's mistake might have been a typographical error. On García de Loaysa as Prince Philip's tutor, see: Antonio Feros, *El Duque de Lerma: realeza y privanza en la España de Felipe III* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2002), 45; and Patrick Williams, *The great favourite: the Duke of Lerma and the court and government of Philip III of Spain, 1598-1621* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>54</sup> For some little information on the life and career of Rodrigo Dávalos, see: Linda Martz, *A network of converso families in early modern Toledo: assimilating a minority* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 297, 300; and Henar Pizarro Llorente, "Los miembros del Cabildo de la Catedral de Toledo durante el arzobispado de Gaspar de Quiroga (1577-1594)", *Hispania sacra* 62, no. 126 (2010): 602.

images. Unfortunately, the identity of the architect remains unknown since the matching handwriting of the plan and the report do not coincide with those of the *maestros mayores* (major architects) of the cathedral in this period, Diego de Alcántara and Nicolás de Vergara el Mozo.<sup>55</sup>

The new chapel was to be built precisely where the miraculous event took place, hence following the recurrent association of shrines with places of sacred happenings.<sup>56</sup> The architect proposed that an arch should be built between the pillar of the Descent and the one to the eastern side. The arch would have accommodated a central altarpiece with a *retablo*, and a tabernacle with the Sagrario Virgin displayed “with the greatest decency”.<sup>57</sup> The pillar on the right would have been adorned with a new altarpiece mirroring the Descent, and dedicated to one or both of the saintly bishops of Toledo, Eugenio and Ildefonso. The chapel would have emerged from these three unified altarpieces, as a quadrangular space comprised between four pillars. The idea of expanding the chapel of the Descent with additional altarpieces may have been inspired by a proposal made by the cathedral canons a year earlier, when they overcame the inadequacy of the chapel’s position for celebrating Mass by placing a portable altarpiece near the relic stone.<sup>58</sup> The architect argued that an additional advantage of this project was that it would bring the two images of Our Lady closer together. By that time

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<sup>55</sup> I wish to thank Fernando Marías for his generous help in this issue. Information on the lives and works of these architects is contained in: Fernando Marías, *La arquitectura del Renacimiento en Toledo (1541-1631)* (Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1983), vol. II: 31-50 (Diego de Alcántara) and 51-100 (Nicolás de Vergara el Mozo).

<sup>56</sup> Christian, *Apparitions*, 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> BNE, MSS/5785, f. 46r: “Lo q[ue] en sustancia contiene la traça es, que dexando el altar de la descension en el lugar q[ue] agora tiene, mucho mas [...]nado, se haga en el pilar que esta a su lado yzquierdo, otro que le corresponda en todo, y maciçando el arco que esta en med[io de] los dos, se haga en el, otro altar grande, con el retablo y tabernaculo qual convenga, pa[ra] que este la imagen de N[uesr]ra S[eño]ra que oy [esta] en el sagrario, con la mayor deçencia que ser pueda (...).”

<sup>58</sup> ACT, LAC, 18 (1584-1586), f. 233v: 26 April 1586, “y que attento que la estrechura del lugar donde esta el altar, ya que no ay nave comoda donde este el cabildo y la ciudad por estar en esgonçe, se ponga un altar portatil arrimado a la piedra y assi se estara en nave derecha.”

there existed no cult image of Mary in the chapel of the Descent,<sup>59</sup> which suggests that the promoters were referring to *Our Lady de la Antigua* that was placed only a few meters away from it.<sup>60</sup> If the images of the *Sagrario* and the *Antigua* were closer, the chapter would not have faced the dilemma of having to choose which image of Mary: “by being together, this inconvenience will terminate”.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the interest in combining the previously scattered contact relics of the Virgin’s Descent into the space where the miracle took place, the project was never carried out. In the report, the architect explains that the project was designed with the objective of creating a chapel with the capacity to accommodate many people, which would, in turn, move the citizens of Toledo to express their devotion to the Descent.<sup>62</sup> Despite the architect’s argument, the drawing shows that it was unlikely that the project for the chapel would provide an adequate space for well-attended liturgies. Moreover, the question of the enshrinement of the bodily relic of Saint Ildefonso constituted a more serious complication, with acute political implications. Notwithstanding the exact place in the chapel where Ildefonso’s bodily relic was intended to be placed, the body was still preserved in the church of San Pedro in Zamora. As I have mentioned above, the recovery of the body of Ildefonso had been, and remained, a permanent struggle between Toledo Cathedral and the church of San Pedro in Zamora. The rising popularity of these relics caused many negotiations with the Spanish royal court, as well as with the papal court in Rome, and certainly represented the driving force behind the

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<sup>59</sup> Even if a laborer from Budia, in Guadalajara, in 1541 boasted that he could make Our Lady of the Descent come to wherever he was: Christian, *Local religion*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> González and Pereda, *La catedral de Toledo*, 246.

<sup>61</sup> BNE, MSS/5785, f. 46r: “Es de mucha consideracion, q[ue] haviendo dos imagines de N[uestr]ra S[eñ]ora en un mesmo templo, con quien se tenga devocion, se ha de offi[ecer] inconveniente, siempre que se trate de hazer rogativa, por la perplexidad q[ue] puede causar el adonde se hara, y estando juntas cessa este inc[onveniente].”

<sup>62</sup> BNE, MSS/5785, f. 46r: “[vendrá a quedar] pa[ra] el pueblo una yglesia capacissima, donde es ansi, y nos lo muestra la experiencia, que quando se hazen semejant[es] [ple]garias, en el sagrario, pa[ra] el clero ni pa[ra] el ayuntamiento, por la mucha estrechura, [h]ay capacidad, y mucho menos la q[ue] pa[ra] el pueblo, como se ve en q[ue] viene muy poca gente.”

ordering by Cardinal Fonseca of the altarpiece of Saint Ildefonso. In 1587, there was no new evidence that the body would be arriving in Toledo in the near future, and commissioning a chapel based on that hope would only caused more frustration.<sup>63</sup> Arguably, Cardinal Quiroga and García de Loaysa decided that retooling the relics and images that Toledo Cathedral possessed already was more effective than to call attention to a range of yet unresolved matter.

### **Reframing a Miracle**

If we consider *Our Lady del Sagrario* to be a contact relic of the Virgin's Descent to Toledo, then our interpretation of the later renovations of the Sagrario and Descent chapels need to change dramatically. We must go beyond the traditional assumption that the renovation of these chapels was solely motivated by their precarious condition and by the patrons' desire for self-promotion to examine the renovations within the context of the chapter of Toledo's anxieties regarding the cathedral's insufficiency of relics. Since Dávalos' project to install the Marian sculpture near the chapel of the Descent was rejected, it became necessary to provide a new arrangement that dignified and enhanced the prestige of the image and, consequently, of Toledo Cathedral. I contend that the renovation of the Sagrario chapel was engendered by the need to contextualize and retool the cathedral's newly privileged image of the Virgin and Child. The pragmatic approach that, as I have argued, motivated the re-invention of *Our Lady del Sagrario* in 1584, also inspired the commencement of a profound renovation of the old Sagrario chapel.

Cardinal Sandoval y Rojas, the uncle of the royal favorite, the Duke of Lerma, and a powerful minister of the Spanish court, arrived in Toledo in 1599. By 1610, he

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<sup>63</sup> Clement VIII ordered the church of San Pedro in Zamora to return the bodily relic of Saint Ildefonso to Toledo on 1594, however the resistance of the church of Zamora prevented this to happen. For later developments of this harsh dispute, see Tausiet, *El dedo robado*.

carried out a small but largely significant intervention in the chapel of the Descent. By 1616, however, he had completed the renovation of the Virgin del Sagrario chapel. These interventions are the corollary of a lengthy renovation project on a Marian cult that had suffered from an insufficiency of relics. In the remaining pages, I will concentrate on the ways in which Cardinal Sandoval reframed the two contact relics of the Virgin's Descent and gave definitive form to this cult in Toledo. In the case of the Sagrario chapel, I will focus on reconstructing the tabernacle that originally encompassed the image, when it was displayed in the north wall.

The chapel of the Virgin del Sagrario is arguably one of the most magnificent religious spaces to have been built at the turn of the seventeenth century in Spain.<sup>64</sup> Magnificently crowned and lavishly dressed in precious garments, the medieval sculpture of *Our Lady del Sagrario* was displayed and praised in its chapel as the Virgin's "first, and most favored" image.<sup>65</sup> The chapel's dome was decorated with saints and angels, the walls with Marian scenes, and the four lower oratories with episodes of the life of Saint Bernardo and of the patron saints of Toledo, Eugenio, Ildefonso, and Leocadia. The decoration was carried out by the royal painters Eugenio Cajés and Vicente Carducho, and three altarpieces were adorned by the hand of Carlo Saraceni. There can be no doubt that the chapel's lavish marble revetments, pictorial decoration, and gilded elements were the result of Cardinal Sandoval's strong economic investment and desire to create a magnificent burial chapel, wherein his image and that

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<sup>64</sup> The argument that follows is an expanded version of the points discussed in Cloe Cavero de Carondelet, "Art, Piety and Conflict in Early Modern Spain: the Religious and Artistic Patronage of Cardinal Bernardo de Sandoval between Toledo and Rome (1599-1618)" (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2016), 116-137. Further information on the construction of the Sagrario chapel in Fernando Marías, "El Sagrario y el Ochavo," in *La Catedral Primada de Toledo: dieciocho siglos de historia*, ed. Ramón González Ruiz and Martín Almagro Gorbea (Toledo: Promecal Publicaciones, 2010), 252-257; and Marías *La arquitectura del Renacimiento*, II, 193-213.

<sup>65</sup> Pedro de Herrera, *Descripción de la Capilla de Nuestra Señora del Sagrario ..., y Relación de la Antigüedad de la Santa Imagen, con las Fiestas de su Traslación* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1617), f. 8v: "Insigne es la Capilla. (...) la dedica a la soberana Reyna del Cielo, Madre de Dios y Señora nuestra, en titulo de la primera, y as favorecida Imagen suya."

of his family's could live in perpetuity. However, the fact that this chapel was also a site of devotion was reinforced by the fact that Cardinal Sandoval was able to obtain a papal prerogative from Paul V, which instituted that for the following fifteen years the cathedral had the power to grant indulgences to any person who visited the image of the Sagrario, and that every funerary mass celebrated in the Sagrario chapel would free a soul from purgatory.<sup>66</sup>

The spatial arrangement of the image of *Our Lady* within the chapel projected by the cathedral architect Juan Bautista Monegro was meant to evoke the legend of the Virgin's Descent to Toledo. Contrarily to what we see today, the image was not intended to be placed at the high altar and had a different throne. Fortunately, it is possible to reconstruct its original disposition from Pedro de Herrera's detailed description of the chapel, in his volume published in 1617 under Cardinal Sandoval's patronage (fig. 5). The high altar, conceived as an open space flanked by a grid of balusters, allowed the viewer's access to see the relic collection of the cathedral. The image of Mary was placed in the quadrangular niche framed with bright crimson marble above the high altar,<sup>67</sup> her body acting as a Eucharistic metaphor in the liturgical ritual.<sup>68</sup> Following the general decoration of the chapel, the interior walls of the image's tabernacle were decorated with geometric polychrome decoration of jaspers and marbles. The back of the tabernacle was closed with two doors made of mahogany, walnut, and boxwood, with a gilded lock, through which the canons could access the niche to dress and move the image.

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<sup>66</sup> ACT, E.3.K.1.4: Brief of Paolo V, Rome 18 June 1616. ACT E.3.K.1.6: Brief of Paolo V, Rome 9 July 1616. These privileges were an extension of similar privileges for eight years attained by Cardinal Quiroga in 1591. ACT, E.3.K.1.5: Brief of Gregory XIV, Rome 5 June 1591.

<sup>67</sup> Herrera, *Descripción de la Capilla*, ff. 28v-29r, ff. 82r-83v.

<sup>68</sup> Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*, 218.

Following the general arrangement of Mary's miraculous icons,<sup>69</sup> *Our Lady del Sagrario* was surrounded by an angelic frame. She was positioned on a throne surmounted by a bust-image of God offering blessing and decorated with winged heads of *putti* at the base. A symmetric arrangement of angels in prayer, angels with crowns, and angels playing musical instruments surrounded the image.<sup>70</sup> This angelic composition conveyed a twofold message: On the one hand, the vision of the Marian image surrounded by angels echoed the well-known legend of the Descent of the Virgin with her angelic entourage to Toledo Cathedral. Angels and *putti* were also fundamental elements in Eugenio Cajés' drawing of *The Virgin Embracing Our Lady del Sagrario*. In it, Cajés represents the Virgin on an angelic cloud, and the two Marian figures are flanked by heavenly circles of *putti*. On the other hand, the throne recalled the angelic entourage that, according to Villegas, carried the sacred image of *Our Lady del Sagrario* on procession every night through the cathedral, in the years preceding the miraculous rediscovery.<sup>71</sup> The angelic throne of the Sagrario thus underscored the conflation between the image and its prototype.

The location of Cardinal Sandoval's private oratory within the chapel reflects on the idea that the new chapel evoked a symbolic conflation between *Our Lady del Sagrario* and the Virgin's Descent onto Toledo. The oratory was connected to the archiepiscopal palace through a *pasadizo* (a suspended exterior passage) and had a small balcony on the north wall. The balcony was positioned in front of the tabernacle of the miraculous image and was only about half a meter higher. This position enabled Sandoval to engage with the Sagrario in a direct and more intimate way. The balcony's

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<sup>69</sup> Among others, see Stephen F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome. The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 151-167.

<sup>70</sup> The throne is now lost, but it was represented in the engraved book covers of Pedro de Herrera and José de Valdivielso. Herrera, *Descripción de la Capilla*. José de Valdivielso, *Sagrario de Toledo: poema heroico* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1616).

<sup>71</sup> Villegas, *Flos Sanctorum. Segunda parte*, 100.



elevation also placed the cardinal closer to the dome, which was decorated with *tondos* of angels and saintly figures. The cardinal's experience, when kneeling in his oratory and contemplating on *Our Lady del Sagrario* surrounded by angels under the angelic dome, thus recalls the divine experience of his saintly predecessor, Archbishop Saint Ildefonso.

The spatial arrangement of the image in the Sagrario chapel was nevertheless conceived to facilitate a more restrained access of the beholder with the sculpture. By placing the image in a high tabernacle where significant natural light was needed in order to view it properly, the cardinal prevented the beholders at a floor level from engaging directly with the image.<sup>72</sup> As it happens, the location of the Sagrario accumulated criticisms because devotees deemed the positioning to be too small, and yet too high, to view the sacred image properly. However, the chronicler Pedro de Herrera argued strongly against these opinions and defended the image's location, stating that the high position allowed the reliquary to be seen through the opening in the high altar. Herrera also reminded the viewer that sacred texts advocated that images be placed in high spaces away from the space where people's bones were buried. Lastly, Herrera stated that "it is irreverence to want, that wide-open eyes enjoy sacred things without restrictions" and criticized the people's "indecent curiosity and whims".<sup>73</sup>

Sandoval's renovation of the Descent chapel in 1610 may be seen as his attempt to materially reframe the two chapels to become companions to one another. Besides restoring the Gothic pinnacle and embellishing the chapel with his coats of arms, commemorative inscriptions of his patronage, and a new screen,<sup>74</sup> Cardinal Sandoval

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<sup>72</sup> Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*, 218-227.

<sup>73</sup> Herrera, *Descripción de la Capilla*, f. 90: "Es irreverencia querer, que los ojos a resto abierto gozen desembaraçadamente las cosas sagradas: (...) quedese dicho para los que sin reparar en la veneracion, y gravissimas razones, que movieron al Cardenal a colocar esta Santa Imagen en el puesto que tiene, censuran la altura, por la pequeñez, y curiosidad indecente de particulares antojos."

<sup>74</sup> Mariás, *La arquitectura del Renacimiento*, III, 216-218.

reframed the stone-relic and modified the devotional practice. The stone was enclosed in a reliquary case of red jasper and only a small portion of it could be seen through a small barred opening. The medieval inscription prompting the beholders to kiss the stone was erased, thus resonating with the coeval scholar Tamayo de Vargas who had described the verses in 1616 as “less elegant than devout.”<sup>75</sup> These verses were substituted by an inscription showing Psalm 131 “Adorabimus in loco ubi steterunt pedes eius” adorned with Sandoval y Rojas’ escutcheon. The choice of this psalm was probably related to Blas Ortiz’s famous *Summi Templi Toletani Descriptio* (1549), in which Ortiz associated the Virgin’s steps in Toledo Cathedral with this psalm’s reference to the apostle’s feet and suggested that this episode should be interpreted as a prophetic announcement of the Virgin’s Descent.<sup>76</sup> The reason for substituting devotional rhymes written in Spanish with a Latin psalm was probably due to Sandoval’s desire to restrain the popular, yet too interactive, devotion to the relic stone. Furthermore, it is likely that by concealing the relic stone Sandoval also wanted to enhance the prestige and popular devotion for the renovated image of the Sagrario as the foremost relic of the Virgin.

## **Conclusion**

The need for a sacred object to describe devotion to the Virgin’s Descent and for a shrine to allow the devotees to perform an appropriate ritual became the guiding principle for a series of contact relic inventions and artistic commissions in Toledo Cathedral during the twelfth through the seventeenth centuries. The medieval benchmark of a pillar shrine in the sacred space where the Virgin descended went hand

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<sup>75</sup> Tomás Tamayo de Vargas, *Historia General de España del P. D. Juan de Mariana defendida por el Doctor Don Thomas Tamaio de Vargas contra las advertencias de Pedro Mantuano* (Toledo: Diego Rodríguez, 1616), 35: “menos elegante que devota.”

<sup>76</sup> Cavero de Carondelet, *Art, Piety and Conflict*, 119-122.

in hand with the elaborate inventions for a relic stone allegedly bearing the Virgin's footprints. To conform to the new relic, the pillar shrine was dismantled and transformed into a sumptuous alabaster shrine decorated with the representation of the miracle. The post-Tridentine directions prompted the Church of Toledo to devise a novel, more dignified contact relic of the Descent: an image of Mary. Cardinal-Archbishops Gaspar de Quiroga and Bernardo de Sandoval renewed and modernized the cult to the Virgin in Toledo by conflating a medieval sculpture of Mary with a spectacular episode of interaction with its divine character and by decorating the image with a lavish material cover.

Contrarily to most Roman and Florentine image cults,<sup>77</sup> the reframing of *Our Lady del Sagrario* was not conceived as an implication of the image's miraculous power, but rather as a catalyst for an expanded definition of the sacred image in a post-Tridentine age. The revitalization of the Sagrario as a contact relic of the Virgin's Descent was devised by the archbishops and cathedral canons to resolve the daunting matter of a shortage of relics in a Reconquest climate, within which the primatial see of Toledo struggled to reacquire its lost relics. Although the legend of the Virgin's embrace to *Our Lady del Sagrario* was first drafted in 1584, it was not until the new chapel's inauguration in 1616 that the image gained fame. Throughout the seventeenth century, painted replicas of the Sagrario became highly popular across Castile. The reliquary-chapel effectively consecrated *Our Lady del Sagrario*, establishing a novel authority and sacred role for the venerable image as a relic of the Virgin's corporeal touch.

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<sup>77</sup> Holmes, *Miraculous Images*, 438.