



# **The Making and Unmaking of a Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac (The Middle Ages Series)**

*Mathew Kuefler*

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A crusader, a hermit, a bishop, a plague victim, and even a repentant murderer by turns: the stories attached to Saint Gerald of Aurillac offer a strange and fragmented legacy. His two earliest biographies, written in the early tenth and early eleventh centuries, depicted the saint as a warrior who devoted his life to pious service. Soon Gerald was a venerated figure, and the monastery he founded was itself a popular pilgrimage site. Like many other cults, his faded into obscurity over time, although a small group of loyal worshippers periodically revived interest, creating sculpted or stained glass images and the alternate biographies that complicated an ever more obscure history.

*The Making and Unmaking of a Saint* traces the rise and fall of devotion to Gerald of Aurillac through a millennium, from his death in the tenth century to the attempt to reinvigorate his cult in the nineteenth century. Mathew Kuefler makes a strong case for the sophistication of hagiography as a literary genre that can be used to articulate religious doubts and anxieties even as it exalts the saints; and he overturns the received attribution of Gerald's detailed *Vita* to Odo of Cluny, identifying it instead as the work of the infamous eleventh-century forger Ademar of Chabannes. Through his careful examination, the biographies and iconographies that mark the waxing and waning of Saint Gerald's cult tell an illuminating tale not only of how saints are remembered but also of how they are forgotten.

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