

Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and Their Cults in Medieval Europe (Studies in Church History)

Patricia Healy Wasyliw

Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and Their Cults in Medieval Europe is a comprehensive history of child saints and their cults from late Antiquity to the end of the fifteenth century. The child martyrs of the persecutions, including the Holy Innocents, were the first child saints recognized by the Church and their cults spread throughout Europe in the early Middle Ages. Alongside these cults, medieval society also venerated child «martyrs», victims of political or domestic violence. The increasing role of the papacy in the canonization process after the tenth century resulted in the veneration of saintly child confessors in the high Middle Ages, but from the end of the twelfth century, most children worshipped as saints were the alleged victims of ritual murder by Jews. This book considers the formation and transformation of child saints and their cults in the context of popular belief and the history of childhood.

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