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## A Discussion of Fake Relics in the Early Eleventh Century: An Analysis of Guibert of Nogent and Rodolphus Glaber

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# A Discussion of Fake Relics in the early Eleventh Century: An Analysis of Guibert of Nogent and Rodolphus Glaber.

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## Introduction

The reactions towards relics and fake relics during the early eleventh century varied between individuals and institutions. The monks Guibert of Nogent and Rodolphus Glaber held conflicting views on relics; however, they shared the negative views of fake relics and argued that there needed to be steps to identify fakes and that the clergy were directly involved with the propagation of fake relics.

## The Source

Guibert of Nogent broke up his 1119 C.E. work *On the Relics of Saints* into three books with the overarching theme of responding to the church of Saint-Médard and their relic, a baby-tooth of Christ (Guibert of Nogent, vii). Book I described relic cults and Guibert's initial response to Saint-Médard's claims, Book II discussed the problems relating to the existence of relics and their relation to the Eucharist, and Book III attempted to debunk Saint-Médard's claims (Guibert of Nogent, xvii).

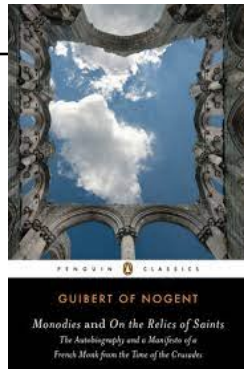
“What kind of saint is it whose death causes doubt?” (Guibert of Nogent, 197).

This specific source relates to Guibert of Nogent's reaction to the claims of the church Saint-Médard obtaining a baby tooth of Christ. Guibert disagreed with those claims due to his belief that any relic that claimed to be a physical body part of Christ was a fake relic (Guibert of Nogent, 193, 250). A fake relic included relics whose saint had doubt cast upon them because of a lack of written evidence supporting their sainthood (Guibert of Nogent, 195-197). The significance of this source comes from Guibert's more strict interpretations of what relics were, thus casting doubt on the validity of several relics of his time. Guibert also argued for detailed written documentation of the validity of the saint connected to a relic.

## Conclusions

The preliminary conclusion is that Guibert of Nogent relics, while holding necessary jobs and values within the church, were not necessary towards salvation itself. Guibert argued for proper documentation as evidence to prove the validity of saints and relics, which highlighted his negative response to fake relics. The broader significance of this work is the creation of a new perspective by using Guibert of Nogent to show the similar and differing viewpoints during the early eleventh century and comparing his work to those of Rodolphus Glaber.

Image: The Cover of *Monodies and On the Relics of Saints*



<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/304708/monodies-and-on-the-relics-of-saints-by-guibert-of-nogent/>

## Literature Cited

Guibert of Nogent. *Monodies and On the Relics of Saints: The Autobiography and a Manifesto of a French Monk from the Time of the Crusades*. Translated by Joseph McAlhany and Jay Rubenstein. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2011.