

[Ebook pdf] Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565 (Middle Ages Series)

Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565 (Middle Ages Series)

Walter Simons

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Walter Simons : Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565 (Middle Ages Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565 (Middle Ages Series):

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. An important book, if a somewhat limited look at a very interesting phenomenon.By M. DaltonThe Beguines were a very important phenomenon in the history of Europe. Until pretty recently, they have received little attention in the English-speaking academic world, so this book is a welcome and sorely needed addition to the body of work on this subject, and I hope it is only the first of many to come. The beguines were lay communities of women who thrived for a period in the medieval low countries. Originally founded by large numbers of widows left alone after a series of brutal wars in the region, beguines represent a remarkable type of community. Outwardly they appeared to be similar to nuns, but they swore no vows, could remarry if they chose to do (and many did) yet at the same time they were autonomous. The Church initially accepted them but later began to crack down as some beguine leaders became influential and their outlook was described in the Catholic encyclopedia as 'polytheistic' and 'anarchist'. They were protected by some of the more powerful towns due to their value as relatively cheap labor in the textile industry, and perhaps most important, for their role as school

teachers. The respect for these women in these towns is made clear by the continued survival of some spectacular Beguinages to this day, such as the remarkable Begijnhof complex in Amsterdam. My only complaint about this book is that it is somewhat limited in scope as it does not track the movement of beguines beyond the Low Countries in the 14th and 15th Centuries (when many of them moved East to Bohemia and Poland where there was greater religious tolerance) and beyond the medieval period, as well as their relationship to the somewhat similar and equally important Brethren of the Common Life, who played an important role in the spread of scriptoria for copying books. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Combine Brother Cadfael book series and a trip to Brugges ...By Dimitrios Halatsis Combine Brother Cadfael book series and a trip to Brugges, Belgium you find in this book a history review about women in Medieval years. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Carefully researched information about location of Beguine communities, but ...By Adele B. Hanson Carefully researched information about location of Beguine communities, but most of the book is footnote material written in much detail in very small print!

In the early thirteenth century, semireligious communities of women began to form in the cities and towns of the Low Countries. These beguines, as they came to be known, led lives of contemplation and prayer and earned their livings as laborers or teachers. In *Cities of Ladies*, the first history of the beguines available in English in almost fifty years, Walter Simons traces the transformation of informal clusters of single women to large beguinages. These veritable single-sex cities offered lower and middle class women an alternative to both marriage and convent life. While the region's expanding urban economies initially valued the communities for their cheap labor supply, severe economic crises by the fourteenth century restricted women's opportunities for work. Church authorities had also grown less tolerant of religious experimentation, hailing as subversive some aspects of beguine mysticism. To Simons, however, such accusations of heresy against the beguines were largely generated from a profound anxiety about their intellectual ambitions and their claims to a chaste life outside the cloister. Under ecclesiastical and economic pressure, beguine communities dwindled in size and influence, surviving only by adopting a posture of restraint and submission to church authorities. Based on the archival records left by about 300 beguine communities, *Cities of Ladies* illuminates the context of beguine writings, which are considered among the most significant documents of medieval women's mysticism. In updating and expanding our knowledge of the beguines, Simons makes a significant contribution to the history of urbanization, religious change, and gender in medieval Europe.

"Comprehensive and authoritative." *Medium Aevum* "This fine work reveals medieval religion as a web of overlapping interests. . . . Simons has thus both provided a detailed study of the movement in the Low Countries and place it in its wider religious, social, and economic context." *Ecclesiastical History* "A tour de force." David Nicholas, Clemson University "A vivid, valuable portrait." *History* "The definitive study. . . . A learned, lively, and highly readable book, now the essential introduction to the subject." *Choice* "Indispensable for students of medieval religion and women's history." *Journal of Religion* "Walter Simons has written a thorough, scholarly study, long on careful research, to the point on analysis, and without theoretical trappings. *Cities of Ladies* is a most welcome contribution to the study of medieval religious life and women's place in the life of the Low Countries." *Speculum* "Destined to become the standard work in beguine history." *Renaissance Quarterly* About the Author Walter Simons is Associate Professor of History at Dartmouth College.