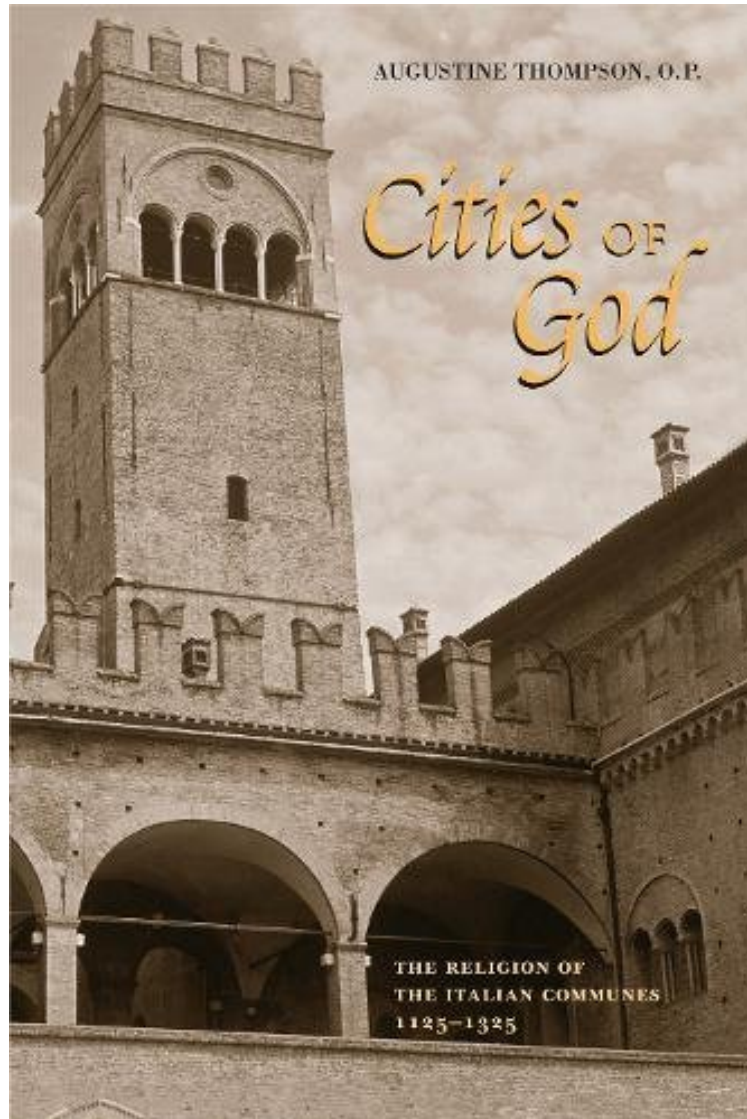


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Augustine Thompson O.P.

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Augustine Thompson O.P. : Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 11251325 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 11251325:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. WonderfulBy D. MillerThompson's work is a great study of medieval Italian communes which revises previous assumptions about their poltical and religious character. Rather than early democracies which separated religious practices from local government, Thompson argues persuasively that civic and religious concerns were completely interwoven. The book provides a well researched and deeply detailed

study of the daily lives of the lay people of the communes and the significant role of religious beliefs which permeated both their spiritual and civic activities. Thompson focuses primarily on the urban populations of cities which exercised actual or de facto autonomy from the empire.¹² of 13 people found the following review helpful. A Guide to Medieval Faith By Lisa J. Steele It is a rare book that, having read it, one wonders why it was not written sooner. This is such a book. Thompson surveys religious faith and customs in 12th to 14th century Italy, looking at typical practices and beliefs. The book focuses primarily on the upper classes, perhaps due to a dearth of materials about other urban residents. Like the author, this reader looks forward to similar books about medieval faith in England, France, and other parts of medieval Europe. This reviewer is moderately well-read in medieval history, but found new insights in nearly every chapter of this book.

We know much about the Italian city states the communes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But historians have focused on their political accomplishments to the exclusion of their religious life, going so far as to call them purely secular contrivances. When religion is considered, the subjects are usually saints, heretics, theologians, and religious leaders, thereby ignoring the vast majority of those who lived in the communes. In *Cities of God*, Augustine Thompson gives a voice to the forgotten majority orthodox lay people and those who ministered to them. Thompson positions the Italian republics in sacred space and time. He maps their religious geography as it was expressed through political and voluntary associations, ecclesiastical and civil structures, common ritual life, lay saints, and miracle-working shrines. He takes the reader through the rituals and celebrations of the communal year, the peoples corporate and private experience of God, and the liturgy of death and remembrance. In the process he challenges a host of stereotypes about orthodox medieval religion, the Italian city-states, and the role of new religious movements in the world of Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, and Dante. *Cities of God* is bold, revisionist history in the tradition of Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*. Drawing on a wide repertoire of ecclesiastical and secular sources, from city statutes and chronicles to saints lives and architecture, Thompson recaptures the religious origins and texture of the Italian republics and allows their inhabitants a spiritual voice that we have never heard before.

Using a wealth of evidence drawn from civic and ecclesiastical statues, tithe lists, saints lives, art, and architecture, Thompson reminds us that the urban environment was densely packed with expressions of orthodox religion. . . . This book is a stunning achievement. Not only is it a masterful study of the Italian church and lay religion, it calls into question prevailing views of communal society and challenges us to rethink the way we apply terms like secular and religious to medieval society. David Foote, *American Historical* Thompsons stimulating and well-researched volume fills an important gap in our understanding of lived religion in the Italian Middle Ages. His style is fluid and often entertaining, and he skillfully balances comprehensiveness with evocative detail. It deserves to be widely read and debated. Frances Andrews, University of St. Andrews This brilliant, innovative, challenging, and often surprising book lays out every conceivable aspect of the religious lives of citizens of the medieval Italian commune. It is also a fascinating exposition of the unexpected ways in which civic communes of central and northern Italy from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth century were indeed *Cities of God*. William Bowsky, *History: s of New Books* Augustine Thompsons immensely scholarly work has enormous implications for our understanding of the western political legacy. He has successfully shown that the most democratic, the most participatory strand in the Italian civic republican legacy was a specifically Catholic one that was not at all neopagan nor secular in the modern sense. This demonstration should further disturb our lingering tendency to narrate the story of the last one thousand years as one in which forces of progress gradually banish the gothic shadows. John Milbank, Research Professor of Religion, Politics and Ethics, University of Nottingham Augustine Thompsons *Cities of God* provides a valuable overview of the religious lives of ordinary lay people in the towns of northern Italy during the central Middle Ages. Maureen C. Miller, *Ecclesiastical History* About the Author Augustine Thompson, O.P. is Professor of Religious Studies and History at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy* (1992) and, with James Gordley, *Gratian: The Treatise on Laws with the Ordinary Gloss* (1993).