

Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250

By Brian Patrick McGuire

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"I assume that historical sources can convey human feeling, even though it is fruitless to psychologize individual friends or to reach complete explanations about their motives. I simply accept that because medieval Christians believed in friendship and felt the need for it, some of them both practiced and lived out friendships."?from the new Introduction

Human beings have always formed personal friendships. Some cultures have left behind the evidence of philosophical discussion; some have provided only private or semipublic letters. By comparing these, one discerns the effect exercised by the society in which the writers lived, its opportunities, and its restrictions. The cloistered monks of medieval Europe, who have bequeathed a rich literary legacy on the subject, have always had to take into account the overwhelming fact of community. Brian Patrick McGuire finds that in seeking friends and friendship, medieval men and women sought self-knowledge, the enjoyment of life, the commitment of community, and the experience of God.

First published in 1988, *Friendship and Community* has been widely debated, inspiring the current interest among medievalists in the subject of friendship. It has also informed other fields within medieval history, including monasticism, spirituality, psychology, and the relationship between self and community. In a new introduction to the Cornell edition, McGuire surveys the critical reaction to the original edition and subsequent research on the subject of medieval friendship.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Brian McGuire's *Friendship and Community* is by now a classic, the most important book to appear?ever?on the subject. Its sweep is broad. McGuire shows the development of medieval ideals of friendship and community from antiquity to the high Middle Ages. Current interest on the topic is high, in large part due to McGuire’s book."?C. Stephen Jaeger, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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