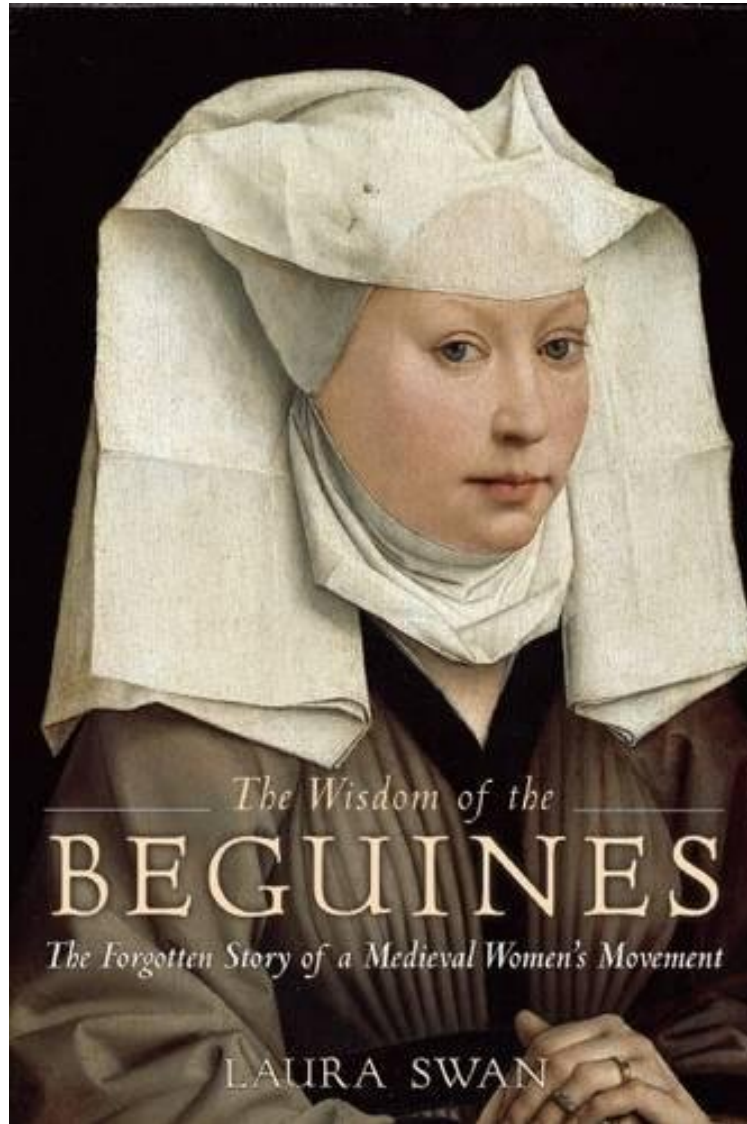


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The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement

Laura Swan

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Laura Swan : The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. ... that women were working to make the world a better place even back in the 1200sBy Carol DeMentVery heartening to learn that women were working to make the world a better

place even back in the 1200s. Ms. Swan's well-researched book gives us an intimate glimpse into the lives and beliefs of the leaders of the Beguine movement. I was struck by how these women managed to carve out a niche of relative freedom for themselves in a male dominated society overseen by a patriarchal church. Very impressive, and an interesting sociological study of change agents at work. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wisdom for our Day By Jane E Pitz If you have an interest in the history of the Beguines, this book covers it well. Moreover, the book covers these laywomen as independent, astute in business, ministering to the sick and to the poor and were wonderful examples of women asserting themselves in a male society. They were also investigated by the hierarchy! There were obvious parallels between what they encountered because of meeting the needs of the poor and ill and religious communities being investigated in our time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The original feminism in Europe By Gary H. Labowitz My wife is really enjoying this book. Talk about real feminism. A fascinating idea, lasting a long time.

The beguines began to form in various parts of Europe over eight hundred years ago. Beguines were laywomen, not nuns, and they did not live in monasteries. They practiced a remarkable way of living independently, and they were never a religious order or a formalized movement. But there were common elements that these medieval women shared across Europe, including their visionary spirituality, their unusual business acumen, and their courageous commitment to the poor and sick. Beguines were essentially self-defined, in opposition to the many attempts to control and define them. They lived by themselves or in communities called beguinages, which could be single homes for just a few women or, as in Brugge, Brussels, and Amsterdam, walled-in rows of houses where hundreds of beguines lived together a village of women within a medieval town or city. Among the beguines were celebrated spiritual writers and mystics, including Mechthild of Magdeburg, Beatrijs of Nazareth, Hadewijch, and Marguerite Porete who was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake in Paris in 1310. She was not the only beguine suspected of heresy, and often politics were the driving force behind such charges. The beguines, across the centuries, have left us a great legacy. They invite us to listen to their voices, to seek out their wisdom, to discover them anew.

PRAISE FOR "THE WISDOM OF THE BEGUINES": The Wisdom of the Beguines sweeps up some surprising women and a range of locales. What's left is a legacy that had more influence than official church history acknowledges. Swan's book is a useful corrective. THE SEATTLE TIMES Swan brings their lives and writings to the general reader with a clear, admiring narrative. Her book is a sympathetic look at the Beguines that will intrigue anyone interested in women's spirituality. PUBLISHERS WEEKLY Swan's book provides an accessible overview of beguine spirituality in the context of their own times [it] does a good job of explaining both the beguines spiritual practices and their continuing legacy. COMMONWEAL