

# The Wisdom Of The Beguines The Forgotten Story Of A Medieval Women S Movement Hardcover

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the beguines began to form in various parts of europe over eight hundred years ago around the year 1200 beguines were laywomen not nuns and thus did not take solemn vows and did not live in monasteries the beguines were a phenomenal movement that swept across europe yet they were never a religious order or a formalized movement but there were common elements that rendered these women distinctive and familiar including their common way of life their unusual business acumen and their commitment to the poor and marginalized these women were essentially self defined in opposition to the many attempts to control and define them they lived by themselves or together in so called beguinages which could be single houses for as few as a handful of beguines or as in brugge and amsterdam walled in rows of houses enclosing a central court with a chapel where over a thousand beguines might live a village of women within a medieval town or city and each region of europe has its own beguine stories to tell among the beguines were celebrated spiritual writers and mystics including mechthild of magdeburg beatrijs of nazareth hadewijch of brabant 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 certain clerics defended beguines against charges of heresy while other women had to go undercover by joining a benedictine or cistercian monastery amazingly many beguine communities survived for a long time despite oppression wars the plague and other human and natural disasters beguines lived through and helped propel times of great transition and reform beguines courageously spoke to power and corruption never despairing of god s compassion for humanity they used their business acumen to establish and support ministries that extended education health care and other social services to the vulnerable and they preached and taught of a loving god who desired a relationship with each individual person while calling to reform those who used god s name for personal gain what strength of spirit protected the lives of these women and their beguinages what can we learn from them what might they teach us the beguines have much to say to our world today this book invites us to listen to their voices to discover them anew

the book describes the ancestry of general goethals in ghent belgium from the 1500s as well as the branch of geeraert goethals ennobled in 1652 a list of all goethals recorded in nine parishes in ghent from 1584 to 1796 is added in appendix

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the Marian miracle tale of thirteenth century Spain and France is an unusual thematic genre comprising tales songs poems plays and sermons dedicated to miraculous occurrences attributed to the Virgin Mary while there are scholarly articles on particular aspects of this large and important body of literature there has been no attempt to bring its principal authors together into a single scholarly study bringing five well known thirteenth century authors together Gonzalo de Berceo Gautier de Coinci Cardinal Jacques de Vitry Rutebeuf and King Alfonso X of Spain the book shows how each used the Marian collections for individual purposes Mary is portrayed in a variety of manifestations as Mediatrix Monitrix Mater Dei national patroness and even as something close to the troubadour's desired or unattainable lady Berceo was a secular priest who found an older collection of tales useful as an instructive tool Gautier an aristocratic monk of intellectual refinement had a nearly exclusively artistic interest in his Marian materials while Cardinal Jacques de Vitry an eminent churchman and eloquent reformer sought with his carefully chosen tales to bring Marianism into the fold of doctrinal orthodoxy Rutebeuf a minstrel accepted the tales as popular piety and returned them to his audience in a spirit of reproach to the sometimes heavy handed didactic use made of the material by churchmen with vested interests finally the personal voice and directing presence of Spain's King Alfonso X makes of his famous Marian collection the *Cantigas de Santa María* a part of his social and religious program for Spain additionally a reflection upon the formalistic criticism of Bakhtin and Todorov suggests new possibilities for seeing within some Marian tales of the period a subtle tool for the subverting of perceived church excesses

in these conferences dating to 1961 Thomas Merton provides for his audience of young monks an overview of major themes and figures in the Christian mystical tradition as an integral part of their religious inheritance and a crucial part of their spiritual formation from fathers of the church such as St Athanasius and St Gregory of Nyssa through such important medieval theologians as St Bonaventure Hadewijch and Meister Eckhart to the great Spanish Carmelites St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross Merton traces such key topics as the integration of theology and spirituality the importance of natural contemplation recognizing the divine presence in creation the centrality of apophatic or dark contemplation and the role of spiritual direction in forming mature and balanced contemplatives

Women mystics in medieval Europe revives the exquisite mystical literature of five powerful mystics of the middle ages a Benedictine abbess a Cisterian prioress and three Beguines the lost story of

feminine christianity is here enriched for the first time by the historical context of each woman s life and her fresh literary expression of spiritual reality hildegard of bingen hadewijch of antwerp beatrice of nazareth mechthild of magdeburg and marguerite porete were acknowledged handmaidens of god s prophetic spirit their teaching solidly based in theological and metaphysical culture was even thought superior to that of the scholastic doctors of the time an important work of reference for christians and spiritual seekers as well as an inspirational resource for those who aspire to see without intermediary what god is page 4 of cover

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