



Illumination from the *Liber Scivias* showing Hildegard receiving a vision, inscribing what she sees on a wax tablet, and dictating to her scribe and secretary.

## STATIO CONFERENCE

### ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN AND THE CARE FOR CREATION

Sr. Irene Dabalus, OSB, June 2013

While I was writing the first page of this conference, I heard snatches of a newscast from Radio Veritas that reported the lack of rain and the onset of aridity in Ilocos Sur. Farmers were advised not to sow their rice seeds which would go to waste with the lack of water. At the same time another news item carried the threat of flooding in Surigao, resulting from a steady downpour of rain over a weekend. Then more worrying news came affecting land and climate: the Manila Bay reclamation project would push through with 148 ha. of land to be reclaimed from the bay to house the so-called Solar City for three man-made islands for economic development. A protest group was then decrying this degradation of the bay and its natural marine habitat. Some days later concern was raised about the beautiful coastal towns of Narra, Palawan, at risk of being destroyed. This was due to a planned coal-fired power plant to be built this year amidst strong protests from residents and environmentalists about the danger to thousands of lives of people and marine life with toxic chemical emissions from the plant.

El Niño, floods, and human engineering are surely changing our world and the changes will nothing but be irreversible

This brings us to the topic of the care for our world, right here in the country, and links us to the theme of the care for creation in the life and writings of St. Hildegard of Bingen— a prophetess, a down-to-earth conservationist of nature and a herbalist, curing with herbs and other raw materials of the earth in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

In Hildegard's writings and the "ecological" practices in her Abbey, she reveals a profound sensitivity to the interconnectedness and balance existing among the three realities of God, the humans and nature. When this balance is destroyed by human greed and domination, there ensues a catastrophic disarray in this three-fold bonding. The destruction of this balance is of such a magnitude that it can hardly be reversed, unless the destroyer, the human, converts to God and his fellow human beings. For example, she speaks of the clamor of the elements of nature coming from the "air and the water." In her visions she heard, "We can no longer run and find our way to our goal, because men and women hinder us on the way with their evil doings from above and from below and we – the air and the water - already stink like the pest."

She smelt the increasing stinking of a spoiled world in her century. She spoke of the polluting of the air and of climate catastrophes, of sneaking diseases among people and animals, of how the green of the fields was drying up and how the forests were dying out. "Now the air vomits out filth so that the human can no longer dare to open his mouth to breathe." Already in

the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this woman with her gift of wisdom and prophecy decried the ugly effects of the human's lack of love for the world of nature around him/her and denounced them. She might as well have spoken these words to our own times in the face of our vicious treatment of life "contra naturam."

**Who was St. Hildegard of Bingen** and why is she becoming a rallying point for ecological and feminist movements to save our earth and the beleaguered women in our age? What was her prophetic message and what drove her to the causes she undertook?

Hildegard of Bingen – acclaimed Doctor of the Church on October 7, 2012 - was first of all a Benedictine. One of her cloistered nuns in the present day Abbey of Eibingen in Cologne became my mentor in a two-week tutorial on the writings of Hildegard way back in 2007. She told me, "Before all else, Hildegard was a Benedictine nun. She lived a life of prayer and work with her nuns for 70 years, following the Rule of St. Benedict, standing in choir for common praise 7 times a day, and observing the common life of mutual service at meals, at work, at recreations and at celebrations. "With this in mind", she told me, "we can better understand how Hildegard moved in a climate 'drenched' with Scriptures, the writings of the Fathers, and the chant of the psalms." When we encounter her in her writings, we find her speaking and writing of visions and allegories culled from the biblical world and the liturgy. This is the matrix in which her prophecy, cosmology, medicine, music and poetry grew, out of which crystallized both heavenly and earthly wisdom which she shared with her nuns and with outsiders.

To appreciate her in her lived context, let us recall some of the events of her life, as one cloistered, and yet, very much attuned to the happenings of her social and political world.

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#### **Biographical data, with historical cross references to significant persons and events in her life**

##### **BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF HILDEGARD OF BINGEN**

- 1098 Born as the 10<sup>th</sup> child on the Bermersheim farm in Alzey to Hildebert and Mechtilde, high ranking nobles. Two brothers entered the clerical life and one sister was in her own cloister.
- 1106 For her spiritual formation Hildegard at the age of eight is entrusted to Jutta of Spornheim, a recluse living in a hermitage which was annexed to the monks' monastery at Disibodenberg.
- Around 1100 In the Roman Mass liturgy all the existing music for Mass was set and defined. The reform of church music with the content of the eight church tones was basically concluded.**
- 1112- 1115 Vows at the age of fourteen; the hermitage (Klause) of Disibodenberg developed itself into a cloister. Hildegard was a Benedictine with heart and soul and lived as a contemplative nun according to the RB. She learned how to read Latin and was well-versed in the Bible and the Psalter and also learned how to play the harp to accompany liturgical prayer.
- 1115 St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), the father of medieval mysticism, founds the cloister of Clairvaux, from which grew the the Cistercian Order, the most influential and leading order of the times under his leadership.**
- 1130 The schism of the papacy starts between Pope Innocent II (1130- 1143) and Pope Anaclet II (1130-1138).**
- 1136 Jutta of Spornheim dies; Hildegard is elected as the abbess of the convent of nuns which had developed from the hermitage. She quietly followed her vocation for forty-three years before her life changed dramatically. From her early years she was plagued by weak health that could manifest itself in difficulty in walking, even paralysis, and a number of other physical ailments.
- April 1139 The First Vatican Council: end of the schism of the papacy, in which due to the authority of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Pope Innocent II was legally recognized and Pope Anaclet II who died already in 1138 was deposed. The marriage of clerics starting from the subdiaconate , as well as marriage of monks, is declared null and void.**
- 1141 She receives from God the mandate to write down her visions; in the 10 following years

the book *Scivias (Know the Ways)* comes out. At that time she wrote in the “Protestificatio” (foreword) to *Scivias*, a fiery light flowed through her brain and filled her heart like a flame. It was a light that did not burn but warmed like the sun. She was filled with a divine understanding of the psalms, the Scriptures and the holy books of the Bible, as she heard a voice from heaven instruct her: “Tell and write what you see and hear...do not write as is pleasing to you or as another thinks is right, but according to the will of the one who knows, sees, and orders all in the hidden depth of his mysterious wisdom.” Hildegard emphasizes that what she saw and heard was not perceived in a dream or in a state of mental confusion but with a clear mind while she was wide awake. Her “inner eye and ear” received the divine message in a place only God can enter. She also worked on the lyrical drama “Ordo Virtutum”.

- 1146 Bernhard of Clairvaux, mandated by Pope Eugene III (1145-1153) campaigns for the second crusade. In Europe at the beginning of this crusade it comes to terrible attacks against the Jews.**
- 1146-1147 Hildegard maintains correspondence with Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most significant Church representatives of those times.
- 1147-1148 Pope Eugene the 3<sup>rd</sup> confirms her visionary gift at the reform Synod of Trier; from this time on she has correspondence with important personalities of State and Church.
- 1147-1149 The second crusade ends as a total failure which brought about the loss of papal authority.**
- 1150 Hildegard founds a new abbey at Rupertsberg in Bingen and transfers with 20 nuns to a newly-built abbey there.
- 151-1158 She writes a body of composition on the natural and healing arts (*Physica* and *Causa et Curae*).
- 1151-1152 She negotiates regarding the election of her secretary who is also her spiritual daughter, Richardis of Stade, as abbess of Bassum Stift.
- 10.29.1152 Abbess Richardis Stade dies in Bassum Stift (near Bremen) before she could return to Hildegard at Rupertsberg.
- 1152 Friedrich of Barbarossa is elected as the second German king.**
- 1152 Elisabeth of Schoenau (1129-1164), prioress of the Benedictine cloister of Schoenau in Hessen-Nassau, writes down her visions in Liber Viarum Dei (The Book of God’s Works = “Buch der Werke Gottes”).**
- After 1154 Hildegard meets with Emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa in Kaiserpfalz, Ingelheim.
- 1155 Pope Hadrian IV (1154-1159) crowns Friedrich I Barbarossa emperor.**
- Around 1155 Peter Lombard (d. 1160) composes his 4-volume commentary (Sentenzkommentar) which became the existing available theological handbook until the 16<sup>th</sup> century.**
- 1158-1163 Hildegard comes out with her book *Liber Vitae Meritorum* (Book of Life’s Merits), the second of her trilogy of visionary works.
- 1158 Friedrich I Barbarossa conquers Milan and gives it over to its destruction in 1162.**
- 1160-1163 Three major preaching journeys lead Hildegard others to Mainz, Wuerzburg, Kitzingen, Trier and Cologne. She strives to convey awareness for the necessity of a life in harmony with God and all creation.
- 1163-1174 She comes out with her third book *Liber Divinorum Operum* (Book of the Divine Works).
- Around 1165 She founds the Abbey of Eibingen above Ruedesheim which she visited twice a week as acting abbess.
- 1167 Katharer council in Toulouse: Rejection of the rich Catholic Church by the Church of evangelical poverty (Katharer = the Pure-sect movement within the Church)**
- 1170 She makes her fourth preaching journey while visiting Maulbronn, Hirsau, Kirchheim under Teck and Zwiefalten.
- 29.12.70 The holy archbishop Thomas Becket is killed during Vespers in the cathedral of Canterbury on the orders of King Henry II of England, d. 1189).**
- 1174-75 The monk Gottfried starts work on Hildegard’s Vita
- 1178-1178 She comes into conflict with the basilica chapter of Mainz who impose the interdict on the convent of Rupertsberg, because of the burial of an excommunicated nobleman in the cemetery of the cloister. The Mainz episcopate want his body removed from the

- abbey grounds, but Hildegard refused to follow orders in the belief that the nobleman had confessed before his death. The interdict was lifted through the intervention of Bishop Christian of Mainz
- 9.17.1179 Hildegard dies in the Cloister of Rupertsberg at the age of 82. The hagiographer tells of the appearance of two radiant arcs of light which met to form a cross in the sky on the night she died.
- ca. 1180-90 The monk Theodorich finishes the Vita which Gottfried started.
- 1182-1192** **The third Crusade**
- ca. 1223-37 The process of canonization fails for unknown reasons.
- 7.10.2012** **St. Hildegard is proclaimed Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome on October 7, 2012.**
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## A SPIRITUALITY FOR THE CARE OF CREATION IN HILDEGARDS' WRITINGS

### 1. God enfolds humanity and nature in his loving embrace.

“Hildegard wrote explicitly about the natural world as God's creation, charged through and through with His beauty and His energy; entrusted to our care, to be used by us for our benefit, but not to be mangled or destroyed.” We encounter her as a Benedictine for 28 years before she revealed her visions at the age of 42. During this time of her growth and maturing as a Benedictine, she only had the Scriptures, the liturgy and the personal communion with God to form her.

In her works Hildegard shows a spirit-filled vision of the integral relationship of God-Humanity-Nature-and History, guiding us on our way back to the source and summit of life – God Himself. Basic is the role of solidarity and responsibility for the world which falls on man and woman in this totality. “She visualized the human need for redemption totally within the concept of the inseparable unity of the World, Humans, and God” (cosmology, anthropology and theology.)

### 2. The Cosmos is God's Work of Art – the Manifestation of God

This is the subject of her third main work on the world and the human called **Liber divinatorum operum** (The Book of Divine Works completed in 1174 after 11 years of work ). It is a colossal work on the cosmos as the manifestation of God and shines forth as God's work of art.

“Out of the elemental force of God's love flows the creation, the incarnation in the form of the Son and the final redemption of man, who has lost his way, at the end of time in an all-embracing unity. Man appears as a microcosm, who reflects in his physical and spiritual condition the laws of the whole cosmos (macrocosm). In man God has portrayed the other creatures and in the human form ordered the building of the firmament and of all of creation accordingly. Just as an artist has his moulds with which he makes his vessels,” writes Hildegard, “so God forms man after the structure of the world's fabric, after the whole cosmos.” For Hildegard, the basic forms of being are the circle and the cross – the symbols of divine love, union and redemption as well as the signs of time and eternity.”

Her main basic concern can be summarized at the end of her third book in this way: “And again I saw the living light and I heard a voice from heaven which taught me these words: Now praise be to God in his work, man. For the sake of his salvation He fought the mightiest battles on earth...”

### 3. Here are the salient points of this spirituality of interconnectedness summarized.

(Adapted from G. Uhlein 1983, Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen)

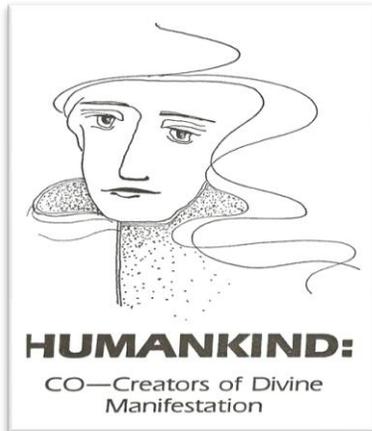
<p>1 I am for all eternity the <u>vigour of the Godhead</u>. I am the divine power through which God decided, sanctioned the creation of all things.</p>	<p>3 I, the fiery life of divine wisdom <u>I ignite the beauty of the plains,</u> <u>I sparkle the waters,</u> <u>I burn in the sun</u> <u>and the moon,</u> <u>and the stars.</u> With wisdom I order ALL rightly Above ALL I determine the truth.</p>	<p>5 With my own mouth <u>I kiss my own chosen creation.</u></p>	<p>7 The air is life, <u>greening and blossoming...</u> All creation is gifted with the <u>ecstasy of God's light.</u></p>
<p>2 I am the breeze that nurtures <u>all things green</u>. I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.</p>	<p>4 Invisible life that sustains ALL <u>I awaken to life everything in every waft of air.</u></p>	<p>6 I uniquely, Lovingly, <u>embrace every image</u> I have made out of the earth's clay</p>	<p>8 As the creator loves his creation so the creation loves the Creator. Creation of course was fashioned to be adorned, to be showered to be gifted with the love of the Creator <u>The entire world has been embraced by this kiss.</u></p>
<p>9 The earth is at the same time mother, she is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human. The earth of humankind contains <u>all moistness</u> <u>all verdancy,</u> <u>all germinating power.</u></p>	<p>10 In just such a manner the vitality of the earth's elements comes from the strength of the Creator. It is <u>this vigor that hugs the world:</u> <u>warming, moistening, firming,</u> <u>greening.</u></p>	<p>11 When a forest does not green vigorously, then it is no longer a forest. When a tree does not blossom, it cannot bear fruit. Likewise, a person cannot be fruitful without <u>the greening power of faith</u> and an understanding of Scriptures.</p>	

### HILDEGARD'S INTEGRAL VIEW OF GOD, THE HUMAN, AND THE WORLD OF NATURE AND HOW IT IS CORRUPTED BY THE SELFISHNESS OF THE HUMAN.

The unity of vision of Hildegard regarding God, humanity, and nature is exemplified in III. Book of **Scivias**. Hildegard shows a good grasp of the essential integration among these three realities or three worlds --- the world of God the Creator/Redeemer/Sanctifier/, the world of the human, and the world of nature and creation. She sees how the human has put aside the commandments of God and how this has led to a collision of human life with God and at the same time with nature. Instead of being a unity, the three worlds are now in a collision course with one another, where man/woman turns his/her back to God and his dominion in order to claim and control the forces of nature for his/her own interests.

The human being chooses to lord it over the laws of nature and re-order it in his/her own image, wielding power over the atom or the human genes, yet powerless to master his/her own situation. The world in turn goes against the human and becomes vindictive and uncontrollable. For example, so much agricultural land of our indigenous peoples are being sacrificed to big development projects. The project APECO in Casiguran, Quezon will dislocate about 300 hectares of farm lands, affecting about 3,000 families or 15,000 individuals—but this is only the tip of the iceberg, In the long term, more of the 12,900 hectares and hundreds of thousands of people will be affected. Also, much of the forest cover of our lovely Philippines has been reduced to 22% of its original lushness due to illegal logging. No wonder that the lack of trees in our country has opened us up to deadly floods and tsunamis so rampant in recent years!

Here once more are the salient points of the humans' responsibility to care for the environment as taught by Hildegard ( adapted from G. Uhlein).



As often as the elements,  
the elements of the world  
are violated  
by ill-treatment,  
so God will cleanse them.

God will cleanse them  
thru the sufferings,  
thru the hardships  
of humankind.

Man is an allusion to the divinity of  
the God-head; woman is a reference to the  
humanity of the Son of God.

Thus,  
humankind, man and woman,  
is enthroned over creation  
and all creatures are in the care of  
men and women.

Humankind,  
in this way,  
is more than creation.  
It is the guardian of creation.

God desires  
that all the world  
be pure in his sight.  
The earth should not be injured.  
The earth should not be destroyed.

Good People,  
Most royal greening verdancy,  
rooted in the sun,  
you shine with radiant light.  
In this circle of earthly existence  
you shine  
so finely,  
it surpasses understanding.  
God hugs you.  
You are encircled  
by the arms  
of the mystery of God.

The marvels of God  
are not brought forth  
from one's self.  
Rather,  
it is more like a chord,  
a sound that is played.  
The tone does not come  
out of the chord itself,  
but rather,  
thru the touch  
of the musician.

I am, of course,  
the lyre and harp  
of God's kindness.

## 1. Hildegard sends us an urgent message in an attitude of hope

The message of Hildegard is an urgent wake up call from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to our 21<sup>st</sup> century. She sees our humanity as mortally sick and offers not only a diagnosis, but also a life-giving medicine. The recovery from such an illness would first of all be to confess its sins to water and the air because it has polluted them. At the same time Hildegard's words serve as a therapy to humanity to lift it up. In the words of Sr. Cecilia Bonn, an Eibingen nun and writer, "we do not need to fall into panic or resignation in our powerlessness before the giants of business, politics and technology. In her vision Hildegard stresses again and again what a powerful strength there is in all of humanity. Although the human being is miserably little in comparison with the whole world, he can do much when he opens himself to the workings of God, when he lets God into this world, when he decides for the good in all freedom."

## 2. Humans – one with all that lives -ought to take responsibility for the fate of the world out of solidarity with all of the living.

Indeed God has entrusted into our hands, to each one of us the whole reality that is our world: to build or to destroy. First of all we ourselves are interwoven into its network with all that we all are: our temperaments, living conditions, and dangers: We are rooted into nature through our mortal bodies and branch out and blossom from nature, like the twigs of a tree. "Thus, we take over responsibility for the fate of this world according to the mandate of the Lord precisely because of our solidarity with all that lives."

How can we have so much power? Hildegard says: ‘From the heart of the human being there is a path which connects to the building and control panels of the cosmos and of history.’ We can pull the levers for good.

## **LEARNING FROM HILDEGARD SOME ATTITUDINAL CHANGES IN DAILY LIVING WHICH WOULD BENEFIT NATURE**

This section will just be a cursory glance at the monastic practices which Hildegard propagated to care for the environment. They could challenge us to embrace our duty and responsibility to the earth through the practical tasks we have at hand.

### **1. We are to develop a cosmic vision through the practice of the arts.**

This is not just a concept but a way of life to heal the psyche and the cosmos. Art is a sure pathway. Hildegard’s illuminations (miniature paintings), music, poetry, drama and her implicit invitation to make art our way of passing on a cosmic vision are different ways of healing. Thus, this healing is not purely of a rational nature but an attitude which brings the world inside us and the world outside into a unity.

M. D. Chenu, a Dominican researcher in St. Aquinas’ writings states that such a cosmic consciousness makes "nature and history interlock". In other words, “Hildegard holds the key to healing the dangerous dualism between nature and history, creation and salvation, mysticism and prophecy, that has dominated much of Western intellectual life for centuries.” That is why, Chenu continues “Aquinas' scholasticism has failed to return a cosmos to the West...” However, Aquinas is correct when he says “that the individual's fulfilment can only occur in "a universe that is itself unified." It is then right to say that “Hildegard’s kind of spiritual cosmology is key to that healing experience of oneness. This is one reason she resorts to the “*mandala*” so often to express compassion or healing.”

### **2. In the art of healing we can turn to art.**

As a visionary and a prophet Hildegard moves within the world of symbols, images, myths and wholistic forms of expression – the liturgy, music, painting, sculpture, iconography, poetry and literature, among others. They offer a balance to the world of things which we try to control and manage, to test and measure: science, technology, media, and human behaviour. Hildegard, on the contrary, writes of colors – light and darkness, of forms – the circle and the cross, and of intimacy – God’s kiss on his creation and the delights of sexual love. In the face of the drivenness of our culture and its focus on competition and success, she shows us the natural flow of living things in their “verdancy”, “greening”, “moistness”, and “firming”. It might as well be that the “green movement” and the upsurge of initiatives like the “Greenpeace” in our world have their counterpart in Hildegard’s lively awareness of the greening power of God’s creation, easily “mangled” and violated by human beings greedy for power and profit.

Art as practised by Hildegard in her miniatures, symphonies, drama, and prophetic compositions reclaims for us humans a “lust” for the beauty of just being, of just living, and just trusting in the forces of the Almighty who sustains all things and delights in them. This symbolizes the social ground of her concern for the environment, for healing the relationships among bishops, popes and kings, and for acting out of justice even in conflict and pain. We

recall her passion for medicinal plants, animals, and earth to cure maladies. We remember her spirited engagements with Pope Eugene III, King Frederick Barbarossa and her travels to reform various convents in Northern Germany. Finally, we see how even an interdict could not bend a will dedicated to God's will as she perceived it in the case of the excommunicated nobleman whom she buried on monastery grounds against the will of the Church authorities.

### 3. The use of “*mandalas*” in Hildegard’s works on healing is a symbolic form of unifying opposites.



A practical form of art to which Hildegard often has recourse is the “*mandala*”. It is an expression of how she views the unification of our inner and outer world – of the physical and the sacred space. One such “*mandala*” is the “illumination” or painting of the greening of the world in all seasons. *Mandalas* are examples of “maps of the cosmos” originating from the East and the medieval West. They lead us on the road to a “liberated consciousness” which like our primeval consciousness is fundamentally one. This illumination symbolizes the presence of reintegration and holistic relating which leads to healing. “For Hildegard, her “*mandalas*” become a primary means by which the microcosm/macrocosm, the human and the universe, are brought together again.” As M.D. Chenu says:

“She awakens Christianity to some of the wisdom of the ancient women's religions and thereby offers healing to the male/female split in religion. She awakens the psyche to the cosmos and thereby offers healing to both. She awakens to the holiness of the earth and thereby heals the awful split between matter and spirit in the West. She awakens art to science and science to music and religion to science. And thereby heals the dangerous rift between science and religion that has dominated culture the past 300 years in the West. She heals the isolation of the artist from the deepest intellectual and spiritual currents of the past. She illumines. "In illuminating darkness, she speaks out." She illumines us today more than she illumined or dreamed of illuminating **anyone in her own time.**”

### 4. Nature cures.

Hildegard turns physician in applying knowledge of medicinal plants and trees, precious gems and stones and animal behavior to cure physical and mental ailments. She was very much into the medieval beliefs of “humours” or sensations of hot, cold, moist and dry to heal everyday sicknesses. She put her knowledge together in her two books – *Physica* and *Causae et Curae*. Although a number of her prognoses are anomalous and confused, yet modern day doctors do not just put them aside but study them as part of medieval lore.

She wrote extensively on the application of herbs to countless diseases and their symptoms which remind us of the practices of the *arbularyos* in our barrios. For example, she recommended the concoction of honey and wine with tormentil to be drunk at night to fight fever, because tormentil is “cold”. Or, she prescribed tancy which is “hot” and “moist” to cure the common cold. Evergreens were particularly “hot” and could ward off evil spirits. In the area of animals life, she wrote that birds like the sparrow hawk are good to fight off “lustfulness. Likewise, fish should feature generously in our religious diet. For epilepsy, worms were the best cure if the worms were newly emerged from dug earth and not forcibly picked out. In the case

of precious stones, she said that gems were best applied externally, or if soaked in wine, the wine of the gem could be ingested. The emerald, for example, was effective in curing heart pains, headache and colds. The sapphire could improve mental powers if held in the mouth first thing in the morning.

Our sisters in Seoul Priory who have developed a Hildegard Center have adopted the use of gems and herbs in their crafts and kitchen to bring the native wisdom of Hildegard to their patients and customers. Handcrafted rosary beads, necklaces, arm bands and the like have become popular with both young and old. Together with this financial venture they bring people to get acquainted with Hildegard, her music, and her mystical arts.

In her *Physica* Hildegard also ventured into very human and earthy topics which touched on sexual matters for counselling: sexual desire, sexual pleasure, intercourse, conception and childbirth, and the difference between a man and a woman in sexual relationships. For example, she compared “man’s desire to a brushfire, woman’s to continuous but gentle sunlight” (cf. Jane Bobko, *Vision: the Life and Music of Hildegard of Bingen*). She had a positive appreciation of sexual love as life-affirming, yet she states the fact that the Fall of Adam and Eve made it lose some of its original beauty. And – unless man and woman loved one another at the conception of the child, God cannot act in perfect accord with his creation.

I quote P. Harrison on Hildegard’s writings regarding orgasm to show her naturalness in counselling people about sexuality: “When a woman is making love with a man, a sense of heat in her brain, which brings with it sensual delight, communicates the taste of that delight during the act and summons forth the emission of the man’s seed. And when the seed has fallen into its place, that vehement heat descending from her brain draws the seed to itself and holds it, and soon the woman’s sexual organs contract, and all the parts that are ready to open up during the time of menstruation now close, in the same way as a strong man can hold something enclosed in his fist.”

It is opined that Hildegard’s knowledge of the topic must have come from her own experience and from counselling women and nuns in those days. She had the prophetic audacity and boldness to write about sexuality, orgasm, conception, birth and the sexes with positive conviction. Thus, Matthew Fox regards her as the forerunner of feminism, the acceptance of the body and environmentalism,

## CONCLUSION:

I conclude with a prayer by Hildegard used on Earth Day 1990 from the North American Conference on Religion and Ecology.

**The earth is at the same time mother,  
She is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human.  
She is the mother of all, for contained in her are the seeds of all.  
The earth of humankind contains all moistness, all verdancy, all germinating  
power. It is in so many ways fruitful. All creation comes from it. Yet it forms not  
only the basic raw material for humankind, but also the substance of the  
incarnation of God’s son.**

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## Reflection Questions

1. What will you change in your life if you would develop that “cosmic vision” which Hildegard says is a healing and unifying approach to God, the Human, and Ecology?
  2. From this cursory introduction to Hildegard and her care for creation, what aspect of her teachings resonates with you? Why?
  3. What in Hildegard’s life awakens amazement and admiration in you? Do you feel that she could be a model for young people today or does her message seem to be an “utterance in a foreign tongue?” Elaborate on your perception.
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