



The impact and effect of Hildegard of Bingen on Christianity cannot be underestimated. Through her significant contribution in the wide-ranging areas of art & music, science, theological development, Church reform, and social welfare, Hildegard remains one of the single greatest female influences on Christianity from the early medieval period.

As she was sent to an anchorage attached to a Benedictine Church at a young age, her early spiritual life was characterised by exposure to music as a form of spiritual devotion. Her early years were similarly shaped by her experience of visions, which she believed to be sent by God. These influences lead her to compose numerous musical pieces, which attempted to express spiritual beliefs through song, as well as utilising song and music as a form of devotion in themselves. Her compositions continue to be popular in contemporary Christian worship, particularly within monastic circles.



Hildegard also completed a series of paintings, entitled the "Illuminations", which visually depicted her ~~own~~ visions. These paintings were significant in drawing attention to the importance of Christian symbolism within art, and this led to increased interest and study in the field, which is still of significant consideration in ~~the~~ contemporary art.

As well as writing books that strictly delineated the revelations that came to her as a result of her visions (such as her notable work "Scivias", or "Know the Ways of the Lord"), Hildegard wrote several works that were concerned with various aspects of natural science. Her "Physicae" and "Causae et Curae" in particular dealt with the metaphysical properties of natural objects (such as stones) based on the Aristotelian system of physiology, with strong emphasis placed on the manifest role (and presence) of the divine within all earthly creation.

Her writings extended to her significant contribution



to Christian theology at the time, with her account of the life of St Disibod also including a critique of the ~~church~~ church (particularly the monastic) practices at the time. Hildegardi's preaching "tours" were also highly theologically significant; she preached directly to the laypeople (a practice seldom witnessed in the medieval church), and her theological discourse were significantly inclusive of the role of women, and the common people in general, in the Church. She placed heavy emphasis on the divine feminine, a facet of Christian theology commonly disregarded at the time, stating that "every woman who gives birth helps to clothe ~~the~~ God in humanity." Such teachings had a significant effect on the development and expression of the medieval Christian church, setting precedents for the involvement of women and laypeople in their own spirituality.

She further significantly contributed to Church reformation through her criticism of monastic excess in her biographical ~~account~~ account of the life



of St Disibod, in which she suggests that leading a monastic life - rather than actively working amongst the people - was not truly doing God's work. Furthermore, her significant effect on this reformation was epitomised through her own actions, as she actively went out and preached to the laypeople, in an attempt to manifestly perform God's work in a manner that would be of spiritual and social significance. This again had significant effects on the development and expression of medieval Christianity, as Hildegard encouraged different approaches and methodology for the ideal of the clergy doing God's work.

Additionally, her own exegeses - particularly those regarding the Gospels and the Athanasian Creed - encouraged clergy to return more closely to the Scriptures as the source of Divine guidance and inspiration. As such, she significantly influenced medieval Church reform, towards a closer relationship with both the Scriptures and the laypeople.



Hildegard's attitude of inclusion of, and assistance to, the lay people directly reflected her strong interests in the area of social welfare. As a particularly strong and influential female figure, she was significant in allowing increasing participation of women in their own spirituality. She achieved this both through her own informed theological writings and through the increased emphasis on both the Divine feminine, as well as the presence of God in the lives of the everyday people - including women. This was significant in setting a precedent within the medieval Christian Church that <sup>partially</sup> dispelled the previously held prejudices against the role of women in the development and expression of Christianity.

Hildegard of Bingen was a highly influential and significant female figure, whose effect on the development and expression of Christianity in the areas of art, music, science, theology, Church reformation and social welfare can still be discerned within contemporary Christian ~~practices~~ practices.