



Selected Writings

Hildegard of Bingen, Mark Atherton (Translation)

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Benedictine nun, poet and musician, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was one of the most remarkable figures of the Middle Ages. She undertook preaching tours throughout the German empire at the age of sixty, and was consulted not only by her religious contemporaries but also by kings and emperors, yet it is largely for her apocalyptic and mystical writings that she is remembered. This volume includes selections from her three visionary works, her treatises on medicine and the natural world, her devotional songs, and fascinating letters to prominent figures of her time. Dealing with such eternal subjects as the relationship between humans and nature, and men and women, Hildegard's works show her to be a wide-ranging thinker who created such fresh, startling images and ideas that her writings have been compared to Dante and Blake.

Selected Writings Details

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From Reader Review Selected Writings for online ebook

Mikolajl says

Fascinating read. From incredible visions (some say inspired by God), through religious interpretations to beautiful letters.

Gives a lot of insight into the life of this interesting and talented woman. But also into the life and customs of the times she lived in (the XII-th century).

Brandon Cook says

I good selection to introduce readers to the life and works of this remarkable woman.

The only thing missing are the illustrations of her visions which were sorely needed for the allegorical passages, but a good collection regardless.

P.S. Beckmann says

Hildegard von Bingen, the Sybil of the Rhine, was a 12th century nun and Christian mystic. Mark Atherton's translation seems to preserve the authenticity of her medieval musings without attempting to convert the phrasing to accommodate modern readers. I read the book to gain insight into the mind, thoughts, and emotions of a historical character, and Mr. Atherton's translation didn't get in the way of that. His introduction was helpful in that he sets up the modern reader, who may be biased to discredit a medieval prophetess, with an explanation of how a medieval nun's meditative reading could be understood to lead to mystical visions.

During a misogynist period, Hildegard gains extraordinary privilege to comment on politics of the day and to leave the convent to travel and preach. Her musings are intriguing. I didn't find the discography of her music as fascinating. My interest was piqued by her thoughtful musings, very intentional, never rambling, on subjects ranging from the mysteries of God, thunder and lightning, the sun and moon, the cosmos, and the healing power of sapphires. Scattered throughout the excerpts are also wonderful allegories that give meaningful insight into the mind of a 12th century nun.

Leah says

Four stars for being slightly out of date and not enough poetry for my taste. :P

David says

I picked this one up as preparation for a class I'm teaching at my church, as together we review Hildegard's writings, her life...and her music.

Mostly her music, which is just so radiantly glorious, ethereal and mystic in the best possible way.

The book is a solid resource, a good overview of her writings, well selected and...hmmm.

It's a wee bit dry, in the way of much scholarly writing. It's also, um. How to put this? It's not hagiographic. Meaning, you see all of Hildegard, and all of Hildegard is "interesting," but perhaps not in the way I'd anticipated. Meaning, there's a bunch of stuff in there that's waaaaay esoteric. Because she was that way, being medieval and all.

The gemstones-are-magic stuff, for example. It's...er...let's just say that's not particularly useful in my Christian walk. And her oracles offered to political leaders? Hmmm.

That's not a liability of the book, but rather my perhaps overinflated and culturally mediated expectations.

A three point five. And the music? Wow. Still just wow.

Vincent says

This was a very tedious, repetitive read. However, I am a firm believer in reading and judging a work within the context in which it was written, and for that I can appreciate how revolutionary Hildegard of Bingen was for her time. In fact, many feminist historians trace the roots of modern feminism to Hildegard, who commanded the respect of popes and bishops, composed music, and wrote treatises on natural history and medicinal plants. But she is most famous for her visions which she claimed were delivered from God, but were most likely the result of chronic migraines and a vivid imagination. She collected these in her *Scivias* around 1152, following each with an inspired interpretation regarding their divine symbolism.

The Ways of the Lord, published by HarperOne, is a selective collection of the *Scivias*, and makes for an odd book. Hildegard's psychedelic visions are given little explanation or context besides a short forward by former NASA engineer Homer Hickam, most famous for his book *Rocket Boys: A Memoir*, which was the basis for the film "October Sky". It is never clear why Hickam is chosen to introduce this book or what his connection or expertise is in regards to medieval feminine mysticism. Though he states that her contributions to feminism will be clear by reading her *Scivias*, it is instead revealed in her biography, which receives little detail here.

As for the visions themselves, if you are a reader who enjoys Catholic theology or apologetics, or are prone to believe in the divine inspiration of Hildegard, you may find the *Scivias* compelling. However, I do not count myself in any of those groups. *The Ways of the Lord* gave me some insight into medieval mysticism, but my eyes blurred and struggled their way through most of it.

Katie says

Hildegard of Bingen is an absolutely wonderful writer to read, and she's one of those rare historical figures who manage to really pop out of their historical context and attain a sort of reality all their own. Her areas of interest touch on theology, mysticism, current events, nature, medicine, linguistics and music. She was in touch with (and often gave orders to) nearly all the major figures of her time. Her writing is clear and lyrical, and she has a very distinctive sort of mysticism that's very vivid and visual, focused especially on greenness, nature, and growth. Everyone should read one of her works at some point in time.

That said, I'm not sure I'd really recommend this edition. It's nice for an overview, but the selections it pulls tend to be really brief and jump around all over the place, so it's hard to get really into any of her works. I'd recommend instead Scivias for a good edition of her visions or Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works: With Letters and Songs. If you're interested in her medical writings, go with Hildegard von Bingen's Physica: The Complete English Translation of Her Classic Work on Health and Healing, and if you'd like to see how she interacted with other players of the period take a look at The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen, Vol. 1.

Morgan Djuna Sorais Harrigan says

I always felt drawn to Saint Hildegard of Bingen after seeing a book of her journal entries when I was 6. Her writings are beautiful and knowledgeable. I love what she has to say about nature and medicine.

Trunks says

Hildegard always blows my mind!

If you are looking for Hildegard stuff
check out this awesome website:
<http://www.hildegardchristianmystic.com>

Peace & love,

Matthew Richey says

I wanted to like this... I really did. The mystics just do not resonate with me. I read them every once in a while, kind of hoping they will. This reminded me of the Shepherd of Hermas (which I also did not like). If you liked that, you may like this. I did not.

Joe Gibson says

Incredible writings of an inspiring Christian Mystic.
Highly recommended.

If you love Hildegard, please visit

<http://www.hildegardchristianmystic.com>

Thank you.

God bless,

Matt says

Hildegard of Bingen is one of those rare individuals that people of different ideologies try to claim as one of their own. She is held in esteem by feminists who consider her a proto-feminist and yet is also acclaimed by the Catholic Church as a Doctor of the Church.

This volume contains a representative sample of her many writings on numerous subjects, and the quality of the material varies based on subject and form. The songs are quite beautiful (It's not hard to see why numerous discs of her music have been recorded), the treatises on science read as awkward and sometimes embarrassing by their out-dated information, the letters have a historical curiosity for those interested in her life and often reflect her own visions and teachings. But through it all, one comes across recurring images and certain idiosyncrasies in her language.

Objectively speaking, I guess this should be rated as 3 stars out of 5. However, because I have a bit of interest in St. Hildegard of Bingen, I found the collection to be quite interesting (Even though I found myself skipping pages in the sections on gemstones) and consequently rated it higher than I would have were it somebody else.

Johanna says

I mostly enjoyed readin of her life's story, and how others percieved her-
Among her visions there were certain passages of interest - and the imagery was interesting too, in most cases.

It was interesting to read of the thoughts around the planets, and how the sun, the moon, and the rain "works" - but I believe that would have been more "common" 12th century thought than exactly her own..

The one thing that struck me was at the end of the book, where there is retold the instance in which her parents decide to oblate her to the church - after she apparently could see/predict what the calf of a pregnant cow would look like (pattern wise). To me... would this have been 400 years later, this prediction would have been -far- off anything suggesting divine grace.. more likely the opposite.

It really tells a lot how view points change-- nothing never stays the same -- which perhaps is a good thing.
