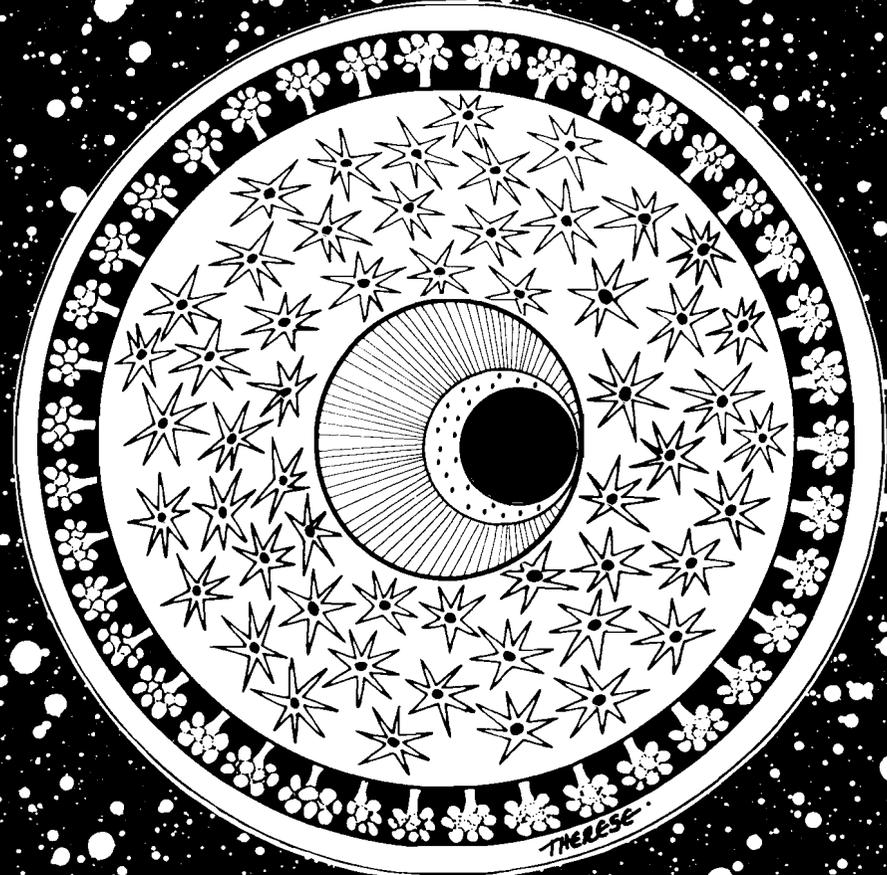


HILDEGARD
OF BINGEN



AND HER VISION
OF THE FEMININE

Nancy Fierro

Foreword

During a question-and-answer session at a recent lecture in Los Angeles, historian Gerda Lerner was asked to name ten or more women who should be well-known but have been left out of mainstream history. One of the first women she named was Hildegard of Bingen, the twelfth-century abbess.

Along with St. Augustine in the fourth century and Martin Luther in the Reformation, Hildegard was a powerful leader not only in her own century but in impact of her ideas on future centuries. In fact, her works are back in print today in numerous translations because of the richness they offer to a world wrung dry by reason, technology, and male dominance. Hildegard gives us a sense of God's intimate presence — not a male God of punishment but a Divine Feminine in whom we on earth live and move like a baby in a cosmic womb.

Dr. Nancy Fierro, a member of Mount St. Mary's College music faculty, has studied Hildegard's music, read her works, and shares in her commitment to life as a woman religious. A professional speaker as well, Nancy gives lively and witty lectures on Hildegard which include excerpts of Hildegard's music and slides of her art. In order to make knowledge of Hildegard accessible to a wider audience, Nancy has distilled from her lectures this brief introduction of Hildegard's life and accomplishments. By reading it, twentieth-century women and men can regain part of the heritage that should have been given to them as they grew up. For those who want to learn more about Hildegard and the Divine Feminine, names of other books and audiotapes are provided.

As a colleague of Dr. Fierro, with a specialization in medieval literature and women's studies, I am delighted to share in introducing you to Hildegard of Bingen. For women today her life and achievements have special relevance. In *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, Lerner sums up Hildegard's significance to

us: "The life of Hildegard of Bingen exemplifies the breakthrough of a female genius who managed to create an entirely new role for herself and other women without ostensibly violating the patriarchal confines within which she functions." I invite you to read this monograph and expand your own sense of who you are and what you can be.

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