

# Entrepreneurship and Faith: What a 12th-Century Nun Has to Say to 21st-Century Entrepreneurs

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**ABSTRACT:** Entrepreneurship flourishes in the 21st century, and women have benefited from this trend. Therefore it is remarkable that one of the most written-about women entrepreneurs is not from the 21st century but from the 12th — Hildegard of Bingen. Hildegard was an abbess of a monastery in what is now Germany and was famous for her writings, visions, and music. This paper utilizes the entrepreneurship literature to show how as an entrepreneurial woman, Hildegard dealt with difficulties similar to those faced by 21st century women entrepreneurs. In addition, the paper examines Goossen's proposed Christian Model of Entrepreneurship (2004) and suggests that Hildegard was an example of a person who fits this model.

## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship flourishes in the 21st century. An entrepreneur is a person who sees innovations and opportunities that others do not (Drucker, 1985), is willing to take risks to utilize those opportunities (Schumpeter, 1942; Siggelkow & Rivkin, 2005), and by doing so creates wealth and shifts economic resources into a level of higher use to society (Galbraith, 1991; Say, [1803] 2001). While every new business is not entrepreneurial, entrepreneurs tend to create new businesses (Drucker, 1985; Hmieleski & Baron, 2009).

Entrepreneurial opportunities increase when there is discontinuous economic change (Schumpeter, 1942). Such an economy began in the 20th century and accelerated in the 21st. Entrepreneurs, through their innovations, help societies adjust to change (Drucker, 1985; Schumpeter 1911/1982; Parker & Stacey, 1994). Appropriately, in recent years both entrepreneurship itself and the academic study of the area have proliferated.

Women, particularly, have benefited from this trend. For example, in the United States women now own over 25% of all businesses (Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007) and have created firms at a rate exceeding the national average (American Express Open, 2011). About 46% of

private firms in the U.S. are woman-owned; this represents approximately 8.1 million firms with revenues of close to \$1.3 trillion (Dell Ray, 2011). Internationally, access to microcredit has permitted women to open microbusiness at unprecedented rates (Moore, 2008). For example, Grameen Bank's 2011 Annual Report reports that 96% of its borrowers were women who used the money to create a number of small enterprises in a culture where few women have access to education or opportunity (Grameen, 2011). The 21st century would seem to be a prime time for women entrepreneurs.

Therefore it is remarkable that possibly one of the most written-about entrepreneurs ever was a 12th century nun, Hildegard of Bingen. A recent internet search (November, 2012) found over 502,000 entries for Hildegard and over 4,500 books written about her. Most of these involve Hildegard's visions, art, music, writings, healing arts, and spiritual leadership. However, the descriptions of her life and activities suggest that Hildegard had significant entrepreneurial talent.

There have been calls for considering faith integration from the perspective of Christians in other centuries and faith traditions (i.e. Seibert, 2011; Smith, 2005). The life of Hildegard is an example of living faith-integration in entrepreneurship. Hildegard was not only an intuitively

successful entrepreneur; she can be something of a role model for godly entrepreneurs in the 21st century.

This paper will discuss Hildegard as entrepreneur, woman entrepreneur, and Christian entrepreneur. First, we will use the entrepreneurship literature to present an historical perspective on how entrepreneurship was both similar and different in the 12th and 21st centuries. For example, research suggests that entrepreneurs rely more strongly on nonlinear thinking processes, such as insight, creativity, and intuition, than other business people (Carland, Carland, & Busbin, 1997; Cunningham, Gerrard, Schoch & Hong, 2002). In her century, Hildegard demonstrated significant nonlinear thinking in her activities such as music publishing and preaching tours — activities that women in her culture would normally not even consider or be permitted to undertake.

Secondly, the paper will extend the literature on women as entrepreneurs by examining an historic example of such a person. Women entrepreneurs often have different motivations and face a different set of challenges than their male colleagues. Hildegard, who lived in a medieval society, nevertheless faced difficulties very similar to those faced by 21st century women entrepreneurs and overcame them in culturally appropriate ways.

Thirdly, the paper will contribute to the discussion on whether there is a Christian Model of Entrepreneurship as has been proposed by Richard Goossen (2004). Goossen suggested that a genuinely Christian entrepreneur would demonstrate his or her passion in a way that is rooted in five core worldview elements: 1) an overarching “God-Narrative” focused on Christ; 2) a vertical perspective with God in authority and treasure in heaven; 3) a calling to discipleship, including difficulties; 4) use of personal gifts for the whole community; and 5) a focus on God’s providence. We suggest that Hildegard is an example of a person who fits the Christian Model of Entrepreneurship.

Finally, this paper presents a rarely discussed view of a well-known person. Most of the books and articles written about Hildegard stress her visions, artistic contributions, or medical knowledge (Cantor, 1994). Very few focus on her role as a Christian female entrepreneur. The paper will augment the literature on the historic persona of Hildegard. There are difficulties with using an historic person as an example. Some would argue that a study of Hildegard should remain in historical context and any applications should be to the time and culture in which she lived; others would disagree (Crew, 1980; Spiegel, 2007). It is outside the scope of this paper to enter into

this extensive philosophical debate. However, while the authors understand that Hildegard was a woman of the 12th century not the 21st, we nevertheless find that the work of God in her life illustrates timeless patterns.

The first section of the paper will present a short biography of Hildegard of Bingen and a description of the world in which she lived. Next, the entrepreneurial literature is discussed, first in general, then focusing on gender-specific issues, and Hildegard’s activities are compared and contrasted. In the final section, we discuss Hildegard in relation to the Christian Model of Entrepreneurship.

## HILDEGARD OF BINGEN AND HER WORLD

### A Brief Biography of Hildegard

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a celebrity in 12th century Europe, not unlike some well-known preachers of our century. Her theology and medical books were top sellers, her preaching tours were highly popular, and her original music and plays were performed by the best musicians and actors (Nolan, 1994). She was the only woman of her age accepted as an authoritative voice on Christian doctrine, and was the first woman permitted by a Pope to write theological books (Dronke, 1984). Women from the royal families came to her, eager to be instructed by this well-known scholar (Flanagan, 1989).

Hildegard was born in 1098 in Bermersheim, just south of what is now Mainz, Germany. She was the tenth child of a noble family. When she was eight years old, her family dedicated her to God by placing her in a Benedictine community of about six or seven nuns led by a famous anchoress and seer, Jutta of Sponheim (Flanagan, 1989). Sending “extra” daughters to monasteries was a common practice at the time, but this placement also suggests that Hildegard was an unusually intelligent child. In her time and culture women did not go to school. By putting her in this community, her family was giving this gifted daughter an opportunity for an education.

At some point, Jutta’s community became connected with the adjacent male monastery of St. Disibodenberg, and Jutta put her students under the tutorship of the monk, Volmar. Volmar became Hildegard’s trusted confessor and secretary (Newman, 1989). When Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard was named prioress of the nuns, under the authority of the Abbot of St. Disibodenberg. She was 38 years old (Flanagan, 1989).

*Visions.* Several years later, Hildegard reported vision-ary experiences to Volmar, who had her write them down.

Mindful of Satanic deception, they both prayed about what to do about these writings. Volmar ultimately decided to show them to Kuno, the Abbot of St. Disibodenberg, and then to the local archbishop, Arnold of Manz. Arnold ordered Hildegard to continue writing. After some resistance, she complied and documented her visions<sup>1</sup> and insights in a book she named *Scivias*, “Know the Ways of God” (Newman, 1989).

*Scivias* is a collection of twenty-five or twenty-six visions that Hildegard said come from the “voice of heaven” (Flanagan, 1989, p. 58) and that sum up Christian soteriological history (Nolan, 1994). In a period where Bible commentaries and study aids did not exist, these visions and their explanations helped other Christians better understand the work of God in salvation.

Nevertheless Hildegard was still concerned about whether her visions should be published. She sent an early copy of *Scivias* to a trusted friend, Bernard of Clairvaux, France’s famous saintly author and abbot. Bernard was so impressed by her theological understanding that he presented *Scivias* to Pope Eugene who read it aloud during the Council of Trier (1147-1148). The council approved of her writing because of the soundness of her doctrine and because she did not claim to be writing on her own authority but as the “mouthpiece of God” (McAvoy, 2000).

It should be noted that in saying that her visions were the “voice of heaven” and that she spoke as the “mouthpiece of God,” Hildegard was not claiming extra Biblical authority or that her work was equal to Scripture. Rather, this was a culturally appropriate way to express that she, a woman, was not the authority behind these messages and that she was merely doing what God told her to do (McAvoy, 2000; Newman, 1987). Ahlgren suggests that this formula served two purposes. First, it confirmed Hildegard’s humility, obedience, and submission to the church hierarchy and through them, to God. Secondly, it implied that this vision was from God, otherwise how could a mere woman speak with such authority? This formula also referenced Paul’s discussion of how the weak things of this world confound the wise (I Cor. 1:27) (Ahlgren, 1993).

Throughout her life, Hildegard’s writings remained theologically orthodox (Barrow, 1991) and she was praised by Pope Benedict as being sincerely loyal to the doctrine of the Christian Church (Flanagan, 1989). Benedict said that the visions of Hildegard showed “the seal of an authentic experience of the Holy Spirit, the source of every charism” (as cited in Flanagan, 1989).

**Move to St. Disibodenberg.** While Hildegard was still writing *Scivias*, she reported to her archbishop that she

was commanded by God to leave the co-ed monastery of St. Disibodenberg (Cantor, 1994). Because the nuns did not have external financial support, this was a risky move. Abbot Kuno was apparently unhappy about the move; however the issue was resolved by Archbishop Arnold of Mainz who gave Hildegard a fairly lenient charter in 1158 (Flanagan, 1989). Hildegard used connections with family and friends to raise money to purchase land about 30 km away in Rupertsberg (Flanagan, 1989). By 1165, so many women had joined the Rupertsberg monastery, that Hildegard established a second community at Bingen (Dronke, 1984).

**Writings and Preaching Tours.** Upon receiving papal license to continue her writing (about 1153), Hildegard became an instant celebrity. Volmar and some of the learned nuns at Rupertsberg mass-produced *Scivias* by hand, and the theological treatise was read and discussed in ecclesiastical circles from Vienna to Bremen (Cantor, 1994; Flanagan, 1989).

In 1158, Hildegard began the second volume of her visionary trilogy, the *Liber Vitae Meritorum*, “Book of Life’s Merits” which was completed in 1163. Her third volume, *Liber Divinorum Operum*, “Book of Divine Works,” was written between 1163 and 1173. At the same time she was writing music (some of her songs were apparently known in Paris as early as 1148) and plays based on Scripture and *Scivias* (Newman 1989). Hildegard also wrote two scientific medical encyclopedias entitled *Physicia* and *Causae et Curae*.

Hildegard went on four extended preaching tours throughout Germany to men’s and women’s monasteries and to urban cathedrals to preach to the clergy (Cantor, 1994; Haskins, 1955). These tours were extremely popular, not unlike the tours of a modern rock star. Though she endured a long illness, her final preaching tour was apparently undertaken about 1171 when she was 73 years old (Haskins, 1955). In addition, she wrote more than three hundred letters, seventy hymns, and a glossary for a modified Latin alphabet with invented words, which some speculate was used for communication with her nuns (Dronke, 1984). Her music is still sung and played; recordings of her hymns and songs can be found at classical music sources and on YouTube ([youtube.com/hildegard\\_von\\_bingen](https://www.youtube.com/hildegard_von_bingen)).

### Hildegard’s World

**The Economy in 12th Century Europe.** According to Schumpeter (1911/1982) entrepreneurship flourishes in a discontinuous economy. Hildegard (1098-1179) grew

up and lived in such an economy in Europe which was adjusting from the effects of the first (1095-1099) and second Crusade (1147-1149). The movement of large numbers of people across Europe and the Middle East created great social changes, including a breakdown in the rigid feudal system (Heilbroner, 1975).

Another effect of the Crusades was to change the European economy from guild/craft to mercantilism. With new products coming from the east and travel becoming more common, local exchanges of goods and textiles gave way to long-distance trade and mercantile centers (Anderson & Zinsser, 2000). During Hildegard's lifetime disruptive new technologies, such as the water mill and the invention of book-keeping, emerged (Heilbroner, 1975). Furthermore the extensive casualties caused by the Crusades increased opportunity for everyone still living, including women. From guildswomen and merchants' wives to royal women landowners, the opportunities for women to practice business were abundant during this period (Hopkins, 2004).

**Monastic Communities.** The population of the monasteries tended to be heavily aristocratic in the Rhineland during this time. It was common for nobles and lords to establish a monastery with a gift of land, though this was done far less often for female communities (Cantor, 1994). Possibly because of the social disruption and high mortality rate during the crusades, the nobility regarded the abbeys with respect and high expectation as investments "for the comfortable repose of the souls of the noble families and their early release from purgatory to heaven" (Cantor, 1994, p. 69).

Christians in the 21st century will find this problematic on many levels and there is considerable evidence that Hildegard did also. Many of her visions and sermons dealt with corruption in the Church and called church men and women to holiness of life. Her first book, *Scivias*, focused on soteriology, including a major section on salvation through Christ Jesus (Flanagan, 1989), not through good works (such as establishing monasteries).

Monastic life at St. Disibodenberg and the two monasteries founded by Hildegard was practiced according to the Benedictine Rule. The Benedictine Rule, created by Benedict of Nursia (c.480-550), was a code of conduct for Christian communities that had three underlying principles: poverty, chastity, and obedience. The rule divided the day into equal periods of work, study, and prayer (Benedict, Verheyen (tr.), 1949).

An abbot or abbess was in charge of the spiritual life of the monastery. Under the feudal system, he or she was

also responsible to fulfill the secular feudal obligation of a vassal living on the land that had been granted by the local lord of the manor (Anderson & Zinsser, 2000). At St. Disibodenberg, Hildegard shared these responsibilities with Abbot Kuno; at the monasteries she founded, she bore the total responsibility.

Economically, those managing a monastery needed to find ways to support the community of monks or nuns and have sufficient additional resources to provide hospitality and help the poor. A monastery could either be supported by alms, find a wealthy patron as described above, or become self-sufficient through manufacturing products or by the farming and sale of agricultural goods (Lawrence, 1984).

Christian communities that did not have a patron or large land holdings created business to support themselves. Some monasteries specialized in trades such as medicine, needlework, brewing of beer or wine, or as Hildegard's monasteries did, the copying and illustration of books.<sup>2</sup> An ornately bound, illuminated manuscript was a precious object produced by a team of skilled artisans, a collector's item on par with gemstones, tapestries, and fine porcelain (Jardine, 1996). Religious leaders and royal scholars would write the monastery requesting to be sent the latest works by bestselling authors. The opportunity to produce a text for which a demand had been identified was a lucrative business opportunity. Recognizing this, monasteries began to capitalize on the inspirational material of members of their organization, particularly the visions of mystics such as Hildegard (Jardine, 1996). This is not unlike the 21st century pastor who writes books or has a radio ministry.

In that culture, the life of a mystic was considered a special path to Christian holiness, a way to create affinity with God that came not only from doing the work He prepared (Eph. 2:10), but also from extended meditation and prayer. Mystics were considered to be gifted with a direct channel of communication to God, without the aid of a priest. This authority empowered mystics to break cultural patterns. Hildegard, for example, educated her nuns far above the norms of her day and spoke out boldly against corruption in leadership, even writing admonishing letters to emperors and popes (Anderson & Zinsser, 2000). These authors find it interesting that in that culture and time, God chose to make Hildegard a mystic. While we are clear about the priesthood of the believer (1 Peter 2: 4-9), the point here is that God found ways to give this creative person the means to accomplish His will.

However Hildegard's visionary books were not val-

ued only, or even primarily, for the income they generated. Rather her monasteries benefited in a way similar to the way 21st century universities benefit from a star scholar. When the research of a university professor becomes well known, the university gains wider recognition, attracts better students and faculty, and achieves more alumni donations. In Hildegard's case, there was an added spiritual benefit for other Christians. Under these circumstances, it is understandable that Abbot Kuno of St. Disibodenberg was reluctant to let his colleague and "house visionary" leave for her own enterprise.

Though she was a woman of the 12th century, Hildegard's activity patterns reflect those that researchers suggest for successful entrepreneurs (Sanchez, 2008). The following sections will develop this argument in two ways: first utilizing the entrepreneurship literature to show patterns that all entrepreneurs display and then discussing some of the distinctives of women as entrepreneurs. The final section will discuss a Christian Model of Entrepreneurship (Goossen, 2004) and use the life of this godly woman as an example of a Christian entrepreneur.

## ENTREPRENERUSHIP AND HILDEGARD

Hildegard is well known for her theological and artistic abilities. Less well understood is the entrepreneurial passion that inspired her to use those abilities to strengthen the Church. According to a number of scholars, passion is the defining difference between entrepreneurs and other business people (Cardon et. al., 2009; Schumpeter, 1951).<sup>3</sup> It is the entrepreneur's passion that encourages him or her to take unusual risks – the second defining difference between entrepreneurs and others in business. In this section, we will explore more deeply the issues of entrepreneurial passion and risk in relation to Hildegard, and will place this 12th century entrepreneur within the different types of entrepreneurship.

### Entrepreneurial Passion and Hildegard

*Entrepreneurial Passion.* Entrepreneurial passion has been called "the most observed phenomenon of the entrepreneurial process" (Smilor, 1997, p. 342), and is the element that sets the entrepreneur apart from other business people (Baron, 2008; Cardon et. al., 2009). Entrepreneurial passion is defined as an intense emotion that creates an unusual intensity of focus, and unwavering belief in a dream (Baum & Locke, 2004; Cardon et. al., 2009). Entrepreneurship is a work of love; people engage

in it because they find their idea or product meaningful and important. Entrepreneurs pursue their products, ideas or dreams with unusual passion (Schumpeter, 1951; Cooper, Woo, & Dunkelberg, 1988), and this passion influences many aspects of their behavior. It helps them recognize innovations that others miss and gives them unusual ability to persist in the face of obstacles (Drucker, 1985; Baron, 2008).

Hildegard's passion was to strengthen the church and call people to God, and she pursued that passion with the intensity of the entrepreneur. Her "God-Narrative" (Goossen, 2004) or worldview was that the relationship between the individual and God rested within God's cosmic order which was beautiful and healthful. Each person's chain reaction of sinful or virtuous acts would result in a weakening or a strengthening of God's cosmos (Nolan, 1994).

This passion to call others to God's cosmos was perhaps most clearly evident in her speaking tours, which she began in her sixties in spite of bouts of paralyzing illness (Maddocks, 2001). However, all of Hildegard's "products" such as her books, music, and plays shared the same aim: to focus the spirit on God and draw it to His cosmos (McAvoy, 2000). For example, in *Scivias* she outlined a grand structure of salvation with the intent of teaching the readers how to live within the cosmic work of God. Hildegard saw church scandals such as the investiture controversy, or the rise of heretical groups such as the Cathars, as signs of the weakening of God's cosmos (McAvoy, 2000) and wrote and spoke passionately against them.

*Becoming Convinced.* Once an entrepreneur is convinced of the importance of his or her idea or passion, they pursue it with unusual tenacity (Cooper et. al, 1988; Fraser & Greene, 2006). However, he or she must first go through a process of being convinced – and some entrepreneurs take a very long time (Fraser & Greene, 2006; Westhead, Uchasaran, Wright & Binks, 2005).

Hildegard went through a convincing process that took many years. In her early life she denied her creative talents and visions. However, as she denied them she became ill and the more she refused to use her talents, the more ill she became. She was forty-two before she accepted her creative energy as a gift of God, allowed His power to flow through her, and experienced healing (Noland, 1994). From that time until her death at eighty-three, Hildegard was constantly creating and allowing God to use her visions, music and drama to educate, direct and promote a greater understanding of Himself (Dronke, 1984).

*Types of Entrepreneurial Passion.* There are different kinds of entrepreneurial passion: some entrepreneurs enjoy the work of venture creation (Baum & Locke, 2004; Cardon, Zietsma, Sapority, Matherne, & Davis, 2005), while others have special enthusiasm for watching their finished product or idea become successful over time (Smilor, 1997; Fraser & Green, 2006).

Hildegard appears to have had both kinds of passion: enjoying both the work of creation and the dissemination of the finished product (Sanchez, 2008). For example, though monastic women had many restrictions, they were allowed to compose and perform their own music (Maddocks, 2001). Hildegard used this permission to compose nearly eighty liturgical songs, collectively called *The Symphony of the Harmony of the Heavenly Revelations*, and also wrote a morality play with music, *The Ritual of the Virtues*. Her personal feelings were that the music was the ultimate praise to God, and she was joyful in the act of composition (Nolan, 1994). However music was also an important part of the daily life of her Benedictine community, with up to eight hours a day spent in prayer and singing (Hopkins, 2004). Therefore Hildegard created her music with the practical needs and voices of her nuns in mind (Newman, 1987), and this in turn enhanced the spiritual development of the monastery. Eventually Hildegard's hymns and praise songs spread to other monasteries and churches and became a product as well as a "trademark" of the Rupertsberg and Bingen monasteries.

Hildegard's types of entrepreneurial passions could also be said to be displayed in creation and development of the monasteries themselves (Sanchez, 2008). She founded two monasteries, an unusual act for any Abbot or Abbess, but particularly so for a woman. After difficult beginnings, both monasteries became autonomous, self-sustainable communities rich in intellectual and spiritual life (Flanagan, 1989).

### **Entrepreneurial Risk and Hildegard**

Because entrepreneurs pursue their products, ideas or dreams with unusual passion, they are willing to take unusual risks (Schumpeter, 1951; Baron, 2008) – to the extent that willingness to take risks is a second major observable mark of the entrepreneur (Hyytinen & Ilmakunnas, 2007).

Hildegard frequently took risks to advance her passion. For example, her preaching tours, dedicated to church reform, were both socially and physically risky. Abbots and abbesses normally did not leave their monasteries, and it was particularly uncommon for women to

embark on preaching tours. Hildegard's passion, however, was to bring the entire country to God. Therefore, she was willing to violate social norms by traveling to other communities "to reveal openly to them the words that God had shown me...and following God's instruction, I settled their internal quarrels" (Flanagan, 1989, p. 172). Hildegard even preached to the masses in the streets, which was unheard of for a woman (Cantor, 1994). In addition, travel in those unsettled times was physically risky. Dangers of the road included, kidnappers, killers, and illness (Nardo, 1996).

Hildegard also took organizational risks. For example, she publicly reprimanded her highest earthly authority, the Pope. During the years of 1153-1154, she sent an open letter to the newly appointed pope, Anastasius, who had the reputation of being feeble in the face of ecclesiastical corruption (Maddocks, 2001). To someone who was significantly her senior in age as well as authority she said:

Wherefore, O man, you who sit on the papal throne, you despise God when you embrace evil. For in failing to speak out against evil of those in your company, you are certainly not rejecting evil. Rather you are kissing it...But you, O man, since you are clearly the shepherd appointed by God, rise up and run quickly to Justice, so that you will not be accused before the great physician of failing to cleanse his sheepfold and of neglecting to anoint his flock with oil. (Baird & Ehrman, (tr.), 2004: Letter 8, Vol. I, 42-43)

This particular letter exemplifies Hildegard's emphasis on church reform. When she believed that the values expressed were the divine will of God, she was courageous in her passion. Yet if Hildegard had not had the authority of being a visionary, she could have been condemned without recourse for her lack of respect towards the clerical hierarchy.

### **Types of Entrepreneurs and Hildegard**

There are at least two types of entrepreneurs: serial entrepreneurs and portfolio entrepreneurs. A serial entrepreneur is defined as a person who sells or closes one business before he or she buys or begins a new one (Bounds, Spors, & Flandez, 2007; Hyytinen & Ilmakunnas, 2007). This person has one business at a time. In contrast, a portfolio entrepreneur has multiple businesses in development at the same time (Westhead, Uchasaran, Wright, & Binks, 2005; Wright, Robbie, & Ennew, 1997).

Hildegard appears to be an example of a portfolio entrepreneur. Her creative talents produced multiple

endeavors simultaneously. This high-volume of output and enterprises is even more striking when one considers that she lived in a male-dominated society and did not emerge as a creative talent until she was in her forties.

Often portfolio entrepreneurs utilize the experience and tactical advantages from early ventures to create multiple others. Hildegard did the same. For example, she funded her second monastery at Bingen by drawing on the alliances she built when she moved the monastery to Rupertsberg. In common with 21st century portfolio entrepreneurs, she created a team of trusted colleagues upon whom she depended in one venture after another (Westhead et. al., 2005). For example, she brought her trusted colleague, Volmar, with her to St. Rupertsberg in spite of the protests of Abbot Kumo.

Portfolio entrepreneurs find a variety of avenues to advance their passion (Hyytinen & Ilmakunnas, 2007; Westhead et. al, 2005). Hildegard used books of visions, books of science, music, letter writing, and speaking tours to spread her message. Her books, music, and no doubt her speeches used language in profound ways. She employed colorful and carefully chosen words to inspire and counsel – and invented them when necessary. For example, to communicate the totality of God’s ongoing creativity in the cosmos, she created the word “viriditas,” which represented God’s “greening power” (Maddocks, 2001). Hildegard’s musical compositions complemented the symbolism in her theological and medicinal writings, using imagery of “greenness, gardens, growth...fire, purity, and womanhood” (Maddocks, 2001, p. 194).

However, Hildegard the entrepreneur was a woman and was under the authority of her church superiors, and both of these things changed the way she exercised her entrepreneurial abilities. She faced restrictions as she moved creatively to fulfill God’s plan for her that are not unlike those faced by 21st century women entrepreneurs. In the following section we will develop this theme more fully.

## 21ST CENTURY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND HILDEGARD

The entrepreneurial opportunities in recent years have been seized enthusiastically by both men and women (Coughlin & Thomas, 2002). Researchers from Womenable, a major gender think tank, say that between 1997 and 2011 the number of U.S. women-owned firms increased by 1.5 times the national average and diversified into all sectors of the economy. The highest

concentration of women owned firms is in health care and social assistance, but even in less traditional sectors, such as construction and mining, women-owned firms have outpaced industry-level growth in both employment and revenues (American Express Open, 2011; Floyd & McManus, 2005).

Women and men entrepreneurs have many similar concerns. However, there are important differences. Entrepreneurs of both genders demonstrate significant passion and willingness to take risk, non-linear thinking, and so forth. However two issues have been identified in the literature as having clear gender differences: motivation for becoming an entrepreneur, and the problems women have in raising capital (Knotts, Jones, & Brown, 2008; Office of Advocacy, 2007; Rindova, Barry & Ketchen, 2009). In this section, we will discuss these gender-specific issues in relation to Hildegard as an entrepreneurial woman.

### Motivational Differences

What makes a person willing to take unconventional risks in pursuit of a passion? Researchers have found that the motivations of most entrepreneurs, regardless of gender, tend to cluster around three issues: financial success, autonomy, and either personal or social achievement (advancing oneself or advancing a cause) (Herron & Sapienza, 1992; Sarasvathy, Dew, Velamuri & Venkataraman, 2003; Yalcin & Kapu, 2008).

However, men and women are different in the emphasis they place on these motivations (Porter & Lawler, 1968; McClelland & Swail, 2005). That is, both genders value financial success, autonomy, and achievement, but men tend to emphasize financial success as the primary goal, and autonomy or achievement as secondary goals (Coughlin & Thomas, 2002; Hmieleski & Baron, 2009). In contrast, women tend to emphasize autonomy or achievement first, and financial success second (Moore & Buttner 1997; Heffernan, 2007) – unless the woman is originally in a low income bracket (Stewart, Watson, & Carland, 2003) or is in a developing economy (Yalcin & Kapu, 2008).

*Motivation: Autonomy.* Regarding autonomy, both men and women say they are strongly motivated to become entrepreneurs because they desire autonomy – to be their own boss (Hmieleski & Baron, 2009; Herron & Sapienza, 1992; Sarasvathy et. al., 2003). However, researchers note that when discussing autonomy men tend to emphasize the benefits of running a business, while women tend to emphasize the benefits of avoiding gender

discrimination or lack of support from bosses (Goldberg, Day, & Hill 2007; Hmieleski & Baron, 2009; Heffernan, 2007; Segal, Borgia, & Schoenfeld 2005).

Reflecting the entrepreneurial drive to autonomy, Hildegard made known her desire to begin a new monastery even before she received permission to publish *Scivias*.<sup>4</sup> The request to start a new monastery was not unprecedented, but it was unusual. The vows of a nun included stability. However, certain people had to create new monasteries in order to accommodate the influx of novitiates (Anderson & Zinsser, 2000) and Hildegard felt that she was directed by God to begin a new ministry (Nolan, 1994). We can only speculate whether gender discrimination or lack of support from “bosses” were behind Hildegard’s desire for autonomy; however, she had to overcome significant obstacles to make the move happen.

Initially, the monks at St. Disibodenberg halted Hildegard’s move to Rupertsberg. However Hildegard, or God, used her body as a negotiating tool and she became very ill (Baird & Ehrman, 2004). From the perspective of the 21st century, it is interesting to observe that Hildegard became ill at critical times in her career. In this instance, she took to her bed and heard a voice telling her to cease writing and speaking – not unlike going on strike (Dronke 1984). She recounts the incident in this way:

I could not see any light because of a clouding over my eyes, and I was so oppressed down by the weight of my body that I could not raise myself. So I lay there, overwhelmed by intense pains. Why I suffered like this was because I did not make known my vision in which it was shown to me that I must move with my young women from the place where I had been offered to God, to another place. (Silvas (tr.) Vita Vol. II, Chapter 5, 163)

When she was allowed to act on her request to leave, she was cured of her debilitating illness; the miraculous return of her health convinced her critics and detractors of God’s blessings upon her. Some might see this as self-induced illness or fakery; others might see it as God working within a particular culture. In the 12th century, debilitating illnesses was frequently associated with mystics and with women. Indeed, a woman’s good character was often validated by her ability to endure such illnesses (Ahlgren, 1993). Additionally, Hildegard’s illness was a powerful tool because it incapacitated her from performing the pastoral and prophetic duties that the monastery so heavily depended upon (Sanchez, 2008).

Basing her actions on a divinely inspired vision created support among her ecclesiastical constituents and

higher authorities. As was said earlier, the negotiations with the monks of St. Disibodenberg were resolved by Archbishop Arnold of Mainz in a charter of 1158 which gave Hildegard’s new monastery some unusual benefits for a group of women in that culture (Flanagan, 1989; Maddocks 2001). However Hildegard had to agree to submit to some oversight from Abbot Kuno, who appointed a provost to oversee spiritual affairs at Rupertsberg. Also, St. Disibodenberg regulated the distribution of assets between the two houses.

#### *Motivation: Personal or Social Achievement.*

Researchers have found that for many women entrepreneurs, objectives such as self-fulfillment, family, or fostering a worthwhile cause are as important as profit. For example, DeMartino and colleagues (2006) found that male entrepreneurs tended to choose ventures according to profitability and to work longer hours once they start a family, while female entrepreneurs tended to choose ventures that allow work-family balance and work fewer hours once they start a family (DeMartino, Barbato & Paul, 2006). Supporting this, Kirkwood and Campbell-Hunt (2007) found that women were more than twice as likely as men to speak of entrepreneurship in relation to their children.

Hildegard reflects 21st century women entrepreneurs in that she also appears to be mainly driven by “soft” goals. As has already been discussed, her vision was to advance the kingdom of God. As for family, while Hildegard did not directly have children to consider, she was responsible for at least three communities of people, including many novices. She considered herself a steward of God for these communities. Her attitude was that the nuns did not belong to her but to the Lord, and she was responsible to the women to reunite them with their Spouse in love, Jesus Christ (Newman, 1998). Hildegard also encouraged her nuns in their psychological growth. For example, she delegated her responsibilities as abbess, thus empowering her nuns and encouraging individual accountability (Nolan, 1994).

Hildegard felt that God’s charge was to foster the spiritual enrichment of her communities and also the surrounding lay people. For example, though Hildegard lived at Rupertsberg, she made it a point to visit the second monastery at Bingen twice a week in spite of the distance, her age, and difficulty of travel (Maddocks, 2001). She made these visits not only for her nuns, but as a way of showing love for the pilgrims who traveled to both locations seeking her spiritual counsel and prayer for healing physical ailments.

### Access to Capital

Most entrepreneurs must search for resources to implement their passion, and they encounter varying degrees of difficulty in obtaining capital, collateral, and fair business terms. A number of researchers have found that women seem to face unusual difficulties in this area (i.e., Coleman, 2007; Grant & Perren, 2002; Harrison & Mason, 2007).<sup>5</sup> For example, women entrepreneurs must make an average of twenty-two attempts in order to obtain equity capital (Center for Women's Business Research, 2007).

Two reasons for these obstacles have been suggested to be the size of the loans women apply for and the types of businesses they pursue (Coleman, 2007; Kawasaki, 2008). Women tend to seek smaller loans than men because, in general, they tend to start smaller firms. Given the relatively high handling costs of loans banks are less interested in small loans. Additionally, since many female entrepreneurs develop products new to the industry, many banks are adverse to the risk involved (American Express Open, 2011; Conrad, 2007). As a result, many women entrepreneurs use personal savings or investments from family or friends as their starting capital. This dependence on personal finance leaves some ventures undercapitalized and vulnerable to changes in business conditions (Conrad, 2007; Silver, 1994).

Hildegard's experience was similar to this. In general, female monasteries were considerably less wealthy than co-ed or male monasteries (Gilchrist 1994). The donations were smaller and the initial land usually came from the dowries of the women entering the monastery rather than from large grants of land (Venarde, 1997). Furthermore, there was an ongoing struggle for female monasteries about property ownership. In the eyes of many male clerics, property ownership was too important to leave in the sole care of a woman (Anderson & Zinsser, 2000).

With the Archbishop's support, Hildegard was able to purchase the site at Rupertsberg for twenty marks (Maddocks 2001), a relatively inexpensive amount. The actual funds, as is true of many 21st century women entrepreneurs, came from Hildegard's family and friends. Among the contributors were Hildegard's brothers; Jutta's brother, Count Meinhard of Sponeheim; and Emperor Conrad III's sister, Gertrude (Maddocks, 2001). Even so, the new venture was underfunded and the building was slow. When the Pope validated *Scivias*, St. Rupertsberg became financially viable, but there was a gap of several years before this happened. In the meantime, there came a series of invitations from other

monasteries asking Hildegard to come and preach – an unusual situation for a woman. These invitations began her preaching tours which allowed Hildegard both to advance her passion and to obtain the funds necessary to complete the monastery. Later, funding from her books, music and preaching tours were used to build and support both St. Rupertsberg and Bengen.

The major risk of starting a new foundation was vindicated when a number of new nuns entered St. Rupertsberg. The death in the Crusades of many of the men of the warrior class left a number of widows and unmarried daughters without conventional opportunities (Venarde, 1997). In addition, the monastery was one of the few places where a woman could get an education. As Hildegard's reputation increased, nobles became eager to send their daughters to be mentored by such a notable woman. To accommodate all the women who wanted to enter St. Rupertsberg, Hildegard later opened the foundation at Binggen. She appears to have had much less financial trouble establishing the second monastery. In the 12th century, as in the 21st, angel investors appear to be more willing to aid an entrepreneur of either gender who has a good track record (Fraser & Green, 2006; Kawasaki 2008).

### CHRISTIAN ENTREPRENEURS AND HILDEGARD: TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN MODEL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The evidence suggests that Hildegard was, as a Christian, called by God to entrepreneurship (Novak, 1996; Packer, 1990). However, is it possible to extrapolate from this and stories of other Christian entrepreneurs that there is a specific construct called "Christian entrepreneurship"?

Recently, Goossen (2004) proposed that five core worldview elements could together be said to be a Christian Model of Entrepreneurship (CME). His argument was that there was a way of thinking and acting such that an entrepreneur would reflect Christ as he or she worked out the entrepreneurial vision. To our knowledge, this model has not been tested either empirically or subjectively. However, as a step towards model validity we decided to see if Hildegard, as an entrepreneur who was also a Christian, would be an example of these elements. We found many areas of agreement between the model and the life of Hildegard; this suggests that appropriate testing of this model might be useful.

The five core worldview elements of the Christian Model of Entrepreneurship (CME) are as follows: 1) an overarching “God-Narrative” focused on Christ; 2) a vertical perspective, with God in authority and treasure in heaven; 3) a calling to discipleship; 4) use of personal gifts for the whole community; and 5) a focus on God’s providence. We will examine each in turn.

### **Core Element 1: An Overarching “God-Narrative” Focused on Christ**

As is appropriate, Goossen grounds the Christian Model of Entrepreneurship in Christ. He suggests that one of the things that distinguish an entrepreneur modeling the CME is his or her “God-in-Christ narrative,” as contrasted with the “self-narrative” common in most views of spirituality (Goossen, 2004). The Christian entrepreneur sees Christ as the center of Truth and believes the words of Christ that “no man comes to the Father except by me” (John 14:6). An important part of this God-Narrative is the centrality of the written word of God, the Bible, which helps guide the entrepreneur’s attitudes, values and actions in practical ways as the entrepreneur engages with his or her passion (Goossen, 2004).

As has already been discussed, Hildegard’s God-Narrative focused on Christ as the center of God’s beautiful and healthful cosmic order (Maddocks, 2001). In her writings, music and visions, Hildegard put together the ideas of Christ as creator (Col. 1: 15; John 1:3), vine (John 12), light (John 8:12) and life (John 1: 4, 5) to depict images of growth and gardens. She coined the word “viriditas,” which combined the Latin word for truth and green, to describe Christ as the greening power of God, reflecting the greenness of a lush and lovely garden. Hildegard’s symbolism celebrated the Living Light and power (fire) of Christ within His spiritual creation (Newman, 1989) and the written Word as a reflection of the truth of the divine Word. She warned about the power of sin to “dry up” what was once full of life. Rejecting sin and focusing on Christ and the word of the Bible, was the way to spiritual health and growth.

### **Core Element 2: A Vertical Perspective, with God in Authority and Treasure in Heaven**

A second core element of the CME is that the Christian entrepreneur must consistently have a vertical perspective. An entrepreneur can easily be caught by his or her passion and focus on this as the driving force in life – which creates a horizontal perspective. In addition, financial or personal success is a strong motivator for

entrepreneurs (Herron & Sapienza, 1992; Yalcin & Kapu, 2008), which is another facet of a horizontal perspective. A Christian entrepreneur with the worldview of the CME focuses vertically on God, not entrepreneurial passion, as his or her driving force. God is in charge, not the entrepreneur. Such a person is motivated by treasure in heaven and/or success in the eyes of God (Goossen, 2004).

For Hildegard, God was always in charge. A lesson that she can teach 21st century Christian entrepreneurs is her accountability to God and to other Christians. Hildegard lived in a time and situation where her personal accountability to others was not only encouraged but obligatory. As a creative portfolio entrepreneur, this served her well in several ways.

First, it forced her to keep her focus on God. It is easy for a passionate and optimistic person to lose perspective. Inappropriate optimism leads many entrepreneurs to overemphasize the extent to which their skills can mold circumstances (Hmieleski & Baron, 2009; Simon, Houghton & Aquino, 2000). In common with all Christians, Hildegard had to learn to submit her will to God; being accountable to other people, such as Abbot Kuno reinforced this lesson. Hildegard, herself, understood the possibility of deception and voluntarily submitted her accounts of visions to a series of people she trusted before actively embracing them. Prayer and accountability were safeguards against her natural passion misleading her.

Submitting to others and to God also taught her humility. It is stimulating to use one’s talents and abilities to create a new venture, and it is tempting for the entrepreneur to think that he or she made it all happen. Yet every ability we have comes from Christ (Colossians 1: 16, 17). Hildegard seems to have learned the lesson of humility. In later years, she became a mentor for Elisabeth of Schönau, another female visionary. In a characteristic and revealing image, Hildegard told Elisabeth to be like a trumpet, which resounds not by its own efforts but by the breath of another (Newman, 1987, p. 36). Humility was her greatest message to Elisabeth. As she expressed in a letter to Monk Guibert, “A human being is a vessel that God has built for himself and filled with his inspiration so that his works are perfected in it” (Silvas (tr.), 1999: Letter to the Monk Guibert, 1176).

### **Core Element 3: A Call to Discipleship in the Work, Including Difficulties**

Entrepreneurship can be a vocational calling (Novak, 1996; Packer, 1990). However the first calling of any

Christian is to be a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:26-28) and follow Him in work that is done, regardless of the difficulties that inevitably arise (Goossen, 2004).

As evidenced by her letters and writings, Hildegard was serious about her call to discipleship. This was reinforced by the spiritual disciplines she practiced according to the Benedictine Rule. Jesus, himself, got up before daylight to go to a solitary place to pray before starting His day (Mark 1:35), a demonstration of His dependence on the relationship with His Father. Under the Benedictine Rule, Hildegard was taught to do the same. While she was identifying opportunities and assessing the qualities and gifts of herself and those around her, the spiritual disciplines she practiced helped her keep her mind focused on the One who called her to be in that position.

Hildegard proclaimed herself to be a vessel of God, a person who sought the wisdom of God in her ventures and speaking tours. This submission did not change when difficulties arose. Hildegard felt she was following God's instructions in moving to Rupertsberg (Maddocks 2001), but the move itself was difficult. From the nuns' perspective, they were leaving the protection and amenities of the established monastery for financial hardship and inadequate buildings – and they complained (Flanagan 1989). Hildegard wrote:

For just as the children of Israel distressed Moses, so they [the nuns] also shook their heads at me and said, "What good of this, that noble and wealthy young women should leave a place where they lacked nothing to be reduced to such beggary?" But truly, we are awaiting the grace of God to come to our help, for it was he who had shown us this place. (Silvas (tr.), 1999, *Vita* Vol. II, Chapter 5)

Although it was uncomfortable to live in an unfinished building and with inadequate funding, Hildegard encouraged her group to see the hand of God in the situation. Though the invitations to preach filled the financial gap, Hildegard's account of her first preaching tour (c.1159) in the *Vita* merely states: "I took the opportunity to make a trip to other monasteries and expounded there the words God commanded." That her trust in God was well placed is evidenced by Guibert of Gembloux, one of Hildegard's biographers. He had this to say about the later finances at Rupertsberg:

Furthermore, not counting guests whom we are never without, and the administrators of the house of which they have several, the monastery provides enough for the expenses of food and clothing of fifty sisters without any shortfall. (Silvas (tr.), 1999: Guibert's Letter to Bovo, Chapter 3, 101).

#### Core Element 4: Use of Personal Gifts for the Whole Community

A distinguishing feature of a Christian entrepreneur is that he or she emphasizes the community. The gifts God gives are to be used for others (Goossen, 2004). Hildegard understood experientially that her talents and gifts were entrusted to her by God but belonged to the world. Her visionary experiences began as a young child but when she was in her 40's God made it clear that the visions and the knowledge they imparted could no longer remain her private possession but were to be manifested for the good of all. What had begun as a child's idiosyncrasy now became a prophetic mission. A letter written to Guibert of Gembloux at the age of seventy-seven, describes her experience with great precision.

From my early childhood, before my bones, nerves, and veins were fully strengthened I have always seen this vision in my soul, even to the present time when I am more than seventy years old. In this vision my soul, as God would have it, rises up high into the vault of heaven and into the changing sky and spreads itself out among different peoples, although they are far away from me in distant lands and places...And as the sun, the moon, and the stars appear in water, so writings, sermons, virtues, and certain human actions take form for me and gleam within it. (Van Ecker (Ed.), 1993: Hildegard's Reply to Guibert, 332-333)

When Hildegard withheld her gifts from the community she suffered internally, both emotionally and physically. Combined with discipline in prayer, her creative endeavors expanded her vision and the result was multiple endeavors from which many Christians profited.

As was discussed earlier, Hildegard's passion and purpose was to call people to God and she used her position as a charismatic prophet and celebrity to influence both church and civic leaders. She also understood the need of the people of Germany for honest and trustworthy Christian leadership in the government. Using letters, she became a voice to encourage the political leaders of her day to be true to principles of integrity, justice, and love. About 300 of her letters still exist. For example, when Frederick Barbossa was elected king of Germany in 1152, she wrote him a congratulatory letter and they remained in correspondence after he became the Holy Roman Emperor. Her counsel was both temporal and spiritual; she discussed each individual's salvation and challenged her correspondents to realize their responsibilities under God to the people.

Hildegard also used her position and abilities to strengthen the church. Abbots and abbesses sought her advice. Several wrote and asked her whether to leave their organizational responsibilities and go into “full time Christian work” by becoming hermits. Hildegard viewed this as irresponsible pietism which abandoned the needs of the souls these leaders were entrusted with. Her consistent response was that these church leaders should persevere in their offices with renewed commitment, accepting the task of leadership in the Church as God’s gift. Below is one such example. Hildegard to an abbess:

A person who can bear up heaven by her knowledge has received a mighty and powerful gift from God. No one should flee who has the strength to bear up the congregation of the saints with God’s rod. Let God’s gift to you inspire you, my daughter, to carry His light diligently. .... This is your martyrdom, my daughter, and in it you endure tribulation and fear and grief in the tumult of life. Nevertheless, in this way many saints, like the martyrs, come to God. And so you also, trust God because He will not desert you. (Baird & Ehrman (tr.), 2004, Letter 237r, Vol. III, 36)

Hildegard did not focus exclusively on the great. Many people wrote to her asking for words of encouragement or exhortation, or asking about the condition of their souls or the souls of those dear to them, and she answered graciously. One person wrote asking for help finding treasure, and, although Hildegard had to respond that God had revealed nothing to her about treasure because He was concerned with souls rather than with transitory wealth, she nevertheless closed with a benediction; “Yet may He help you according to His will and your need” (Baird & Ehrman, 2004, p. 240).

##### **5) Focus on God’s Providence.**

A fifth distinguishing feature of the CME is a focus on the benevolent guidance of God in all things (Goossen, 2004). Throughout Hildegard’s writings, she declared that people should listen to the calling of God within their own lives. All members of the faithful, she felt, were endowed with Christ’s guidance; His guidance became the foundation for her endeavors as well. Hildegard used the imagery of wings to focus on God’s providence in raising a mission to the highest. She said:

They (the virtues) descend through Him to the hearts of the faithful, who with good hearts leave their own will and incline themselves to the righteous deeds, just as the workman bends down to lift a stone that he will carry to the building. And

they ascend again in Him when they offer to God heavenly works perfected in mankind, rejoicing, so that the body of Christ can in this way be the more quickly perfected in his faithful members. Thus each and every action receives wings from God, by which it can raise itself above the filth of the human mind, to obtain the shining splendor by which it shines before God, for nothing can be obstructed or hidden that flows from the fountain of eternal life. (*Scivias* III.8.13: p. 496)

With her belief system embedded in the Benedictine spiritual disciplines, every step that Hildegard took was heavily prayed about. She believed in the guardianship of God over his creatures and felt that through His light and intervention men and women could accomplish things which would ultimately bring about God’s objectives in the world. Through her own discernment and the guidance of Christ through prayer and colleagues, Hildegard forged a path in history that demonstrates a Christian Model of Entrepreneurship.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Hildegard’s narrative is rich in the complexities that confront modern women and Christian entrepreneurs. Like many women, she appeared to face a “glass ceiling” in the restrictions inherent in staying at St. Disibodenberg. Had she stayed under the authority of Abbot Kuno, it is unlikely that she would have been permitted to undertake her preaching tours or publish her music. Though she had limitations placed upon her, both as a woman and as under the authority of the Church, she was able with the guidance of God to find ways that allowed her to follow the passion God gave her.

Hildegard may be an unconventional role model, but she is a good one. Hildegard focused her entrepreneurial energies on God and utilized the talents He provided. Through the grace of God, she was able to successfully balance the roles of entrepreneur and leader. Hildegard was open to and listened to God’s guidance. She had the faith, not only in her God but in herself to carry out God’s will and impress reform in the Church and state. She acted when others might have been paralyzed in fear and doubt.

The product, passion, or venture of the contemporary Christian entrepreneur might be different than Hildegard’s, but the call to service is the same. Ephesians 2:10 says, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should

walk in them” (Bible, Ephesians 2:10). The good works might be different, but the same God will guide each person’s enterprises. Hildegard is a role model of an entrepreneur, a female entrepreneur, and a Christian entrepreneur.

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#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Some Western Christians might find problematic the idea that God gave Hildegard visions as aids to strengthen the church. However, as many missionaries will attest (i.e. Roth, 2012) in many oral cultures God uses visions and dreams to build His church.
- <sup>2</sup> It should be emphasized that the authors are not suggesting that the Church of Jesus Christ is a business. Rather we are saying that Christian communities, such as monasteries, created businesses to gain support to carry out their ministry. This could be considered a type of Tentmaking.
- <sup>3</sup> For a recent literature review on entrepreneurial passion, see Cardon, Wincent, Singh & Drnovsek, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> The publication of *Scivias* was, in essence, the beginning of Hildegard's public entrepreneurial career.
- <sup>5</sup> For a recent literature review on women entrepreneurs and financing, see Harrison & Mason, 2007.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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The issue of gender in the business environment has always been of extreme importance to me, and I am fascinated by the contributions women have made in Christian history. Thus, my primary research interests lie in addressing why the literary and artistic contributions of females in Christianity have been noted while their faith-based business achievements have historically been overlooked. Hildegard of Bingen is a multi-faceted example of a woman who answered Christ's calling by starting two monasteries for the spiritual development of her communities and preached to the masses based on her biblical knowledge.



**Yvonne Smith, Ph.D.**, is professor of strategic management at the University of La Verne. Her current research projects include strategic cognitions in top management teams and the effect of religion on job satisfaction. Yvonne received the CBFA Chewing award in 2005 and the CBFA Johnson award in 2011.

This paper was inspired by the intriguing way that God accomplished His work through a woman with entrepreneurial competencies who lived in a patriarchal society. Even under a rigid hierarchy, God helped Hildegard find ways for her abilities to flourish.