ABELARD AND HELOISE

GREAT MEDIEVAL THINKERS

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Series Foreword

Many people would be surprised to be told that there *were* any great medieval thinkers. If a *great* thinker is one from whom we can learn today, and if "medieval" serves as an adjective for describing anything which existed from (roughly) the years 600 to 1500 AD, then, so it is often supposed, medieval thinkers cannot be called "great."

Why not? One answer often given appeals to ways in which medieval authors with a taste for argument and speculation tend to invoke "authorities," especially religious ones. Such invocation of authority is not the stuff of which great thought is made—so it is commonly said today. It is also sometimes said that greatness is not to be found in the thinking of those who lived before the rise of modern science, not to mention that of modern philosophy and theology. Students of science are nowadays hardly ever referred to literature earlier than the seventeenth century. Contemporary students of philosophy in the twentieth century are often taught nothing about the history of ideas between Aristotle (384–322 BC) and Descartes (1596–1650). Modern students of theology have been frequently encouraged to believe that sound theological thinking is a product of the nineteenth century.

Yet the origins of modern science lie in the conviction that the world is open to rational investigation and is orderly rather than chaotic—a conviction which came fully to birth, and was systematically explored and developed, during the Middle Ages. And it is in medieval thinking that we find some of the most sophisticated and rigorous philosophical and

theological discussions ever offered for human consumption—not surprisingly, perhaps, if we note that medieval philosophers and theologians, like their contemporary counterparts, were mostly university teachers who participated in an ongoing world-wide debate. They were not (like many seventeenth, eighteenth, and even nineteenth-century philosophers and theologians) people working in relative isolation from a large community of teachers and students with whom they were regularly involved. As for the question of appeal to authority: it is certainly true that many medieval thinkers believed in authority (especially religious authority) as a serious court of appeal. But as many contemporary philosophers are increasingly reminding us, authority is as much an ingredient in our thinking as it was in that of medieval thinkers. Most of what we take ourselves to know derives from the trust we have reposed in our various teachers, colleagues, and friends. When it comes to reliance on authority, the main difference between us and medieval thinkers lies in the fact that their reliance on authority was often more focused and explicitly acknowledged than is ours. It does not lie in the fact that it was uncritical and naive in a way that our reliance on authority is not.

In recent years, such truths have come to be increasingly recognized at what we might call the "academic" level. No longer disposed to think of the Middle Ages as "dark" (meaning "lacking in intellectual richness"), many university departments (and many publishers of books and journals) now devote a lot of their energy to the study of medieval thinking. And they do so not simply on the assumption that it is historically important but also in the light of the increasingly developing insight that it is full of things with which to dialogue and from which to learn. Following a long period in which medieval thinking was thought to be of only antiquarian interest, we are now witnessing its revival as a contemporary voice—one to converse with, one from which we might learn.

The *Great Medieval Thinkers* series reflects and is part of this exciting revival. Written by a distinguished team of experts, it aims to provide substantial introductions to a range of medieval authors. And it does so on the assumption that they are as worth reading today as they were when they wrote. Students of medieval "literature" (e.g., the writings of Chaucer) are currently well supplied (if not over-supplied) with secondary works to aid them when reading the objects of their concern. But those with an interest in medieval philosophy and theology are by no means so fortunate when it comes to reliable and accessible volumes. The *Great Medieval Thinkers* series therefore aspires to remedy that deficiency by concentrating on medieval philosophers and theologians, and by offering solid overviews of their lives and thought coupled with contemporary

reflection on what they had to say. Taken individually, volumes in the series will provide valuable treatments of single thinkers many of whom are not currently covered by any comparable volumes. Taken together, they will constitute a rich and distinguished history and discussion of medieval philosophy and theology considered as a whole. With an eye on college and university students, and with an eye on the general reader, authors of volumes in the series strive to write in a clear and accessible manner so that each of the thinkers they write on can be learned about by those who have no previous knowledge about them. But each contributor to the series also intends to inform, engage, and generally entertain even those with specialist knowledge in the area of medieval thinking. So, as well as surveying and introducing, volumes in the series seek to advance the state of medieval studies both at the historical and the speculative level.

The subjects of this volume, who are appropriately buried together, have always been linked because of their famous romantic relationship (chronicled in Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* and evident from a series of letters). Two of the most controversial personalities of the twelfth century, they were each fascinating in their own right.

Abelard was handsome, eloquent, and personable. The most outstanding dialectician of his age, he enjoyed an international reputation even in his own lifetime. And he played many and various roles. He was (not always simultaneously, of course) a teacher, a polemicist, a lover and husband, a parent, a writer, a logician, a theologian, a biblical commentator, a metaphysician, a moral philosopher, an iconoclast, a monk, an abbot, and (as abbot) even a potential murder victim (so he claimed). Chiefly via Peter Lombard (the subject of another *Great Medieval Thinkers* volume) his influence on thirteenth-century philosophers and theologians was considerable, though he was condemned as a heretic by the 1141 Synod of Sens, as well as by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Pope Innocent II.

As for Heloise: she was clearly one of the most literate women of her time, a serious intellectual, an undoubted influence on Abelard at various levels, and, for much of her life, an able monastic administrator. Sometimes hailed as an icon by contemporary feminist authors, she does not seem to have been exactly what we would now describe as a feminist. Yet, one of the few medieval women to come down to us as doing so, she stands out as a formidable and unusual thinker and human being.

While Abelard and Heloise are probably best known for their protracted love affair, this volume presents them not just as lovers but as great thinkers actively concerned with many of the key issues that preoccupied their contemporaries. So it provides an accessible introduction

not just to their turbulent lives but also to their philosophical and theological ideas. A number of books have been published in recent years that deal only with Abelard's life and thought. This book, however, explores the evolution of Abelard's intellectual interests in the context of his relationship with Heloise, who so often forced Abelard to confront questions that he had not previously asked. The book also situates both Abelard and Heloise firmly in the context of wider intellectual debates of the twelfth century. Its author has been publishing specialist material on Abelard and Heloise for over twenty years. In what follows he offers a very welcome and mature synthesis of his research on two of the most original medieval thinkers.

BRIAN DAVIES

Acknowledgments

This book has been a long time in the making. I must first of all thank Brian Davies, O.P., for inviting me to contribute a volume on Abelard for this series, and then for his patience in waiting for the final product to appear. There have been many detours on the journey. The complexity of the debates that surround the authenticity, dating, and literary context of the letters and other writings associated both with Abelard and Heloise and with their contemporaries has demanded detailed research that can only be alluded to in this volume. In the final analysis, the judgments that are made in this book about what constitutes an "authentic" writing or about the exact date of a particular composition are based on what seems to me to be the most plausible interpretation of often enigmatic evidence. Sometimes I can only raise a possibility, so as to invite further discussion and debate. I am very aware that in this study I have concentrated more on some writings than on others. The nature of the surviving evidence has meant that I have given more attention to Abelard than to Heloise. My broader intention has been simply to provide a framework that can help readers explore for themselves the richness of the texts that have come down to us, not just of Abelard and Heloise but of their contemporaries. Much more is still waiting to be discovered in the many manuscripts that survive from the twelfth century or have been copied from documents that have since disappeared. There is also a wealth of material provided to us by scholars over the centuries that still needs to be fully digested. If this book helps to promote such enquiry and to en-

courage readers to deepen their linguistic skills to get to know Abelard and Heloise more fully, as well as to explore further the writings of their remarkable generation, it will have been worthwhile.

Many institutions, friends, colleagues, and students have helped me over the years. Monash University has generously supported this research. The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton provided a wonderful environment to follow up literature impossible to find in Australia. My teachers, Richard Southern, David Luscombe, and Jean Jolivet, guided me in my early studies on Abelard, for which I am grateful. I have benefited from conversations with Michael Clanchy, Sabina Flanagan, Fiona Griffiths, Yukio Iwakuma, C. Stephen Jaeger, John Marenbon, Dominique Poirel, Werner Robl, Irène Rosier-Catach, Ralf Stammberger, Peter von Moos, and David Wulstan, among others. Cary Nederman, Juanita Feros Ruys, and John O. Ward have been particularly helpful in commenting on a draft version of this manuscript. I am indebted to Ruys and Ward for being privileged to use their draft edition (forthcoming in the Corpus Christianorum) of *In primis*, a commentary on Cicero by William of Champeaux, and their translation of Abelard's *Planctus* and *Carmen ad Astralabium*, forthcoming in an important volume, *The Repentant Abelard: Abelard's Thought as Revealed in His Carmen ad Astralabium and Planctus* (Palgrave Macmillan). I am grateful to Palgrave Macmillan for being able to reproduce extracts from the translation by Neville Chiavaroli and me of the *Epistolae duorum amantium* included within *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*. It remains finally to acknowledge Maryna, the one person who has patiently watched over its genesis and development. To her I owe a profound debt of gratitude.

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Abbreviations

Abelard and His Legacy	Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and His Legacy*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 504 (London: Ashgate, 2001)
AHDLMA	*Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*
AL	*Aristoteles Latinus*
BGP[T]MA	Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie [und Theologie] des Mittelalters
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaeualis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
CIMAGL	*Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge Grec et Latin* [Université de Copenhague]
Clm	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codex latinus monacensis
Cousin	*Petri Abaelardi opera hactenus seorsim edita*, ed. Victor Cousin, 2 vols. (Paris, 1849, 1859)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
LLL	Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue*

	in Twelfth-Century France (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MS	*Mediaeval Studies*
PL	J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*
Reason and Belief	Constant J. Mews, *Reason and Belief in the Age of Roscelin and Abelard*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 730 (London: Ashgate, 2002)
RTAM	*Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*

Works of Abelard and Heloise, and Reports of Abelard's Teaching

Carmen	*Carmen ad Astralabium*, ed. José M. A. Rubingh-Bosscher (Groningen: [privately published], 1987).
Collationes	Peter Abelard, *Collationes*, ed. and trans. John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001)
Comm. Cantab.	*Commentarius Cantabrigiensis*, ed. A. Landgraf (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1937–45)
Comm. Rom.	*Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. Eligius-Marie Buytaert, CCCM 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969)
Conf. fid. Hel.	" 'Confessio fidei ad Heloisam'—Abelard's Last Letter to Heloise? A Discussion and Critical Edition of the Latin and Medieval French Versions," ed. Charles S. F. Burnett, *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 21(1986): 147–55
Conf. fid. 'Universis'	"Peter Abelard, Confessio fidei 'Universis': A Critical Edition of Abelard's Reply to Accusations of Heresy," ed. Charles S. F. Burnett, *MS* 48 (1986): 111–38
De int.	*Abélard: Des intellections*, ed. and trans. Patrick Morin (Paris: Vrin, 1994)
Dial.	*Petrus Abaelardus. Dialectica*, ed. Lambert de Rijk, 2nd ed. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970)
EDA	*Epistolae duorum amantium: Briefe Abaelards und*

	Heloises? ed. Ewald Könsgen (Leiden: Brill, 1974); trans. Neville Chiavaroli and Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999)
Ed. Por./ed. Cat./ed. Per./ed. Div.	*Editio super Porphyrium, Glossae in Categorias, Editio super Aristotelem, De interpretatione, de divisionibus*, ed. Mario Dal Pra, *Pietro Abelardo: Scritti di Logica* (Rome 1954; 2nd ed., 1969), 1–203
Ep. II–VIII	Ed. J. T. Muckle, "The Personal Letters between Abelard and Héloïse," *MS* 15 (1953): 47–94 [*Ep.* II–V]; ed. J. T. Muckle, "The Letter of Héloïse on the Religious Life and Abelard's First Reply," *MS* 17 (1955): 240–81 [*Ep.* VI–VII]; ed. T. P. McLaughlin, "Abelard's Rule for Religious Women," *MS* 18 (1956): 241–92; ed. Eric Hicks, *La vie et les epistres Pierres Abaelart et Heloys sa fame* 1 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1991) [*HC, Ep.* II–VII]
Ep. IX–XIV	*Peter Abelard. Letters IX–XIV*, ed. Edmé Smits (Groningen: [privately published], 1983)
Epithalamica	"Epithalamica: An Easter Sequence by Peter Abelard," ed. Chrysogonus Waddell, *Musical Quarterly* 72 (1986): 239–71
Exp. Hex.	*Expositio in Hexaemeron*, PL 178: 731–784; "Abelard's Expositio in Hexameron," ed. Eligius-Marie Buytaert, *Antonianum* 43 (1968): 163–94
Exp. Or. Dom./ Symb. Ap./. Symb. Ath	"The Expositio Orationis Dominicae 'Multorum legimus orationes,' ed. Charles S. F. Burnett, *Revue bénédictine* 95 (1985): 60–72; *Expositio Symboli Apostolorum* and *Expositio Symboli S. Athanasii*, PL 178: 617–32
Gl. sec. vocales	*Glossae secundum vocales*, ed. Carmelo Ottaviano, *Fontes Ambrosiani* 3 (Florence, 1933)
HC	*Abélard: Historia calamitatum*, ed. Jacques Monfrin (Paris: Vrin, 1959)
Hymn. Par.	*Peter Abelard's Hymnarius Paraclitensis*, ed. Joseph Szövérffy, 2 vols. (Albany, N.Y.: Classical Folio Editions, 1975); *Hymn Collections from the Paraclete*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell, Cistercian

	Liturgy Series 8–9, 2 vols. (Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, Ky.: Cistercian Publications, 1989)
Instit. nostrae	*The Paraclete Statutes. Institutiones Nostrae: Introduction, Edition, Commentary,* Cistercian Liturgy Series 20 (Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, Ky.: Cistercian Publications, 1987)
LI sup. Por./sup. Praed./sup. Per.	*Logica "Ingredientibus"* [*super Porphyrium, super Praedicamenta Aristotelis, super Periermeneias*], ed. Bernhard Geyer, *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften,* BGPMA 21.1–3 (1919–27); *LI super Periermeneias*, ed. Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, *Twelfth Century Logic: Texts and Studies II: Abaelardiana inedita* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1958)
LI sup. Top.	*Logica "Ingredientibus" super Topica glossae,* ed. Mario Dal Pra, *Pietro Abelardo: Scritti di Logica,* 2nd ed. (Rome, 1969), 205–330; ed. Karin Margareta Fredborg, "Abelard on Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100–1540*, ed. Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Rodney M. Thomson (Brepols: Turnhout, 2003), 62–80.
LNp	*Logica "Nostrorum petitioni sociorum,"* ed. B. Geyer, *Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften,* BGPMA 21.4 (2nd ed., 1973)
Planctus	*Pietro Abelardo: Planctus,* ed. and trans. Massimo Sannelli (Trento: La Finestra, 2002)
Problemata	*Problemata Heloissae,* PL 178: 677–730
Scito teipsum	*Scito teipsum,* ed. Rainer M. Ilgner, CCCM 190 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); *Peter Abelard's Ethics,* ed. and trans. David Edward Luscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)
Sent.	*Secundum magistrum Petrum sententie,* ed. L. Minio-Paluello, *Twelfth Century Logic:Texts and Studies II: Abaelardiana inedita* (Rome, 1958), 111–21
Sent. P. A.	*Sententie magistri Petri Abelardi (Sententie Hermanni),* ed. Sandro Buzzetti (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1983)

Sent. Parisienses	*Sententie Parisienses*, ed. A. M. Landgraf, *Ecrits théologiques de l'école d'Abélard* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934)
Sermo 1–33	*Sermones*, PL 178: 379–610; [*Sermones* 2, 4, 14, 26, 32, 34] ed. Paula di Santis, *I Sermoni di Abelardo per le monache del Paracleto*, Medievalia Lovaniensia I.31 (Louvain: Peeters, 2003)
SN	Peter Abailard, *Sic et Non*, ed. Blanche Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976–77)
Sol.	*Soliloquium*, ed. Charles S. F. Burnett, "Peter Abelard, 'Soliloquium': A Critical Edition," *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 25 (1984): 857–94.
TChr	*Theologia Christiana*, ed. E. M. Buytaert, CCCM 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969)
tsch/TSch	*Theologia "Scholarium,"* ed. E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, CCCM 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987) [*tsch:* recensiones breuiores; *TSch:* recensiones longiores]
TSum	*Theologia "Summi boni,"* ed. E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, CCCM 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987)

Works of Other Writers

Bernard, *SBO*	*Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq, 8 vols. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–77)
Boethius, *In Cat.*	*In Categorias Aristotelis libri quatuor*, PL 64:159–294
Boethius, *In Isagog.*	*In Isagogen Porphyrii Commenta*, ed. G. Schepss and S. Brandt, CSEL 48 (Vienna-Leipzig, 1906)
Boethius, *In Per.*	*Commentarii in librum Aristotelis Periermeneias*, ed. C. Meiser, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1877, 1880)
Bouquet, *Recueil*	M. Bouquet, *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, 24 vols. (Paris, 1738–1904)
Chron. Maur.	*La Chronique de Morigny (1095–1152)*, ed. Léon Mirot (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1912)

Gerland, *Dialectica*	Garlandus Compotista, *Dialectica*, ed. Lambert Marie de Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1959)
John, *Metalogicon*	John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall, CCCM 98 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991)
Otto, *Gesta Friderici*	Otto of Freising, *Gesta Friderici I Imperatoris*, ed. Georg Waitz and Bernard von Simson, MGH Scripta rerum germanicarum in usu scholarum, 3rd ed. (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1912; repr. 1978)

I

Images of Abelard and Heloise

There is a mythic quality to the lives of Peter Abelard and Heloise that has never ceased to fascinate readers of their letters and to provoke controversy about the significance of their ideas. The outer contours of their lives are well known through Abelard's so-called *Historia calamitatum,* or *History of My Calamities*.[1] He tells the story of his life as a moral lesson on how worldly success could lead to disaster while the most difficult situations could always be turned to the good. He explains how, after arriving in Paris from his native Brittany around 1100, he established himself as a brilliant and controversial teacher, who outshone both William of Champeaux in dialectic and then Anselm of Laon in divinity. He devotes much attention to putting his side of the story about which rumor was rife, his love affair with Heloise. Explaining what happened as if it were a fable, he presents his behavior as simply the consequence of lust. The love affair became the subject of wide gossip and was eventually discovered by her uncle, Fulbert, a cleric and Abelard's host. When Heloise became pregnant, Abelard had her escape to Brittany. Abelard endeavored to make amends to her uncle by forcing her (against her will) into a secret marriage. This failed to placate Fulbert, who had him castrated. At Abelard's behest, they both entered the religious life, she at the Abbey of Argenteuil and he at the royal Abbey of St.-Denis.

Abelard explains these events, difficult as they were to accept, as all serving a higher end. In a similar vein, he argues that the machinations

that led to his writing on theology being condemned as heretical at the Council of Soissons were corrupt but served to cure him of pride, just as the castration had cured him of lust. He devotes the remainder of his narrative to explaining the background to his foundation of the oratory of the Paraclete. The narrow-mindedness of the monks of St.-Denis had driven him to escape to the territory of Champagne, where he established a philosophical retreat, dedicated initially to the Holy Trinity but then more specifically to the Paraclete. After a few successful years the community collapsed, forcing him to accept a position as abbot at a remote monastery in Brittany. By the working of providence, however, a corrupt action—Suger's expulsion of Heloise and her nuns from Argenteuil—had a positive outcome. Abelard transferred to Heloise and her community control over the abandoned oratory. By 1131, the Paraclete had been granted official recognition by the papacy. While Abelard's life was still uncertain, he was sure that all difficulties could be overcome. This at least is the story as Abelard tells it in his *Historia calamitatum,* written around 1132.

Much less is known about Heloise, about whose early life we are largely dependent on the rather remote and enigmatic testimony of Abelard in his account of their early affair. Ever since Jean de Meun summarized the story of their love affair within his continuation to *Le Roman de la rose* in the thirteenth century, there has been no shortage of attempts to imagine and admire her as a passionate heroine, devoted to Abelard. The difficulty with this fascination in the story of their love affair is that it has tended to overshadow awareness of Abelard and Heloise as thinkers, preoccupied by issues of language, theology, and ethics. While Jean de Meun read the correspondence from the perspective of a very specific issue, namely, whether true love could ever be compatible with marriage, Abelard's narrative in the *Historia calamitatum* is itself shaped by profoundly theological concerns. It is addressed to an unidentified friend (perhaps indirectly Heloise herself), then experiencing great difficulty, in the expectation that this friend will find comfort from the message that all suffering ultimately serves a higher end, and that God never ceases to provide consolation through the Holy Spirit, the comforter or Paraclete. In her initial response, Heloise declares that she is not satisfied by his attempt to provide consolation, or by his account of their relationship as driven by lust, and insists on the purity and selflessness of her love for him. She closes the letter by declaring that she should write to him in the religious life as much as he used to write to her in the past, when they were lovers.[2] Abelard, by contrast, prefers that she dwell on the religious ideals to which she is committed in the monastic life, and he

composes, at her behest, extensive treatises and liturgical texts for Heloise and her community.

In the *Historia calamitatum,* Abelard shapes his narrative to show how the working out of his own life itself followed an inner logic, as the unfolding of the divine will through the most unpalatable and unjust situations. Reading the text literally, we can easily assume that this is the writing of an individual with an aggressive and difficult personality, driven in his youth by debauchery and pride as well as by enduring suspicion that others are driven by jealousy of his genius. Like other writers of the period, Abelard plays up certain elements of his past to evoke a moral lesson. While he gives much more detail about his life than most of his contemporaries, he glides over many issues, above all his debt to those who have helped him both politically and intellectually. His major argument is theological: that God's consoling goodness can turn the most difficult situation to a positive end. He presents the story of his life and his relationship to Heloise in mythical terms. Inheriting a literary topos from Ovid and Jerome that he has been victimized by the jealousy *(invidia)* of rivals, he claims that he has learned that all these difficulties serve a greater good. He opens his account by reflecting that the story of one individual's life can often be more powerful than general platitudes: "Often examples stir or soothe human emotions more than words."[3] While his narrative is a carefully crafted text that provides a particular perspective on the story of the lives of its two central protagonists, it needs to be read with caution.

The rhetorical framework of the *Historia calamitatum* makes it dangerous to rely only on this account as an objective summary of Abelard's career. It is not particularly concerned with the evolution of Abelard's ideas or his intellectual debts. It is a polemical document in which he emphasizes not only his own past debauchery, from which he claims to have been freed by castration, but also the injustice of the accusations made against his teaching of theology. The *Historia calamitatum* gives no record of the way Abelard's thinking deepened during the 1130s as a result of his becoming a spiritual adviser to the Abbey of the Paraclete and through starting to teach again in Paris at the schools of the Montagne Ste.-Geneviève. This phase of life, perhaps the most intellectually productive in his entire career, has to be understood through the prolific writings that he produced both for Heloise and for his students in Paris during this decade.

Our understanding of Abelard as a thinker has also been much shaped by the powerful imagery invoked by Bernard of Clairvaux in a widely diffused letter that he addressed to Pope Innocent II in 1140/41. Goaded

by William of St.-Thierry, Bernard caricatures Abelard as a self-important thinker devoted to reason rather than to the love of God. Bernard's writing has been immensely influential over the centuries in creating the impression that Abelard always remained a dialectician at heart and never matured into a serious theologian:

> We have in France a former teacher turned new theologist, who from his earliest youth has dabbled in the art of dialectic and now raves about the Holy Scriptures. He tries to raise teachings once condemned and silenced, both his own and others', and to add new ones besides. He who deems to know everything in heaven above and on earth below apart from "I do not know" lifts his face to heaven and gazes on the depths of God, bringing back to us words that cannot be spoken, which are not lawful for a man to speak. While he is ready to supply a reason for everything, even those things that are beyond reason, he presumes against reason and against faith.[4]

Bernard portrays Abelard as a stereotype of everything that the true intellectual should not be. With no awareness of the arguments that underpin Abelard's dialectic, Bernard presents his opponent as someone who, under the guise of providing reasons to justify belief, argues against both reason and faith. Drawing on passages brought to his attention by William of St.-Thierry, Bernard dissects a range of opinions in Abelard's *Theologia "Scholarium"* that seem to be manifestly contrary to orthodox Christian doctrine. In particular he abhors Abelard's claim that while God the Father is full power, God the Son is only "a kind of power" and the Holy Spirit "no power at all."[5] This seems to contradict the claim of the Athanasian Creed that all three divine persons are equally omnipotent. Bernard is troubled not only by Abelard's apparent claim that the Holy Spirit is not of the substance of the Father but also by his definition of faith as "estimation" or opinion *(estimatio)*, which seems to contradict the Pauline definition of faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the argument of things that do not appear" (Heb. 11:1).[6] Abelard's account of the redemption seems to William and Bernard to be even more alarming. Both quote from a report of his teaching, a so-called book of the sentences of Master Peter, in which Abelard seems to assert that Christ did not come to free humanity from any legitimate yoke of the devil.[7] If he denies that humanity was not rightfully held in captivity by the devil, does that not render unnecessary the death of Christ on the cross? Bernard is outraged by Abelard's rhetorical question: "To whom does it not seem cruel and wicked that anyone should seek the blood of an innocent, or cannot it in any way please him for an innocent person to be killed, so that God has an acceptable death for his Son, so that he could be reconciled

through this death to the whole world?"[8] Abelard seems to imply that all Christ achieved through his suffering was to demonstrate an example of love rather than to free us from the yoke of sin, in his assertion that "[O]ur redemption is that supreme love for us, achieved through the passion of Christ."[9] These are criticisms not of Abelard's method but of his understanding of key doctrines of orthodox Christian belief. Bernard considers that Abelard is gutting the idea of God as a Trinity of three, coequal persons and abandoning any orthodox sense that Christ came to redeem mankind from sin.

Bernard has great difficulty in finding any common thread to all the various ideas in Abelard's thought other than a perverse desire to challenge accepted Christian doctrine. He cannot understand Abelard as a philosopher, except as someone who has dabbled in the art of dialectic and now "raves" incoherently about the Scriptures. All that he knows about Abelard's intellectual evolution is that having begun life as a dialectician, he has failed to grasp anything of Christian doctrine or the spiritual life. Drawing on Paul's warning about false teachers (1 Tim. 6: 20), he describes Abelard as indulging in "profane novelties both of words and of meanings," pursuing novelty for its own sake.[10] Anxious to respond to these accusations, Abelard seeks permission to present his case at a forthcoming council, to be held at Sens on May 25, 1141. When he realizes that Bernard had already spoken to the bishops on the eve of the council, Abelard decides to transfer his case to Rome, prompting Bernard to write a flood of letters to the pope and the cardinals. Pope Innocent II issues an official condemnation of Abelard as a heretic, condemning him to perpetual silence and excommunicating all his followers on July 16, 1141.[11]

This public controversy made it difficult for contemporaries to gain an unbiased understanding of what Abelard actually thought about language, theology, and ethics. Unlike Bernard, Abelard did not have articulate apologists to put forth a reasoned explanation of his arguments, or a well-resourced monastic community that could ensure the diffusion of his writings. His most ardent defenders could also be the most intemperate. Berengar of Poitiers writes a heated attack on Bernard's behavior at Sens, but in it speaks little about Abelard's theology.[12] Even John of Salisbury, who followed Abelard's introductory lectures on dialectic in 1136/37, never shows any profound familiarity with Abelard's theology. John certainly admires the broad commitment of Abelard to philosophical learning, and recalls that "the peripatetic of Le Pallet" was one of a small cluster of outstanding teachers—alongside Gilbert of Poitiers, Thierry of Chartres, and William of Conches—who defended the value of the liberal arts: "He

was so eminent in logic that he alone was thought to converse with Aristotle."[13] Yet for all his enthusiasm for Abelard's capacity to produce easily accessible explanations of ancient texts, John does not hesitate to describe specific arguments offered by Abelard as either naïve or simply wrong.[14] While John shares Abelard's admiration for classical ethics, he is more sympathetic to the arguments of Gilbert of Poitiers about language and theology. In the *Historia pontificalis*, John gives a detailed and nuanced account of the accusations against Gilbert raised at Reims in 1148, subtly criticizing Bernard of Clairvaux for not appreciating Gilbert's learning and theological depth. John only alludes briefly, however, to Bernard's behavior at the Council of Sens in 1141.

The superfluity of images, claims, and counterclaims generated by Abelard's eagerness to engage in public debate makes it difficult to determine the underlying threads behind Abelard's diverse output. Even twentieth-century historiography of Abelard has been subtly influenced by the rhetorical arguments of previous centuries. Theologians tend to view Abelard as a philosopher, in particular as a logician, rather than as one of their own. Philosophers have concentrated their attention on certain aspects of Abelard's logic but have rarely paid attention to his commentaries on Scripture or his other writings for Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete. As a thinker, he tends to be identified as "a man of the schools" rather than as a monk, concerned for the religious community dedicated to the Paraclete. Scholars interested in Abelard's ethical theory tend to consider such inquiry as separate from his activity as a logician or as a commentator on Scripture. The cleavage that has developed in the modern period between philosophy and theological studies has had a serious effect in fragmenting understanding of Peter Abelard. This tendency to disciplinary fragmentation is itself a legacy of the increasingly sophisticated intellectual culture of the twelfth century.

With Heloise, we encounter a similar problem. She tends to be perceived and admired more in a secular than in a religious context. As a woman, she could not become a teacher in her own right except in the context of the Paraclete. It is thus more difficult to reconstruct the distinct features of her thought. She became famous for qualities quite different from those associated with Abelard, namely, piety, wisdom, and patience: "The more she hid herself away in her enclosed cell to give herself more fully to holy prayers and meditations, the more ardently did outsiders seek out the advice of her spiritual conversation."[15] Heloise's refusal to present a public image of herself to a wider world only encouraged her admirers to imagine the inner story of her life. In two letters to Heloise, Hugh Metel (ca. 1080–ca. 1150) speaks glowingly of her reputation as a writer:

"By composing, by versifying, by renewing familiar words in new combination, and what is more excellent than everything, you have overcome womanly weakness and have hardened in manly strength."[16] When Heloise failed to respond to this flattery, Hugh sent a second message, presumably also to no avail. While Heloise does seem to have been an imaginative and innovative writer, she steered away from the public stage. Only after Jean de Meun came across the exchange of letters between Heloise and Abelard does a shadowy story, largely passed over by twelfth-century monastic chroniclers, begin to come to life. Jean is interested in Heloise not as an abbess or as a thinker about ethics, but as a woman who proclaims the completeness of her love.

Little is known of the books possessed at the Paraclete during the twelfth century. Most thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts of the correspondence of Abelard and Heloise were copied in a humanist rather than a monastic milieu, but probably derive from an archetype originally preserved at the Paraclete. The fullest version of the exchange—including Abelard's Rule for the Paraclete and a document, "Our Institutions" that lays out monastic practice at the Paraclete, drafted in around 1141 quite possibly by Heloise—occurs in full only in a single manuscript (Troyes, Bibl. mun. 802), perhaps made for the Paraclete, but bought by Robert de Bardi from the cathedral chapter of Notre-Dame in 1347. In the late fourteenth century, the Avignon popes had granted indulgences for the restoration of the Paraclete after its near complete destruction through war.[17] The Troyes manuscript may have been returned to the Paraclete by 1497, when a new abbess, Catherine de Courcelles, had the bodies of Abelard and Heloise solemnly transferred to places of honor in the newly constructed abbey church at the Paraclete. The manuscripts prepared for the occasion, including transcriptions of epitaphs recovered from their original tomb, reflect an image of Abelard and Heloise as virtuous Christians, subtly different from that given in *Le Roman de la rose*.

This image of Abelard and Heloise as representing a spirit of monastic humanism was reinforced by the publication in 1616 of their writings by André Duchesne and François d'Amboise.[18] This volume initially appeared with a preface by Duchesne, who provided a detailed historical commentary on the *Historia calamitatum*, but was subsequently reprinted in that year with a more elaborate preface by d'Amboise, as well as with a *Censura* from the doctors of the Sorbonne. Abelard's writings had been on the Index of Prohibited Books since 1563 and technically were forbidden reading. Neither Duchesne nor d'Amboise was particularly interested in the content of Abelard's theology, and they did not include any of his writings on dialectic in the edition. Rather, they sought to show

that Abelard and Heloise were authentic historical figures who contributed in a significant way to French culture in the twelfth century. The 1616 edition challenged an image of Abelard as dialectician and heretic, widely circulated through the polemical letters of Bernard of Clairvaux, by emphasizing his fundamental orthodoxy.

Paradoxically, this edition was published at precisely the moment that the abbess of the Paraclete, Marie IV de la Rochefoucauld (a relation of François d'Amboise), was seeking to diminish the presence of Abelard and Heloise at her abbey by transferring their remains from the main church to the crypt. Having given many precious manuscripts relating to the early history of the community to François d'Amboise, the abbess quietly gave up all of the liturgical customs that had given the Paraclete its distinct identity since the twelfth century. She eliminated all mention of the achievement of its founders in a commentary that she wrote on the Rule of Benedict, to guide her nuns. In an atmosphere of increasingly rigid religious orthodoxy in seventeenth-century France, Abelard and Heloise came to be seen as individuals at odds with ecclesiastical authority.

The renewal of scholarly interest in medieval culture provoked by the Maurists in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had little impact in improving awareness of Abelard as a thinker, although they did publish a few hitherto unknown texts such as his *Theologia Christiana* and *Expositio in Hexaemeron*. By contrast, the letters of Heloise fascinated a non-clerical audience for what they had to say about "affairs of the heart." In 1643, François de Grenaille provided some rather free translations of letters of Heloise within a collection of writings by famous women, both mythological and historical.[19] Enthusiasm for these letters flowered in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through a range of literary paraphrases of the *Historia calamitatum* and the accompanying letters of Heloise to Abelard. Picking up on the literary genre of Ovid's *Heroides*, they presented Abelard as an amorous philosopher at odds with the dogmatism of ecclesiastical authority, and Heloise as outspoken in her tragic love for Abelard. Needless to say, Abelard attracted little interest as a thinker, while Heloise was admired for her teaching about the purity of love rather than as the abbess of a religious community.

These attitudes changed significantly during the early nineteenth century, just as the physical remains of Abelard and Heloise were given new honor at Père Lachaise. In the second volume of his *Histoire de France*, published in 1833, Jules Michelet presented Abelard as the hero of the urban communes, the Breton logician whose proclamation of liberty threatened the Church, and Heloise as a sign of a new dignity accorded to women in the twelfth century.[20] The key figure in promoting awareness

of Abelard as a thinker was Victor Cousin, who first published the fruits of his pioneering research into hitherto unread manuscripts of medieval logic in 1836.[21] In a volume that opened up awareness of medieval philosophy, Cousin provided editions of Abelard's previously unknown *Sic et non* and *Dialectica,* and explained scholasticism as a philosophy defined above all by dialectic. Cousin was not particularly interested in Abelard's theology as such, "the only thing one could study at that time," but emphasized his critical method. He presented Abelard as the creator of a system that would eventually be destroyed by Descartes, whom he considered to be the founder of "modern" philosophy *proprement dit,* free from the constraints of religious dogma.[22] Abelard was thus a precursor of the critical achievement of German philosophy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Cousin saw this scholastic philosophy as fertilizing a Europe that was otherwise "one in religion." It is impossible to disguise the latent nationalism behind claims such as "One can say that scholastic philosophy was born in Paris, and that it died there."[23] Cousin's commitment to the reform of university education in France, for so long monopolized by the doctors of the Sorbonne, neatly mirrored his image of the growth of the schools in twelfth-century Paris, spreading enlightenment in a society otherwise under the control of religion.

Cousin understood scholastic philosophy to be defined not by grammar or rhetoric but by dialectic. It involved the application of reason to theology, but was not identified with theology as such. The core issue of medieval philosophy he identified as the question, mentioned in passing in Porphyry's introduction to the *Categories* of Aristotle, whether a universal term such as *animal* or *man,* predicated collectively of different individuals, exists in reality *(in re)* or is simply a spoken utterance *(in voce)*.[24] Cousin established an interpretation of Abelard's logic as preeminently concerned with universals that continued to be of great influence throughout the twentieth century. It sees Abelard's discussion of one particular type of word as foreshadowing modern philosophical suspicion of references to essences beyond the realm of critical analysis. Cousin interpreted Abelard's account of how he forced William of Champeaux to modify his teaching of universals in the course of hearing him lecture on rhetoric as marking Abelard's rupture with traditional ontology. Cousin's *Ouvrages inédits,* followed by the two volumes of *Petri Abaelardi Opera,* published in 1849 and 1859, canonized this image of Abelard as a nominalist dialectician concerned with words and concepts, rather than as a serious theologian. It was an image ultimately inspired by the powerful rhetoric of the abbot of Clairvaux. Cousin never commented on any of Abelard's monastic writings. The title of his edition referred only to the

name of Abelard, not of Heloise, a practice followed in 1855 when the abbé Migne printed an expanded version of the 1616 edition under the title *Opera Petri Abaelardi*, without the name of Heloise on the title page.

Doubts about whether Heloise actually wrote the letters attributed to her were first raised in 1806 by Ignaz Fessler and were renewed by J. C. Orelli in 1844 and Ludovic Lalanne in 1855, all of whom suggested that the surviving letters may be nothing more than a literary fiction.[25] The myth of Heloise as a heroine of outspoken love had reached such extravagant heights by the early nineteenth century that a few scholars suggested that two "personal" letters to Abelard, evidently modeled on the *Heroides* of Ovid, could be a fiction composed to promote the story of their conversion. In the first major biography to be written about Abelard, published in 1845, Charles de Rémusat presented a more rounded picture than Cousin of Abelard's intellectual achievement, but he reinforced the practice of considering Abelard as the intellectual and Heloise simply as the idealized focus of his attention.[26] In 1885, Martin Deutsch published an important study of Abelard as "a critical theologian" but ignored the presence of Heloise, on the grounds that the letters attributed to her might not be authentic.[27] Writing in 1904, Henry Adams took for granted that Heloise was a mythic figure, like Isolde "spanning the ages," while having no doubts about the intellectual achievements of Peter Abelard.[28]

With the growing influence in the nineteenth century of the Catholic intellectual revival, Abelard was judged by Catholic traditionalists to be less than fully orthodox, a man of reason rather than a reliable exponent of religious faith. Following the encyclical *Aeterni patris* of 1879, the teaching of Thomas Aquinas became defined as a definitive system of thought in which a fixed deposit of faith was analyzed through reason, always in obedience to the authority of the Church. Where Abelard had been a symbol of philosophical progress for Cousin and his admirers, he now came to symbolize the limitations of secular thought. In his place, Aquinas was presented as the archetypal scholastic, against whom all other teachers had to be measured. Admirers of Abelard often emphasized that his major contribution lay in his scholastic method, his use of reason, rather than his specific theological teachings. At the same time, a number of scholars raised questions about whether the historical Heloise could really have been the "heroine of love" that her admirers made her out to be, and argued that perhaps the entire correspondence was a monastic fiction, written either by a disciple or entirely by Abelard himself.

The argument that Abelard was fundamentally an orthodox Christian was given its classic exposition by Etienne Gilson in *Héloïse et Abélard*,

first delivered as lectures to the Collège de France in 1936–37.[29] Never particularly interested in those discussions about universals that fascinated Cousin, Gilson focused on Abelard as a moralist who came to understand the true meaning of Christian conversion. He portrayed Heloise as a heroine of pagan *grandeur,* who never fully came to terms (at least in her letters) with her situation in the religious life. In an appendix, Gilson refuted the hypothesis raised by Bernhard Schmeidler that Heloise's letters may all have been written by Abelard by claiming that this failed to understand "the heart" of Heloise. Gilson's analysis of the drama of their relationship as that between an orthodox theologian and a pagan heroine was itself shaped by a romantic image of Heloise as a woman who lived for her man. Gilson effectively used Abelard and Heloise as metaphors for the relationship between a Christian theologian and a pagan world that was still in need of conversion. The dualism implicit in this interpretation of the letters of Heloise was much criticized by Peter von Moos, who engaged in a protracted debate with Peter Dronke in the 1970s about reading her letters as "expressions of her heart." Von Moos interprets the correspondence as a whole as a monastic document, a highly crafted rhetorical *exemplum* about conversion to the religious life. In more recent writing, he has continued to emphasize the monastic function of the correspondence as a whole.[30]

The debate about the authenticity of the correspondence provoked by John Benton's hypothesis that the entire letter collection might have been forged in the late thirteenth century (first presented in 1972), or by Abelard himself (a position to which he had reverted by 1979), forced scholars to look afresh at the relationship between the famous letters of Abelard and Heloise and their other writings, hitherto much neglected, relating to the monastic life. The long established tendency to focus on Abelard as a schoolman and Heloise as a tragic heroine effectively screened them off from their broader monastic context and identity. Readers silently assumed that for both Abelard and Heloise, monasticism was a prison that impeded their emergence as "protomodern" identities. Only during the 1980s and 1990s did these attitudes begin to change, as a few scholars looked more at the very significant monastic documents in the correspondence, notably Heloise's criticism of the Rule of Benedict and Abelard's two lengthy treatises, on the history of religious women and his Rule for the Paraclete. It became apparent that Bernard of Clairvaux did not have a monopoly on the definition of monastic culture in the twelfth century.

Study of the correspondence of Heloise and Abelard experienced a new awakening with the growth of interest in categories of gender in the

late twentieth century and a renewed confidence that Heloise was indeed author of the letters attributed to her in the manuscript tradition. A number of scholars argued that Heloise's writings not only expressed devotion to Abelard but also criticized a number of his perspectives. Barbara Newman has taken issue with the absurdity of assuming that Abelard could have written the letters of Heloise, suggesting that such interpretative strategies in fact extended a process of repression of her identity already evident within the texts written by Abelard.[31] Other studies on the letters of Heloise attend to the rhetorical strategies evident in her letters as she seeks to establish an identity distinct from that of Abelard. There are few studies, however, that give due weight to the originality of both Abelard and Heloise in the correspondence. Some writers focus on the monastic dimension of the exchange, particularly evident in Abelard's two lengthy treatises on the religious life, while others focus on Heloise as a critic of the strategies that Abelard seeks to advance.[32] Those who have questioned the authenticity of her letters have criticized a romantic idealization of her persona, without always recognizing that these letters present a set of attitudes quite distinct from those of Abelard.

A similar problem bedevils commentary on Abelard's rich and manifold achievement as a philosopher and theologian. Because he has for so long been interpreted as a forerunner of modernity, whether by admirers or by critics, scholars have tended to isolate one aspect or another of this achievement in the light of fixed assumptions about the meaning of *logica* or *theologia*. They have often assumed that Abelard is much more of a philosopher of language, critical of the supposed ontological "realism" of thinkers such as St. Anselm and William of Champeaux, than a serious thinker about ethics or theology.

In 1969 Jean Jolivet attempted to break down this perspective by exploring both Abelard's theory of language and its application to theology.[33] He argued that the issue of universals was only part of Abelard's theory of language, according to which words and phrases do not make statements about things *(res)* but rather signify aspects of their subject, whether that subject has a concrete existence or is purely hypothetical. Jolivet's analysis focused on Abelard's theory of language and its application to theology rather than on theology per se. Other scholars, such as Albert Murray, Lief Grane, and Richard Weingart, have been interested in Abelard's reinterpretation of traditional Christian theology but have had little to say about how it connects to Abelard's theory of language. The year 1969 also witnessed the publication of David Luscombe's detailed study of the influence of Abelard's theology in the twelfth-century schools, from a historical perspective.[34]

Two books, both published in 1997, epitomize quite different approaches that can be taken toward Abelard. Michael Clanchy has produced a highly readable and historically well-informed biography that considers various aspects of Abelard's life (master, logician, lover, theologian, heretic) but focuses above all on his personality as a rebel and critic of authority.[35] By contrast, John Marenbon has written an excellent study of Abelard as a philosopher both of logic and of ethics.[36] He argues that scholars have considered Abelard merely a critical thinker and have not appreciated the originality of his ethics. Marenbon interprets Abelard as initially preoccupied with problems in medieval logic, in particular with ontology, but then as experiencing a radical shift away from logic to ethics, which he sees as the foundation of his theology.[37] His book is divided into three sections, dealing in turn with issues of chronology, with Abelard's logic, and with his ethics. The effect of this division is to suggest that there is a radical rupture in Abelard's philosophical evolution from being a logician to being a theologian, driven by ethical concerns. Like Clanchy, Marenbon comments in passing on Heloise's influence on Abelard's thought on matters of ethics, although not in any systematic fashion.

The question remains of how we are to reconcile the multitude of apparently contradictory images that both Abelard and Heloise generated, both in their own day and down through the centuries. Is Abelard's theology simply a cover for his theory of language or his ethics, or can he be considered as a serious theologian? What influence did Heloise have on his intellectual development? How is she different as a thinker? There is a long tradition of bracketing together both Abelard and Heloise as fundamentally secular figures, at odds with the dominant religious traditions of their day, as represented by Bernard of Clairvaux. Post-Enlightenment distinctions between "religious" and "secular" culture have frequently been imposed on the culture of twelfth-century Europe, so as to trace the roots of so-called modernity. Abelard is often perceived as a quintessential rebel, who challenged theological tradition through his philosophical acumen. Even if one argues that Abelard changed from being a critic of conventional logic to being a theologian concerned to justify the beliefs of the establishment, commentators have often assumed that his theology was simply a vehicle through which he could pursue non-theological interests, whether in the sphere of language or of ethics. This perspective tends to detach Abelard from the theological concerns of his contemporaries. A similar question arises in relation to Heloise. Was her reputation for piety and religion simply a cover for purely worldly concerns, or should we read her letters as manifesting a religious intent?

The argument will be pursued in subsequent chapters that far from manifesting rupture and discontinuity, Abelard's thought evolved from an early concern with *logica,* the theory of language, to growing awareness of both theology and ethics, in particular under the influence of Heloise. We need to avoid imposing a radical dichotomy between secular and religious culture in studying Abelard and Heloise, or indeed any of their contemporaries. Their interest in theology and religious commitment evolved out of their fascination with secular learning and wisdom, as well as through the particular circumstances of their own lives.

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