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Abelard's place in Christian education.

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Thesis

ABELARD'S PLACE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by

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ABELARD'S PLACE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION
College courses in the history of education have allotted one day's lecture to the teacher of the twelfth century, Peter Abelard. This mere introduction has served only to whet my appetite. I wanted to know more about the man before whom the intellectual world of his generation bowed in adoration. I wanted to know if his life had been of any permanent worth. This interest seemed a legitimate one upon which to begin research, the object of the study being a thesis to be submitted as partial requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

I have chosen to make the study an appreciative one. In the doing, I have eliminated many side-lights on the character of Abelard brought in by authoritative writers. I recognize that there are weaknesses in Abelard's character, but the choice to make the study almost purely appreciative has been a deliberate one. A valuable precedent has been given me by Joseph McCabe in his excellent biography, Peter Abelard.

The bibliography for the thesis is necessarily short. The majority of the books on Abelard are written in French and there are few available translations. I have relied primarily upon McCabe, Rashdall, Compayre, Poole, Hawkins and Abelard's Autobiography. Quotations have been
given from George Moore's lovely book, *Heloise and Abelard*. I realize that this book is more fiction than history, yet the quotations used seemed to me to be representative of the Abelardian mood, thereby valid for this thesis.
CHAPTER ONE

Historical Background.
The Eleventh and Twelfth Century Church

The eleventh century was one of turmoil for the Church. During its early decades the Papacy was extremely dissolute and a multiplicity of Popes arose. At one time there were three Popes in Rome, each holding one of the large churches and each defying the other two. This schism was ended when the Emperor, Henry III, took matters in his own hands. At the synod of December, 1046, he nominated, and the overawed people elected, Clement II of Germany as Pope, thereby doing away with the several rival ones. In subsequent years the Papacy broke away, little by little from Empire dominance until under Gregory VII, known commonly as Hildebrand, the Papacy was completely freed. Not only that, but Hildebrand considered the Papacy "a divinely appointed universal sovereignty which all must obey and to which all earthly sovereigns are responsible, not only for their spiritual welfare, but also for their temporal government." 1 Hildebrand was fated to become the most remarkable personality in mediaeval Papal history. Throughout his reign he worked hard for reform in both spiritual and secular fields. "He attempted to bring the high clergy everywhere under his control. He caused extensive codification of church

1 Walker, History of the Christian Church, p. 229.
law to be made and enforced clerical celibacy as not only the theoretical but the practical rule of the Roman Church. The ideals that he had established for the papacy were to live after him.  

Yet with his death dissolution again set in. A long strife between papacy and empire ensued which ended in compromise -- a compromise which would not have satisfied Hildebrand, but which left the church and state with equality of power.

During this period came the first crusade, in 1096. Walker calls the crusades "in many ways the most remarkable of the phenomena of the Middle Ages."¹ Eleventh century Europe saw considerable economic upheaval. Famine, misery and unrest prevailed widely and everywhere was felt the urge to change environment in the hope of alleviating suffering. As is often noted during economic stress there comes a revival of religious fervor. In this century the manifestations of this fervor took monastic and ascetic forms. The people desired to go on pilgrimages to the holy places of their faith, there to gain a rebirth of the spirit. But the holy places had been captured by the infidels, who would not permit Christians to enter the sacred ground.

¹ Walker, supra, p. 232.
² Walker, " p. 238.
Urban II proclaimed, in 1096, a Crusade for the rescue of the holy places from the Moslems. He called on all Christendom to take part in it, promising forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who should fall in the enterprise. Enthusiastic response greeted his proclamation and thousands of folk from all over Europe joined the crusading army. This first crusade was acclaimed a success when, in 1099, Jerusalem was at last wrested from the Mohammedans. This, however, was but the beginning of such crusades, which lasted well on into the thirteenth century.

As has been said, the religious fervor manifested itself also in monastic forms. The Cluniac reform dominated the eleventh century. The monastery at Cluny was founded in 910 by Duke William the Fious, of Aquitaine. It aimed at monastic reformation by example and influence, and became a powerful monastic organization. The most important monastic group of the twelfth century was the Cistercian group, of French origin. In 1098, Robert, a Benedictine monk, founded a monastery of great strictness in Citeaux. Here was cultivated a strenuous self-denying life. Buildings, utensils, surroundings of worship were of the plainest character. Its ideals
were withdrawal from the world, contemplation and imitation of apostolic poverty. To this monastery in 1112 came the young Bernard, but even the strictness of Citeaux was not severe enough for him, so, in 1115, he withdrew and formed the Cistercian monastery at Clairvaux, abbot of which he remained until his death. In his monastery even the few freedoms of Citeaux were denied, and it is the leader of this stern movement with whom we have to deal in the later part of this thesis.

Eleventh and Twelfth Century Monastic Education

Throughout the earlier Middle Ages the chief centers of culture had been the monasteries. Through that period which Mother Frances Drake in her Christian Schools and Scholars ¹ calls a time of "lead and iron ignorance," the monasteries had saved learning from extinction. By no means was this a necessary part of their Rule, but fortunately in the daily routine of the monks, three to four hours a day were left free for reading. Each monastery had a library of service books, with usually some copies of

¹ London: Burns Oates & Washburn, Ltd., 1924.
Bibles and theological works. It had a school for novices which probably entailed certain elementary textbooks. As books were scarce, the novices were taught to write and set at the task of copying manuscripts.

During the early Middle Ages those who wished their children trained for the service of the church sent them to the monastery for education. The instruction was, of course, in Latin, and to preserve the purity of the tongue, Latin texts were kept. As a result, the old classics, Caesar, Cicero and Vergil were preserved.

2. Cathedral. In time the monastic schools gave up their place as the primary teaching institution to the cathedral schools. These schools had been established in connection with the cathedral churches, and their aim was to ensure proper training of the clergy. The teacher of this school was the scholasticus, who was assisted in his teaching by the Bishop of the cathedral.

For at least six hundred years these two types of schools were the only advanced teaching institutions in western Europe. The studies in these schools were known as the Trivium and Quadrivium. The former included grammar, rhetoric and dialectic; the latter, music, geometry, arithmetic and astronomy. Of these seven we shall emphasize most in the following sections, the study of dialectic. Therefore
it might be well to quote what Rhabanus Maurus, learned
textbook writer of the mediaeval era says of it:

"Dialectic is the science of the under-
standing, which fits us for investigation and definitions,
for explanations and for distinguishing the true from the
false. It is the science of sciences. It teaches how to
teach others; it teaches learning itself; in it the reason
marks and manifests itself according to its nature, efforts
and activities; it alone is capable of knowing; it not only
will, but can lead others to knowledge; its conclusions lead
us to apprehensions of our being of of our origin; through it
we apprehend the origin and activity of the good, of the
Creator and creature; it teaches us to discover the truth and
unmask falsehood; it teaches us to draw conclusions; it
shows us what is valid in argument and what is not; it
teaches us to recognize what is contrary to the nature of
things; it teaches us to distinguish in controversy the
true, the probably and the wholly false; by means of this
science we are able to investigate everything with penetra-
tion, to determine its nature with certainty, and to discuss
it with circumspection."

There were three famous cathedral schools
in France during the eleventh and twelfth centuries -- Laon,
Chartres and Notre Dame. We shall give a very brief description
of these before entering upon the main body of the thesis.

Of the cathedral school at Laon, there is not
a great deal of material written, probably because the school
here did not survive very long. Three famous teachers at
this school were Adelard of Bath, Anselm and Ralph of Laon.
These last two were theological teachers of distinction and
have been called the eyes of the Latin Church. The subjects
taught at Laon were probably the seven liberal arts, theology
and philosophy.

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1 Maurus, Education of the Clergy, trans. by F.V.M. Painter from
the German text of Schulz, Gansen and Keller, in his Great
Pedagogical Essays.
The cathedral school at Chartres was at the height of its eminence in the twelfth century. Fulbert was its first great teacher, through whose influence the school attained superiority over Paris and Laon. Other great names follow in succession. The curriculum here consisted of the seven liberal arts, the school being primarily noted as a school of letters. By the middle of the 12th century Chartres became overshadowed by the cathedral school of Notre Dame.

From this great school we are led to the foundation of the University of Paris. Three great names are inseparably connected with Notre Dame -- William of Champeaux, Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard. The school became especially famous for its teachers of the liberal arts, especially dialectic and theology. By means of the great teachers the school increased until it outgrew its cathedral school organization and from it arose the university structure.

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We have tried to trace in a sketchy fashion the historical background for the life and work of Peter Abelard, perhaps the keenest scholar of the twelfth century, and whose life story follows immediately.
CHAPTER TWO

The Life of Abelard.
Birth and Boyhood. Peter Abelard was born in Pallet, Brittany, in the year 1079. Like so many of history's famous characters, very little is known of his early life. In Abelard's own biography he does not tell anything of his childhood years. Thus we can only formulate from his later life, a questionable knowledge of his childhood. It is not known for certain that his surname was really "Abelard", and various accounts are given explaining the name. Some say it was given him through an application of the French word for "bee", abeille, on account of his industry and the sweetness of his discourse.  

Another author refers to an account that Abelard, having mastered the higher branches of learning but knowing very little about mathematics, undertook to round out his understanding of that field. His master, noting Peter's efforts, said: "What more can the sated dog do than lick the bacon?" The phrase "to lick the bacon", translated into the crude Latin of the period, becomes bajare lardum. This name, adopted by students as a nickname for their fellow-pupil, was eventually rounded into "Abelard". This, somehow, seems rather far-fetched, and McCabe, who gives the latter tale, accredits no great credence to it. He feels that it is reasonable to assume that "Abelard" was Peter's own surname.

\[1\] Storrs, Bernard of Clairvaux, p. 431.
Peter was the oldest child of Berenger, a nobleman of Brittany, and Lucy, his wife. His parents were educated to a degree which was not usual for the day. The children in the home were surrounded with cultural and moral influences, and from early childhood were, undoubtedly, subjected to instruction in the arts and sciences of the time. Berenger, an able soldier himself, probably destined his oldest son, as a matter of course, to the same career. But the young Peter, growing up in an atmosphere of study, took little or no interest in soldiering, but desired to seek after knowledge. Cheerfully he abandoned to his younger brother his birthright, that of succession to the place of his father, and, he says in his autobiography: "I relinquished the Court of Mars that I might be educated in the lap of Minerva."¹

Education

Even in these early days -- days immediately preceding the twelfth century and its renaissance -- thousands of young men, eager to learn all that was possible, left their homes and made their way toward the centers of learning. The fame of great teachers had found its way into the most isolated corners of Europe, and many, like

¹Abelard, Historia Calamitatum, Chapter I, p. 1.
Abelard, left all they had to gain, in return, instruction from their favorite leaders. It is said that one could not go far on any road without meeting these wandering students who walked from school center to school center, drinking their fill from each matter, and, thirsting again, moving on to another. Peter Abelard became one of the great company.

The first teacher to whom he was attracted was the great Roscelin. Abelard, we remember, was still a youth, in his fifteenth or sixteenth year. Roscelin spoke of him as "the smallest of my pupils." Roscelin, Canon of Compiegne, was then teaching at Tours. He was the great rationalist of his day, and at his feet, on the floor of the hay-strewn lecturn hall, Peter Abelard spent several years. Roscelin's doctrine had been condemned by a council at Soissons in 1092, and he had been banished from both England and France, hence he was compelled to teach in provinces of Gaul. Of him Rashdall says: "He supplied that powerful shock to established beliefs and modes of thought in which great speculative movements usually have their origin. His teaching awoke the schools of Europe to a consciousness of the speculative issues of the logical question which they had been discussing since the time of Alcuin, as well as to the speculative

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1 There is some dispute as to the amount of time Abelard spent under Roscelin. Mme. Guizot finds no evidence that he studied here at all. Roscelin says Abelard studied with him from "boyhood to youth." Abelard says himself that he attended Roscelin's lectures "for a short time."
possibilities of the dialectical weapons whose use they had long made it their chief business to teach." ¹

The fifteen-year-old youth who sat in his classroom would have to be precocious indeed if he derived anything at all from a teacher on questions so speculative as those discussed by Roscelin. Foremost among these questions was that which will be discussed later, the question of universals. But, as Storrs says, "the youth was undoubtedly impressed by the trained mind of his teacher, and carried away with him much of the master's spirit, if not his teachings." ²

For the next five or six years Abelard "went where dialectics flourished." He wandered from place to place, drawn irresistibly by the fame of schools and teachers. This period, though dismissed with a few words by Abelard, was a most important one in his development, for it was in those years that he received his training in dialectics which was to make him the most famous teacher of his age. McCabe says of this period:

"To so good purpose did he advance in this work of loosening the tongue and sharpening the wit, that throughout his life the proudest orators and thinkers of Christendom shrank in dismay from the thought of a verbal

¹Rashdall, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, p. 47.
²Storrs, supra, p. 434.
encounter with him."  

At the age of twenty he arrived at Paris — "beautiful, naughty, brilliant, seductive Paris — the center then, as for centuries afterward, of letters and arts for Northern Europe. Each of the abbeys in Paris had its school, and good schools they all were. But to the young Abelard there was but one school, the great episcopal school of Notre Dame, under whose ceilings taught the supreme master in Christendom, William of Champeaux.

Often as we reconstruct, mentally, the picture of Abelard as he sat under the tutelage of William, we visualize an old master being put to rout by a young and brilliant student. Such was not the case. William was by no means and old man. On the contrary, at the time Abelard enrolled himself in his classes, William was but thirty years of age, or ten years older than his pupil.

Champeaux had forced his way to his high position by sheer ability. It was through his efforts that the school at Paris had become an outstanding one. All over Europe his fame had spread. He was held to be the "first dialectician of France," and "the pillar of doctors." At the time of Abelard's entrance at his school he was in the prime of his life, at the height of his career.

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1 McCabe, J.I., Peter Abelard, p. 18.
Abelard's reason for enrolling under this esteemed teacher was his keen interest in dialectics.

It is common knowledge that best impressions are made when opportunity is given for corresponding expressions. This opportunity William provided in his classroom. He taught his pupils the art of disputing, but he gave them the right to exercise their powers in the same art. They were privileged to ask questions or even dispute with the lecturer, provided, of course, that they use the correct form of dialectics. This opportunity was just what Abelard desired. He knew his ability and he was conscious that his questions would baffle even the great William. He had a genius for argumentation, and his style was so clear, his thoughts expressed so easily, his tone so persuasive that before long he came into actual conflict with his teacher.

His autobiography tells us the following about his first experiences at William's school:

"I came at length to Paris, where this study (dialectics) had long been greatly flourishing, to William, styled 'of Champeaux', my preceptor, a man at that time pre-eminent, rightly and by common repute, in this teaching; with whom I stayed for awhile, welcomed by him at first but afterwards a grave burden to him, since I endeavored to refute

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several of his opinions and often ventured to reason with
him, and at times showed myself his superior in debate..."

The great question of the hour was an old
philosophical one -- the question of the reality of uni-
versals. This problem, so little-thought-of today, and
considered of such small importance in modern thought, was
"the one stimulating and interesting morsel which the
monastic teacher could place before the hungry intellect
of the inquiring student." 1 Every student, even in the
so-called Dark Ages, was led to read and make part of him-
self the Introduction to the Logic of Aristotle. In this
Introduction occurs these words:

"Next, concerning genera and species, the
question indeed, whether they have a substantial existence
or whether they consist in bare intellectual concepts only,
or whether, if they have a substantial existence they are
corporeal or incorporeal, and whether they are separable
from the sensible properties of the things (or particulars
of sense), or are only in those properties and subsisting
about them, I shall forbear to determine. For a question
of this kind is a very deep one and one that requires a
longer investigation." 2

This question was the central one in scholastic
philosophy, and many battles were fought on its ground. The

1 Rashdall, supra, p. 38.

2 Quoted in Rashdall, supra, p. 39.
greatest of these battles came in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and were immediately concerned with the three whose names are intimately connected with this paper, namely, Roscelin, William of Champeaux, and Peter Abelard. It was the controversy over this question which drove William in shame and humiliation from his chair in Notre Dame, and this question which raised Abelard to a height where the eyes of the entire intellectual world were fixed on him.

The only position in this controversy which was thought to be compatible with the orthodox faith was Realism. The realists held that universals -- the church, humanity, divinity -- were prior to the particular -- the churchman, the individual man, the persons of the Trinity. They held, further, that the universal had independent existence as a thing, quite apart from the particular individuals in which they might be for the moment objectified. For example: the Church was an entity; Humanity existed; the unity of the Deity was.

The opposing position to the above was known as Nominalism. This party held that universals were names and nothing more. What had to be comprehended was the concrete uniqueness of the particular. Haskins, in his Renaissance of the Twelfth Century, says:\(^1\)

\(^1\) P. 352.
In that period philosophy and theology could not be disassociated. The study of one led naturally to the study of the other. The steps in the progress of educational thought were, Rashdall says, in this order:¹ "from Logic into Physics, from Physics into Metaphysics, from Metaphysics into Theology." When once thought was aroused, it had no material upon which to expend itself, save what was supplied by the Scriptures, the Church Fathers and the doctrinal system of the church. Roscelin, then, with his eager and avid mind, ever searching for truth, of necessity sought for it in the realm of theology. In this realm, then as now, it was most difficult to steer a steady course and very easy to collide with time-honored codes or principles.

Roscelin scorned the orthodox position and contemptuously denied the real existence of universals, declaring them to be, in fact, "mere words." He upheld strongly the reality of individuals. His logical position drove him into theological heresy because unity in the Trinity became, according to his reasoning, an impossibility. Of him St. Anselm says: "He would have spoken of three Gods had usage not forbidden it."

Roscelin's position was reported all over Europe and everywhere were the cudgels of the orthodox taken

¹Rashdall, supra, p. 33.
up against him. St. Anselm assailed him from the theological side; William of Champeaux assailed him from the philosophical side. At Soissons he was condemned and banished.

William of Champeaux was champion of the Realist camp at the time when Abelard sat as a student in his classes. Because of his assiduous championship of this position, he being virtually the leader of philosophical thought, the realistic doctrine began to assume the position of an orthodox or official philosophy. In his teaching he maintained that the whole thing, that is, the idea represented by each specific or generic name was essentially present in each individual of the genus or species. Abelard states Champeaux's position thus: 1 "For he had been of this opinion touching the community of universals, that he maintained a thing as a whole to be essentially the same in each of its individuals, among which, forsooth, there was no difference in essence but only variety in the multitude of their accidents."

The position which Abelard took on this question seems to modern philosophers to be one of commonsense. He chose the old familiar route, the middle ground between the extreme of Realism as taught by Champeaux, and the extreme of Nominalism as taught by Roscelin. And, as

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1 Historia Calamitatum, Chapter II, p. 5.
is often the case, the middle ground proved to be the truer ground. Abelard worked out his doctrine with his usual clearness and brilliancy, so that the restless student minds into which he poured his ideas, were entranced with the logic and simplicity of his position.

The common-sense doctrine of Abelard developed in later centuries into that doctrine known as Conceptualism, which theory was later accepted as orthodox by the Church. His doctrine "inclined to Nominalism in that he started from the individual and believed that by the effort of thought we rise from it to the universal. Also, he approximated to Realism in his belief that universals are not merely names but are conceptions of the mind, necessary in the sense that thought is impossible without them, and real in virtue of their necessity."¹ Against the doctrine of his teacher, Abelard contended that if the whole thing, that is, the whole of the universal were "essentially" present in each individual of the genus or species, none of it was left to be present in any other individual at the same time.

The controversy between teacher and pupil on this question went on. Abelard realizing all the time that he was undermining William's position and making the

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¹ Evans, Joan, _saura_, p. 67.
erstwhile infallible master the laughing stock of many of his students. All of them were not, of course, on the side of the brilliant young Breton. As stated in the autobiography, 1 "Those who among my fellow-students were esteemed the foremost, suffered with all the more indignation in that I was junior to them in age and in length of study. Hence arose the beginning of my calamities......and the more widely my fame extended, the more the envy of others was kindled against me."

Yet there were enough of the students who thoroughly believed in the young Abelard and by them he was encouraged to open a school of his own. Perhaps it was Abelard's first thought to start a school right in the heart of Paris, near the camp of William, but prudence came to his support, and the decision was made to remove Abelard's chair to Melun, thirty miles distant from Paris. Although in those days when there were very crude methods of transportation (students almost invariably walked between centers of learning), a distinct leakage was noted in William's classes, and a constant train of students moved from Paris to Melun. Nor were his students limited to those from his former school and other schools of Paris. Already his fame was spreading and students came from distant places to learn at the feet of the new teacher.

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1 Historical Calamitatum, Chapter II, page 3.
William, realizing that Abelard's power
was increasing daily, strove to suppress the new academy
but his efforts were unsuccessful. These attempts to
oust Abelard, and their subsequent failure, were not long
in coming to the young master's ears. He reasoned that
since William was powerless to strike at him, he might
as well come a little nearer to Paris, since the nearer
to that metropolis he was, the greater number of students
he could reach. The town of Corbeil was chosen, and it
was, as McCabe says, "a comfortable day's walk from Paris."
The two rival schools of dialectics, now so near each
other, exerted all known efforts in order that each might
gain ascendancy over the other. The students met outside
lecture hours and engaged in hot debate over the relative
merits of their schools.

The long period of argumentation and the ex-
citement of setting up and lecturing to his schools, was too
much for Abelard's health. He was compelled to close his
school at Corbeil and return for a time to Brittany. Here
he remained for several years. What he did during this rest
period is a matter of conjecture. In his Historia Calamitatum
he says nothing about it save, "But a few years having gone
by, when for some time I had recovered from my infirmity.....
I returned to him (William)."1

1Chapter II, page 5.
Returning to Paris, Abelard found that the educational arena had undergone a considerable change. William had deserted his cathedral school at Notre Dame for the quietness of the monastic life. He knew that his supremacy as a teacher was doomed and it was quite natural that he should realize that the best alternative was church office, for example, a bishopric. Therefore he took the first step necessary to achieve his desired end. Abelard came back to Paris mentally determined to drive William once and for all from the coveted chair at Notre Dame, and to seat himself therein. He learned that William was teaching rhetoric in St. Victor's priory on the slope of St. Genevieve. Now Abelard at this time knew more rhetoric than William could dream of knowing, yet the wily Breton enrolled once more in William's class. Mediaeval ethics was a far cry from the code we set for ourselves today.

The old contest was reopened. Day after day Abelard hurled questions at his master; day after day William strove to answer in a satisfactory manner. Finally the victory fell to Abelard, for the great Champeaux was forced to alter his long-held and long-fought-for position in regard to the question of universals. You will remember that we stated that William held that
the universal was essentially one and the same in all its individuals. Now he was obliged to retract and to substitute "indifferently" for "essentially." This was the death blow to William's leadership in the intellectual realm and from now on his star declined.

Having won the victory he sought, and seeing the power of his enemy broken, Abelard saw no further need of continuing in William's classes. Yet he could not teach at Notre Dame, because William still held control over the chair in the cathedral school, and under no circumstances would he permit Abelard to assume it. Nothing daunted, Abelard began to teach on the hill of St. Genevieve. His one dominating intention at this time was to assail the cathedral school and to make life so uncomfortable for whoever taught there, that sooner or later the chair would have to be relinquished to Abelard. With him were a loyal band of students who sympathized with every ambition of their master. They advertised his teaching to such a degree that he had scarcely begun to lecture at St. Genevieve before the students deserted the cathedral school and climbed the hill to sit under Abelard. Again the war went on between the two schools. Just as it seemed that the battle was in its final stage, Abelard once more had to leave Paris and journey to Brittany.
His father, Berenger, following in the footsteps of many of his contemporaries, had entered a monastery and the faithful Lucy had to follow his example. Peter hastened to Pallet to bid farewell to his mother. The visit did not take long, but during his absence William was raised to the dignity of a bishop, and the chair at Notre Dame was left without a master.

This second victory won, Abelard did not avail himself at once of that which he had long desired. Instead, as he says, "I returned to France, principally that I might learn divinity." He was not contented to rest upon the laurels won as a superb dialectitian. "He would not have his faculties circumscribed in a single field. He had immense energy of mind, a restless ambition to dominate other minds; and in his age supremacy was only attainable by adding a mastery of theology as a key-stone to unite and perfect the structure, in itself incomplete, of human knowledge."¹

Naturally the brilliant mind of Abelard would be content with none save the best teacher of theology. The man whose reputation in this field was most famous was Anselm of the cathedral school at Laon. To him Abelard went, ambitious for knowledge in a field unfamiliar to him. His great driving force, to be dis-

¹ Poole, R. L., Illustrations of the History of Mediaeval Thought, p. 142.
cussed later under his teaching method, was the dominance of reason, and he brought to his study of theology a freedom "from the shackles of authority and an ardent longing for investigation."

Anselm had been teaching theology for forty years when Abelard, now thirty-four years of age, entered his classes. Possibly many of Anselm's students before Abelard had listened to him lecture and had come away disappointed, but none of them had been outspoken about their discovery. Abelard, however, finding that Anselm was giving him nothing but the fruits of a good memory which had been storing up facts from the Scriptures and the Fathers for forty years, made vocal his dissatisfaction. He says of Anselm, "He filled the house with smoke, not light."

Abelard attended classes for a time but before long ceased to go. One day in a joking conversation with some fellow-students he remarked that educated men should be able to study the Scriptures themselves without any other aid than the Scriptures and the gloss. The students immediately challenged him to make good his boast and it was agreed that on the very next day (Abelard refused to consider a longer time) Abelard should lecture on a little-known passage from Ezekiel. He did so, proving so successful in the lecture that the student body left the

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1 Sweetser, Seth, Church Theology and Free Inquiry in the Twelfth Century, p. 76.
classes of Anselm to listen to their fellow-student Abelard.

This teaching was soon interrupted by a
technicality. No one could teach, at least in the neighborhood
of any recognized school, without the consent of its duly ap-
pointed head. Abelard was teaching without authorization
so he was compelled to withdraw from Laon.

Of course the next move was to the vacant
chair in the cathedral school at Notre Dame. And now comes
that brief, brilliant period which must have been the happiest
time of his life when all Paris idolized him and students
thronged from all parts of the world to hear him lecture.
A quotation from McCabe summarizes his achievement at this
period:

"We are now at, or near, the year 1118. In
the thirty-ninth year of his age, the twenty-third year of
his scholastic activity, Abelard has reached the highest
academic position in Christendom. He who loved so well,
and so naturally, to be admired, found himself the center
of a life that had not been seen since Greek sages poured
out wisdom in the painted colonnade, and the marble baths,
and the shady groves of Athens. His self-esteem was flattered;
his love of rule and of eminence was gratified. Poor as many
of his pupils were, their number brought him great wealth.
His refinement had ample means of solacing its desires.
The petty vexations of their struggle were nobly compensated.

1 McCabe, Peter Abelard, p. 90f."
Before him lay a world of fairest promise into which he, seemingly, had but to enter...."

Yet not for long was he to enjoy the fame which the world was willing to bestow upon him. His career was interrupted by a new element, which until now has not once entered into the life of Abelard, the element of love. For five years Abelard had reigned unchallenged as the master of instruction in a town which was already the intellectual capital of Europe. How long he could have continued thus, it is impossible to say, but we do not have to conjecture because the interruption in his teaching, while spelling tragedy to the brilliant teacher, yet gave his life an unforgettable chapter. The immortal love affair of Heloise and Abelard wrought disaster to the idol of Paris.

Heloise was the niece of Canon Fulbert. Of her own parents we are told nothing, but we know she was educated at the convent at Argenteuil. This childhood education completed, she came to Paris to live with her uncle, and he being a learned man, continued to instruct her and gave her access to his books. As a result she was educated beyond most women of her day, having knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Tradition also credits her with beauty of form, and Abelard himself says
of her, "She was not the least in beauty of countenance."

Just how they became acquainted is not known but it is not difficult to imagine some mutual friend bringing the two together, realizing that they had many interests in common. Heloise, still in her teens, probably stood in awe of the inspiring lecturer whom all Paris adored, but with Abelard it was love at first sight and he could not wait to know her better. By happy chance Abelard conceived the notion of asking Fulbert if he might rent a room in the Canon's home, that he might have a quiet place in which to study. Fulbert, proud that the great Abelard desired to share his home, readily consented to the arrangement. It was decided, also, that in his free time Abelard should undertake the tutoring of Heloise. Nothing could have pleased Abelard more. During the hours set aside for the instruction of Heloise, the teacher made love to her. His classes were neglected that he might devote more time to this newly-found and most alluring phase of his life. Soon the streets of Paris rang with the love songs he composed to his sweetheart. All Paris knew he was enamored of Heloise but it was some time before Fulbert found it out. When at last it was brought to his attention, he drove Abelard from his house and refused to let him see more of Heloise.
Before very long, however, Abelard was forced to take practical measures. Heloise discovered that she was to become a mother and she communicated the news to Abelard. Disguising her as a nun, he removed her to his home in Brittany where she bore him a son whom they named Astrolabe. They left the baby in Brittany with relatives of Abelard when they returned to Paris.

Fulbert was incensed at the outrage and threatened to let it be known all over Paris. Abelard decided that the only way out of the difficulty was to marry Heloise. To this arrangement Fulbert agreed, joyfully, but Heloise would not consider it. She knew that for a man in Abelard's position the chief way to fame was through the church. If he were married the doors of church preference were closed to him. Abelard realized this, also, but he did not know what other course to pursue. Ruin seemed inevitable, whatever he chose to do. Only one loophole presented itself. If the marriage could be contracted and then kept secret, he might continue on his desired way. This suggestion, also, Fulbert agreed to — seemingly all he desired was to see Heloise legitimately married. Again Heloise was approached and again she stormed. She would not stand in the way of
Abelard's advancement in church orders. Affairs he might have, unmarried, and still climb to high church office, but with legal marriage, the church doors were irrevocably closed. After much persuasion, Fulbert and Abelard won her over, and the marriage was consummated. As Heloise had feared, not much time elapsed before Fulbert broke his promise of secrecy and the news of the marriage was broadcast. People came to Heloise for confirmation of the report and to one and all she vehemently denied its truth. Fulbert, out of patience, began to ill-treat her and once more Abelard removed her from the Canon's house, this time to the convent of Argenteuil where she had spent her girlhood.

Fulbert, hearing of this move and believing that Abelard meant to release himself from Heloise by having her take the veil, was incensed and he planned to avenge himself on Abelard. This revenge took a dreadful form. One night as Abelard lay sleeping, hired vagabonds entered his room and perpetrated an indescribable outrage on him. McCabe says: "In that dark night the sunshine disappeared forever from the life of Peter Abelard. Henceforth we have to deal with a new man."¹

Abelard, on his bed of sickness, felt that he would never again be able to face people. Many questions

¹ McCabe, Peter Abelard, p. 138.
came to his mind: "Which way would lie open to me there-
after, with what face would I appear in public, to be pointed
out by every finger, scarified by every tongue, doomed to be
a monstrous spectacle to all?" In his weakness the only
path which seemed to be open was to spend his remaining days
in a monastery. He did not realize how unkind it was to ask
the young Heloise to follow the same path and to bury herself
for the rest of her life in a convent. She, faithful to the
love she bore for him who was all of life to her, accepted
his decision and took the veil.

Abelard sought the abbey of St. Denis for his
home. He hoped it would provide quiet seclusion, but his
choice was a most unwise one. St. Denis was the royal abbey,
a most worldly place since its foundation, and at the time
Abelard donned the black tunic of a Benedictine monk within
its walls, the abbey was at the height of its gay career.
The monks, a boisterous, rowdy band, had heard of the fame of
Abelard as a teacher and a songster, and they welcomed him
as one of them. Great was their disappointment and disgust
when they discovered their blunder. This man was not the
same Abelard who had made Paris the gathering place of the
greatest intellectuals of the period. This was not the man
who songs of love were on the lips of all. This was an
Abelard who lectured the monks on their lax morals and their
want of discipline. This was an Abelard who refused to enter
into their noisome gaieties and held himself aloof, choos-
ing the sombre, ascetic life. He made himself so obnoxious
to his brothers that the Abbot sent him to a small country
place, there to represent the abbey and collect its revenue.
Once here by himself, Abelard upon request, agreed to re-
sume his public lectures and in a very short time, the
little village, like Paris sb shortly before, became the
intellectual center of France. The teacher's suffering
had made him more subtle and more learned than ever, it
seemed. Several thousand students thronged into the vil-
lage and the district "could find neither hospitality nor
food" for them. And with the homage of his students came
once more a renewed zest for life.

Yet again his happiness was short-lived.
Anselm of Laon, hearing of the activity and still smart-
ing from the assault of Abelard, aroused sentiment of
high church officials and rival masters against him.
Abelard's peace was disturbed by their complaints. It
was uncannonical, they said, for a monk to give lectures
and to live outside his monastery. This charge was not
potent enough, so they went even further. They accused
Abelard of heresy. For some time he had been teaching
theology and to facilitate his teaching he had written
textbooks. In these writings he brought forth his major
emphasis -- the great power of human reason. Some of these writings were:

(1) Dialogue Between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian, a work which has been called the "most radical expression of his rationalism." More will be given about this work later.

(2) Sic et Non -- a collection of sentences from the Fathers on points of dogma. This work will also be spoken of in greater detail under a later section.

(3) Treatise on the Unity of the Divine Trinity. Upon this book the charge of heresy was based. In the writing of this treatise Abelard attempted to devise rational proofs of the dogmas of the church. He was perfectly sincere and devoutly religious in intention, but every book which has ever been written on the Trinity could be found to contain statements which might seem heretical and could be proved so. This book was no exception to this rule. Therefore, through the instigation of Anselm, Abelard was called to defend his orthodoxy at the Council of Soissons, in 1121.

The trial at Soissons was a farce. When asked to explain his position as given in his book, Abelard did so readily, and its theology seemed so genuinely orthodox that up until the last day of the Council nothing could be found of heresy in the man or his book. On this last day, however, Abelard's accusers found a way to achieve their ends. They
reminded the leaders of the Council that Abelard's book had been published without episcopal permission and on this slender ground was his beloved book condemned and with his own hand he was forced to burn it before the assemblage. Yet another humiliation they heaped upon him whose cup was already full. They brought to him a copy of the 'thanasiian Creed and insisted that he read it (they hinted that he could not recite it) as a proof of his orthodoxy. Shamed at these indignities, Abelard quietly accepted the sentence of the Council to virtual imprisonment in the monastery at St. Medard.

This imprisonment did not last long and before many weeks we find him back at the Abbey of St. Denis. Here he literally buried himself in the library and took up the study of history. This study proved to be an unfortunate choice, for because of certain authorities which he read, he remarked to the monks that the founder of their abbey was not St. Denis the Areopagite, patron of France, but another Denis. To the monks this was nothing short of treason and they threatened to bring the matter to the King's attention (the abbey was a royal one, we remember), and in the storm which arose Abelard had to flee from the wrath of his brother monks. He took refuge with a friend and after long negotiations Abelard was released from St. Denis and given permission to settle,
by himself, in a bright, restful valley in the heart of Champagne. Here he built himself a crude dwelling and for a time lived in quietude and contentment. However, he had made no arrangements about sustenance, and having no money, he had to raise some. The only way he could do it was to start once more to teach. He probably started this time with a few pupils from the village, but word soon travelled that Abelard was lecturing anew, and his rustic solitude was broken. Abelard's heart sang again as streams of eager students surged into the valley and built rude huts near the dwelling of their beloved master. "The great magician had waved his wand once more, and the fascination of his lectures was as irresistible as ever."

The students built a new oratory for their master and it was formally dedicated to the Trinity, but especially was it devoted to the Holy Spirit, or Paraclete. The name chosen was significant. Surely Abelard, of all unhappy men, needed a Comforter. Here in the lovely valley the Comforter sought him, and here he gave himself up to the joys and delights of teaching.

Even this move of Abelard's, that of calling his oratory the Paraclete, was criticized by his enemies. They accused him of separating the Trinity into three distinct persons. This was absurd, of course, but we have

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1McCabe, Peter Abelard, p. 212.
learned that Abelard's every move was noted and the slightest occurrence gave his enemies occasion for harsh criticism. And for still another time fear clutched at the heart of Peter Abelard. He learned that his enemies were inciting Bernard of Clairvaux and Norbert of Premontre against him. These two men were hailed as the "new apostles." Abelard knew of their power and influence, and when he realized they, too, were working for his downfall, the blow was a severe one.

Bernard

Bernard was Abbot of the monastery of Clairvaux. In him we see the deeply religious ascetic, scaling the high walls of Heaven by dint of self-torture, arduous work and eyes closed to the beauty of the world. In his *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* Professor Maskins quotes a description of St. Bernard as given by Symonds in this fashion: "St. Bernard, blind to the beauties of Lake Leman as he bends a thought-burdened forehead over the neck of his mule."

The other apostle, Norbert, was the founder of the Premonstratensian canons. These monks of him were a sort of police force and no disorder in faith or morals escaped their notice. Sorrowful indeed was the plight of

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him who might incur Norbert's displeasure. His influence, as Bernard's, was far-reaching, extending from high church officials to the common people. Norbert claimed to be able to perform miracles, and Abelard, the rationalist, ridiculed his pretensions, always teaching his students that the age of miracles was over. Norbert was not one to accept lightly the ridicule of Abelard. Joining forces with Bernard, Abelard says of them, "These men, as they went preaching about the world and shamelessly slandering me in whatever way they could, made me for the time little contemptible as well to certain ecclesiastical as to the secular powers." Many who had hitherto supported Abelard now turned against him, inspired so to do by the preaching of Bernard and Norbert.

This insidious attack would have worried one more strong than Abelard. His previous catastrophes had weakened him and the prospect of another encounter unnerved him. "I fell into such despair," he said, "that... I was ready to remove among the heathen, and there in quiet... to live Christianly among the enemies of Christ." Every time he heard of a church gathering, he dreaded lest he should be called before it. The awful torture of Soissons could not readily be forgotten.

1 *Historia Calamitatum*, Chapter XII, p. 37.
But the inclination to leave France and take
up his abode in a foreign land never became fact. Abelard
was offered the position of Abbot of the monastery of St.
Gildas, on the coast of Brittany. It seemed to him that,
by accepting, he might escape further machinations of Ber-
nard, Norbert and the others. He chose to take the office.
The acceptance was just one more serious blunder on his
part. The abbey of St. Gildas had reached the last stage
of monastic decay. His "sons" in the monastery not only
sought out the company of women, each one had a wife and
family living on the estate. The situation horrified the
new Abbot. These monks, like those of St. Denis years be-
fore, had heard of Abelard as the gay troubadour of Paris,
the high-hearted songster, the inspired teacher. This
Abelard was not the man they sought at all! They were
rough, vigorous, ignorant men and they would not have this
sexless ascetic preach to them on the beauty of continence.
Abelard's life here was torture for him. Even the language
was unintelligible. His "sons" tried to be rid of him,
stooping to attempted poisoning and hired assassins. Some-
how Abelard always escaped. Yet his existence was a miser-
able one and he eagerly sought some outlet for himself. The
outlet was provided and a few years of intermittent joy were
opened to the harassed Abbot.
The convent of Argenteuil where Heloise was prioress, was taken over by the Abbey of St. Denis and the nuns were placed in other convents. Heloise did not wish to be placed indiscriminately. Her plight reached the ears of Abelard in far-off Brittany. The old relationship, the old love which had never really died in his heart, was lighted anew. His oratory in Champagne, the Paraclete, should be made over to her. This was done with the Pope's consent, and Heloise became Abbess at the Paraclete. In time her community here became a center of light in France.

Abelard helped install his wife and her "daughters" in their new retreat. Time was hanging heavy with him and his life at St. Gildas was so unhappy that he spent long periods at the Paraclete. But soon even this small pleasure was denied him. Ugly rumors were spread abroad about his presence at the convent and his visits had to cease.

He picked up the threads of his life at St. Gildas but before long he knew he could not remain there. The monks were determined to be rid of him. He escaped them and for three or four years nothing is known of him. During this time he probably devoted his time to literary pursuits, and out of this period may have come his *Historia Calamitatum* and the famous letters which he exchanged with Heloise.
Later Teaching.

In 1136 we find him back in Paris, taking up his old task of teaching in the familiar chair on St. Genevieve. Why he returned is not known. Possibly he needed an income; possibly his longing for the intellectual combat was too strong to be suppressed.

A new generation of students had arisen -- students to whom his former teaching was now well-known and accepted. Yet there was no master, even now, who could surpass him and daily his classes were crowded with eager pupils. Among them were two whose names have come down to us through the years, John of Salisbury and Arnold of Brescia. From the former we have this statement: "There at his feet I acquired the first rudiments of the dialectical art, and snatched according to the scant measure of my wits whatever passed his lips with entire greediness of mind." 1 Arnold of Brescia became known as the "scourge of the Italian clergy". We remember that he tried to make a republic of Imperial Rome and succeeded for a "brief, romantic moment." 2

About this later teaching on Mount St. Genevieve Storrs says: 3 "Men who were afterward to be not only eminent but principal persons in the Church and State were now taking impressions from the brilliant, acute and commanding eloquence

1 Metalexicus, 11, 10, as translated by R. L. Poole, Illustrations, etc., p. 177.

2 Scudder, Vida, The Franciscan Adventure, p. 38.

3 Storrs, Bernard of Clairvaux, p. 443.
of him whom the city and the schools triumphantly extolled as the first of philosophers, if not the first of living theologians. Popes, cardinals, archbishops and princes as well as free-thinkers and reformers, were being in effect molded by him for future work."

Mme. Guizot states that there was one future pope in Abelard's student group, and Rashdall says that twenty of these students later became Cardinals and more than fifty of them became Bishops.¹

But not for long was Abelard to teach unmolested. Bernard of Clairvaux had no intention of dropping the attack started some years before. He read Abelard's works and became convinced that the teacher was wrong. He asked Abelard to meet with him for a conference to which Abelard gladly consented. The conference availed Bernard very little, but he was willing to bide his time. He was determined, sooner or later, to bring Abelard to terms. "He was 'acting Pope' to the Church of Christ and he felt all the responsibility. And, amongst the multitudinous cares of his office, none gave him greater concern than the purity of the faith and the purification of the disquieting scholastic activity of the day."² It was inevitable that open conflict would shortly ensue. The essential differences between the two are summed up by Remusat in a clear and

¹ Rashdall, supra, p. 60.
² McCabe, supra, p. 296.
graphic way. He says that Bernard represented a school of most austere discipline in the piety of the time; Abelard represented a school of free inquiry and wide-ranging thought. Bernard's school was considered a house to train men to serve the Church and the Pontiff, in whatever office these might command, the other a seminary in which religion was regarded as a science and a sentiment, not an institution or a cause.

It was not, then, a complete surprise to Abelard when he was notified that he was to appear at the Council of Sens to discuss his position, and for him to learn that his chief opponent at this Council would be Bernard of Clairvaux.

The Council met on June 4, 1141. It was a colorful affair with the King, his nobles, suffragens of the archbishop, bishops, abbots, clerics, and innumerable masters. As at Soissons the trial was a farce and the verdict known before the Council met. The whole cathedral was with Bernard — Abelard had done nothing to gain supporters, but Bernard had been working on this, and this alone for years. Abelard could not help but feel the tenor of the throng. When Bernard mounted the platform armed with the writings of Abelard, and began to read the indictment, Abelard stepped forth, as Paul

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1 Remusat, *Vie d'Abelard*, 1, 118.
the Apostle had done so classically in a similar situation, and cried out: "I will not be judged thus like a criminal. I appeal to Rome!"

They had given the great teacher no chance to defend himself—to them he was already a heretic and need be given no voice. His appeal was in order, but it was a blow to his enemies because it was utterly unexpected. They were prepared for a flow of words from the master dialectician. The appeal completely upset their plans and they were thoroughly disappointed. The next day they met, condemned Abelard's teachings as heretical, and submitted his person and his works to Rome for judgment.

Conclusion. The student of history looking back upon the picture with the perspective of centuries can see every phase of the drama which was here being enacted. It is a simple matter for him to realize that Bernard and his group of prosecutors would be unwilling to sit idly by and let Abelard fare to Rome and present his case unchallenged. But Abelard could not have this perspective. He was living in the midst of the battle and he could not see into the intrigue all about him. Consequently, after his appeal to Rome, he felt comparatively safe for a time. He saw no occasion for hurry, so he took time to settle affairs
before he left for the Pontificate. His delay was dangerous. Bernard lost no time in despatching swift messengers to Rome, bearing letters to the Pope about Abelard and his writings. The Pope, whom we have said was a tool of Bernard, did not dare dismiss Bernard's notes. On the contrary, without ever waiting to see Abelard, a bull of excommunication was dictated against him and sent to France. Abelard, oblivious to all this, at last started on his journey toward Rome and vindication. On his way he rested overnight in various monasteries and the good fortune which rarely seemed to follow him, somehow was with him on this journey, for it directed his steps toward the Benedictine abbey at Cluny. The abbot here was Peter the Venerable, one of the kindliest and most human figures of the time. He it was who said of Bernard, "You perform all the difficult duties; you fast; you watch; you suffer; but you will not endure the easy ones—you do not love."

This lovely spirit dwelling in Cluny, which Adams speaks of as "the most agreeable residence in Europe," welcomed the pathetic ghost of the once proud and illustrious Peter Abelard. The Abbot knew that the bull of excommunication against Abelard was already in Bernard's possession. Carefully

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and tenderly he gave this information to Abelard. This was the last and most decisive blow which the teacher could stand. His hope was forever shattered and never again was his proud head lifted in defiance. For him life was over. "The violence of Bernard had rid the church of a spirit too high-minded and too sensitive to outline the injury."  

The Abbot took care of Abelard, talked with him, gave him agreeable tasks, and finally effected a sort of reconciliation between Bernard and Abelard. Bernard was content now. He had played the winning hand and was now willing to let matters lie.

For the remainder of his life Peter Abelard lived at Cluny, a broken man yet made as happy as possible by the kindly Abbot. He endeared himself to his brother monks to such an extent that after his death they claimed his body and would not hear of its being removed from their abbey.

Abelard's death occurred on the 21st of April, 1142, in his sixty-third year. Heloise had asked Peter the Venerable that the body of her husband be brought to the Paraclete, scene of so many of his happy hours, for burial. The monks at Cluny being unwilling, Peter had to get the body away by stealth but he succeeded in removing it to the Paraclete and here Abelard was buried. Here, for twenty years the faithful

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1 Poole, supra, p. 60.
Heloise attended his grave, and after her death she was buried in his tomb. During the course of history their ashes were removed and reburied several times, but in 1817 they were interred, for their final resting-place, in the cemetery of Pere Lachaise, in Paris. It is said that no matter when one may visit this tomb, he will find fresh flowers on their grave, laid there in fond memory of the immortal lovers.
CHAPTER THREE

The Teaching Influence of Abelard.
more intimately with romance than with history. He is thought of more frequently as the lover of Heloise than as one of the greatest teachers and most brilliant men of his age. Yet the point of this thesis is not to add more information about Abelard the lover, important and necessary to life as that may be. Rather we would seek to show Abelard the teacher and the influence he was able to wield because of the greatness of his teaching ability.

In George Moore's book, Heloise and Abelard, Abelard is spoken of as "a man to whom a thought was more important than health or wealth or glory." And again, "The world asks for nothing better than to listen to him."

There was a charm about his teaching which was irresistible. Wherever he went, in favor with the leaders of Church and State, or out of favor, it mattered not to the seeking herds of students who followed him. His name held magic for them, and at the merest suggestion that he was to lecture, they were at his side. He attracted such a vast number of hearers that the inns were not sufficient to contain them. When he opened his school at the

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Paraclete "cities and castles were deserted for this Thebaid of science. Tents were set up; mud walls covered with moss, rose to shelter the numerous disciples who slept on the grass and nourished themselves with rustic dishes and coarse bread."¹ In a time when there was neither publicity nor advertising, and renown could only be established slowly and from place to place by conversation and oral accounts, he nevertheless acquired both glory and popularity. Wherever he went he seemed to carry reputation and a crowd along with him.

The chief characteristics of his teaching are said to have been clearness, richness in imagery, and lightness of touch. These qualities we note in his written works, but we are sure that much was added when the man himself spoke orally to his classes. His versatility would appeal to the student body. Surely they knew that he was a poet and a singer. Moore says that to the heart of Heloise "he was a singer always, though in her intellect he was a philosopher always." His appearance and personality were most attractive. Unlike the majority of teachers of the period, he had a freedom from excessive piety and this would be appreciated by young students.

Robinson, in his Readings in European History² says further of him: "A most industrious study of

¹Remuscat, Charles de, Abelard, p. 108.
²Ginn & Company, Boston, 1904.
Haskins, Renaissance of the Twelfth Century, p. 259.

The Roman classics that were available, a retentive memory.

He had extraordinary courage and undertook.

and productive mind, with a corresponding clearness of expression, a ready

mind, with a corresponding clearness of expression, a ready
pupils. He had none of the humility, nor even of the
modesty which the habit of intellectual docility rendered
easy to his contemporaries. He went so far as to write
that he considered himself the only philosopher of his
time; but for that matter, if he was wrong to say it,
perhaps he was right in thinking it.  

Method of Abelard

When Abelard taught there was, as
we know, no regular university
organization or buildings. The
students thronged the cloisters of the cathedrals to hear
their masters lecture. What was there about the method of
Peter Abelard which was so revolutionary that students
left other teachers to enroll with him, and high church
officials pursued him relentlessly in order to make him
change his tactics?

He was a superb dialectician. It is said
that "he lived, moved, and had his being in dialectics."  

In Moore's book we find the Comte de Rodeboeuf saying:

"For thou (Abelard) wast never without a thought for dia-
lectic, and could put down the lute with pleasure to em-
barrass a man with subtle reasoning, till he found himself

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1 Compayre, G., Abelard and the Early History of Universities,
p. 13.


in a quandary, and then the spirit of the lute would rise up in thee again and philosophy would be forgotten." This study throws one back to first principles, definitions even, and in this field Abelard did more than anyone else to define the problems and methods of scholasticism.

The great passion dominating him was the passion for freedom of thought and inquiry. He was not satisfied to accept, quietly, what was handed down to him by his teachers. He must know all there was to know. This fervor he brought over into his teaching and he tried to what the mental appetites of his students so that they should want to search, independently, for truth. Moore has Abelard say: ¹ "It seemed to me that I talked to everybody who would listen to me, taking pleasure in the argument for the sake of it, caring very little which side I took, my pleasure being to quicken dead minds, to awaken thought..."

He had an utter contempt for those who took everything on trust and insisted that his students should learn how to make proper judgments. He taught them to doubt, that, through doubting they might be led to inquiry, and from inquiry they might perceive the truth.

The content material out of which Abelard formed his lectures was largely theological. In the field

of theology as in that of philosophy he upheld the banner of freedom of thought and of the spirit of inquiry. To stimulate his students' minds in this direction he wrote his famous book, *Dic et Non*, in the Prologue to which he says: "Therefore we decided to collect the diverse statements of the Holy Fathers, as they might occur to our memory, thus raising an issue from their apparent repugnancy, which might incite the *teneres lectores* to search out the truth of the matter, and render them the sharper for the investigation..."

The method used in this book was not a new one. Others had used it before him, but he gave it such popularity that it has become permanently associated with his name. The method was to take significant topics of theology and ethics, and to collect from the Fathers their opinions pro and con. The original thing about Abelard's work was, that he gave no solutions but left that to the student to think out independently.

The following are samples of the questions raised in the book:

1. That faith is to be supported by human reason, *et contra*.
2. That God is not single, *et contra*.
3. That to God all things are possible, *et contra*.
4. That only Eve, not Adam, was beguiled, *et contra*. 
5. That Adam was saved, et contra.
6. That no one can be saved without baptism, et contra.
7. That nothing is yet established concerning the origin of the soul, et contra.
8. That marriage is lawful for all, et contra.
10. That we sin at times unwillingly, et contra.
11. That a lie is permissible, et contra.
12. That it is lawful to kill a man, et non.
13. Is God a substance, or no?
14. Does the first Psalm refer to Christ, or no?
15. Is sin pleasing to God, or no?
16. Is God the author of evil, or no?
17. Is God all powerful, or no?
18. Has God free will, or no?
19. Was the first man persuaded to sin by the devil, or no?
20. Did all the Apostles have wives except John, or no?
21. Are the flesh and blood of Christ in very truth and essence present in the sacrament of the altar, or no?
22. Does God punish the same sin both here and in the future, or no?
23. Is it worse to sin openly than secretly, or no?\(^2\)

One hundred and fifty eight of such problems are supplied and none of them does he attempt to solve. "The emphasis was upon contradiction rather than upon agreement, and the failure to furnish any solutions, real or superficial, tended powerfully to expose the weaknesses in the orthodox position and to undermine authority generally."\(^3\)

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1 Quoted in Haskins, supra, p. 354f. (From (1) to (12)).
2 Quoted in Robinson, supra, p. 450. (From "13" on)
3 Haskins, supra, p. 355.
Content

Abelard knew very little of the works of
Aristotle. They were not available to the
medieval scholar in the original. But,
as has been said, philosophy and theology were not separate
fields of endeavor in those days. Philosophy was theology,
and vice versa.

Abelard had the utmost respect for the church
and its doctrine, but he could not let it alone. He was
deeply interested in the problem of the relation of Christianity
to other religions -- the other religions being that of the
ancient philosophers and the Jews. To make this interest
clear to his students he wrote a Dialogue Between a Philosopher
a Jew and a Christian. "The Dialogue is an important monument
to Abelard's genius. It anticipated not merely the rationalisti
attitude of modern theology, but also quite a number of
the modifications of traditional belief which modern rational
and ethical criticism has imposed. Abelard regards the ethical
content of Christianity, and finds that it is only the elabora
ation or the reformation of the natural law, the true essence
of religion. God has given this essential gift in every con
science and in every religion; there are no outcasts from the
plan of salvation; the higher excellence of the Christian re
ligion lies in its clearer, formulation of the law of life.
The popular notion of heaven and hell and deity are travesties
of true Christian teaching. God, as a purely spiritual be-
ing, is the supreme good, and Heaven is an approach to Him by obedience; hell, isolation from Him. When we remember that Abelard had before him only the works of the Fathers and such recent speculations as those of Anselm, we shall surely recognize the action of a mind of the highest order in these debates.  

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The work is unfinished, and as far as it goes the victory lies with the Christian. Yet Abelard departs from traditional formulae in not consigning all heathen philosophers to everlasting oblivion. In the treatise he shows that all three are different sects, yet all worship the one and the same God.

The content of his Sic et Non was discussed under "Method", so we need not repeat it here.

Bernard of Clairvaux gave us a rather lucid description of the content of Abelard's teaching when he said: "There is nothing in Heaven or on earth that he does not claim to know." All available knowledge, then, became for him part of his content material. Bernard was shocked at what seemed to him the impiety of Abelard. "It was sacriligious to bring out the pearls of the sanctuary from the doly of Holies, where the piety of the Church had enshrined

1McCabe, supra, p. 162f.
them for ages, and expose them to the rough feet of unbelieving swine."

One of these "pearls of the altar" was the doctrine of the Trinity, the mystery of which Abelard presumed to understand and explain in his Treatise on the Unity of the Trinity. "It was about this time that I was attracted above all by the thought of making plain the fundamental principles of our faith by analogies, and to do this I composed a treatise on the unity of the divine Trinity for the use of my pupils, who asked for human and philosophical reasons. They said they did not seek for vain words, and that nobody could believe what he did not understand (Abelard's teaching here) and that it was ridiculous to preach what one did not understand oneself. The Lord himself reproved the blind man for leading the blind. My treatise was written and generally approved of, for it seemed to answer all questions, even the most difficult..."

In Abelard's judgment no reading was forbidden, "not even that of the poets, so it be used aright and not preferred to what is better. Let no man call any knowledge evil, even the knowledge of evil." A quotation from Abelard's works shows clearly how he felt about fields of knowledge other than theology:

1 Sweetser, supra, p. 57.
A new calumny against me have my rivals lately devised, because I write upon the dialectic art; affirming that it is not lawful for a Christian to treat of things which do not pertain to the Faith. Not only they say that this science does not prepare us for the Faith, but that it destroys faith by the implications of its arguments. But it is wonderful if I must not discuss what is permitted them to read. If they allow that the art militates against faith, surely they deem it not to be science (scientia). For the science of truth is the comprehension of things, whose species is the wisdom in which faith consists. Truth is not opposed to truth. For not as falsehood may be opposed to falsity, or evil to evil, can the true be opposed to the true, or the good to the good; but rather all good things are in accord. All knowledge is good, even that which relates to evil, because a righteous man must have it. Since he may guard against evil, it is necessary that he should know it beforehand, otherwise he could not shun it. Though an act be evil, knowledge regarding it is good; though it be evil to sin, it is good to know the sin, which otherwise we could not shun. Nor is the science mathematica to be deemed evil, whose practice (astrology) is evil. Nor is it a crime to know with what services and immolations the demons may be compelled to do our will, but to use such knowledge. For if it were evil to know this, how could God be absolved, who knows the desires and cogitations of all His creatures, and how the concurrence of demons may be obtained? If therefore it is not wrong to know, but to do, the evil is to be referred to the act and not to the knowledge. Hence we are convinced that all knowledge, which indeed comes from God alone and from His bounty, is good. Therefore the study of every science should be conceded to be good, because that which is good comes from it; and especially one must insist upon the study of that doctrine by which the greater truth is known. This is dialectic, whose function is to distinguish between every truth and falsity; as leader in all knowledge, it holds the primacy and rule of all philosophy. The same also is shown to be needful to the Catholic faith, which cannot without its aid resist the sophistries of schismatics."

To say that Abelard used every field of knowledge as content material would be implying too much.

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1Cousin, Ouvr. inedits d'Abelard, pp. 434, 435.
were we not remembering the limited sphere of knowledge in his day. Realizing this, we can safely assume that he knew no barriers and attacked any problem which presented itself with vigor and confidence.

Spirit

There is something about the spirit of Abelard which seems symbolic of the spirit of Youth. One can almost imagine his saying, as was said of old, "I demand life, all of life, the cup full and running over!" Surely his spirit was not easily crushed. Time and again, after sore encounters and deep humiliation, he would come back to his beloved teaching and in the joy of the work which meant all of life for him, he could, apparently, forget his hours of sorrow.

He entered into the life of a scholar with whole-hearted abandon. It is said that he sought disputation with the same enthusiastic relish with which a knight of the Middle Ages galloped to the tournament. We have stated that Abelard was an apostle of freedom, and that inquiry into sources and meanings dominated his teaching. Coupled with this spirit of inquiry was an insistence upon reason as a basis of knowledge. The knowledge he possessed, and desired his students to possess, was reasoned knowledge. "Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good" might well have been his motto.
It was Anselm of Canterbury who formulated the phrase which defines the position of the orthodox church and its teachers in this period: "I believe, in order that I may know." This platform dictated the methodology which was prevalent in the episcopal schools when Abelard was a student. To a nature such as his, such a position was untenable. He preferred to know first and because of his knowledge to believe. The phrase, then, as Abelard would have it, reads "I know, in order that I may believe." For him constant reasoning was the only path to real knowledge. He desired to know all that was knowable and to come to conclusions through a process of sincere reasoning.

Christendom was not ready for this type of mind. In Abelard she saw one who might overthrow the ancient order. The Church taught that its doctrines were to be received by faith, through authority, not analyzed and known, but believed and obeyed. Small wonder, then, that Abelard was tried twice for heresy. Was he not a man who searched for meanings, doubted the most holy doctrines until he could find reasons to believe them, declared that if creeds were not understood, we might believe error as well as truth?

In Héloïse and Abelard the master says about his mission:¹ "For the world, it seems to me, is sloughing

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¹Moore, supra, p. 226f.
off its skin of centuries very slowly, almost unwillingly, too lazy to use its wits, liking nothing as well as to lie like a pig in a sty; lacking reason, the world is no better. I began to look upon myself as a swineherd who, irate at the sloth of the swine, was moved to prick them up with a goad."

Abelard was not put under strict surveillance by the Church until he began to probe under its foundations and to search for reason and truth in the very doctrines of faith. When, in his *Sic et Non*, he raised a question of orthodox doctrine, then lined up Scripture references and statements from the Fathers, pro and con, yet giving no final judgment, as to where the correct position lay, the Church felt its pillars shake. When in his *Dialogue*, although the Christian ultimately attained the victory, the others were shown to have very tenable positions, the Church was shocked. But when Abelard in his *Treatise on the Unity of the Trinity* strove to make even the Trinity consistent with reason, the Church was horrified and cried "Heresy!", and the decree of excommunication fell.

Abelard was not trying to break down the historic faith. He did not doubt that the path of authority was a true one. He felt that ultimately the two paths, reason and authority, would converge. But for him there was only one path by which he would start upon his search for truth, and that was
the path of reason, opened to him by the questionings of his own mind.

Abelard was not the first exponent of reason. One of his immediate predecessors in the field was Anselm of Canterbury who applied a keen logic to the analysis and defense of truth. Yet, "the sharpness of his logic left unimpaired the simplicity of his faith and the sincerity of his affections."\(^1\) He expended his "utmost intellectual ingenuity in first raising and then meeting objections to the doctrine which he himself unhesitatingly accepted. With Anselm this effort was made entirely for the instruction of the believer; his object was to add knowledge to a pre-existing faith."\(^2\)

Abelard had read Anselm's writings carefully and they had made considerable impression upon him. He saw in Anselm a genuine lover of truth. This truth, to Anselm, came through the path of authority, and right there came his divergence from Abelard.

Nor can one forget the classic example of Socrates as an exponent of the validity of reason. Yet we have discovered in our reading many an analogy made between the philosopher of Athens and the "peripatetic of Pallet."

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\(^1\) Sweetser, supra, p. 46.

\(^2\) Rashdall, supra, p. 41.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion.
Effect on Method of Christian Education

"Abelard had methods that were still bolder than his doctrines and principles whose range far outran the consequences at which he himself arrived. Hence his influence is not to be sought for in the verities which he established, but in the impulse which he gave...He imparted to minds that impetus which perpetuates itself from generation to generation."¹

An immediate effect of the mood of Abelard is shown in the teachings of his disciples. It is one of the frailties of human nature that we find it almost impossible to impart to others what has been given to us in its exact, original form. Thus it was with the teachings of Abelard. His disciples were inspired by his message and method, but once away from the direct influence of the master, his message was colored with the personality of the reporter. They could not reproduce his careful discriminations. They uttered crudely what he expressed finelty. In this manner gross exaggerations were made and much unnecessary harm was done to the position Abelard held in the eyes of the leaders of the Church.

The Sìc et Non may be taken as an exposition of the Abelardian method. State the problem, gather your

authorities for and against, and draw your own conclusions. This method which so horrified Abelard's contemporaries became later, with a slight change, the method of orthodoxy. The Sentences of Peter Lombard, Abelard's successor at Notre Dame, which the Church used as an authoritative teaching text, was based on the method of Abelard. The difference came in the conclusion. Abelard gave none; Lombard relied all the forces pro and con, but gave the victory to the supporters of the orthodox position held by the Church. Lombard's Sentences was in turn supplanted, in the thirteenth century, by the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas. This book is patterned after Lombard's and Abelard's method, and is today the definitive textbook for orthodox Catholicism. As has been said, Abelard was not the first to write a book of such sentences, but he was the first to systematize the method.

With his close attention to, and insistence upon, the right of reasoning, he has been called "The father of modern rationalism." He rationalized the problems of theology and in the doing paved the way for philosophical rationalism. This was a far-reaching effect of his claim for the right of reason.

In his abandoning of authority for reason, Abelard hoped to leave the traditional beliefs intact, for he believed that the paths of reason and authority would
ultimately converge. However, by giving the mind this freedom he opened the door to all succeeding liberties, to all the heresies of the future since he willed that "everything shall be discussed, everything explained, that there shall be no more secrets, no more mysteries." 1

Abelard remains celebrated among the historians of philosophy for having taken an intermediate and sound position between the Realists and Nominalists of his day. His position, very similar to what later became known as Conceptualism, is often spoken of as the doctrine of common-sense. The position he took on this old question of universals "had the stimulating effect of all teaching which clears away time-honored cobwebs.... And with the cobwebs in which the older dialecticians had been enmeshed, there disappeared also the caution and timidity which had characterized their attitude toward Theology. The weapon of dialectic was now freely applied to the problem of revealed as well as natural religion: the boundaries which had hitherto divided philosophy and theology were broken down; the sovereignty of reason was proclaimed." 2

Effect on Content of Christian Education

It is impossible to separate in thought Abelard's method and the content of his teaching. Still more

1 Compayre, supra, p. 20.
2 Rashdall, supra, p. 61.
difficult is it to try to tell of the effects of his method without running over into the teaching content. A sentence starts out to deal with method, but before the last phrases are put in, we discover that we are talking about content. This being the case, the first two topics under this section must, of necessity, be run together.

Theology, the traditional content material of the cathedral schools, was given very soon after Abelard's teaching, an Abelardian color. Bernard and the others did their best to preserve it in its orthodox dress, but they could not save it. The method of the teacher was not as easily crushed as his life had been. Abelard's most characteristic principles are now among the accepted foundations of dogmatic theology, while Bernard's principles have almost entirely died out. "The modern Catholic theologian invariably defines faith as an intellectual act, an acceptance of truths after a satisfactory rational inquiry into the authority that urges them. It is official Catholic teaching that faith is impossible without a previous rational certitude."  

Abelard made certain changes in theological content. For example his intellectual criticism led him to alter the terms of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and others; his ethical criticism led him to

1McCabe, Peter Abelard, p. 380f.
modify the currently accepted theories of original sin, penance, atonement, and so forth. McCabe states that a distinguished German theologian who had written a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, read the commentary which Abelard had made on that epistle centuries before. The reading was a revelation to him and he seriously considered whether the wisest thing to do would be to republish the work of Abelard. This illustration shows to what extent Abelard anticipated the development of the science of theology.

Besides theology, Abelard stimulated enthusiasm for the study of classical literature. He imparted fresh vigor into the teaching of grammar, which study had for long been a monotonous, circumscribed one. He was also an orator, and a stylist, as well as being a noted poet. Through his influence these less important studies were given impetus.

There are conflicting opinions as to whether or not Abelard's method and content did have any real or lasting effects. In the above paragraphs we have tried to state why they may have carried over into succeeding generations. Yet supporters may be found for each position, and we are in the same predicament as were Abelard's students—we must draw our own conclusions. It seems reasonable to
believe that any teacher who had the influence which Abelard surely had over the minds and hearts of so many hundreds of students, must have inspired them to the extent that through them his teaching should live and grow. At any rate, the education in succeeding generations proves that the spirit of Abelard, if not the method and content, lived, and perhaps that contributions is as important as any.

Effect on Organization of Christian Education

G. Compayre has written a book which he calls *Abelard and the Early History of Universities* in which he gives credit to Abelard for the founding of the University of Paris. In the beginning of his book he gives the following quotation from Cousin: 1 "That man who by his qualities and defects, by the audacity of his opinions, the éclat of his life, his in-borne passion for controversy, and his rare talent for instruction, contributed most to increase and expand the taste for study and that intellectual movement from which the University of Paris issued was Peter Abelard."

Without fear of exaggeration, we can say that Abelard's teaching made Paris the center of the intellectual world of his century. While he was not the first teacher to

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1 Cousin, V., Ouvrages inédits d'Abelard. Introduction.
attract students to Paris, his popularity aroused such enthusiasm for learning that Paris became a city of teachers. It was not long after the death of Abelard that teachers and students were so numerous that they organized themselves into guilds or corporations. These groups formed the basis of the later university. And although he taught long before the constitution of the University of Paris was formed, his method of instruction and the content material he taught, became the pattern for the new university.

Rashdall says, "With Abelard the great scholastic movement reaches a point in which it begins to identify itself with what we may call the university movement. Theoretically universities, even in their most rudimentary form, did not exist until at least a generation after Abelard. But Abelard inaugurated the intellectual movement out of which they eventually sprang. Even from the point of view of external organization, Abelard may in a sense be said to inaugurate the university movement. Anselm was the last of the great monastic teachers. A generation later the monasteries began to shut their doors upon secular students and their educational activity was taken up by the cathedrals and their more independent secular teachers. It was the cathedral school in which Abelard had taught -- the Cathedral School of Paris -- which eventually developed into

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1 Rashdall, supra, p. 42.
the earliest and greatest university of Northern Europe."

Abelard wrought with great effect than he probably knew. He opened new paths for himself, and at the same time he drew around him the keenest students of his age, into whose hands he left the task of bringing to fruition the seeds which he had so ably sown. Through his efforts a great intellectual movement was started whose end even yet we have not seen.
Chapter One

The Church in these centuries fought its way from an extremely dissolute condition to one of equality with the State. The leading name in the Papacy of the period was Hildebrand, or Gregory VII. This is the period of the First Crusade and of the rise of two flourishing monastic systems, that of Cluny and that of St. Bernard. The education in these centuries was confined to the monastic and cathedral schools, the latter gradually usurping the principal place. Here learning was preserved during the Dark Ages and here students were taught classical and religious knowledge. The three important cathedral schools of France during this period were Laon, Chartres and Notre Dame.

Chapter Two

Peter Abelard was born at Pallat, Brittany, in the year 1079. His quest for knowledge led him to the school of Roscelin, and later (about 1100) to Paris. Here he studied dialectic under William of Champeaux in the Cathedral School of Notre Dame. The eager student quarrelled with the master on the question of universals. William upheld the side of realism; Roscelin had upheld Nominalism, and Abelard chose a middle ground. In the argument William was defeated and forced to abandon his chair. Abelard
subsequently taught at Melun, and Corbeil, drawing throngs of students to his lectures. Later he taught in Paris on Mount St. Genevieve. He desired to study theology, so enrolled at Laon, under Anselm. In a very short time he became dissatisfied, left Laon, and returned to Paris where he assumed the chair at Notre Dame and became the idol of Paris. During this time he met Heloise and fell in love with her. She bore him a son, illegitimately, but they were afterward married. Having enraged Fulbert, uncle of Heloise, Abelard is made to suffer gross ignominy. Both Abelard and Heloise retire to monasteries, Abelard at St. Denis; Heloise at Argenteuil. The Abbot of St. Denis permitted Abelard to teach in a hermitage of the abbey, near Rheims, where his popularity again attracted throngs. His enemies denounced his teaching as heretical and he was called before the Council of Soissons, 1121, forced to burn his beloved book, and sentenced to imprisonment. After his release he built a small oratory near Troyes, dedicated to the Holy Spirit (Paraclete). Students swarm to him, lured again by his teaching. His writings and teachings aroused the antagonism of Bernard and Norbert, influential monks. To escape, Abelard accepted the position of Abbot of St. Gildas, a monastery in Brittany. Here he was most unhappy, save for short periods he spent at the Paraclete which he had deeded to Heloise, and where she had taken up her abode. In 1136 he was back at Paris again, teaching, where he enjoyed about five years of the work he loved.
This was interrupted by a call, instigated by Bernard and Norbert, to appear at Council of Sens to defend himself against a second accusation for heresy. The outcome of this was disastrous to Abelard, who from then on was a broken man. In his last years he was befriended at Cluny by its Abbot, Peter the Venerable. He died at St. Marcel lez Chalons, a rest home near Cluny, in 1142.

Chapter Three  As a teacher Abelard is noted especially for his championship of the spirit of free inquiry. He delved into every known field of study, thus opening up and making popular little known fields.

He emphasized reason, rather than authority as a basis for faith and turned the phrase of St. Anselm from "I believe, in order that I may know", to "I know, in order that I may believe."

His method of teaching theology was novel and fascinating, and his handling of philosophy has earned him the title of "father of modern rationalism."

Chapter Four  Abelard's method and content may, or may not have affected subsequent methodology and choice of content material. His spirit, the spirit of
free, though reverent inquiry, could not help but have its effect. His method was followed, perhaps indirectly, by Peter Lombard and later by Thomas Aquinas, and the method of the latter has become definitive for instruction in Catholic schools of higher education. Abelard's appeal for widening of the sphere of instruction to include literature and the sciences, opened the door for this type of instruction in subsequent school organizations. The type of teaching he did, brought so many admirers to Paris, that this city became a city of teachers, who in another generation formed the nucleus for the University of Paris.
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Note: The volumes marked # have been read completely. In the others I have read only those sections directly or indirectly bearing on the subject of the thesis.

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* Readings in the History of Education. (As above).


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