

Topic Page: [Abelard, Peter, 1079-1142](#)

Definition: **Abelard** from *Collins English Dictionary*

n

1 Peter. French name *Pierre Abélard*. 1079–1142, French scholastic philosopher and theologian whose works include *Historia Calamitatum* and *Sic et Non* (1121). His love for Héloïse is recorded in their correspondence

Summary Article: **Abelard**

From *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*

Abailard, Peter

1079-1142

French philosopher and scholar

Peter Abelard was born near Nantes in Brittany, the eldest son of a noble Breton house. He studied under Johannes Roscellinus at Tours and William of Champeaux in Paris, and enjoyed great success as a teacher and educator. In 1115 he was appointed lecturer in the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, where his pupils included John of Salisbury. There he became tutor to Héloïse, the beautiful and talented 17-year-old niece of the canon Fulbert with whom he was lodging. They fell passionately in love, but when their affair was discovered, Fulbert threw Abelard out of the house. The couple fled to Brittany, where Héloïse gave birth to a son, Astrolabe. They returned to Paris, and were secretly married. Héloïse's outraged relatives took their revenge on Abelard by breaking into his bedroom one night and castrating him. Abelard fled in shame to the abbey of St Denis to become a monk, and Héloïse took the veil at Argenteuil as a nun.

In 1121, the Church condemned him for heresy, and he became a hermit at Nogent-sur-Seine. There his pupils helped him to build a monastic school which he named the Paraclete. In 1125 he was elected abbot of St Gildas-de-Rhuys in Brittany, and the Paraclete was given to Héloïse and a sisterhood.

In his final years Abelard was again accused of numerous heresies and he retired to the monastery of Cluny. He died at the priory of St Marcel, near Chalon; his remains were taken to the Paraclete at the request of Héloïse, and when she died in 1164 she was laid in the same tomb. In 1800 their ashes were taken to Paris, and in 1817 they were buried in one sepulchre at Père Lachaise.

Non enim facile de his, quos plurimum diligimus, turpitudinem suspicamus."We do not easily suspect evil of those whom we love most."

- From *Historia Calamitatum Mearum*, ch.6.

Abelard and Héloïse are renowned for the collection of their correspondence. Abelard's other works include *Sic et non* (a key text in the 12th-century movement from faith to reason), *Nosce te ipsum* (an account of his ethical system) and *Historia Calamitatum Mearum* (c.1132, "The Story of my Troubles").

Sikes, J G *Abailard, Peter* (1932). Alexander Pope wrote a poem about them called *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717).

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Abelard. (2011). In L. Rodger, & J. Bakewell, *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (9th ed.). London, UK: Chambers Harrap. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/abelard_peter_1079_1142

Chambers © Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd 2011

Chambers © Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd 2011

APA

Abelard. (2011). In L. Rodger, & J. Bakewell, *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (9th ed.). London, UK: Chambers Harrap. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/abelard_peter_1079_1142

Chicago

"Abelard." In *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, by Liam Rodger, and Joan Bakewell. 9th ed. Chambers Harrap, 2011. https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/abelard_peter_1079_1142

Harvard

Abelard. (2011). In L. Rodger & J. Bakewell, *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*. (9th ed.). [Online]. London: Chambers Harrap. Available from: https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/abelard_peter_1079_1142 [Accessed 23 October 2019].

MLA

"Abelard." *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, Liam Rodger, and Joan Bakewell, Chambers Harrap, 9th edition, 2011. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/abelard_peter_1079_1142. Accessed 23 Oct. 2019.