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Chapter Five The Learned Turn of the High Middle Ages

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Chapter 5

The Learned Turn of the High Middle Ages

“A Christian should progress through faith to understanding,” proposes Anselm, abbot of Bec, in a letter to Bishop Fulk of Beauvais written near the end of the eleventh century, and “not reach faith through understanding or, if he cannot understand, fall away from faith.”¹ This certainly resonates with Saint Augustine’s admonition in his commentary on St. John: “Do not seek to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”² Although Anselm of Canterbury, as he is known (having served as archbishop there), admired Augustine, he was prepared to introduce a new degree of intellectual daring into the relation between faith and understanding. Where Saint Benedict’s sixth-century Rule prescribed divine study as “the direct route to our creator” for those “who are hurrying towards the heavenly country,” Anselm paused.³ He took the time afforded by life within the cloisters to work out a strictly logical proof of God’s existence.

By the eleventh century and the turn of the millennium, learning had come to the forefront of monastic life. It was a source of joy for the learned and a sign of their piety and purpose. Anselm writes of how “our faith has to be defended by reason against the

¹ Anselm, “Letter 136. To Fulk, Bishop of Beauvais,” in *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, vol. 1, trans. Walter Frölich (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1990), 315. Anselm asks the bishop to send the letter to a council considering Roscelin’s controversial stand on the Trinity, suggesting that, if Anselm’s views are requested, it “should be read out in the hearing of the whole assembly”; *ibid.*

² Augustine, “Tractate 29,” in *St. Augustine: Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 28-54, trans. John W. Rettig (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 18.

³ *The Rule of Benedict*, trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin, 2008), chap. 73, 104.

impious.”⁴ Anselm of Canterbury is a pivotal figure between abbey and school. He has been judged “the last great intellect of the monastic centuries of education,” by Johns Hopkins medievalist John W. Baldwin.⁵ His manner of reasoning made him one of the fathers of scholasticism, which dominated the cathedral schools and early universities: “No longer belonging to the holy monk in rural isolation,” Baldwin writes, “learning has become the property of the urban master who produced his intellectual goods within the *atelier* of his school and sold them to his students at a price to compensate labor and skill.”⁶ If Anselm led the way, he was hardly alone in the spread of learning beyond Benedictine monasticism. In addition to Anselm, I consider in this chapter the work of Hildegard of Bingen, another of learned daring and reach, as well as Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard, in what came close to being the intellectual showdown of the High Middle Ages, when abbot Bernard sought to have the schoolman Abelard condemned for heresy during the 1041 Council of Sens.

A good part of what is intriguing about Anselm is that even as he brought the force of reason to the fore, he did so while upholding the Rule of Benedict, despite how little the Rule gives to learning.⁷ If the two saints, Benedict and Anselm, differed in

⁴ Anselm, “Letter 136,” 315. R. W. Southern regards Anselm as an instance of a new “medieval humanism”: “The change took the form of a greater concentration on man and on human experience as a means of knowing God”; “Medieval Humanism,” in *Medieval Humanism and other Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 33.

⁵ John W. Baldwin, *The Scholastic Culture of the Middle Ages, 100-1300* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1971), 38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 56. At the same time, Georges Duby notes that, “virtually all the extant texts from a century-long period between 1030 and 1120 originated in the monasteries,” which was the “very period of monasticism’s triumph”; *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 174, 176.

⁷ Anselm offers this prayer to Benedict, which circulated among the nobility, with a number of women, Benedicta Ward points out, showing interest in his work: “You have placed me under your tutorship, / however ignorant a pupil; / I have vowed to live according to your Rule, / however carnal a monk.” “Prayer to St. Benedict,” in *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. Benedicta Ward S.L.G. (London: Penguin, 1973), 197, 275-77.

their understanding of how best to pursue salvation, Anselm still sought to bring not just his prayers, but also the age's most ambitious works of learning, within the Benedictine vow of humility. Consider Anselm's preface to the *Proslogion* finished in 1078. Authors often used the prefatory remarks in medieval manuscripts to confess and apologize for their presumption. To be an author (*auctor*) was to assume an authority (*auctoritas*) that otherwise belonged to God and kings alone. Through the realm of learning, Anselm was among those holding out for a third source of authority beyond God and king. This was the force of reason in the hands of the learned. But even here, the authority was not the writer's to assume. It was up to others within this formative commonwealth of learning to verify or censure a work's authority.⁸ Anselm opens the preface of the *Proslogion* in this spirit of humility.

He begins the preface by reflecting on the pressure that he faced to publish: "After I had published, at the pressing entreaties of several of my brethren, a certain short tract [*Monologion*]... a number of people (above all the reverend Archbishop of Lyons, Hugh, apostolic delegate to Gaul, who commanded me by his apostolic authority) have urged me to put my name to them."⁹ Here, with authorship pressed upon him, Anselm appeals directly to God, as the other party to this intellectual labor: "Well

⁸ See Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

⁹ Anselm, *St. Anselm's Proslogion, with a Reply on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo and the Author's Reply to Gaunilo*, trans. M. J. Charlesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 103, 105. Anselm explains the title in the Preface: "*Proslogion*, that is, an allocution"; *ibid.*, 105. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* had been undertaken at the "request" of King Ceolwulf; "Preface," in *Ecclesiastical History*, 3. In the earlier *Monologion*, Anselm also insisted his authorship was at others' request: "Certain brothers have frequently and earnestly entreated me to write out for them, in the form of a meditation, certain things which I had discussed in non-technical terms with them regarding meditating on the Divine Being"; "Monologion" in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 1-2.

then, Lord,” he addresses his request for assistance “that I may understand, as much as You see fit, that You exist as we believe you to exist and that You are what we believe You to be.”¹⁰

Anselm goes on in the *Proslogion* to develop an ontological argument for God’s existence. Briefly, the argument begins by stating God’s defining quality as “that than which nothing greater can be thought,” as Anselm puts it.¹¹ And he argues that as we can imagine and understand what is truly supreme, it can be said to exist in the mind. If the truly supreme being exists in the mind, the argument continues, then such a being must logically and reasonably exist in reality as well. For if such a being did not exist, then God would be flawed and not supreme.¹² Ergo, God must exist.

For our purposes, that Anselm was pressed to publish such an argument testifies to the expansion of learning and logical inquiry within monasticism, as an occupation of the human soul: “Come now, insignificant man,” he begins the *Proslogion*, “fly for a moment from your affairs... enter into the inner chamber of your soul.”¹³ The proof to be found within the soul remains subject to others’ assent, dissent, and encouragement to share. This logic only strengthens the faith out of which it grew. It makes the mind as the final arbiter of the faith’s soundness. As Anselm concludes, “God cannot be thought not to exist.”¹⁴

Anselm’s logical demonstrations of God’s divine attributes in the *Proslogion*

¹⁰ Anselm, *Proslogion*, 117.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. To keep it from seeming too risky a question to even raise, Anselm sets this exercise as a response to Psalm 14 and 53: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.” Matthew R. Cosgrove neatly summarizes the argument thusly: “If God is ‘possible,’ i.e., if the notion of God is not logically contradictory, he exists necessarily”; “Thomas Aquinas on Anselm’s Argument,” *Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974), 514.

¹³ Anselm, *Proslogion*, 111.

¹⁴ Ibid., 103.

established learning's particular *autonomy* and *authority* on the path to salvation.

Anselm counters the fears of heresy with the intellectual bliss of encountering God:

"Judging, then, that what had given me such joy to discover," he writes in the preface, "would afford pleasure, if it were written down, to anyone who might read it, I have written the following tract... from the point of view of one trying to raise his mind to contemplate God and seeking to understand what he believes."¹⁵

As fervently as Anselm insisted that he wrote at the request of others, he still had proprietary interests in the intellectual quality of the work. In the preface to *Why God Became Man* (*Cur Deus homo*), he opens with just such a concern: "Because of some people who, without my knowledge, began copying out the first parts of this work before it was finished and fully researched, I have been compelled to complete the work... in greater haste than would have been opportune."¹⁶ Augustine, you may recall, had expressed a similar sense of having a right over the creation, completeness, and release of his work, reflecting the author's personal investment in, and responsibility for, a work's quality and completeness. Or as Anselm puts it in his preface: "For, if I had been allowed to edit it in tranquility and for the appropriate length of time, I would have included further additional material."¹⁷ And again, it is worth noting that this is not about ownership claims, but a craftsman's right to see the work through properly and thoroughly before turning it over to others to use.

Anselm's intellectual achievements were a powerful draw for those among the devout who were interested in a life of the mind: "From every country, many noble

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Anselm of Canterbury, "Why God Became Man," trans. Camilla McNab, in *The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 261.

¹⁷ Ibid.

personages, well-informed clerics, and brave knights came to him in droves...[and] consecrated to God's service their persons and their wealth," as his disciple Eadmer puts in his hagiography of Anselm.¹⁸ Anselm's student, Guibert of Nogent, speaks of how his teacher "had free access to the monastery of Fly, where I lived, because of his piety and erudition," and he adds that Anselm's "teachings were incomparable and his life perfectly holy."¹⁹ For Anselm, no less than for Guibert, monastic life was well-suited for working out systems of thought on a daily basis over an extended period of time.

Still, the church called on Anselm, when he was sixty years of age, to restore its threatened endowment in England. In 1093, he left the quietude of the monastery and made the journey across the channel to take up the post of Archbishop of Canterbury. This was ostensibly at the request of King William II, but Anselm then had to take on the king to protect the church's interests at every turn. And the crown was not above forcing Anselm into exile more than once during his tenure as defender of the church, first against William and then Henry I.

Despite these new challenges and responsibilities, Anselm of Canterbury continued to write on theological themes. His final text, *The Harmony of the Foreknowledge, the Predestination, and the Grace of God with Free Choice (De concordia...)* was completed in 1108, just a year before his death at age 76. In his concluding work, he fearlessly plunges once again into what appears to be most difficult to establish, armed with only the dialectical reasoning of assertion and response that

¹⁸ Cited by Jean Leclercq, *Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 195-96.

¹⁹ Guibert of Nogent, *A Monk's Confessions: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, trans. Paul J. Archambault (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 61. Further to this matter of his learned reputation, Anselm is the sole medieval monastic to earn a section in Anthony J. P. Kenny's *Medieval Philosophy: A New History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 40-44.

became the sword and shield of scholasticism. The book begins: “Admittedly, free choice and the foreknowledge of God seem incompatible.”²⁰ He then goes on to unfold the logical necessity of the two concepts co-existing. He also concludes this final work by affirming what was by then the life-long pleasure and communality of learning: “Therefore, since what I know about this topic, by God's revelation, was especially pleasing to me: knowing that it would likewise please certain others if I recorded it, I wanted freely to bestow, on those who are seeking, that which I have freely received.”²¹

Anselm made reason an intellectual property of theology for the pleasure and erudition of others. He allowed that the individual has the right – nay, he called on each reader directly (“come now, insignificant man”) – to work out and test the reasoning that he presented. He recognized others’ rights to his learning, asking in return that he be allowed to fully work out his ideas and determine when they were ready to circulate. His scholasticism deepened the reach of reason within monasteries and cathedral schools; it later infused the universities beginning in the twelfth century and continuing well into the Early Modern era, with humanism its only rival. It was still present at Christ Church, Oxford, when John Locke attended the college in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Locke cared little enough for it, as it had by then been drained of the joy and pleasure that Anselm had first found in it, but that can happen in the course of six centuries of instruction.

Bernard of Clairvaux

²⁰ Anselm, “The Harmony of the Foreknowledge, the Predestination, and the Grace of God with Free Choice” in *Complete Philosophical And Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 531.

²¹ Ibid., 574.

Another of the signs that learning had made gains in the monasteries of the High Middle Ages was the strength of the backlash that it provoked among more conservative monastics. Monastic wealth and learning were portrayed as corrupting the cloisters, diverting religious houses from their true ascetic mission. Such *irregularity*, on both counts, led to calls for monastic reform. Among the responses was the founding of the Cistercian Order in 1098 in the Cîteaux Abbey of what is now eastern France. The Cistercians sought a restorative return to the Rule of Benedict, placing its emphasis on measures such as manual field work in sustaining the monastery, rather than hiring out such work.²² The twelfth-century Cistercian monk, Arnoul of Bohéries, cautioned each monastic sitting before a manuscript that, “when he reads, let him seek for savor, not science.”²³ In the early years of the order, Bernard of Clairvaux, born in 1090, served as both inspiration and authority in his own learned challenge to learning’s excess. If the Cistercians allowed for little more than a single cupboard for a monastery’s collection of books, Bernard’s own prolific flow of commentary and sermon, in book after book defending the faith, mocked such a restricted view of the monastic library.²⁴

Bernard was particularly intent on restoring the piety of Christian reading against the rising intellectual force of scholasticism that Anselm had inspired. In the place of assertion and defense, Bernard offered a poetic, mystical spiritualism. It infuses his

²² Within a century, the Cistercians had some 700 monasteries distributed across the Latin West. David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 943-1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 526-27. See also Richard Roehl, “Plan and Reality in a Medieval Monastic Economy: The Cistercians,” *The Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 1 (1969), 181

²³ Cited in Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 73. Ivan Illich draws the connection, in this devotion to reading, to Jewish mysticism and “the desire to live with the book,” as he puts it, as such “readings taste to him as sweet as a mother’s milk to a babe”; *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh’s Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 59.

²⁴ Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, eds. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 346.

sermon on the Song of Songs, as he turns his loving attention to the Bride (“she is the soul that thirsts for God”) who is every Christian: “She does not ask for freedom or payment or an inheritance or learning, but for a kiss, in the manner of a most chaste bride, who sighs for holy love; and she cannot disguise the flame, which is so evident.”²⁵ It is not learning, then, that quenches the longing for God. Only holy love and the flame of the chaste bride can satisfy that urge. He cautions that, “if anyone who imagines that he has a smattering of knowledge indulges in too close an inquiry, he will find his intellectual powers overcome and his whole mind reduced to subjection [2 Cor 10:5].”²⁶ He advises the monks attending his sermons that, “today the text we are to study is the book of our own experience; you must therefore turn your attention inward.”²⁷ He advises Hildegard in a letter, “when the learning and the anointing (which reveal all things to you) are within, what advice could we possibly give?”²⁸

The place that Bernard allowed learning was enclosed within the Cistercian restoration of piety: “Perhaps you think that I have sullied too much the good name of knowledge,” he writes in another sermon, “that I have cast aspersions on the learned

²⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermon 7,” in *Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 114.

²⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermon 67” in *On the Song of Songs* vol. IV, trans. Irene Edmonds (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1980), 4.

²⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermon 3,” in *Honey and Salt: Selected Spiritual Writings of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Kilian Walsh OCSO (New York: Vintage, 2007), 1.1, 69. Bernard’s reference to “the book of our own experience” later becomes a theme for both Bacon and Locke, with more to follow on this. Brian Stock, who points out that for Bernard “only experience increases one’s knowledge”; “Experience, Praxis, Work, and Planning in Bernard of Clairvaux: Observations on the Sermones in Cantica,” in *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, eds. John E. Murdoch and Edith D. Sylla (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1975), 226. Stock treats the Latin *experiential* and *experimentum* as synonymous in the work of Bernard, where it was to later develop into the distinctions that we now see associated with experiments and trials; *ibid.*, 265-68.

²⁸ Bernard, “Letter 2, From Bernard of Clairvaux,” Hildegard, *Personal Correspondence*, 21.

and proscribed the study of letters. God forbid!”²⁹ Bernard understood that it was too late to return to the “skillfully ignorant and wisely unlearned,” as Gregory the Great had characterized Saint Benedict.³⁰ In another sermon, on knowledge and ignorance, Bernard writes that, “there are various and countless things of which one may know nothing without detriment to salvation.”³¹

By 1139, Bernard’s concern for the growing influence of the Paris schools set him off on a mission to this city. He wanted to restore this growing body of aspiring scholars to the proper faith: “Spare your souls, I beg you brothers.... Flee from the midst of Babylon, flee and save your souls (Jer 48:6; 51:6). Fly to the cities of refuge (Jos 21:36).”³² Consider the force of Bernard’s image of the rural monastery as the spiritual sanctuary, the anti-city. The very public nature of these new schools was the source of their spiritual risk. It led to “disputes,” in Bernard’s words, about the Holy Trinity and the nature of God, “in towns, villages, and castles, by scholars not only within the schools, but also in the roads and public places... and not only among learned or passably instructed persons, but among children even and simple and ignorant persons.”³³ And indeed, some left Paris to follow him back to his Cistercian

²⁹ Bernard, “Sermon 36,” in *Honey and Salt*, 2.2, 154. The vanity theme comes up repeatedly in Bernard’s sermons: “How can you be proud, O Man? [Sir 10:9] How can you puff yourself up for your smattering of knowledge? [1 Cor 8:1]?”; “Sermon 3,” in *Sermons on Conversion*, trans. Marie-Bernard Saïd (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1981), 129.

³⁰ Cited by Putnam Fennell Jones, “The Gregorian Mission and English Education,” *Speculum* 3, no. 3 (1928), 337.

³¹ Bernard, “Sermon 36” in *Honey and Salt*, 1.1, 153.

³² Bernard of Clairvaux, “Exhortation to Repentance, and To Seek a Humble Place First and Only After Becoming Worthy to Look To Higher Honor,” in *Selected Works*, trans. Gillian R. Evans (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 95. On this conversion theme, Evans cites Bernard: “It is better to try to *convert* the Jews than to attack them”; *Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 109.

³³ Bernard, “Letter 337 (A.D. 1140),” in *Life and works of Saint Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux*, vol. 2, ed. John Mabillon, trans. Samuel Eales (London: Hodges, 1889), 868.

monastery, and took up the monastic vows in “the school of Christ.”³⁴

Bernard did not believe that the knowledge at issue was entirely misguided. He was opposed to this open access to it in schools and towns, as it was bound to lose its spiritual bearings. Bernard catalogues the failings of learning that is set apart from this holy charity:

For there are some who long to know for the sole purpose of knowing, and that is shameful curiosity; others who long to know in order to become known, and that is shameful vanity... There are others still who long for knowledge in order to sell its fruits for money or honors, and this is shameful profiteering; others again who long to know in order to be of service, and this is charity.³⁵

Bernard could be said to stand with Augustine in condemning idle curiosity and with Bede in keeping learning within monasticism’s spiritual compass. But the time of such enclosure was surely passing. Learning was taking on a new public sense, both charitable and professional, at least for men. The learned were outgrowing the institutional constraints of monasticism, and their work was circulating more widely, certainly more than Bernard was comfortable with. Yet such changes did not mean an end of the need for an order that distinguished the properties of their work, institutionally and economically, in ways that made their work a distinct form of property (with more to follow on this below).

Bernard did have friends among the schoolmen, including the notable scholar

³⁴ Bernard, “Sermon 30,” para. 11.

³⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermon 36,” in *Honey and Salt*, 3.3, 156.

Hugo of St. Victor, and he wrote letters in support of those friends when they needed them within the church.³⁶ Yet he also took on the great schoolman of the age in Peter Abelard. And if he was to win the battle against Abelard, the war against the schools was already lost in 1140, when Bernard was invited by the church to bring heresy charges against the apostate before the Council of Sens. Before introducing Abelard (whom I have moved out of chronological order – he was born in 1079, eleven years before Bernard – to the end of this chapter, given how he was ahead of his time, as a transitional figure in the lead up to the universities), I turn to this book’s last monastic, Hildegard of Bingen, who also greatly expanded the scope of learning within the cloisters, while extending her gifts to parishioners and court as part of learning’s growing circle in the High Middle Ages.

Hildegard of Bingen

Born on the cusp of the twelfth century in 1098, Hildegard’s monastic career began at the age of eight with her dramatic enclosure in the convent. Her parents, born of noble stock, offered her as a tithe to the church. She was sealed in a room with the recluse, Jutta of Sponheim, to live and pray. Fortunately, Hildegard’s life as a nun was not to remain so confined. She first went on to serve as convent “infirmarian” taking care of sisters who were unwell through remedies cultivated in the monastery.

Hildegard soon supplemented the folkways passed on to her with her own observations and experiments with the healthful benefits of plants and other balms to

³⁶ Matthew A. Doyle provides a defense of Bernard’s acceptance of the schools and his “belief in the validity and benefits of wide learning for the secular clergy”; *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Schools: The Formation of an Intellectual Milieu in the First Half of the Twelfth Century* (Spoleto, Italy: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2005), 16.

heal the ailing. In the course of this work, she developed a theory of bodily humors and elements. She also had much to offer on questions of human sexuality and reproduction. She published a guide to medicinal herbs called *Physica* and a guide to the treatment of ailments, more broadly, in *Causes and Cures*. She established a reputation in the field of natural remedies that spread through Europe and her name remains closely associated with this field to this day.³⁷

In 1136, Hildegard was elected to serve as *magistra*, or a teacher of divine learning, by her sister community, and she was eventually appointed prioress, first at St. Rupertsberg and then at the Eibingen priory on the Rhine. She was well read in secular literature; she wrote poems, invented alphabets and lexicons, worked on astronomical and astrological theories, and she remains among the most celebrated of medieval composers of choral music.³⁸ She is the author of what is regarded as the earliest surviving medieval morality play. She reported that some of this work was inspired by visions, which she had had since childhood.³⁹

In 1146, at the age of forty-eight, Hildegard decided to act on these visions. She approached the fearsome abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, who had figured in one of her

³⁷ Hildegard's medical counsel circulated in manuscript before being published in the sixteenth century and continues to this day to be a subject of medical interest: O. Micke and J. Hübner, "Traditional European Medicine – After All, Is Hildegard von Bingen Really Right," *European Journal of Integrative Medicine* 1, no. 4 (2009), 226. Micke and Hüner report that, "about three percent of all inhabitants of Germany" trust the "Hildegard medicine"; *ibid.*, 226. Uehleke, Bernhard, Werner Hopfenmueller, Rainer Stange and Reinhard Saller report that Hildegard's correct medical claims are "significantly higher [in number] than it could have been by pure chance": "Are the Correct Herbal Claims by Hildegard von Bingen Only Lucky Strikes? A New Statistical Approach," *Research in Complementary Medicine* 19, no. 4 (2012), 187. 187-190.

³⁸ Jennifer Bain, *Hildegard of Bingen and Musical Reception: The Modern Revival of a Medieval Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³⁹ The visions have been identified as "indisputably migrainous," judging by their visual aura and other qualities, by the noted neurologist Oliver W. Sacks, *Migraine: Understanding a Common Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 106. The influence of migraines had been noted earlier by C. Singer, "The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen," in *From Magic to Science: Essays on the Scientific Twilight* (New York, Boni and Liveright, 1928), 199-239.

visions “as a man able to stare at the sun” and “a terror to the unlawful foolishness of the world,” as she put it.⁴⁰ She wrote to him with the question of “how much I should say of what I have seen and heard.”⁴¹ He responded in brief that, “we rejoice in the grace of God which is in you... and beseech you to recognize this gift as grace.”⁴² Bernard’s encouragement was amplified two years later when Pope Eugene, in his travels to northern Europe, gave his blessings to the prophetic visions that Hildegard set down in her still incomplete *Scivias*. She now had license to share her words, visions, music, lyric, preaching, and teaching. She not only employed secretaries to record her words, but eventually ventured forth to preach along the Rhine Valley⁴³

“These are great and fearsome matters,” she later wrote, as she turned her visions into lessons about the forces of good and evil at play in heaven and earth.⁴⁴ These visions are the source and provocation behind much of the thinking reflected in her verse, prose, and the illuminations that she directed illustrators to construct for her. She presented these visions as a means of interpreting Biblical passages, such as the

⁴⁰ Hildegard of Bingen, “Letter to Bernard of Clairvaux,” in *Selected Writings*, trans. Mark Atherton (London: Penguin, 2001), 2-3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴² Bernard, “Letter 2, From Bernard of Clairvaux,” in Hildegard, *Letters*, 21.

⁴³ Constant J. Mews notes how Hildegard “drew on a broader range of human experience than scholastics like Abelard or monks like Bernard. She appealed to those who resented the growing influence of Parisian intellectuals in defining religious belief”; “Hildegard and the Schools,” in *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of her Thought and Art*, ed. Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke (London: Warburg Institute, 1998), 109.

⁴⁴ Hildegard, *The Personal Correspondence of Hildegard of Bingen*, ed. Joseph L. Baird (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18. Richard K. Emmerson notes that Hildegard uses “scriptural exegesis to supplement her visions” in an “exceptional” combination, although her exegesis is “generally conventional, homiletic, and highly moralized,” invoking themes of “sexual purity or deviance” and demonstrating an “impressive command of monastic learning”; “The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*: Image, Word, Commentary, and Visionary Experience,” *Gesta* 41, no. 2 (2002), 102, 106.

Prologue of John.⁴⁵ In *Scivias*, to take another example, she identifies the image presented of a female figure as the Knowledge of God (*Scientia Dei*), whom she sees as a common force against evil.⁴⁶ The illustrations of her visions are marked by their geometrical order, with striking overlays depicting woman, man, beast, and cosmic force. The images present an “Edifice of Salvation,” as she put it, revealed to her by God.⁴⁷ It amounts to a reordering of the world, beginning with women’s place in that order: “God made the form of woman / to be the mirror of all his beauty, / the embrace of his whole creation.”⁴⁸ The feminine reflects God’s cherished work, rather than the evil, Eve-like seductress. An illustration from her later years depicts a handsome naked man, free of genitals, who has declared that, she reports, “I am Reason.... everything vital is rooted in me, as Reason is the root for which the resounding word blooms in the world.”⁴⁹ As it was for Anselm, reason is vital to her understanding of faith and world.

Hildegard engaged at times in monasticism’s regional politics, but she also directed this prophetic wisdom toward a more orderly arraignment of church and state.⁵⁰ She corresponded with popes as well as kings, from Henry II of England to the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, whom she advised on, as she put it, “how to

⁴⁵ Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite (†1310)* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984), 163.

⁴⁶ Madeline H. Caviness, “Hildegard as Designer of the Illustrations to her Works,” in *Hildegard of Bingen*, 32. See also Beverly Mayne Kienzle, “Hildegard of Bingen’s Teaching in her *Expositiones evangeliorum* and *Ordo virtutum*,” *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 80.

⁴⁷ Cited by Sarah L. Higley, *Hildegard of Bingen’s Unknown Language: An Edition, Translation, and Discussion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3. The figures 2, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 20 include, beneath the main image, a nun sitting at a desk in the cloisters, recording the vision on wax tablets, with her feet comfortably crossed, despite being dwarfed by the vision and uncowed by the blinding light and spewing animals. Hildegard’s role in preparing these intricate illuminations is not known; Caviness uses the term “designer”; “Hildegard as Designer,” 29-62.

⁴⁸ Cited by Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 187.

⁴⁹ Cited by C. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 178.

⁵⁰ See Dronke, *Women Writers*, 144-201.

hold the rod of proper governance in your hand.”⁵¹ She assured a prelate that, “God established that the female sex is to be governed by faithful teachers,” and she established that women could be such teachers, against Saint Paul’s oft-cited injunction: “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach” (Tim 1: 12-14).⁵² Priests sent her pressing queries – “Please also teach me about the body and blood of Christ” – and provosts wrote to her, acknowledging the integral role that she played in sustaining the monastic community: “You have always refreshed me with your consolation in all my tribulations, and because all the things that you have foretold have come to pass.”⁵³

In women’s learned contributions to monasticism, we find another demonstration of how the institutional properties of these religious houses – with their sponsored autonomy and self-discipline, their scriptoria and shared libraries – eased the path to learning not only for Hildegard of Bingen, but for Herrad of Hohenberg, Hilda of Whitby, Mechthild of Hackeborn, and other religious women who thrived in convent and priory as students, teachers, administrators, and scholars throughout the Middle Ages.⁵⁴ Their contributions to the intellectual properties of learning were considerable, in this distinctive realm of the manuscript page, cloister, and (spiritual) learning.

Their example also illustrates the limits of this commonwealth’s autonomy, its ability to operate outside the mores of the larger society. For this same period saw the categorical exclusion of women from the cathedral schools and then from the medieval

⁵¹ Hildegard, *Personal Correspondence*, 78.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 76, 79.

⁵⁴ On Mechthild of Hackeborn, for example, Barbara Newman points to how she thrived in a nunnery at Helfta, near Eisleben, under her sister the abbess “who was renowned for maintaining a first-class scriptorium, enhancing the library with the purchase and copying of books, [and] promoting education”; “Annihilation and Authorship: Three Women Mystics of the 1290s,” *Speculum* 91, no. 3 (2016), 592.

universities that began in the thirteenth century to dominate the intellectual life of the High Middle Ages.⁵⁵ The Gregorian church reforms of the late eleventh century and early twelfth centuries contributed to the isolation of women from the more public life of learning. During that time, Pope Gregory VII approved policies “aimed at a church virtually free of women at every level but the lowest stratum of the married laity,” according to Jo Ann McNamara, a historian at Hunter College.⁵⁶ There was an increased emphasis on masculine clerical celibacy; the double monasteries were dissolved; and the mendicant Franciscan and Dominican friars, so active in learning, did not accept women. The church was increasingly given to portraying women as either the maternal, redemptive Mary or the seductive Eve. The convent remained an intellectual home for women, even as learning increasingly moved into the public domain, where it faced new struggles for autonomy and support.

Peter Abelard

In *Historia Calamitatum*, Peter Abelard offers what is indeed an account of a calamitous

⁵⁵ Lina Eckenstein writes of how the education “secured in so great a measure to women by convents in the past” was an inspiration to “the modern movement for women’s education”; *Women Under Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 484. In the eighteenth century in Bologna, with its tradition of a forceful student body, women were first able to obtain doctorates and hold teaching chairs. Women gained admittance to Oxford in 1879, with the opening of Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College, while full “membership of the University” was not to be theirs until 1920; Vera Brittain, *The Women at Oxford: A Fragment of History* (London: Harrap, 1960). For a review of the historical exclusion of women from the church and other positions of responsibility and cultural achievement leading up to the early modern period, see David Noble, *A World Without Women: The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science* (New York: Oxford, 1993).

⁵⁶ Jo Ann Kay McNamara, “The Herrenfrage: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150,” in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, eds. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 7. See Gary Macy on how, by the thirteenth century, “at the same time that theologians and canonists were redefining ordination [to exclude women], they also began the process of expunging the memory of ordained women from Christianity”; *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 110.

life.⁵⁷ He composed this autobiographical letter in his final decade, circa 1132, and it is a tale of, among other things, the great age of cathedral schools, which formed educational centers in Paris, Chartres, Rheims, Canterbury, and elsewhere. The schools were attracting a great new interest in learning, both for its own sake (as Bernard warned) and as a preparation for the life of officialdom in church or court. Abelard helped set some part of that in motion, by bringing to the schools the daring glamour of learning, with a touch of tragedy.⁵⁸

Born in 1079 in the west of France, Abelard initially set off as a young man to follow in his father's heavily armored footsteps, along with his brothers. This meant, as Abelard puts it, that his father's sons were to "have instruction in letters before they were trained to arms" as suited a minor nobleman in Brittany.⁵⁹ Abelard started down that path by acquiring his letters, only to discover that "the more rapid and easy my progress in my studies, the more eagerly I applied myself, until I was so carried away by my love of learning that I renounced the glory of a military life, and made over my inheritance and rights of the eldest son to my brothers, and withdrew from the court of Mars in order to be educated in the lap of Minerva."⁶⁰

He was still his father's son. In his approach to learning, he "preferred the weapons of dialectic," as he describes it, and "chose the conflicts of disputation," to be found in the Notre Dame, "where dialectic had long been particularly flourishing, and [he] joined William of Champeaux, who at the time was the supreme master of the

⁵⁷ Peter Abelard, "Letter 1, *Historia calamitatum*: Abelard to a Friend: The Story of my Misfortunes" *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1974).

⁵⁸ Give what Abelard does for moving the schools forward (toward the coming universities), I have moved him to the end of this chapter, and after the monastics Hildegard and Bernard, whom he precedes chronologically.

⁵⁹ Abelard, "*Historia calamitatum*," 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

subject.”⁶¹ Disputes are bound to arise among such talented disputants, and soon enough, the brash Abelard left the cathedral school at Notre Dame in Paris to found his own school at Melun, southeast of Paris, at a time when pupils pursued and paid masters of a certain reputation for the chance to sit and learn at their feet.

It was on his return to Paris in 1113, to take charge of the school at Notre Dame, that he began his fateful tutoring of the young Heloise, niece of his landlord the cathedral Canon Fulbert. It was a turning point for them both. Their love child and secret marriage led to a nunnery for Heloise and a monastery for Abelard, along with castration at her uncle’s instigation.⁶² But perhaps more germane to the intersection of learning, gender, and intellectual property is the extent to which the already well-educated and gifted Heloise taught Abelard, beyond the lessons he gave to her. Through their initial meetings and in the course of their continuing correspondence, she demonstrated to him the value of the classical writers in reflecting on philosophical matters and human relationships. M. T. Clanchy, medieval historian at the Warburg Institute, argues that she may even have convinced Abelard to become a writer.⁶³

Heloise cites Seneca and Cicero, as well as Genesis and Matthew, in her first letter to Abelard. She challenged him to write for the benefit of the Paraclete convent – “that you will prescribe some Rule for us” – which he had given to her after founding it

⁶¹ Ibid., 4-5.

⁶² As rough a justice as the uncle extracted, Abelard reports of those who did this to him that “the two who could be caught were blinded and castrated as I had been”; “*Historia calamitatum*,” 17. Uncle Fulbert’s actions were denounced and a property fine levied; John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997), 15.

⁶³ Clanchy, *Abelard*, 169. Clanchy holds that Heloise may have also demonstrated to Abelard what it meant to be “a self-conscious writer” and “a writer in the modern sense of creative author and also in the sense of a stylist and rhetorician, who has been instructed in – and delights in performing variations on – the most advanced maneuvers in Latin”; *ibid.*, 170. On her influence, John Marenbon observes that “antiquity itself played little part in his thought before about 1120,” which is to say before he gets to know Heloise; *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, 95.

with a bequeathal provided by a generous friend.⁶⁴ Heloise continued to seek the dialogue and connection: “I beg you, think what you owe me.”⁶⁵ Yet he little credited what he learned from her and portrayed himself turning, rather, to Christ to develop his theological writings. The intellectual slight and loss was as much part of the tragedy of the times as the fate of their love. Here, the intellectual properties reflected in these letters may have been subsumed by the love story. But the thing about learning’s properties is not only their tendency to persist and be preserved, but later scholars’ right of use in the form of an obligation to reconsider the force of Heloise’s contributions reflected in her letters.

What is distinctly Abelard’s in all of this is his stance toward theology: “By doubting we are led to inquiry, and by inquiry we attain the truth.”⁶⁶ It can be contrasted with Anselm of Canterbury’s stance: “I do not seek to know in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may know.”⁶⁷ Both were committed to the path, if not yet the rule, of reason. Abelard made great advances in logic, pushing ahead with Anselm’s application of reason to faith, working from Aristotle’s *Categories* and Porphyry’s introduction to it (*Isagoge*, translated by Boethius).⁶⁸ He applied this logic to identifying Scriptural and doctrinal contradictions. In his *For and Against (Sic et non)* from perhaps 1121, he offers the 158 conflicting points to be found in the pages of the Bible, without

⁶⁴ Heloise, “Letter 6, Heloise to Abelard,” in *Letters*, 94.

⁶⁵ Heloise, “Letter 2, Heloise to Abelard,” in *Letter*, 55. Dronke: “At all events, I think we should envisage between Abelard and Heloise a literary and intellectual partnership... [reflected in] those texts that both he and she cited oftenest... [and] in terms of shared pursuits of certain problems”; *Women Writers*, 112.

⁶⁶ David William Sylvester cites these quotes from Abelard and Anselm, in *Educational Documents*, Vol. 1 *England and Wales 800-1816*, ed. David William Sylvester (London: Routledge, 1970), 55.

⁶⁷ Cited by *ibid.*

⁶⁸ John Marenbon writes of Abelard: “There is throughout his writings the same willingness to challenge accepted views, to find and dwell on awkward questions, and to press ideas to their logical conclusion”; *Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, 94.

providing a resolution but only a dialectical method of determining the conflict. You can imagine that this may well have struck some as undermining church and priest, especially given his public presence.

Abelard faced censure in 1121, at the Council of Soissons where he was summoned before the papal legate Cardinal Cono of Praeneste: “Without any questioning or discussion they compelled me to throw my book into the fire with my own hands” he writes, “and so it was burnt.”⁶⁹ This must have been discouraging enough, but he had come close to being stoned at this sorry event by those who came to see him properly denounced and punished.⁷⁰ “I wept much more for the injury done to my reputation,” Abelard wrote of it all, “than for the damage to my body, for that I had brought on myself through my own fault, but this open violence has come upon me only because of the purity of my intentions and love of our Faith which had compelled me to write.”⁷¹

Two decades later, perhaps sensing that the times had changed, Abelard decided to confront his critics. He asked Archbishop Henry of Sens for the chance to publicly address the accusations that had dogged him for years.⁷² Bernard of Clairvaux was selected by the church to prosecute Abelard’s theological failings at the Council of Sens where the schoolman-monk would meet his accusers. Although Bernard showed some

⁶⁹ Abelard, “*Historia Calamitatum*,” 24.

⁷⁰ Clanchy, *Abelard*, 299. Clanchy identifies Soissons, in 1118, as both a “show trial” and “academic heresy trial”; *ibid.*, 300.

⁷¹ Abelard, *Abelard’s Adversities*, 52. Here are the grounds – referring to their love as “my own fault” – of Heloise’s writing of this letter to a friend in which “nearly every line of this letter was filled, I remember, with gall and wormwood,” Heloise, “Letter 2, Heloise to Abelard,” in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 47.

⁷² Constant J. Mews, “The Council of Sens (1141): Abelard, Bernard, and the Fear of Social Upheaval,” *Speculum* 77, no. 2 (2002), 342-82. There is some dispute over the dating of the council, with Mews on the side of 1141, while I follow Clanchy and others with 1140.

initial reluctance – “I am but a child in this sort of warfare” – he was soon thoroughly engaged in preparing his brief with the assistance of his most assiduous of secretaries.⁷³ Bernard decided that the *capitulum* that they composed against Abelard was to be limited to only nineteen of the principal heretical errors in his work: “To answer them all,” he observes, “would require volumes. I speak only of those on which I cannot keep silence.”⁷⁴ As part of his strategy, he secured the presiding judges’ support for his case in advance.

In 1141, Bernard must have entered the chambers of the Council of Sens with a great deal of confidence. He was about to put a stop to Abelard’s kidnapping of young souls in the midst of Babylon. In attendance at the council were not only church prelates, but also King Louis VII, members of the nobility and Abelard’s fellow teaching masters. Still, Abelard found a way to subvert the disputation. “And so, in the presence of all, face to face with my adversary,” Bernard later wrote to the pope, “I took certain headings from his books. And when I began to read these, he refused to listen and walked out, and appealed from the judges he had chosen, which I do not think was permissible.”⁷⁵ On leaving, Abelard informed the judges that he would appeal directly to the pope in defending the fidelity of his faith.⁷⁶

⁷³ Bernard of Clairvaux, “Letter 239,” in *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Bruno Scott James (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1998), 318. David Knowles on Bernard: “When he attacked Abelard he came forward as one who had come to challenge on his own ground the most brilliant and adored master of his age”; “St. Bernard of Clairvaux: 1090-1153,” *Dublin Review* (1953), 117, n. 105. Clanchy notes that “in manuscript culture every copy of a book was different and even St. Bernard could not be sure he was reading Abelard’s authentic works”; *Abelard*, 308.

⁷⁴ Bernard, “Letter 190 (A.D. 1140),” in *Life and Works of Saint Bernard*, vol. 2, trans. Samuel J. Eales, ed. John Mabillon (London: John Hodges, 1889), 576.

⁷⁵ Bernard, “Letter 239,” in *The Letters of St. Bernard*, 319.

⁷⁶ Among the reasons Clanchy offers for this uncharacteristic response from Abelard ranges from “the stress of the occasion” to “early signs of brain cancer,” while also citing Christ’s silence before Pontius Pilate; *Abelard*, 312. Clanchy also points out that Abelard was known (by Bernard) to have disciples in Rome; *ibid.*, 314.

Bernard wasted little time in sending his well-documented *capitulum* to the pope and cardinals, accompanied by a letter in which he refers to Abelard as a dragon inflaming disorder and dissent. Bernard, the intrepid dragon-slayer, warns that “although he is no longer lurking in his lair: would that his poisonous writings were still lurking in their shelves, and not being discussed at the crossroads!” He continues, “his books have wings... his writings ‘have passed from country to country, and from one kingdom to another.’”⁷⁷ The abbot was alarmed once more by the noisy, public spread of learning, reflected in the growing prominence of the schools across the continent. As well, the archbishop of Sens sent to Rome the court’s judgment on the case that had not been heard: Abelard’s heresy was nothing less than a “contagion.”⁷⁸

In terms of my argument, the Council of Sens brings the twelfth-century conception of intellectual property rights into sharp focus. Bernard charges Abelard with what is, in effect, intellectual trespassing. He accuses Abelard of overstepping his right of use with Scripture by exposing its contradictions. This is, for Bernard, an infringement of the Holy Book’s properties, namely its divine perfection as the word of God.⁷⁹ Abelard aggravates his sin, first of all, by circulating the infringing work through publication, and, secondly, by presuming to teach others how to take such an approach

⁷⁷ Bernard, “Letter 239,” in *The Letters of St. Bernard*, 318. In this letter, Bernard also casts Abelard as a Goliath facing down the armies of Israel, with Bernard the implied David, able to slay the intellectual giant by the throwing at him of “certain headings from his [Abelard’s] books”; *ibid*, 319. Henry, archbishop of Sens, also picks up the crossroads theme in his letter to the pope: “Disputes are carried on about the Holy Trinity and what God is, not only within schools but also at crossroads by public places by boys and simple foolish people, as well as by the learned and students”; cited by Clanchy, *Abelard*, 299.

⁷⁸ Cited by Clanchy, *Abelard*, 318.

⁷⁹ Mews: “Bernard’s theological concerns, however, had an important political dimension. He was troubled by the potential of Abelard’s teachings to tear the church apart”; “Council of Sens,” 344.

on their own with the Bible.⁸⁰

At the Council of Sens, the *capitulum* charges that Abelard “presumptuously prepared to give a reason for everything, even of those things which are above reason.”⁸¹ What Anselm of Canterbury unleashed with the application of reason to faith, in his proof of God’s existence (without reference to Scripture), Abelard had taken a step too far in applying such logic to Scripture and the doctrine of the church: “He promises understanding to his hearers, even on those most sublime and sacred truths, Bernard writes, “which are hidden in the bosom of our holy faith.”⁸² Abelard is said to promise what is not his to offer. He is “always seeking after new things, who invents what he does not find,” as if he were indeed living by the writer’s credo.⁸³ Then there is Bernard’s ancient charge against Abelard’s learned eclecticism via Heloise: “While he exhausts his strength to make Plato a Christian, he proves himself a heathen.”⁸⁴

Abelard later responded to this *capitulum* in a work that came to be known as *Apologia contra Bernardum*, of which only fragments remain. From what has come down to us, it is clear that he is not defending the beliefs that he holds but the integrity of the works in question, adding to their standing as intellectual property. Bernard’s reading of his books, Abelard says to his accuser, is “manifestly mistaken, brother, as if

⁸⁰ R. I. Moore writes of the attack on heresy being particularly strong during this period: “Between 1139 and 1148 two of the greatest in a stellar generation of scholars and teachers, Peter Abelard and Gilbert de la Porée, were charged with heresy in high-profile public trials; there were burnings in Provence, the Rhineland, the Low Countries and northern France; the two most influential churchmen of the age, Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, and Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, proclaimed heresy among the people a menace to the church”; *War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 145.

⁸¹ Bernard, “Letter 190,” in *Life and Works*, 566.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 567. John R. Sommerfeldt points to how Bernard and Abelard actually hold similar views on this point of logic’s limits in the face of belief; *Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Life of the Mind* (New York: Newman, 2004), 127.

⁸⁴ Bernard, “Letter 190,” in *Life and Works*, 576.

in no way comprehending the import of the words.”⁸⁵ At another point, he denies having written the book *Sentences*, which Bernard describes as “a crop of blasphemies and errors.”⁸⁶ Abelard responds, “thanks be to God... since such writings either cannot be found or were not mine,” and that thus Bernard’s own words “prove him wrong without my saying even a word.”⁸⁷ Yet Abelard also offers a few retractions of what he has written, setting the record straight, following the examples of Augustine, Bede, and others who have treated their earlier work as having this continuing existence, as an intellectual property that they are still responsible for correcting, in others’ work and especially in their own.

The charges laid against Abelard at the Council of Sens were different from those mounted at the Inquisition trials that would take place with some regularity within a century’s time. In these trials, the misbeliefs of heretics were confessed, renounced, and repented, if under the duress of torture and the threat of imminent death. The Inquisition put the heretic and his sins on trial. At Sens, Abelard’s books were accused of corrupting young and old; the books were condemned, as such, to be burned. The texts of the books are held to possess toxic properties capable of working on others. Once they are condemned as an (evil) intellectual force in the world, only then is Abelard held liable.

On reading the charges and judgment of the council, Pope Innocent II issued two

⁸⁵ Abelard, *Letters*, 122. Abelard adds for good measure by way of trash talk, “So know what you did not know, and learn what you have not learned”; *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Bernard, “Letter 238,” 542-43.

⁸⁷ Abelard, *Letters of Peter Abelard: Beyond the Personal*, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 118. As if to raise further learned intellectual property issues, Clanchy notes that Abelard “was not telling the whole truth here, as this ‘Book of Sentences’ does contain Abelard’s authentic opinions and it was accepted practice for a master’s teachings to be circulated among students in this way”; *Abelard*, 308.

letters to all concerned. The first summarily sentenced Abelard to perpetual silence and his followers to excommunication. The second confined him, as well as his compatriot Arnold of Brescia, to separate religious houses, and called for their “erroneous books to be burned wherever they were found.”⁸⁸ In censoring Abelard during “these last days and perilous times,” the pope cited an earlier fifth-century ruling of the Byzantine emperor Marcian that forbade anyone “to discuss the Christian faith in public.”⁸⁹ Still, the pope did not sentence Abelard to death, which was to be the fate of Arnold of Brescia, who was hanged and then burned in 1155 for, among other sins, preaching that the church should renounce all of its property claims.⁹⁰

In Abelard’s case, friends and admirers in Rome and among the monasteries, intervened on his behalf, suggesting that a change in the church’s intellectual climate was afoot. Foremost among his supporters was Peter the Venerable, lord abbot of the Cluny Abbey (although an enemy of God, according to the cantankerous Bernard of Clairvaux). Peter was a monastic who saw learning as a public good, in striking contrast to Bernard’s support for its monastic enclosure. The abbot of Cluny exhorted those “distinguished for their knowledge, love of learning, and eloquence” to be not “so sluggish” in the sharing of their work, but to “hand down in writing to those who are to come after them the marvelous works the Almighty repeatedly accomplishes in different parts of the world.”⁹¹ Peter commissioned at no small expense a Latin edition of the

⁸⁸ Cited by Clanchy, *Abelard*, 218.

⁸⁹ Cited *ibid.*, 319.

⁹⁰ Elphège Vacandard, “Arnold of Brescia,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907), online. Arnold also took a leadership role in the republican Commune of Rome that was founded in 1145 and, surviving Arnold’s death, lasted to 1193, when the city was again placed under papal authority.

⁹¹ Cited by Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 156-57.

Qur'an, in an effort to point out the errors of Islam that its member's souls might be saved, much as he intended with his *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*. Peter was taken, in turn, with the fearless and worldly intelligence of Abelard, and reached out to him in his friend's time of need.

Following the pope's condemnation of Abelard, Peter wrote to Innocent II on behalf of the broken *magister*. He described how Abelard "made his peace with the abbot of Clairvaux [Bernard] and that their previous differences were settled," which seems a remarkable instance of Christian forgiveness on both their parts.⁹² Peter further described Abelard heeding others' counsel and removing from his writings "anything offensive to orthodox Christian ears."⁹³ Abelard had, in Peter's words, "decided to abandon the turmoil of schools and teaching and to remain permanently in your house of Cluny."⁹⁴ Peter asked that rather than be arrested, Abelard be allowed to so retire, as his "learning, which is not altogether unknown to you, could be of benefit to our large community of brothers."⁹⁵

Abelard was then able to spend his final year within the shelter of monastic life. In his epitaph for Abelard, following his friend's death in 1142, Peter pronounced him, finally, "the Socrates of the Gauls, Plato of the West, our Aristotle, prince of scholars."⁹⁶ That this should be an abbot's greatest praise – and in what sense *our* Aristotle, if not in uniting school and monastery – speaks to the broader sense of learning that had found a place within monasticism. Abelard had tended to a more qualified endorsement of the

⁹² Peter the Venerable, "Letter (98) to Pope Innocent II," in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 215.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 216.

⁹⁶ Cited by Betty Radice, "Introduction," in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 42.

philosophers, at least in his declaration of faith to Heloise: “I do not wish to be a philosopher if it means conflicting with Paul, nor to be an Aristotle if it cuts me off from Christ.”⁹⁷ Here, Abelard makes it clear that he turned to Aristotle, as well as Porphyry and Talmudic scholars, to raise the intellectual stakes within the bounds of Christianity.⁹⁸ Had he pursued this work within the quieting brotherhood of the monastery, he would not have posed a problem for the church. Yet for the twelfth-century Latin West, it was too late to think about enclosing such exercises of logic and reason. Within town and marketplace, a growing segment of the public was clearly interested in what was intellectually at stake for Abelard and others in the public pursuit of learning.

The Council of Sens was monasticism’s last triumphant defense of learning’s enclosure. There is no small irony in Abelard being condemned to perpetual silence; muteness is the monastery’s way, even as it was often overcome by the Bedean spirit of learning. Abelard, too, went on to be heard. At least one historian has designated him the University of Paris’ founder-in-effect with that institution gradually taking shape in the decades after his death.⁹⁹ The monasteries, as well, were undergoing change. At the Council of Paris in 1212, the prelates of the church declared that monastic libraries should be open to those who had no other access to such learning: “We forbid monks to bind themselves by any oath not to lend books to the poor, seeing that such a loan is one

⁹⁷ “Abelard’s Confession of Faith,” in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 270.

⁹⁸ Clanchy: “Abelard is one of the few medieval churchmen who shows any understanding of what the Jews suffered at the hands of the Christians. ‘We are confined and oppressed, as if the whole world had conspired against us alone. It’s a wonder we are allowed to live,’ he has a Jew say [in *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*]”; *Abelard*, 17.

⁹⁹ Gabriel Compayré lists Victor Cousin, John Henry Newman, and Père Denifle along with “all serious authorities,” who credit Abelard with “a preeminent part in the foundation of the great Parisian University”; *Abelard and the Origin and Early History of Universities* (New York: Scribner, 1893), 4.

of the chief works of mercy.”¹⁰⁰ Taking a far more practical tack to this learned charity, Bernard’s order of Cistercians went on to offer the world improved hydraulic engineering techniques for watermill fulling (pounding) and grinding, agricultural irrigation and drainage, and wastewater and latrine systems.¹⁰¹ By the thirteenth century, the Cistercians were building among the earliest blast furnaces in the West for smelting iron at Rievaulx Abbey in the north of England.¹⁰²

Over the centuries, monastics found various ways to resolve the paradox that the Rule of Benedict posed for learning. They managed to establish the value of advanced forms of inquiry within their communities. Radegund, Bede, Alcuin, Anselm, Hildegard, among those examined here, provided pious instances of how a Benedictine devotion to the selfless labor of learning could open the road to piety for others. In the process, learning moved out into the world, whether through the Carolingian Renaissance’s monastic schools, Hildegard’s Rhineland preaching tours, or Abelard’s setting up of schools wherever students gathered around him. The intellectual

¹⁰⁰ George Haven Putnam, *Books and their Makers During the Middle Ages: 476-1600* (New York: Hillary House, 1962), 1:138. “Cathedral libraries” were also public; *ibid.*, 162-63. Cathedrals also provided grammar teachers for the poor, as a result of Pope Alexander III’s policy at the Lateran Council of 1179; Baldwin, *Scholastic Culture*, 39. Thomas Kelly, while noting how restricted access was to the universities, includes fourteenth-century English instances of a Bible bequeathed “for the common use” to the church of St. Nicholas, Newcastle, and a Latin dictionary to the church of Blessed Peter at York “to be placed in a common, safe and honorable place, so that should anyone seek information concerning some point of doubt, scholarship, or disputation, it may easily be found according to the letters of the alphabet”; *Early Public Libraries: A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain before 1850* (London: Library Association, 1966), 25.

¹⁰¹ Constance Hoffman Berman, “Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside, and the Early Cistercians: A Study of Forty-three Monasteries,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 76, no. 5 (1986), 49, 88-89; P. F. Cooper, “Historical Aspects of Wastewater Treatment,” in *Decentralised Sanitation and Reuse: Concepts, Systems and Implementation*, eds. Piet Lens, Grietje Zeeman, and Gatzte Lettinga (London: IWA Publishing, 2001), 14.

¹⁰² Gerald McDonnell, “Cistercian Monks as Metallurgists: Iron Technology at Rievaulx Abbey 1130–1600,” (lecture, Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, Oxford University, 2011, available on iTunes U); R. Vernon, Gerald McDonnell, and A. Schmidt, “The Geophysical Evaluation of an Iron-working Complex: Rievaulx and Environs, North Yorkshire,” *Archeological Prospection* 5, no. 4 (1999), 181-201.

momentum in Europe was shifting away from the enclosed space of the remote monastery and into urban centers and secular institutions. Beginning in the twelfth century, learning in the West was about to be suffused with a great number of Greek and Islamic works that were being rendered in Latin for the first time. This wealth of access, which is the subject of the next chapter, was to permanently alter the direction and institutional setting of learning.

The great era of monastic learning in the Latin West, dating back to Jerome and Augustine, was coming to a close with Anselm, Hildegard, and Bernard of Clairvaux. The monastery ended up sponsoring the learning of the religious; it provided a degree of autonomy, while offering time and space for studies; it afforded access – both communal and networked – to the works they needed; it created a setting for the accrediting of authors and their ideas through gloss and commentary. The intellectual properties of this learning are both institutional and textual in this case. They form a monastic legacy that was to serve the learning in the schools and universities. One sharp failure in the transfer of this legacy – from abbey to school and later university – was the unreasonable exclusion of women from this new learning. This tragic loss, made all the more apparent by the learned contributions so strongly present in this chapter, with Hildegard and Heloise.¹⁰³ Women continued to find opportunities in nunneries, and

¹⁰³ Penelope D. Johnson: “The movement of male orders to divest themselves of the *cura monialis* [nuns in charge] began during the twelfth century and became general in the thirteenth”; *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 251. On monastic women’s continuing learning and literacy, see Cynthia J. Cyrus, *The Scribes for Women Convents in Late Medieval Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) and Alison I. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

were able to contribute much to the age's learning through their scribal efforts.¹⁰⁴ They also thrived in the female semi-monastic communities of northern Europe, known as *béguinages*, beginning in the twelfth century, which if lacking the splendor of great monasteries, gave rise to a number of writers, including the thirteenth-century mystic Marguerite Porete, whose call to give up reason, in the *Mirror of Simple Souls*, led the church to have her burned at the stake.¹⁰⁵

Compared to Bernard's retreat into monasticism and a poetical mysticism, the new learning, arising from Anselm's scholasticism and Hildegard's polymathic interests, and fully realized in Abelard, was becoming a part of the world. Anselm was creating free-standing exercises in logical reasoning, fearless demonstrations of his ability to create an account of God's existence, independently of God's word. This was a new assertion of the writer's role in creating a purely intellectual artifact at the bequest of others, if still in the service of faith. Hildegard similarly established a new set of monastic practices by preparing practical guides to better health for the larger community, while continuing to serve her religious house with choral music compositions and an illuminated cosmology.

This was a time of change for learning. Masters were setting up in cathedrals and marketplaces; they were collecting fees from pupils, creating a new level of autonomy, economically and intellectually. Students were introducing a new dynamic into learning, as Heloise pushed Abelard's thinking. They were part of what gave the learned book a new standing. Abelard had to defend his works against charges that they

¹⁰⁴ Beach: "Monasteries connected with Hirasu, in particular, not only used the services of resident female scribes, but also provided a setting in which women could participate fully in the central activities of their reformed communities, and this meant access to libraries and teachers"; *Women as Scribes*, 133.

¹⁰⁵ Donke, *Women Writers*, 202ff.

had infringed on the proprietary rights of the church in matters of Scripture. That his books were subjected by the church to burning, more than once, suggests how they were regarded as autonomous (and dangerous) intellectual properties capable of corrupting the world.

Learning's entry into the world was challenged at many points and by more than Bernard of Clairvaux. Women were facing a growing spirit of misogyny in church and state. Their exclusion from the schools (and then the universities) serves to temper this book's whiggish tendency to celebrate gains in learning. It is among the grossest instances of the self-serving blind spot, which is clearly what the learned need look for in themselves, no less so today, it unfortunately needs to be added, than in the High Middle Ages. Vigilance against such shortcomings remain a part of what it means to attend to the history of learning's intellectual properties.