

Title: **The Cloister. 2017**

Author: **Carroll, James**

Genre: *Historical fiction*

Subject: *The love story of Peter Abelard, a twelfth century priest, and Heloise, in the court of French King Louis VII. Told through the contemporary meeting of a Roman Catholic priest and a French Jewish woman who survived the Holocaust.*

Hook: *Twelfth and mid-twentieth centuries: Church and Talmud!*

Reviewer's opinion: *Readers will learn valuable history and be treated to very captivating characters.*

Reviewed by **Richard Rotberg**

TBI member

The Cloister by John Carroll is a novel reprising the [love story of Peter Abelard](#), a twelfth century priest, and Heloise, a high born woman of the court of French King Louis VII. The story is told through the accidental meeting of a Roman Catholic priest and a French Jewish woman who has survived the Holocaust. The priest, Michael Kavanaugh, is troubled by the effort the Church has made to cover over homosexuality, pedophilia and other problems. The woman, Rachel Vedette, is the [daughter of a professor of Talmud](#), who has researched Abelard's work that preaches God's values and declares His love of *all the creatures* He has created. Abelard believes that Jesus came to the world to announce that *all are saved, including the Jews*. There is no original sin.

Abelard was severely punished for his teaching and writing. His works were all but destroyed by the Church. Heloise enters a convent, preserves the work that is uncovered and studied by Rachel's father eight hundred years later on the eve of the Holocaust. Michael and Rachel meet after the war, and the two begin a relationship that brings out conflicts they each have struggled with for many years. The story revolves back and forth between the [twelfth and mid twentieth centuries](#). Carroll's writing paints each century with great care and detail. As in all of his works, Carroll touches the reader with beautiful prose and sensitivity while painting characters who have great psychological depth.

Readers will learn much about the history of and relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. [John Carroll was a priest who left the Church because of its anti-Semitic teaching](#). He has written elsewhere that the Church through its history and theology helped Europe prepare for the Holocaust. Readers will learn valuable history and be treated to very captivating characters.