

PASCAL

Genius in the Light of Scripture

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To the memory of the
REVEREND THEODORE CARSWELL HUME,
killed on a mission of mercy when his
neutral transport plane was shot down
in flames off the coast of Sweden

PREFACE

Throughout the course of Pascal's life and work, there emerged a unity of design taking shape amid a diversity of subject matter: geometry, arithmetic, mechanics, physics, theology, polemics, morality, spirituality. The list of the recorded writings of Pascal is so encyclopedic in character as to baffle one's imagination. What this list actually indicates, however, is the multiplicity of opportunities in a single lifework. Paul Desjardins felicitously describes it when he says that we may here discern in essence "the progressive emancipation of intelligence."¹

The peculiar genius of this personality consists in laying bare the inner logic that lies at the source of human contradictions. When Pascal encounters a network of difficulties, a skein which appears hopelessly tangled, he brings to bear on it the energy of a keen mind, yet always refuses to cut the Gordian knot. Instinctively he feels his way toward a higher plane where the human antinomy is resolved with divine simplicity. His faith thus sharpens his intelligence. *Intelligere* for Pascal is always *intus legere*. As he strains toward a solution, the final stages become easier. It is as though a hand had reached down to help. Has he at last found God, or been found of Him? Does it mean that from the first his wager² has been placed on the right side, or that the deciding factor in his choice was, not his own will, but the hand of a "hidden God"? Or, rather, are these not two ways of looking at the same reality? Thus Pascal confronts the Biblical notion of election, which troubles

¹ Desjardins, Paul, "Pascal libérateur de l'intelligence," in *La Revue hebdomadaire*, No. 28, 32d year, July 14, 1923 (Third Centenary of Pascal), p. 230.

² On the necessity of the wager, see Pascal's *Pensées*, Section iii, Fr. 233, *Œuvres*, v.13, 141-155. (Cf. 161-173 "Appendice pour le Fr. 233.")

"La question la plus haute de la philosophie, plus religieuse déjà peut-être que philosophique, est le passage de l'absolu formel à l'absolu réel et vivant, de l'idée de Dieu à Dieu. Si le syllogisme y échoue, que la foi en cours le risque; que l'argument ontologique cède la place au pari." Lachelier, J., "Notes sur le pari de Pascal," in *Du Fondement de l'induction*, 7th ed., Alcan, Paris, 1916, p. 199 (orig. publ. in *Revue philosophique*, June, 1901).

him, until one day the living Word comes to him: "Console thyself. Thou wouldst not be seeking me, if thou hadst not already found me. . . . Thy conversion, 'tis my concern."³

As his mind gives less place to worldly concerns,⁴ Pascal's hand holds ever more firmly to the Book, to which he always refers as Scripture. Here he finds both impulse and insight for "that poem which gathers up the loftiest aspirations of modern man." Thus it is that Maurice Barrès describes what he called the "Divine Comedy" of the French,⁵ namely, the ascension of Blaise Pascal.

From a distance of some three hundred years, Pascal now appears to our gaze as a solitary peak in the realm of human experience. A peak may often be scaled from any one of several sides. We shall approach this peak from the side which seems to offer most promise to the climber who has caught a glimpse of the summit, gleaming peacefully in the blue mist overhead: *O beata solitudo! O sola beatitudo!* Pascal, whose thought is increasingly dominated by the Bible, can be seen in his full stature only in the Light that comes to him from above. The life of this titanic mind is centered ultimately in the Christ. Once this truth is fully clear, the details of Pascal's life and work gather added meaning when viewed at close range.

It is quite possible, of course, that our treatment as a whole may suffer from a false perspective in the emphasis we have given to the influence of the Bible in the shaping of Pascal's life and thought. If the reader will recognize, as frankly as the writer does, that the danger at this point is real, he may critically check each step. Every individual point of view has its own limitations, but keeping the limitations in mind should help us to chart our course with greater assurance.

Four chapters of *The Clue to Pascal* have been incorporated in this major treatment, where they figure as Chapters I, XV, XVI, and XVII. The fact is that they had been originally detached from a first version of our manuscript, to become a short series of lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary during the summer of 1943. At the request of my good friend Leonard J. Trinterud, of The Westminster Press, I had then agreed to their publication. They are now restored to their proper place, and on this account it is hoped that they may take on added meaning.

³ *Pensées*, Section vii, Fr. 553, *Le Mystère de Jésus, Œuvres*, v. 13, 438.

⁴ Barrès, Maurice, "Les Enfances de Blaise Pascal," in *La Revue hebdomadaire*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

The friendly request of the publisher turned out to be justified. *The Clue to Pascal* has been favorably received in this country and abroad. Many a critic has seen through the author's lines and rendered more than justice to his endeavor. In times when reading tends to become more hurried than ever, it is most gratifying for a writer to find that reviewers are sympathetic to the point of detecting some of his innermost secrets. I must agree, for example, that, in the words of Professor H. Richard Niebuhr, of Yale University, I have "studied the Scriptures with and through Pascal, yet independently also." If it be true, however, that "the central chapters of the book are luminous with the insight gained from this study," the author finds himself amply rewarded for his efforts. From London has come word that *The Clue to Pascal* has been made one of the six yearly Book Club selections of the Student Christian Movement. Accordingly the S. C. M. Press has secured the rights for two editions of the book in Great Britain, one being a large printing at a popular price. As the father of a prisoner of war, the author greatly rejoices at the thought that whatever he has tried to do may thus prove helpful to some lonely soldier, perhaps in a fox-hole along a bleak beach or in some other imposed retreat. Needless to say, whatever preoccupation may have inspired research and presentation, the highest requirements of scholarship have always been kept in mind. It may be that the time has come for university professors to be once more reminded of the fact that "science without conscience is but ruin to the soul."

A third volume is now being prepared under the title *The Heart of Pascal*. It will provide in translation some of the most outstanding texts as yet inaccessible to those who do not happen to read French easily.

In the treatment of source material throughout this volume controversy has been avoided as far as feasible. The scholarly-minded will find in the footnotes the textual evidence upon which the author based his statements. This accounts for the lengthy form of these notes. It is hoped that they will furnish the reader with incentive for further study of Pascal. A book should be, not a grave, but a cradle.

The word *Œuvres* refers to the standard edition: *ŒUVRES DE BLAISE PASCAL publiées suivant l'ordre chronologique avec documents complémentaires, introductions et notes, par Léon Brunschvicg, Pierre Boutroux, et Félix Gazier, "Les grands écrivains de la France," Hachette, Paris.*

In this edition the *Pensées* appeared as Volumes 12, 13, and 14, edited

by Léon Brunschvicg and published in 1904. Volumes 1, 2, and 3, containing the writings of Pascal and those of his relatives up to the *Mémorial* of November 23, 1654, appeared four years later. In editing these writings Brunschvicg followed a chronological order. Pierre Boutroux, who had collaborated with Brunschvicg in editing the mathematical works included in these volumes, and Félix Gazier were largely responsible for the edition of Volumes 4 to 11. In these eight volumes, containing the writings of Pascal and related documents from the date of the *Mémorial* to Pascal's death on August 19, 1662, Boutroux and Gazier followed the chronological method laid down by Brunschvicg. Boutroux had again edited all mathematical works, while Gazier had been responsible for the text and commentary on all other writings. The fourteen volumes of the complete edition, therefore, follow one chronological scheme.⁶

For the *Pensées*, in this complete edition, Brunschvicg developed a scheme of classification. A Concordance will be found in *Œuvres*, v. 12, ccclxxvi–ccciv, which gives for each fragment the corresponding reference to the original manuscript No. 9202, the first copy No. 9203, the second copy No. 12449, to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (cf. *Œuvres*, v. 12, iii ff.), and the editions of Port-Royal (1670), Bossut (1779), Faugère (1844), Havet (1852), Molinier (1877–1879), and Michaut (1896). Concerning these editions, see *Œuvres*, v. 12, xiii–xl.

The author calls the special attention of the reader to the treatment of Scriptural references in the notes as well as in the text of this present work. *Since he was a Roman Catholic, Pascal used the Latin Vulgate*, which he often quoted from memory. He sometimes shortened the text as he quoted it, or added a commentary of his own where a text had been deleted. Sometimes he elaborated on a text, or combined several texts together. Occasionally he would translate directly from the original, with or without the help of other versions. In Chapter XV, "A Lamp Unto My Feet," we discuss some of the problems raised by these habits of a writer whose mind was so thoroughly steeped in the Bible. *In his own discussions and for his quotations the author has regularly used the English version of the Vulgate, first published by the English College*

⁶ For every reference to the works of Pascal, the numerals in bold type indicate the volume, and the following numerals (Arabic or Roman) indicate the page. Thus *Œuvres*, v. 12, 3, refers to Volume 12, page 3, of the complete edition; and *Œuvres*, v. 12, vi–viii, refers to pages vi to viii of the same volume.

at Douay, A.D. 1609, for Old Testament references; and the version first published by the English College at Rheims, A.D. 1582, for New Testament references (John Murphy Company, Publishers, Baltimore, Maryland). The only exceptions to this rule occur in the Biblical texts used as mottoes at the beginning of each section where the King James, or Authorized Version, has been used.

Part of the bibliographical information concerning Roman Catholic aspects of the problems related to Jansenism has been kindly provided by the Rev. J. A. Baisnée, Theological College, Catholic University, Washington, D. C., and by the Rev. James J. Gildea, O. S. A., Villanova College, Pa. May they find here the expression of our deep gratitude.

The author wishes to thank Margaret G. Craig, Helen T. Garrett, Rachel Soltau, and the late Theodore C. Hume, who translated parts of his manuscript from the French. Miss Craig has also gone over whole sections of the text and notes. Thanks must also be expressed to Professor William Shaffer Jack, of the University of Pennsylvania, for his helpful suggestions upon carefully reading over the pages of the last two chapters. Miss Marie G. Carey has shown patience and care in typing the manuscript.

It is again a pleasant duty to acknowledge the editorial advice and suggestions as to wording and presentation, from a friend such as the Religious Book Editor of The Westminster Press, Leonard J. Trinterud, whose trust and gentleness continue to prove a precious encouragement.

I am deeply thankful to my wife for assisting me in the proofreading.

The eminent Pascalian scholar of Cambridge, England, Professor H. F. Stewart, has taken the trouble to write a hearty message which made this fellow worker feel that at least he seemed to be on the right track in his interpretation of Pascal. Nothing is more helpful than such good words in the intellectual loneliness of our time.

Professor Otis H. Green, chairman of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Pennsylvania, has never missed an opportunity to lend the best of his efforts to support the chair of Pascalian studies.

Part of the cost of the research underlying this volume has been covered by three successive grants from the special Research Fund of the University of Pennsylvania. Grateful acknowledgment is hereby extended to the members of the Faculty Research Committee for their recognition of this endeavor.

E. C.

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The Emergence of a Pilgrim

"Truth shall spring out of the earth."

—Ps. 85:11

God wills it! God wills it! God wills it! God wills it! "

The shout goes up from a thousand throats. Pope Urban II has just finished his sermon in the great square of Clermont "in the presence of four hundred bishops or mitred abbots, and of an immense gathering of the populace."¹ Forthwith each one of these breasts is marked with a cross of red cloth, and, without further tarrying, one hundred thousand poor folk fall into line under the leadership of Peter the Hermit. Eastward moves the endless column — toward the Danube Valley; toward the Bosphorus, where it will be cut to pieces by the Turks; on toward the Holy City, which at any cost must be set free. The nobles will follow later.

To this day, the memory of that uprising of a Christian people hovers over the vast, sloping square of Clermont; it stirs to life the robust, square outline of the basilica of Notre-Dame du Port, which for centuries has served as both church and citadel. This Romanesque structure, the greatest in all Auvergne, is buried like a huge cistern among the surrounding houses. Its sturdy bareness well bespeaks the character of the indomitable soul who reared its walls. Built of arkose, it is still quite light in color, like all the older churches in Auvergne. It will be some time before the builders begin to use stone cut from the lava, which they will prefer because it is more durable. In those early days, however, a single structure — the Cathedral — leaps forth from the soil of Auvergne, with a single heavenward thrust, springing from a single-minded faith, its unobstructed eminence crowning the crest of the hill.

¹ Giraud, Victor, *La Vie héroïque de Blaise Pascal*, Les Editions G. Crès et C^{ie}, Paris, 1923, p. 4.