THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

BENJAMIN F. TUCKER

ENTITLED...THE RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEF AND THE WILL IN THE THOUGHT

OF PASCAL

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF...BACHELOR OF ARTS

Instructor in Charge

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF...PHILOSOPHY
The Relationship between Belief and the Will
in the Thought of Pascal

By

Benjamin F. Tucker

-----------------------

Thesis
for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
in
Liberal Arts and Sciences
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

1988
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Groundwork</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pascal and the &quot;Wager&quot;</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pascal's Theology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For man believes with his heart and so is justified

—Romans 10:10
Introduction

The main question addressed by this paper is this: is religious belief the result of a choice? If belief is defined as the acceptance of a proposition as true, then one course recommended when confronted with situations which give rise to doubt is to believe on the basis of objective evidence. Indeed some philosophers, such as W. K. Clifford in his essay, "Ethics of Belief," have insisted that

Belief is desecrated when given to unproved and unquestioned statements....It is wrong always, everywhere, and for every one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence (Clifford, 186).

Passages like that quoted from scripture above are often interpreted as meaning that faith, a species of belief, is somehow more than just the disinterested and rational weighing of objective evidence. Faith, in fact, is sometimes defined as a belief in a proposition beyond the warrant of the (objective) evidence. The authors of such passages seem to emphasize the subjective aspects of belief. Pascal, for example, whose thought this paper will examine for indications of one way to understand the complex relationship between belief and choice, agrees with the skeptics that reason is powerless in matters of faith, claiming that though nothing is "more ridiculous" than reason alone, "the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know" (Pascal, 222). Yet there are still other thinkers who push such
subjectivism to an extreme, arguing for a volitionism where the believer has direct control over his beliefs. They claim that the will is immensely important in the acquisition of religious beliefs since to believe is (at least at certain crucial times) an act like many other acts, the result of a choice freely made. For these thinkers, it is choice itself which causes belief.

In this paper it will first be necessary to examine the relationship between belief and will, especially in regard to the issue of volitionism. My discussion of this issue largely depends on Louis Pojman's book, *Religious Belief and the Will*. Then I will argue that, even though Pascal's "wager" argument is sometimes understood as supporting at least a modified version of volitionism, he actually rejects that position in favor of a view much like that of the early 16th Century reformers. I will show that, like these reformers, Pascal's view can ultimately be traced to what I understand as the position of the later Augustine with its particular view of the will: an emphasis on fallen man's inability and God's initiative in all aspects of religious life, including belief. Unlike the volitionists, Pascal holds true belief occurs only as the result of a God-given inspiration.
Philosophical Framework

Although I am concerned with religious belief specifically, a general definition of belief is a necessary preliminary to my discussion. Stated simply, to believe means to accept a proposition as true. Thus, while some philosophers have argued that knowing precludes believing, I argue that belief can refer both to what is said to be known (those propositions generally accepted with the greatest certitude, like $2 + 2 = 4$) as well as to what is accepted as true with only the slightest possibility of an actual correspondence to fact (propositions like "I will win the lottery" or "Breaking a mirror brings seven years of bad luck"). As defined above, belief contains an assent which seems to entail some kind of mental action, an agreement which in some way necessarily involves the will. So we can speak of the believer inwardly saying yes to the proposition. Now, there are two ways in which the will's involvement might occur: either the will freely moves itself or the will is passively moved. On the first view this assent is a choosing, a judgement of sorts. On the second, it is more like a surrender. Both views are expressed in phrases commonly used (e.g. "Try to believe me" or "I can't help believing it"). Thus, the ambiguous nature of the relationship between belief and will, belief sometimes appearing as an action and at other times as a "passion" (in the sense of
an overwhelming emotion), is reflected in the two ways it is commonly understood.

At this point, it might be helpful to consider the relationship between belief and the will using the terminology in Louis Pojman's book, *Religious Belief and the Will*. In Pojman's analysis there are three main positions: direct volitionalism, indirect volitionalism, and non-volitionalism. In direct volitionalism, because beliefs (or at least some beliefs) are understood as "basic acts of the will" under the believer's direct control, one can say, "I believe r because I will to believe r." As an example, consider the view of philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, whom Pojman considers the foremost proponent of this position. At least part of the time, he held the position that "belief is not a form of knowledge, but a free act, an expression of the will" (*Fragments*, 103). So, when concerned with what is less than certain, belief depends upon volition, the free assent of the will.

Other thinkers Pojman includes among the direct volitionalists are Augustine, Aquinas, and Descartes. To consider another representative of this position, Descartes in his *Meditations on the First Philosophy* claims that, in regard to those beliefs involving ideas which are not "clear and distinct," assent is the result of a freely made choice. But about "clear and distinct" ideas he writes,

...I could not prevent myself from believing that a thing I so clearly conceived was true....simply because from
great clearness in my mind there followed a great inclination of my will... (Descartes, 176).

He holds that this compelling clarity is knowledge, while in regard to what is not clearly known, the doxastic, there is no compelling inclination. Instead there is a freedom to give or withhold assent. Moreover, he can be understood as arguing that what can be doubted, should be doubted; assent should be withheld. He adopts a firm adherence to the resolution never to give judgement on matters whose truth is not clearly known to me (Descartes, 178).

In this, Descartes agrees with Kierkegaard. But whereas Descartes advises the suspension of judgment as a moral duty, Kierkegaard would argue that in certain religiously important cases belief is a religious duty, even if this means going directly against the evidence.

That beliefs might be obtained by a direct act of the will seems most unlikely, taking at least a miracle, as was ironically suggested by Hume and in all seriousness by Kierkegaard. Perhaps the variations on the direct volitionalist's position remain important because its religious proponents want the unbeliever held responsible for his unbelief. Like Aristotle, they see responsibility as necessarily involving an act of the free will. Thus, they may feel that if man is not entirely responsible for his false beliefs, then he cannot be held accountable for the false belief's consequences, namely sin. To fail to believe or to believe falsely must, therefore, be a choice of the free will
and just as freely committed as any other sin. All this is in some ways similar to Descartes' use of free will to solve the problem of intellectual evil, an attempt to reconcile errors in believing with the goodness of the God of theism. He proposed that God has made us such that we cannot err if we withhold judgement on matters whose truth is not perfectly clear (Descartes, 178). The views of evidentialists like Clifford can be traced directly back to Descartes.

In the second position taken regarding belief, indirect volitionalism, it is claimed that beliefs can be indirectly influenced by acts of the will. Thus one can claim, "By willing x, I shall come to believe r." For if someone cannot by an act of will believe a certain proposition, yet they desire to believe that proposition despite the lack of evidence, then there are other ways in which belief can be brought about. Giving this a twist, Alvin Plantinga in an essay found in the book Faith and Rationality writes of the unfortunate person who believes in God on insufficient evidence. Having come to the conclusion that doing so is an epistemological sin, the believer resorts to a strict regimen to lose faith: attending the Universalist-Unitarian church, consorting with members of the Rationalist Society of America, and reading Voltaire, Russell, and Paine (FR, 38). Obviously, given enough time, resources, and a ruthless determination, a person may be able to bring himself to believe almost anything. There are few who deny that actions
which are under the direct control of our will, actions such as the direction of our attention, a refusal to consider evidence, or close association with those who hold a belief, can have an enormous indirect effect on the formation of beliefs. As Pojman writes,

We cannot be directly responsible for our beliefs, as though they were actions, but we can be said to be indirectly responsible for them. If we had chosen different life plans, been better moral agents, we might have different beliefs (Logic, 111).

It might be claimed that volitionalism of some sort is supported by the view that we are responsible for the beliefs we hold, a view reflected in the fact that our society, at least some of the time, considers those who hold morally repugnant beliefs blameable.

Pojman considers Blaise Pascal, Roderick Chisholm, and William James examples of indirect volitionalists. James, in The Will to Believe, claims that we can, by actions within our control, influence the formation of beliefs, a process H. H. Price calls the "voluntary cultivation of beliefs" (Palmer, 33). James defends the thesis that

our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds (James, 11).

Here James is writing of a forced option where the choice is between either A or not A, with no conclusive evidence for or against.

Usually beliefs are best justified on the basis of objective
evidence. Even so, it would be a mistake to think that only the rationally objective counts in determining belief (though this was for evidentialists like Clifford the grand ambition).

William James, in his essay *The Will to Believe*, lists other "factors of belief," less epistemically respectable, but no less important:

- fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our cast and set (James, 9).

James is surely right when he claims that man's non-intellectual nature has a great influence on his convictions (James, 11).

What counts as evidence and how data is assessed depends upon the "noetic endowment" of the viewer, the subjective elements which help make indirect volitionalism possible. Yet, at times, James is identifying all these subjective factors as parts of the "willing nature" ("passional nature"), while volition in the sense generally intended, and in the sense intended in this essay, involves neither wish nor desire, but conscious resolution. Pojman recognizes this ambiguity in James' work, writing that

Sometimes he seems to mean our ability to decide what we shall believe and successfully choose it. At other times, he seems to mean all those hopes, fears, prejudices, interests and inclinations which enter into the belief acquisition process (Pojman, 82).

While it cannot be denied that subjective factors have a considerable influence on what we believe, it still remains to be proven that conscious resolution has any direct affect on our
beliefs, or even on these subjective factors. Now James' main argument seems to be merely that a person should be allowed to believe (at least, in situations where the choice is forced), even if that belief, being based on "desire," would have a less than certain foundation. While this permissive view of noetic justification is consistent with the traditional definition of faith as belief beyond the evidence, is it consistent with the view that a belief may be brought about by a conscious decision, either directly or, as in indirect volitionalism, indirectly through the manipulation of our noetic structures?

In the third position taken regarding belief, non-volitionalism, belief is not considered under the control of the believer. One says simply, "I believe r because I cannot help doing so." Here believing is seen, not as an action in which the will is the efficient cause, but as an event, something that happens to the believer. The belief occurs spontaneously and irresistibly while the will has at most an incidental role in the belief formation. What seems to be the heart of the nonvolitionist's position is the view that our beliefs always attempt to correspond to reality, truth being some kind of correspondence between a belief and reality. Since reality is forced upon the believer, beliefs about reality are forced upon the believer. If, after considering the evidence for a proposition, I consider a proposition more probably true than false, then my will passively acquiesces and the proposition
becomes a belief. The nonvolitionist argues that though I can imagine a proposition at will, I cannot directly will myself to believe that the proposition obtains in actuality. Belief is never dependent on the will; it is always dependent on reality (or at least the believer's concept of reality). It is obvious that a person can only believe what he thinks is true, for if he thinks something is true, he believes it.

Pojman considers Spinoza and Hume proponents of this final position. David Hume, for example, argues for the nonvolitionalist position in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, where he denies that belief is a product of our cogitative abilities, claiming that it is a "sentiment or feeling" which attaches to a proposition,

"...something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgement from the fictions of the imagination. It gives them more weight and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; enforces them in the mind; and renders them the governing principle of our actions" (Hume, 32).

While he admits he finds belief "one of the greatest mysteries of philosophy," he emphatically denies that belief is dependent on the will, being chosen at the believer's pleasure (Hume, 31). To the contrary, he maintains that, like feelings of fear, hate, or envy, it is something passively experienced, spontaneously happening—with or without the believer's consent. If someone examines a proposition and it is attended by this sentiment, then that person believes the proposition.

Pojman himself accepts the possibility of indirect
volitionalism, though he argues that it almost always violates what he calls the "ethics of belief," which emphasizes "the importance of having well-justified beliefs and truth-seeking in general" (Pojman, 188). Neither will he rule out direct volitionalism, though he considers it, not miraculous (again, in the Humean-Kierkegaardian sense), but "abnormal and bizarre." While he offers several arguments against direct volitionalism, the most convincing is what he calls "the logic of belief argument." It is based on a consideration of belief's dependency on "reality," the actual state of affairs. Pojman argues that to believe that p and yet be conscious that that belief is dependent on willing rather than on the actual state of affairs is incoherent, an indulgence in "conceptual confusion." His argument, slightly condensed, is as follows:

1. If A believes that p, A believes that p is true.
2. The truth of p is wholly dependent on the state of affairs, S, which either does or does not correspond to p.
3. That S corresponds to p is independent of A's volitions.
4. A subconsciously or consciously believes 3.
5. Therefore, A cannot both believe that p and that A's belief is presently caused by his willing to believe that p. A must believe what makes p true is S, which obtains independently of A's will.

(Pojman, 171)

To realize that a conscious act of will has brought a belief into being would be to undermine automatically the justification of that belief. Either the belief in the proposition or the belief that the proposition is believed on the basis of an act of will must be rejected. To hold both is incoherent. As Professor
McKim has noted, this argument could easily be expanded to include examples of indirect volitionalism. For any attempt to consciously manipulate the noetic structure that a proposition might be believed rather than relying upon "evidence gathered from reality" to support such a proposition would result in the same fundamental flaw in the belief, being equivalent to an attempt at self-deception. There still remains the problem of consciously seeking evidence which supports a belief one wishes to be true. Do we have an "intellectual obligation" to seek counter-evidence as well?
III

Pascal and the "Wager"

After this outline of the mechanics of belief, I turn now to a consideration of the brilliant seventeenth-century French mathematician, physicist, and writer: Blaise Pascal. That Pascal, a shrewd observer of human nature, was by no means unaware of the importance of the will in regard to belief can be seen in various passages in this work. For example, his disavowal of direct volitionalism and acceptance of the possibility of indirect volitionalism is demonstrated when he writes,

The will is one of the chief factors in belief, not that it creates belief, but because things are true or false according to the aspect in which we look at them. The will, which prefers one aspect to another, turns away the mind from considering the qualities of all that it does not like to see... (Pascal, 191).

Obviously Pascal understood the will to have an indirect effect on the formation of beliefs. Because of the argument known as "Pascal's Wager," also taken from the *Pensees*, Pojman considers Pascal as the first to hold "a strong indirect volitional position," seeing him as offering a "pragmatic argument for manipulating one's belief forming mechanisms" (Pojman, 54). But, if the believer believes as the result of an act of his will, is this compatible with Pascal's claim that God puts "religion into the mind by reason, and into the heart by grace" (Pascal, 205)? In the former case man's will seems to be the chief causal factor...
while in the latter, it is God's will. In opposition to Pojman and others who see Pascal as arguing for the willful manipulation of our belief systems in a calculated attempt to overcome skeptical doubts, I argue that Pascal believed that the will does not create belief, even in an indirect fashion.

The immediate context of the "wager," which may be due to Jansenist editors after Pascal's death, is a series of thoughts on the religious Skeptic's need to be shaken from his easy complacency. The Skeptic of Pascal's time, men like Montaigne (with whose work Pascal was very familiar), accepted the arguments against the possibility of gaining truth through the use of reason and so, sought a Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement mixed with a superficial religious conformity. In the surrounding passages of the Pensees, Pascal attempts to "incite to the search after God" those free thinkers who have dismissed God as a real possibility, those who, after only the most perfunctory examination, choose to ignore the Christian claim to possess the truth, a truth the attainment or lack of which promises eternal consequences. He claims that he writes to point out the sinfulness of those men who live in indifference to the search for truth in a matter which is so important to them, and which touches them so nearly (Pascal, 209).

Now Pascal agrees with the Skeptics that our existence abounds in ambiguities, especially in regard to God. But Skeptical indifference, given man's uncertain condition, living a brief life surrounded on all sides by an apparently meaningless
eternity, threatened by every kind of evil while alive, and in
death facing either annihilation or eternal unhappiness, strikes
Pascal as irrational. Given the claims of Christianity, he writes,

...there are two kinds of people one can call reasonable;
those who serve God with all their heart because they
know him, and those who seek Him with all their heart
because they do not know Him (Pascal, 209).

The "Wager" is not so much an argument for the existence of God
as it is an argument for belief in the existence of God. Its
basic form is this: to begin, Pascal claims that God's existence
is known only through faith. Resisting the early Rationalist's
tendency to idolize reason, he accepts the Skeptical evaluation
of man's intellectual limits, believing that reason is powerless
to decide the issue. Pascal assumes that "only like can know
like." Since God is both infinite and without extension, he is
"infinitely incomprehensible," a being so totally different from
man that man is "incapable of knowing either what He is or if He
is" (Pascal, 214). Therefore, all proofs for God's existence
necessarily fail. Though the unbeliever might wish to forego a
decision on God, suspending judgement given the unfavorable
ambiguity of the situation, this is not an option. The Skeptical
stance is disallowed. To refrain from wagering is to wager
against God's existence. A choice must be made: does God exist
or not?

Now in the forced choice of this game of chance, reason is
neutral; it is unable to determine one way or another. The
gambler plays with a relatively small stake, the dubious pleasures of an ungodly life. The possible winnings, however, are enormous, an "infinitely happy life." The stake, in comparison, is nothing. When the gambler wagers that God exists and wins, he gains an infinite reward, while if he wagers that God exists and loses, he has lost "nothing." On the other hand, if the gambler wagers that God does not exist and wins, then he has gained very little. But in this case, if he loses, he suffers an infinite loss. With much to lose in one case and everything to win in the other, reason itself prudently dictates the choice: belief in God.

But to decide that it would be prudent to believe and to believe are two different things. To the skeptical gambler's complaint that, willing as he is, he is so constituted that he is incapable of belief, Pascal has this reply: in order for the unbeliever to be convinced, his passions, the "stumbling blocks" to faith, must be lessened. Here the subjective aspects of unbelief are acting as obstacles, preventing the believer from recognizing the truth. They must be cleared for faith to ensue. To accomplish this Pascal recommends acting as those who have faith act, relying on custom, a suggestion which is ironically like the Skeptic's usual recourse given the difficulties of attaining religious knowledge. Pascal predicts this conformity, "taking of holy water, having masses said, etc.," will "naturally make you believe and deaden your acuteness" (Pascal, 216). Or,
as William James translates the phrase *cela vous abetira*, "stupefy your scruples" (James, 6). I want to suggest that Pascal intended by presenting the "Wager" to provoke a "passionate" inquiry into the validity of Christian claims and that perhaps Pojman has read too much into his interpretation, but here and in certain other selections of the *Pensees* (for example, numbers 250 and 252) it must be admitted that Pojman's interpretation finds support. For example,

Custom is our nature. Anyone who grows accustomed to faith believes it, and can no longer help fearing hell, and believes nothing else... (Pascal, 189).

It appears that Pascal is encouraging indirect volitionalism through a manipulation of the belief structure by the following of custom, what Pojman calls "getting into a suitable context" (Pojman, 54). Is Pascal recommending that the skeptic "pretend to believe" in order to believe? Terence Penelhum in *God and Skepticism* thinks not. He writes:

The enterprise (Pascal) proposes is only successful if real faith actually ensues. Believing as he does that faith is a gift of grace, he implies that someone seeking to acquire it may be granted it if he makes efforts to remove some of its obstacles (Penelhum, 71-72).

In other words, steps can be taken to acquire belief but, even so, belief is not dependent on those actions. Other critics would argue that Pojman puts too much emphasis on doxastic manipulation, given other passages in the *Pensees*. For example, Emile Cailliet, author of *Pascal: the Emergence of Genius*, feels such a "pragmatic" interpretation is misleading, writing,
The nature of the wager of Pascal has been terribly misjudged by making it a variation of the theme will to believe which the peripheral theory of James and Lange was finally to elucidate (Calliet, 330).

Pascal recommends "searching for the truth," not an attempt at self deception. But lest those passages which appear to support indirect volitionism be misunderstood, consider the following passage:

There are three sources of belief: reason, custom, inspiration. The Christian religion, which alone has reason, does not acknowledge as her true children those who believe without inspiration. It is not that she excludes reason and custom. On the contrary, the mind must be opened to proofs, must be confirmed by custom and offer itself in humbleness to inspirations, which alone can produce a true and saving effect. Ne evacuetur crux Christi (Pascal, 218).

Though Pascal does not deny that reason and Jamesian factors such as custom have an influence on belief, it is only an inspiration coming from "outside" the believer, an inspiration experienced as grace, that makes for "true belief." So it may be said there are three kinds of belief: belief from reason, belief from custom, and belief from inspiration. The first two would seem to correspond in some ways with Luther's concept of "belief-that," while the third might correspond to the concept of "belief-in." Given Pascal's concept of divine inspiration, to believe in any other fashion is spiritually fruitless.
Pascal's Theology

As Terence Penelhuin suggest in his article "Human Freedom and the 'Will to Believe," the basic differences between the voluntarist and the nonvoluntarist is a result of different views of the will (Human Freedom, 136-7). If one wishes to understand Pascal's concept of divine inspiration and its role in the formation of belief, then knowing his position within the Christian theological tradition is of primary importance. For Pascal's philosophy, especially his view of the will, rests securely upon his faith, being built upon a tacit assumption of the truth of his religious beliefs, a traditional Christian understanding of God and man. His philosophical writings can be seen as a defense of such conservative views against both the rapidly rising Skepticism of the Seventeenth Century and the reactionary excesses of the Counter-Reformation, each of which seems to have as its source the Humanism of the Renaissance with its strong emphasis on man and his natural powers. That Pascal's philosophy is influenced most importantly by Augustine and Augustinian theology must be recognized, especially in its insistence on man's "inability." Pascal himself was closely associated with the Port-Royal community, a group committed to the teachings of the Augustinian, Cornelius Otto Jansen, and Pascal shared in the Jansenists' often bitter conflicts with the Roman Catholic Church, particularly the powerful Jesuits.
Writing the *Provincial Letters*, as a defense of the Jansenists' interpretation of Augustine against charges of heresy made by the Jesuits, Pascal played a major part as an apologist for the group. I will consider the central issue involved in Augustine's theology, the concept of grace, and explore the important implications of these ideas for Pascal's own understanding of the will and its role in belief in God.

In several passages found in the *Pensees*, Pascal makes a connection between faith and grace, both of which are understood as gifts of God, blessings freely bestowed by a loving God on undeserving men, necessary if one is to comprehend spiritual realities. Pascal may be justified in doing so, for this is in agreement with what seems to be the theological position of several writers in the New Testament (John 3:3; I Cor. 2:14; Phil. 1:29). If one such passage from the New Testament is considered in full, it reads:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The editors of the Oxford Revised Standard Version note that the "this" refers to "salvation." Both the words "grace" and "faith" are feminine in the original Greek, but the word "this" is in the neuter and, in all likelihood, refers to both grace and faith. In any case, this is how this passage was understood by many Reformation scholars. Now, John Calvin, upon whom Augustine's writings had a tremendous influence also, writes in his
commentary on this passage that it would be an error to think, as some "Papists" apparently did, that "the gift of God" referred to faith only. Calvin claims that the author of Ephesians did not say that the power of choosing aright is bestowed upon us, and that we have afterwards to make our own choice....It is not the mere power of choosing aright, or some indefinable preparation, or assistance, but the right will itself, which is His workmanship (Calvin, Commentaries, vol. 11, 147).

Calvin clearly thinks God has the ability to work inside the will itself, recognizing the will's dependency on God's grace, and not grace's dependency on the will. This interpretation of this passage is in keeping with the view of true faith put forward by Calvin in his *magnus opus*, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. There we find the following definition of faith:

> a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Calvin, Institutes, Vol. 1, 551).

Though Pascal had very harsh things to say against the Calvinists, on many topics, he is in agreement with the Protestant "heretics," an accord often described by his Jesuitical opponents. This is the case here as well. Consider, for example, the following quotation taken from the *Pensees*:

> 248. ...Faith is different from proof: the one is human, the other is the gift of God. *Justus ex fide vivit*. It is this faith that God Himself puts into the heart, of which the proof is often the instrument, *fides ex auditis*: but this faith is in the heart, and makes us not say *scio*, but *credo*. (Pascal, 219)

If Pascal, a keen student of the Bible in its original languages,
is using the word "heart" in the same way the New Testament writers used kardia, translated as "heart," then it may refer to either "the seat of emotional states of consciousness," "the seat of intellectual activities," as well as "the seat of volition" (Evangelical Dictionary, 449). But it is clear that Pascal does not consider the heart merely the source of the will, but also of at least some first principles. For he writes,

281. Heart, instinct, principles.

282. We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is in this last way that we know first principles; and reason, which has no part in it, tries in vain to impugn them (Pascal, 223).

In a way reminiscent of Plantinga’s argument for the "proper basicality" of belief in God, this illustrates what has been called Pascal’s "doctrine of the heart," his understanding of how belief occurs. According to Pascal, the heart, the esprit de finesse, is the organ of intuition, arriving at knowledge directly, without recourse to reason. It is through the heart that God gives the knowledge of himself that makes faith possible. As Pascal writes,

It is the heart that experiences God, and not reason. This then is faith: God felt by the heart, and not by reason" (Pascal, 222).

So only when God inclines the heart toward belief by means of a felt experience, an inspiration or intuition which then operates as a first principle, does "true belief" become possible. Pascal, raised in a strictly religious household, may by speaking of his own dramatic "conversion" experience, recorded in the
Memorial, written on a sheet of parchment found sewn in the lining of his coat after his death. Although Pascal does not mention the Holy Spirit in the Pensees, his view is strikingly like the "doctrine of the internal witness" developed by Reformation theologians.

This similarity is not unusual since the Reformers and Pascal had a common source in Augustine's theology. Examining Pascal's theories of belief reveal their Augustinian foundation, especially in regard to the will. To demonstrate this understanding of the will, Augustine's concept of grace must be briefly summarized. There are three main aspects of the issue to be considered. The first is man's present condition, the second God's action, and the third is man's response. As with Augustine, Pascal considers man's present condition flawed by the sin of Adam, a man who sought independence and equality with God (Miel, 204). Man's post-lapsarian existence is characterized by guilt, ignorance and concupiscence. Moreover, all men share a fallen nature, having been corrupted by Original Sin, a corruption transmitted from generation to generation. Man was created with a purpose: to love God. Having lost as a consequence of the fall the capacity to perform those actions which are, nonetheless, still required of him, man must now look to God alone for supernatural help. The breakdown itself seems to involve the will. According to orthodox Christian theology as influenced by Augustine, man had as a part of his original nature
a free will (libero arbitrio) and this was retained undamaged
despite the other vitiations of the Fall. But Pascal writes in
his analysis of Augustine's doctrines found in the seldom studied
Ecrits Sur la Grace that

the free will remained flexible toward good and toward
evil but with this difference: while in Adam it had no
attraction toward evil, and it was enough for it to know
what was good in order to be able to proceed to it, now
it has through concupiscence a sweetness and a delight in
evil so powerful that it proceeds to it infallibly...
(Miel, 205).

Man, then, has retained his liberty but has lost his freedom
(libertas), no longer having the power to resist temptation. His
will, though externally uncoerced and, in that sense, free,
chooses evil as a result of an inescapable internal compulsion,
his mind having been darkened by concupiscence, an inordinate and
sinful desire. As Pascal interprets Augustine, man is now a
slave to his own desires,

that which most delights him attracts him
infallibly...this is no different than saying that one
does always what pleases one most,...that is, one wants
always what one wants (Miel, 205).

Unfortunately, his desires have been wholly turned away from God
and toward creation. His will is helpless, without the ability
to choose good.

The second major aspect of our discussion is God's action on
behalf of fallen man, namely "the grace of Jesus Christ." The
merciful God, for reasons beyond man's ability to know, chooses
some one without regard to any merit but solely in accordance
with His own good pleasure. To these "Elect," He gives grace,
willing to save them while abandoning the rest to their justly merited punishment. The important thing for Pascal is understanding the way this supernatural grace works in regard to the will. He writes,

"it is a question of ascertaining which of these two wills, namely, the will of God or the will of man, is master, is dominant, is the source, principle, and cause of the other. It is a question of knowing whether the will of man is the cause of the will of God, or the will of God is the cause of the will of man." (Miel, 202)

Pascal, of course, understands God's will as primary while man's will is subordinate. God's chooses a man before that man chooses God.

In the case of Augustine, this view of man is opposed to that of the Pelagians, and, in the case of Pascal, to that of the Jesuits. Molina, a Spanish Jesuit, in his book The Harmony of Free Will with the Gifts of Grace, had in 1588 claimed that God gives man only "sufficient grace" to enable man to will his own salvation. That a man is saved is actually dependent on that man's will, for God's grace requires man's cooperation to become efficacious (Hazelton, 129). The teachings of the Jesuits in this way softened what had been established as the orthodox position, believing that the initium salutis was dependent on man's choice, ignoring those scriptural passages which demonstrate man's dependence on God's will while emphasizing man's natural powers. Like Pelagius in the Fifth century, the Jesuits saw all men, even after the Fall, as fully capable of performing all those actions which God may justly require of
them. Pascal describes this in the eighteenth letter of his

**Provincial Letters** as the

profane sentiment of the school of Molina, who will not
allow that it is by the strength of divine grace that we
are enabled to cooperate with it (grace) in the work of
our salvation...(Pascal, 156)

Against this view he quotes the New Testament letter of Paul to
the Philippians, 2:13, "For God is at work in you, both to will
and to work for his good pleasure." God performs this work
within man, within man's very will, through his grace.
Understood in this way, man's will remains free as it voluntarily
surrenders itself to the "sweet" and somehow "irresistable"
inspiration of God.

And, finally, by this grace, new possibilities of acting are
opened for the transformed man of faith. Pascal presents his
understanding of the results of grace in the same **Provincial**
Letter, writing that by it

God transforms the heart of man, by shedding abroad in it
a heavenly sweetness, which surmounting the delights of
the flesh, and inducing him to feel, on the other hand,
his own mortality and nothingness, and to discover, on
the other hand, the majesty and eternity of
God...(Pascal, 156)

This sentiment is echoed in the earlier analysis of Augustine's
thought found in the *Ecrits Sur la Grace* where Pascal describes
grace as

nothing other than a sweetness and a delight in the Law
of God sown in the heart by the Holy Spirit; this grace,
which not merely equals but even surpasses the strength
of concupiscence of the flesh, fills the will with a
greater delight in good than concupiscence offers it in
evil...(Miel, 206)
In both cases, we find Pascal drawing on Augustine's maxim: "Quod enim (says St. Augustine) amplius nos delectat, secundum operemur necesse est--Our actions are necessarily determined by that which affords us the greatest pleasure" (Pascal, 156).
Conclusion

There is obviously a close connection between Pascal's idea of grace, influenced as it is by the Augustinian concept of the will, and his idea of the way men come to believe in God. According to Pascal, there are three kinds of belief: belief by reason, belief by custom, and belief by inspiration. To believe in God, in the sense of a "real and saving faith," is to have personally experienced God's grace. Having experienced grace, a man's heart is inclined to belief. To continue the quotation from the *Pensees* started earlier:

282. We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is in this last way that we know first principles,...Therefore, those to whom God has imparted religion by intuition are very fortunate and justly convinced. But to those who do not have it, we can give it only by reasoning, waiting for God to give them spiritual insight, without which faith is only human and useless for salvation. (Pascal, 223)

The argument known as the "Wager" may be considered its author's attempt to induce belief by means of custom but, because of his emphasis on 'spiritual insight' elsewhere in his writings, it seems he thought belief so induced would be of questionable spiritual worth. Pascal denies the value of man's natural powers, both the ability to reason and the ability to will. For, while man's reason is useless in spiritual matters since such truths are beyond it, man's will is helplessly drawn to that which delights it most and, in unregenerated man, what delights
it most is not God, but evil. It is not, therefore, by an act of will that "true" belief is obtained, no matter how that willing has come about. Faith comes by the grace of God. So Pascal maintains that

...faith is not within our power like the deeds of the law, and it is given to us in another way (Pascal, 263).

Indeed, man's helplessness when faced by the perplexities of existence makes him recognize his need for grace, leading him to search for a salvation coming from outside himself. To experience the mysterious intuition described by Pascal is to know the self-revelation of the Deus Absconditus. And to find God is an experience which leads to truly saving belief.
Bibliography


