



BE  
Still.

“FIRE!”

**B**LAISE Pascal was born one of three children on June 19, 1623, in the town of Clermont-Ferrand in rural France. Unfortunately, his mother died when he was only three. The family later moved to Paris.

Throughout his life, Blaise's health was extremely poor, but he was blessed with a brilliant mind. Initially his father feared that learning mathematics might overstrain him, but this only served to arouse Blaise's interest.

At 14, Blaise began attending weekly lectures in mathematics. It was from these weekly meetings of mathematicians that the French Academy of Sciences later developed. When only 16 years old, Blaise wrote a paper on conic sections which was acclaimed by his fellow mathematicians as 'the most powerful and valuable contribution that had been made to mathematical science since the days of Archimedes.' This paper 'laid the foundation for the modern treatment of conic sections.'

#### PASCAL'S CALCULATING MACHINE

Blaise Pascal always tried to make his work in science and mathematics of practical use to mankind. While still a teenager, he invented the first machine to do calculations—an arithmetic machine which could add and subtract. This machine involved a set of wheels, each with the numbers zero through to nine on them. The wheels were connected with gears, so that a complete turn of one wheel would move the wheel next to it through one-tenth of a turn. This machine was of great use to his father—a judge in the taxation court—and to others involved in calculations. Although expensive to make and difficult to operate, Pascal's calculating machine was an essential step in the subsequent development of calculators and computers.

THOUGHTS AND READINGS FOR MEDITATION



BLAISE PASCAL

(1623–1662) GREAT CREATION SCIENTIST

#### CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

In 1646, Pascal joined the Jansenists—a group of Catholics in France who believed as Calvin did on some doctrines, including salvation through God's love and grace, rather than through good works. Pascal believed that 'There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.' Pascal wholeheartedly believed that the events described in the book of Genesis were actual historical events. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states that Pascal believed 'man's wretchedness is explicable only as an effect of the Fall' and that 'For Pascal as for St Paul, Jesus Christ is the second Adam, inconceivable without the first.'

Now a committed Christian, Pascal continued his work in science and mathematics. Pascal's experiments with the barometer proved the now familiar facts that atmospheric pressure (as shown by the height of the mercury in the barometer) decreases as altitude increases, and also changes as the weather changes. Pascal made a valuable contribution to developing both hydrostatics and hydrodynamics. He showed that the 'pressure applied to a confined liquid is transmitted undiminished through the liquid in all directions, regardless of the area to which the pressure is applied'. This is known as Pascal's Law and is the principle behind the hydraulic press, which Pascal designed. During these experiments with fluids, Pascal invented the syringe. Pascal also investigated the cycloid—the curve formed by a point on the circumference of a circle as the circle rolls along a straight line. Pascal's discovery of many physical and mathematical properties of the cycloid was an important step towards the later development of calculus by others.

*“O, to be as Enoch till I die!”*

“LET US DRAW NEAR.”  
HEB. 10:22

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## THEORY OF PROBABILITY

Pascal also worked with another mathematician, Fermat, on the Theory of Probability. Letters between the two 'show that Pascal and Fermat participated equally in the creation of the theory.' Although their investigations were carried out on various gambling situations, this theory has an immense number of applications. It is the basis of all insurance schemes and it is of great value to many other branches of science such as quantum physics, where the behaviour of particles can be described using probabilities. Pascal invented a simple method now known as Pascal's Triangle to determine the probability of certain outcomes.

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## RECOMMITMENT

Pascal attended parties where gambling was being conducted, and unfortunately became distracted by this lifestyle. However, Pascal had a narrow escape from death in 1654, when the horses pulling his carriage bolted. The horses were killed, but Pascal was unhurt. Convinced that it was God who had saved him, he reassessed how he was living. From then on, from the age of thirty-one to the day of his death, at the age of thirty-nine, he had but one desire: "he lived that he might turn the thoughts of men to his Saviour." At this time of recommitment to God, Pascal wrote:

*Certainty! Joy! Peace!*

I forget the world and everything but God! I submit myself absolutely to Jesus Christ my Redeemer.

Much of Pascal's last few years was devoted to his religious writings. He wrote a famous series of 18 letters known as the 'Provincial Letters', considered by critics to mark the beginning of modern French prose. Pascal also wrote the outstanding book *Pensées* (French for 'thoughts') in which he argues the case for his Christian beliefs.

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## PASCAL'S PENSÉES

Pascal's great work was to be his APOLOGY FOR THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION ("Apology," of course, in the classic meaning of "Defense"). He worked on it diligently in the closing years of his life, but at his death he left only a sheaf of papers with no particular organisation—fragments of writing, most consisting of one or two paragraphs. Editors differ as to what order they ought to be printed in. They have been published under the title *PENSEES* ("Thoughts"). They contain, not an argument to persuade a non-Christian to accept Christ as Lord, but scribbled notes in preparation for the formulation of such an argument. How Pascal would have organised it and filled in the gaps must remain a matter of conjecture. A few of the better-known lines may suggest the flavour:

I lay it down as a fact that if all men knew what others say of them, there would not be four friends left in the world.

The state of man: inconstancy, boredom, anxiety.

Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in

nature, but he is a thinking reed.

What a chimera then is man!

What a novelty! What a monster!

What a chaos! What a contradiction!

What a prodigy!

Judge of all things, feeble earthworm, depository of truth, sink of uncertainty and error, the glory and the shame of the universe.

Men never do evil so completely or cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

"Be of good cheer—you would not seek Me if you had not found Me."

It seems clear that Pascal intended the completed work to comprise two parts:

Part One examines the condition of man without God, and shows it to be utterly intolerable—to be, not merely hopeless, but also incoherent and paradoxical—to be, in some sense, unnatural. Man needs a Saviour if the world is to make sense.

Part Two argues that we have sound reasons for believing that a Saviour is in fact to be had for the asking.

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## PASCAL'S WAGER

Pascal is famous for the statement known as Pascal's Wager in which he applied his thinking in terms of probabilities to the question of salvation. Pascal's Wager paraphrased is:

How can anyone lose who chooses to become a Christian? If, when he dies, there turns out to be no God and his faith was in vain, he has lost nothing — in fact, he has been happier in life than his non-believing friends. If, however, there is a God and a heaven and hell, then he has gained heaven and his sceptical friends will have lost everything in hell.

This argument has been much ridiculed and much misunderstood, but suppose that by heaven he means an eternal union with Christ. When persons seek to understand (by a study of the Scriptures or by participation in the life of the Christian community, or by seeing what is perhaps Christ at work in the lives of Christian friends) what Christ is like, or what it would mean to be in a right relationship with Him, some of them (not all) conclude that to be in such a relationship is such a glorious prospect that it is indeed worth making the central goal of one's life.

Suppose that I have made the goal of union with Christ all that I care about, every course of action is to be judged by the single criterion, "Will it move me closer to my goal of union with Christ?" Obviously, if Christ is an illusion, then nothing will move me closer to him. But if He is not an illusion, then obviously seeking to love Him, trust Him, and obey Him is more likely to get me into a right relation with Him than the opposite strategy. And so it will be the one I take.

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## PASCAL'S VISION

When he was 31 years old, less than eight years before his death, Pascal had an overwhelming

experience of the presence of God. He apparently made hasty notes, during the vision or immediately afterwards, so that he might always have at hand a reminder of what had happened to him. He transcribed these onto a piece of parchment and sewed it into the lining of his coat, where his servant found it after his death. There is no evidence of his having mentioned the experience to anyone while he lived. The parchment reads as follows (Bible references added):

### MEMORIAL

In the year of grace, 1654, On Monday, 23rd of November, from about half past ten in the evening until about half past twelve,

### FIRE!

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, (Ex 3:6; Mt 22:32) not of the philosophers and scholars. Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. God of Jesus Christ. "Thy God and my God." (Jn 20:17) Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except God.

He is to be found only in the ways taught in the Gospel.

Greatness of the Human Soul.

"Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee." (Jn 17:25) Joy, joy, tears of joy. I have separated myself from Him. "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters." (Jr 2:13) "My God, wilt Thou leave me?" (Mt 27:46) Let me not be separated from Him eternally. "This is the eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and the one whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." (Jn 17:3) Jesus Christ.

### JESUS CHRIST

I have separated myself from Him:

I have fled from Him,

denied Him,

crucified Him.

Let me never be separated from Him.

We keep hold of Him only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Renunciation, total and sweet.

Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.

Eternally in joy for a day's training on earth.

"I will not forget thy words." (Ps 119:16)

Amen.

Pascal recognised that man could not arrive at all knowledge by his own wisdom. He wrote that 'Faith tells us what the senses cannot, but it is not contradictory to their findings.' He also recognised that God was more than just the Creator—He was a loving, personal God as well—'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of the Christians is a God of love and consolation.'

When approaching his death, Pascal wrote: 'And so I stretch forth my hands to my Redeemer, who came to earth to suffer and die for me.' Pascal died on August 19, 1662, in Paris. Despite a short life with constant sickness and pain, this devout Christian made outstanding contributions to science, mathematics and literature.

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# The Sacrament of Living

by A. W. TOZER

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“WHETHER THEREFORE YE EAT, OR DRINK, OR WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.” 1 Cor. 10:31

One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas, the sacred and the secular. As the seas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we live a divided instead of a unified life.

Our trouble springs from the fact that we who follow Christ inhabit at once two worlds, the spiritual and the natural. As children of Adam we live our lives on earth subject to the limitations of the flesh and the weaknesses and ills to which human nature is heir. Merely to live among men requires of us years of hard toil and much care and attention to the things of this world. In sharp contrast to this is our life in the Spirit. There we enjoy another and higher kind of life; we are children of God; we possess heavenly status and enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ.

This tends to divide our total life into two departments. We come unconsciously to recognise two sets of actions. The first are performed with a feeling of satisfaction and a firm assurance that they are pleasing to God. These are the sacred acts and they are usually thought to be prayer, Bible reading, hymn singing, church attendance and such other acts as spring directly from faith. They maybe known by the fact that they have no direct relation to this world, and would have no meaning whatever except as faith shows us another world, ‘an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ (2 Cor 5:1)

Over against these sacred acts are the secular ones. They include all of the ordinary activities of life which we share with the sons and daughters of Adam: eating, sleeping, working, looking after the needs of the body and performing our dull and prosaic duties here on earth. These we often do reluctantly and with many misgivings, often apologising to God for what we consider a waste of time and strength. The upshot of this is that we are uneasy most of the time. We go about our common tasks with a feeling of deep frustration, telling ourselves pensively that there's a better day coming when we shall slough off this earthly shell and be bothered no more with the affairs of this world. This is the old sacred-secular antithesis. Most Christians are caught in its trap. They cannot get a satisfactory adjustment between the claims of the two worlds. They try to walk the tight rope between two kingdoms and they find no

peace in either. Their strength is reduced, their outlook confused and their joy taken from them.

I believe this state of affairs to be wholly unnecessary. We have gotten ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, true enough, but the dilemma is not real. It is a creature of misunderstanding. The sacred-secular antithesis has no foundation in the New Testament. Without doubt a more perfect understanding of Christian truth will deliver us from it.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our perfect example, and He knew no divided life. In the Presence of His Father He lived on earth without strain from babyhood to His death on the cross. God accepted the offering of His total life, and made no distinction between act and act. ‘I do always the things that please him,’ was His brief summary of His own life as it related to the Father. (John 8:29) As He moved among men He was poised and restful. What pressure and suffering He endured grew out of His position as the world's sin-bearer; they were never the result of moral uncertainty or spiritual maladjustment.

Paul's exhortation to ‘do all to the glory of God’ is more than pious idealism. It is an integral part of the sacred revelation and is to be accepted as the very Word of Truth. It opens before us the possibility of making every act of our lives contribute to the glory of God. Lest we should be too timid to include everything, Paul mentions specifically eating and drinking. This humble privilege we share with the beasts that perish. If these lowly animal acts can be so performed as to honour God, then it becomes difficult to conceive of one that cannot.

That monkish hatred of the body which figures so prominently in the works of certain early devotional writers is wholly without support in the Word of God. Common modesty is found in the Sacred Scriptures, it is true, but never prudery or a false sense of shame. The New Testament accepts as a matter of course that in His incarnation our Lord took upon Him a real human body, and no effort is made to steer around the downright implications of such a fact. He lived in that body here among men and never once performed a non-sacred act. His presence in human flesh sweeps away forever the evil notion that there is about the human body something innately offensive to the Deity. God created our bodies, and we do not offend Him by placing the responsibility where it belongs. He is not ashamed of the work of His own hands. Perversion, misuse and abuse of our human powers should give us cause enough to be ashamed. Bodily acts done in sin and contrary to nature can never honour God. Wherever the human will introduces moral evil we have no longer our innocent and harmless

powers as God made them; we have instead an abused and twisted thing which can never bring glory to its Creator.

Let us, however, assume that perversion and abuse are not present. Let us think of a Christian believer in whose life the twin wonders of repentance and the new birth have been wrought. He is now living according to the will of God as he understands it from the written Word. Of such a one it may be said that every act of his life is or can be as truly sacred as prayer or baptism or the Lord's Supper. To say this is not to bring all acts down to one dead level; it is rather to lift every act up into a living kingdom and turn the whole life into a sacrament.

If a sacrament is an external expression of an inward grace, then we need not hesitate to accept the above thesis. By one act of consecration of our total selves to God, we can make every subsequent act express that consecration. We need no more be ashamed of our body—the fleshly servant that carries us through life—than Jesus was of the humble beast upon which He rode into Jerusalem. ‘The Lord hath need of him’ may well apply to our mortal bodies. If Christ dwells in us we may bear about the Lord of glory as the little beast did of old and give occasion to the multitudes to cry, ‘Hosanna in the highest.’

That we see this truth is not enough. If we would escape from the toils of the sacred-secular dilemma the truth must ‘run in our blood’ and condition the complexion of our thoughts. We must practice living to the glory of God, actually and determinedly. By meditation upon this truth, by talking it over with God often in our prayers, by recalling it to our minds frequently as we move about among men, a sense of its wondrous meaning will begin to take hold of us. The old painful duality will go down before a restful unity of life. The knowledge that we are all God's, that He has received all and rejected nothing, will unify our inner lives and make everything sacred to us.

This is not quite all. Long-held habits do not die easily. It will take intelligent thought and a great deal of reverent prayer to escape completely from the sacred-secular psychology. For instance it may be difficult for the average Christian to get hold of the idea that his daily labours can be performed as acts of worship acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The old antithesis will crop up in the back of his head sometimes to disturb his peace of mind. Nor will that old serpent the devil take all this lying down. He will be there in the cab or at the desk or in the field to remind the Christian that he is giving the better part of his day to the things of this world and allotting to his religious duties only a trifling portion of his time. And unless

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great care is taken this will create confusion and bring discouragement and heaviness of heart.

We can meet this successfully only by the exercise of an aggressive faith. We must offer all our acts to God and believe that He accepts them. Then hold firmly to that position and keep insisting that every act of every hour of the day and night be included in the transaction. Keep reminding God in our times of private prayer that we mean every act for His glory; then supplement those times by a thousand thought-prayers as we go about the job of living. Let us practice the fine art of making every work a priestly ministration. Let us believe that God is in all our simple deeds and learn to find Him there.

A concomitant of the error which we have been discussing is the sacred-secular antithesis as applied to places. It is little short of astonishing that we can read the New Testament and still believe in the inherent sacredness of places as distinguished from other places. This error is so widespread that one feels all alone when he tries to combat it. It has acted as a kind of dye to colour the thinking of religious persons and has coloured the eyes as well so that it is all but impossible to detect its fallacy. In the face of every New Testament teaching to the contrary, it has been said and sung throughout the centuries and accepted as part of the Christian message, the which it most surely is not. Only the Quakers, so far as my knowledge goes, have had the perception to see the error and the courage to expose it.

Here are the facts as I see them. For four hundred years Israel had dwelt in Egypt, surrounded by the crassest idolatry. By the hand of Moses they were brought out at last and started toward the land of promise. The very idea of holiness had been lost to them. To correct this, God began at the bottom. He localised Himself in the cloud and fire and later when the tabernacle had been built He dwelt between holy and unholy. There were holy days, holy vessels, holy garments. There were washings, sacrifices, offerings of many kinds. By these means Israel learned that God is holy. It was this that He was teaching them. **Not the holiness of things or places, but the holiness of Jehovah was the lesson they must learn.**

Then came the great day when Christ appeared. Immediately He began to say, 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time..., but I say unto you...' (Mat 5:21-22) The Old Testament schooling was over. When Christ died on the cross the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. The Holy of Holies was opened to everyone who would enter in faith. Christ's

words were remembered, 'The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ...But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:21-23)

Shortly after, Paul took up the cry of liberty and declared all meats clean, every day holy, all places sacred and every act acceptable to God. The sacredness of times and places, a half-light necessary to the education of the race, passed away before the full sun of spiritual worship.

The essential spirituality of worship remained the possession of the Church until it was slowly lost with the passing of the years. Then the natural legality of the fallen hearts of men began to introduce the old distinctions. The Church came to observe again days and seasons and times. Certain places were chosen and marked out as holy in a special sense. Differences were observed between one and another day or place or person. 'The sacraments' were first two, then three, then four, until with the triumph of Romanism they were fixed at seven.

In all charity, and with no desire to reflect unkindly upon any Christian, however misled, I would point out that the Roman Catholic church represents today the sacred-secular heresy carried to its logical conclusion. Its deadliest effect is the complete cleavage it introduces between religion and life. Its teachers attempt to avoid this snare by many footnotes and multitudinous explanations, but the mind's instinct for logic is too strong. In practical living the cleavage is a fact.

From this bondage reformers and puritans and mystics have laboured to free us. Today the trend in conservative circles is back toward that bondage again. It is said that a horse after it has been led out of a burning building will sometimes by a strange obstinacy break loose from its rescuer and dash back into the building again to perish in the flame. By some such stubborn tendency toward error, Fundamentalism in our day is moving back toward spiritual slavery. The observation of days and times is becoming more and more prominent among us. 'Lent' and 'holy week' and 'good' Friday are words heard more and more frequently upon the lips of gospel Christians. We do not know when we are well off.

In order that I may be understood and not be misunderstood I would throw into relief the practical implications of the teaching for which

I have been arguing, i.e., the sacramental quality of every-day living. Over against its positive meanings I should like to point out a few things it does not mean.

It does not mean, for instance, that everything we do is of equal importance with everything else we do or may do. One act of a good man's life may differ widely from another in importance. Paul's sewing of tents was not equal to his writing an Epistle to the Romans, but both were accepted of God and both were true acts of worship. Certainly it is more important to lead a soul to Christ than to plant a garden, but the planting of the garden can be as holy an act as the winning of a soul.

Again, it does not mean that every man is as useful as every other man. Gifts differ in the body of Christ. A Billy Bray is not to be compared with a Luther or a Wesley for sheer usefulness to the Church and to the world; but the service of the less gifted brother is as pure as that of the more gifted, and God accepts both with equal pleasure.

The 'layman' need never think of his humbler task as being inferior to that of his minister. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called and his work will be as sacred as the work of the ministry. It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it. The motive is everything. Let a man sanctify the Lord God in his heart and he can thereafter do no common act. All he does is good and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For such a man, living itself will be sacramental and the whole world a sanctuary. His entire life will be a priestly ministration. As he performs his never so simple task he will hear the voice of the seraphim saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.' **Lord, I would trust Thee completely; I would be altogether Thine; I would exalt Thee above all. I desire that I may feel no sense of possessing anything outside of Thee. I want constantly to be aware of Thine overshadowing Presence and to hear Thy speaking Voice. I long to live in restful sincerity of heart. I want to live so fully in the Spirit that all my thought may be as sweet incense ascending to Thee and every act of my life may be an act of worship. Therefore I pray in the words of Thy great servant of old, "I beseech Thee so for to cleanse the intent of mine heart with the unspeakable gift of Thy grace, that I may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee." And all this I confidently believe Thou wilt grant me through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.**

Taken from the conversations and letters of Brother Lawrence:

*My God, since You are with me, and since it is your will that I should apply my mind to these outward things, I pray that You will give me the grace to remain with You and keep company with You. But so that my work may be better; Lord, work with me; receive my work and possess all my affections.*

*The time of business is no different from the time of prayer. In the noise and clatter of my kitchen, I possess God as tranquilly as if I were upon my knees before His throne.*