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Memorial

Blaise Pascal





Memorial

Author(s): Pascal, Blaise (1623-1662)

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Description: On November 23, 1654, Pascal had an intense religious vision; later that night, he wrote himself a note detailing the experience. Until his death, he kept this note sewn into whichever coat he wore, and only by chance did a servant discover it. In it, Pascal claims to have had a personal encounter with Christ rather than the abstracted God of philosophy. As a result, he felt his faith reinvigorated, and he began his first major work on religion, the Provincial Letters.
Kathleen O'Bannon
CCEL Staff

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Pascal's Memorial

Introduction

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), known in his day and ours as a mathematician and scientist, was also a spiritual writer. His Provincial Letters (1656-1657) defended his Jansenist friends at Port-Royal against their Jesuit critics. His *Pensées*, never finished, and published posthumously in 1670, present Pascal's *apologia* for the Christian faith, addressed to the intelligent skeptic. This work includes his famous "wager" regarding the existence of God. Pascal's most intimate religious work is the Memorial. This scrap of paper, which records Pascal's experience on one unforgettable night in 1654, was found in the lining of his coat after his death, for he carried this reminder about with him always.

Here I present the French and Latin original of the Memorial, followed by an English translation.

Evidently Pascal made a fair copy of his first draft, and a close friend made a third copy. Please note that the last three lines of the Memorial are absent in one of the autographs.

French/Latin original

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L'an de grâce 1654,

Lundi, 23 novembre, jour de saint Clément, pape et martyr, et autres au martyrologe.
Veille de saint Chrysogone, martyr, et autres,
Depuis environ dix heures et demie du soir jusques environ minuit et demi,

FEU.

«DIEU d'Abraham, DIEU d'Isaac, DIEU de Jacob»
non des philosophes et des savants.
Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joie. Paix.
DIEU de Jésus-Christ.
Deum meum et Deum vestrum.
«Ton DIEU sera mon Dieu.»
Oubli du monde et de tout, hormis DIEU.
Il ne se trouve que par les voies enseignées dans l'Évangile.
Grandeur de l'âme humaine.
«Père juste, le monde ne t'a point connu, mais je t'ai connu.»
Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie.
Je m'en suis séparé:
Dereliquerunt me fontem aquae vivae.

«Mon Dieu, me quitterez-vous?»
Que je n'en sois pas séparé éternellement.
«Cette est la vie éternelle, qu'ils te connaissent seul vrai Dieu, et celui que tu as envoyé, Jésus-Christ.»
Jésus-Christ.
Jésus-Christ.
Je m'en suis séparé; je l'ai fui, renoncé, crucifié.
Que je n'en sois jamais séparé.
Il ne se conserve que par les voies enseignées dans l'Évangile:
Renonciation totale et douce.
Soumission totale à Jésus-Christ et à mon directeur.
Éternellement en joie pour un jour d'exercice sur la terre.
Non obliviscar sermones tuos. Amen.

English translation

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The year of grace 1654,

Monday, 23 November, feast of St. Clement, pope and martyr, and others in the martyr-ology.

Vigil of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others.

From about half past ten at night until about half past midnight,

FIRE.

GOD of Abraham, GOD of Isaac, GOD of Jacob
not of the philosophers and of the learned.

Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.

GOD of Jesus Christ.

My God and your God.

Your GOD will be my God.

Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except GOD.

He is only found by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Grandeur of the human soul.

Righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you.

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

I have departed from him:

They have forsaken me, the fount of living water.

My God, will you leave me?

Let me not be separated from him forever.

This is eternal life, that they know you, the one true God, and the one that you sent, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

I left him; I fled him, renounced, crucified.

Let me never be separated from him.

He is only kept securely by the ways taught in the Gospel:

Renunciation, total and sweet.

Complete submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.

Eternally in joy for a day's exercise on the earth.

Not to forget your words. Amen.
