

## FOREWORD

THIS is a study in the strategy of Christian evangelism, as developed by two of its greatest exponents. Setting out from Pascal's revolutionary treatment of the traditional Christian apologetics, and confronting it with Kierkegaard's critique of apologetics, it finds that there is only one type of *apologia* which has any right to be admitted by the Christian Church, namely, an advocacy for the prosecution of the spirit of the age, an offensive challenge to all false doctrines and ways of life. It concludes that this *eristic* type of *apologia* (as Professor Emil Brunner calls it) leads beyond the threshold of evangelism, and indeed constitutes the new Christian military science which Kierkegaard called the strategy of evangelism.

The historical analysis of the lives and works of Blaise Pascal and Søren Kierkegaard in Parts I and II is therefore presented in such a way as to lay particular stress on their offensive strategy in relation to the living issues of their times. It is necessary to go into considerable detail in this historical part, both because every incident in these men's lives has been the subject of close scrutiny and lively controversy, and also because no fruitful comparison of their work can be made except on the basis of as faithful as possible a historical treatment of what they really said to the people of their own times and of the motives which led them to frame their messages as they did.

The systematic comparison of the work of the two men which forms Part III carries further the process of eliciting the elements in a valid strategy for Christian evangelism. It presents the distilled essence of long reflexion upon the profound affinities between Pascal and Kierkegaard, despite the great differences in their temperaments and situations.

The Epilogue relates the conclusions arrived at in Part III to the task of evangelism to-day. It is a signpost which points to the spiritual continuity between the problems which Pascal and Kierkegaard faced and those which the Christian Church faces to-day, and points also to the answers given by these men in their specific situations as a base on which may be developed a Christian offensive strategy for our own times.

Underlying the whole study is the considered judgment that Pascal and Kierkegaard represent an aspect of the spiritual history of modern Europe which has received scant official recognition, but in fact constitutes its most significant feature. They represent the judgment of the Christian Faith upon the

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Renaissance tradition of autonomous, immanent, secular thought and life, and constitute a call for a complete reevaluation of the history of modern thought.

Furthermore, this study acknowledges the penetrating personal challenge issued by Pascal and Kierkegaard to every reader of their works. It is "objective" in the sense of being as historically accurate as possible; it is not "objective" in the sense of being completely disinterested. Both Pascal and Kierkegaard were writers with a purpose, which they pursued with complete singleness of mind and intensity of passion. They sought to awaken their readers to spiritual self-activity and lead them to the Cross of Jesus Christ. This study endeavours to communicate to everyone who may read it something of their spiritual fervour and insistent challenge. The writer acknowledges his own profound inward debt to two men he humbly admires and loves.

To avoid all misunderstanding, it must be clearly stated at the very beginning that this study does not claim to deal exhaustively with the entire thought of Pascal and Kierkegaard. What it does claim to do is to provide the perspective in which alone any research into the profound philosophical problems with which they deal can fruitfully be undertaken. Neither Pascal nor Kierkegaard can be understood except in the light of the unity of spiritual purpose which inspired them to write and informs everything they wrote. Failure to take account of this fact has vitiated a great deal of research by German scholars into Kierkegaard's thought. May this study contribute to prevent this from happening in the English-speaking countries!

The present work originated in a study entrusted to the writer at the University of Zürich in the academic year 1931-1932, in connexion with a Seminar on Kierkegaard under the leadership of Professor Walter Gut. That study was undertaken without any previous knowledge of either Pascal or Kierkegaard, and with no preconceived ideas. Not only were the results arrived at very striking, but the impression made upon the author's mind was profound, and stimulated the desire to communicate it to others. Pressure of other work has prevented it from being completed more rapidly, and has also limited the range and depth of its scholarship. With much more justice than Professor Emil Brunner, the present writer can say: "My relationship to real learning will probably remain that of an unhappy love all my life long."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, Foreword, p. vii.

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year's study abroad out of which this work has grown ; to Professor Walter Gut of Zürich University for the original suggestion of its topic ; to Bishop Torsten Bohlin, with whose critical conclusions the writer cannot always agree, but whose personal kindness and gift of two of his own works on Kierkegaard encouraged and stimulated him ; to the Geneva University Library authorities for making their facilities available to him ; to Miss B. K. Snell, who has borne the main burden of typing the manuscript ; to the writer's father, for undertaking the ungrateful task of reading the proofs ; and above all to his wife, for bearing with uncomplaining self-denial the sacrifice of the pleasures of family intercourse in the evenings of two whole years, and for giving much help in reading and correcting the manuscript and typescript.

There are a great many quotations throughout this study. They serve both to indicate the writer's sense of indebtedness to others and to confirm his judgments with the weight of established authority. Pascal has an apt remark on this subject : " Certain authors, when speaking of their works, say : ' My book, my commentary, my history, etc.' They are like those bourgeois citizens who have a house of their own and constantly have the words ' at my house ' in their mouth. They would do better to say : ' Our book, our commentary, our history, etc.', seeing that usually there is more in it of other people's goods than of their own." <sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, this study is based on original critical research, and arrives at conclusions which have nowhere else been stated in the same way or set out in the same perspective. Here again, both Pascal and Kierkegaard have a word to say, with which this Foreword may fitly end.

" If anyone maintains that what I say is the same as what everybody else is saying, I will raise no objection, if it is taken in the same sense as the remark Leucippus once made, that a tragedy and a comedy consist of the same letters, only that the order is different." <sup>2</sup>

" Let nobody say I have said nothing new : the arrangement of the material is new ; when people play at tennis, it is the same ball which is used by both players, but one places it better.

" I should be as pleased if I were told that I have used old words. As if the same thoughts did not form a different body of discourse by being differently disposed, just as the same words form different thoughts by being variously arranged ! " <sup>3</sup>

ZÜRICH, 1931.  
GENEVA, 1944.

DENZIL G. M. PATRICK.

<sup>1</sup> *Pensée* 43.

<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals*, I, 181 (1843).

<sup>3</sup> *Pensée* 22.