Pascal’s Biblicism:
The Apologetic Consequences of a
Literal View of the Fall

THE CENTRALITY OF THE FALL IN THE
ARGUMENT OF THE APOLOGY

The role of the Bible in Pascal’s projected Apology is above all one of
documentation. Scripture serves as the ultimate authority in Pascal’s at­
ttempt to establish the historicity of the two key elements in the history of
the relationship between man and God: the Fall and the Incarnation. “Or­
dre,” a dossier set down when Pascal organized his various arguments into
twenty-seven provisional chapters, envisages these two events as constitut­
ing the two principal themes around which the Apology will be organized:

Première partie: Misère de l’homme sans Dieu.
Deuxième partie: Félicité de l’homme avec Dieu.
autrement

Première partie: Que la nature est corrompue, par la nature même.
Deuxième partie: Qu’il y a un Réparateur, par l’Écriture. (40/6)

This fragment, the best internal evidence of Pascal’s plan for organizing
his projected Apology, suggests a problem that goes to the heart of Pascal’s
apologetics. The Incarnation will be documented “par l’Écriture.” Man’s
fallen condition, however, will be proved “par la nature.” Are we therefore
to conclude that Pascal’s proof of Christianity will have a dual source?
Does Pascal intend to use the Bible only to document the historicity of the
Incarnation? Will his proof of the Fall be drawn uniquely from outside
Revelation?

Such a view of the overall scheme of the Pensées fails to take into account
Pascal’s understanding of the nature of Revelation. It serves only to sever
Pascal’s arguments from their theological roots. Pascal’s dogmatic theol­
ogy rarely fails to reflect the position of the neo-Augustinian theologians of
Port-Royal. Though they admitted into their commentaries on Original
Sin the notion that the effects of Adam’s fault can be perceived in fallen
nature, the theologians of Port-Royal always insisted that the only legitimate and acceptable proof of the Fall is to be found in Genesis.

It is no accident that fragment 40/6, which seems to draw a sharp distinction between the authority of expérience and that of Revelation, has attracted the attention of so many modern commentators on the Pensées. We are all heirs to an eighteenth-century conception of this work that continues to hold a powerful grasp on critics and ordinary readers alike. It is the notion that there exist "philosophical" sections of the Pensées that can be profitably read and understood totally apart from the theological and "dogmatic" character of the Apology as a whole.

As outlined in fragment 40/6, the "première partie" of Pascal's Apology might at first seem susceptible to such an interpretation. A dissection of the human condition through an analysis of "la nature même" (i.e., human nature) at first might appear to be a philosophical rather than a theological enterprise. Such an approach, however, will not stand the test of even the most elementary textual study. One is immediately presented with the implications of Pascal's use of the word corrompue. For Pascal, and for the reader of his time, this word invokes not simply some vague notion of the folly of the human condition but rather a concrete theological doctrine.

For reasons central to his apologetic strategy, Pascal will approach the doctrine of Original Sin through examples drawn from the realm of expérience. His ultimate demonstration, however, "Que la nature est corrompue," will find its final exposition in the specifically Christian doctrine of the Fall. His ultimate proof of the Fall will be founded upon Genesis' account of Adam's sin. "Sans l'Ecriture, sans le péché originel ... on ne peut prouver absolument Dieu ni enseigner ni bonne doctrine ni bonne morale" (221/189).

Any attempt to assess the role of the Fall in Pascal's argument is infinitely complicated by the unfinished state in which the apologist left his papers at the time of his death. His notes, which represent an Apology interrupted in the course of its organization, give the misleading impression that Pascal envisaged two very different kinds of proofs of Christianity. Entire sections of the Pensées, including many of the most finished passages, seem to rule out a direct appeal to the authority of Revelation. Other large sections, by contrast, seek to document the historical credibility of that same Revelation. How Pascal would have effected a transition from this first order of arguments to the second has preoccupied almost every editor of the Pensées who has attempted to present the work as apology.¹

Rather than viewing the Pensées as incorporating two separate blocks of arguments, such editors have shown us, it is much more in accord with Pascal's design to conceive of his projected Apology as a transition from the questions posed by expérience to the answers afforded by Revelation.
The doctrine of Original Sin, transmuted from a theoretical proposition suggested by expérience into an event whose historicity is confirmed by Scripture, is the model for Pascal's more fundamental transition from the insufficiency of reason to the certainty of Revelation.

From a purely thematic point of view, the doctrine of the Fall is one of the principal organizing forces of the Pensées. Over and over again, it enters into Pascal's very definition of Christianity, where it is always paired with the doctrine of the Incarnation. "La foi chrétienne ne va presque qu'à établir ces deux choses: la corruption de la nature et la Rédemption de Jésus-Christ" (681/427). "Cette religion . . . consiste à croire que l'homme est déchu d'un état de gloire . . . mais qu'après cette vie on serait rétabli par un Messie qui devait venir" (313/281). "Toute la foi consiste en Jésus-Christ et en Adam" (258/226).

These two doctrines, though fundamental to every orthodox school of Christian theology, take on a special significance in the Pensées. "En leur portant une attention presque exclusive, en renfermant en elles toutes les autres vérités," observes Jean Mesnard, "Pascal donne à son christianisme une couleur particulière, qui est celle de l'augustinisme." By examining the place accorded the scriptural doctrine of the Fall in neo-Augustinian theology, I intend to clarify Pascal's adherence to a literal interpretation of Genesis. An understanding of Pascal's biblicism will in turn permit us to penetrate the internal logic of his argument when he puts the Fall in the service of apology.

To denote the idea that the Fall and the Incarnation together constitute the most fundamental mystery of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Redemption, Pascal repeatedly makes use of the formula "Adam"/"Jésus-Christ." Even the most theologically minded modern reader will perhaps forget that Adam is for Pascal no less a historical figure than Jesus of Nazareth. The reader of today will perhaps automatically register the idea "mythological figure" when Pascal speaks of "Adam." Pascal's arguments, however, everywhere suppose Adam to be a historical personnage and the Fall to be a historical event. In order to enter into the internal logic of Pascal's arguments, the modern reader must find a way of temporarily suspending his view of the Fall as but metaphor.

The biblical commentaries of M. de Sacy afford us direct access to a closely reasoned exposition of the very literal understanding of Genesis that is implicit in the Pensées. Sacy's analysis permits us to recapture a vision of the origins of man that has long since been discredited both by science and by modern biblical scholarship. We evoke Sacy's interpretation in order to understand Pascal's view of sacred history. Yet we must constantly remind ourselves that reading Genesis as factual history is by no means an invention of Port-Royal, and that Sacy follows the precedent of
the entire Christian tradition. Only in Sacy's own time did serious biblical scholars begin to doubt the historicity of Genesis' accounts of the Creation and the Fall.

"UN LIEU EFFECTIF": SACY'S PRESENTATION OF THE FALL AS A HISTORICAL EVENT

In his *Préface à la Genèse*, Sacy directs his reader's particular attention to his commentary on Genesis 3, Scripture's account of the Fall. This account, Sacy explains, is an episode whose "sens littéral" is of unparalleled importance in the whole of the Old Testament. It is the historical testimony on which the Church founds the doctrine of Original Sin. This doctrine, Sacy forewarns his reader, is one of those articles of faith "qui enferme toujours certaines obscuritez qui en sont inséparables." Human reason, itself corrupted in Adam's fall, cannot hope to understand the source of its own limitations. Rather, reason must direct its full attention to the explanation afforded by Revelation:

*Lorsque nostre esprit envisage de plus près un mystère si profond, il s'ébloûit d'abord, et il se trouve comme enveloppé d'un nuage de pensées qui le tient dans le doute, jusqu'à ce qu'il s'appuye sur la foy qu'il a receuë de Dieu, et sur l'immobilité de sa Parole.*

The obscure nature of the Fall and the necessity of relying upon the testimony of Scripture is a primary emphasis of Sacy's commentaries. It is likewise an idea echoed in his letters to penitents. "Il ne faut pas," Sacy counsels one gentleman under his direction, "trop raisonner sur le péché originel." Instead, one must practice with regard to his "article" "ce que l'on pratique à l'égard de tous les autres mystères inconcevables à l'esprit humain." The Holy Spirit, "parlant par la bouche de saint Paul," established the authority of this doctrine once and for all time in Romans 5:12. To reject it means not only to "renoncer à tous les sentimens de la religion," but as well to "éteindre toutes les lumières de la raison."

Having developed the idea that the doctrine of Original Sin is infinitely obscure to human reason, Sacy then introduces a paradox. Once this doctrine is enunciated by Revelation, it then illuminates that which is most mysterious in the human condition. "Cette vérité est comme un flambeau qui éclaircit ce qu'il y a plus inexplicable dans l'état présent où la nature humaine est reduite." Nothing is more evident than the corruption of man's reason. "Pour s'en convaincre," one has only to "faire attention à l'estat où naissent les enfans, aux ténèbres où leur âme est plongée, aux mauvaises inclinations qu'elle fait paroître si-tôt qu'elle commence d'agir." From such an observation, one can deduce at the very least the fact that man's present state "ne scâuroit estre celui de son origine." As Sacy sees it, then, the doctrine of the Fall, explaining so much about the human condi-
tion, is really “beaucoup moins obscure” than many of the other great mysteries of Christianity.  

Like Pascal, Sacy identifies the transmission of Adam’s guilt to the rest of humanity as that aspect of the Fall which is the most contrary to human reason:

Nous avons de la peine à comprendre comment la playe de la concupiscence dont Adam fut frappé au moment de sa révolte, et qui comme une maladie contagieuse se répandit dans toutes les parties de son âme et de son corps, est passée dans ses enfans, et ensuite dans la succession de tous les hommes . . . Il est sans doute que c’est là ce qui est le plus difficile à comprendre dans le péché originel.  

Yet, at the same time, Sacy does not hesitate to point out, everyday experience provides ample clarification of this mystery. In nature, one finds manifold examples of hereditary illnesses that follow the same pattern: “Nous voyons tous les jours qu’il y a des maladies héréditaires qui passent des pères aux enfans, qu’il y en a meme, comme la lèpre et semblables, qui sont attachées à des familles entières, sans que la transfusion de cette maladie originelle soit interrompué par le cours et le nombre des années.”

Sacy’s analogy supposes a literal reading of Genesis. He takes the whole of the human race to be a “famille entière” descended without exception from Adam, the father of mankind.

“L’expérience,” Sacy goes on to point out, provides confirmation of the biological transmission not only of physical illnesses but of “vices tout de l’esprit.” Such moral defects, “qui passent des pères aux enfans non seulement en des familles, mais en des Provinces entières,” present an illustration that renders the Christian doctrine of the transmission of Original Sin all the more convincing:

Que l’on considère les humeurs et les inclinations différentes de chaque pais, et l’on trouvera qu’il y en a où les hommes naissent naturellement fiers, vains, et glorieux, ce qui paroit dans les enfans mesmes. Il y en a d’autres où ils naissent artificieux dans leurs paroles et dans leur conduite. . . . Ces passions toutes spirituelles qui estoient dans les pères se reproduisent par la naissance dans l’esprit de leurs enfans.  

The effects of Adam’s sin have penetrated nature in ways that are “si palpables et si sensibles,” Sacy argues, that even the pagan philosophers “en ont esté frappez, quoi qu’ils n’en puissent pas découvrir la cause.” These philosophers rightly realized that man, “ayant receu du ciel la lumière de la raison,” should have been favored with “tous les avantages de la nature.” Yet they only had to compare a newborn animal to a newborn child in order to realize that something had gone wrong at some point in man’s earliest history. “Celuy qui vient au monde comme le roy de tous
maux," Pliny had observed in his Historia naturalis, "naist comme un esclave et un criminel." In describing the pagan philosophers' perception of the effects of the Fall in nature, Sacy cites Saint Augustine: "Rem viderunt, causam nescie­runt." Those "grands esprits" such as Aristotle and Cicero realized that God could not be other than "souverainement bon et juste." Yet when they took stock of the human condition, they found it to be "visiblement un état de condamnation et de supplice." As they had no knowledge of the Fall— "qui auroit autorisé cette misère de l'homme san faire injure à la justice de Dieu”—these philosophers were forced to invent "une cause vray-semblable et très-ingénieuse" to explain the contradiction between God's justice and man's misery. "Ils ont inventé un péché originel, n'ayant pu découvrir le véritable."

Sacy draws a critical distinction between the theoretical concept of man's having fallen from a more perfect state—which can be deduced from expérience—and the Christian doctrine of the Fall, "la véritable," which is grounded in Revelation. Only Genesis documents Original Sin as historical fact. To advance the notion that the story of man's Fall "n'est qu'une parabole" is to undermine the whole of Christian doctrine. Those who advance such an idea have fallen into one of the oldest of heresies. Philo, "expliquant l'Ecriture avec la perfidie d'un Juif et la présomption d'un Philosophe, a changé en une simple allégorie ce qu'a dit Moïse du Paradis." A nonhistorical interpretation of the Fall, Sacy warns, amounts to "une opinion fondée sur la témérité d'une conjecture phantastique de l'esprit humain." According to the universal opinion of the Fathers of the Church, Adam's sin was a historical event and the Garden of Eden "un lieu effec­tif." Adam was the biological father of the entire human race:

Il est certain qu'Adam . . . a eu un très grand nombre d'enfans, qui pendant sa vie, qui a esté de plus de neuf cens ans, ont composé des millions d'hommes et des peuples entiers.

Therefore, all of humankind, including those who are yet unborn, themselves sinned in Adam's sin. To allegorize the Fall is to adopt the heretical position that a man born today is not corrupted just as fully as was Adam himself. It is to fall into the Pelagian heresy, to "détruire la vérité de l'Histoire Sainte" and to "renverser les fondemens les plus inébranlables de la foi et de la religion."

In placing the Fall at the center of his framework for Christian doctrine, in making it the "fondement" of all the other revealed mysteries, Sacy presents us with the essence of neo-Augustinian theology. Without the Fall, not even the Incarnation has any real meaning, "puisque le Fils de Dieu . . . n'est descendu du ciel et ne s'est revestu de notre nature qu'asfin que le
To treat Adam as but a symbol of human weakness is to disrupt the divinely authorized analogy between Christ and Adam. To question the historicity of Adam is to doubt the historicity of the Incarnation. Those who call themselves Christians while “faisant profession” of denying the reality of the Fall find themselves “condamnez en ce point de stupidité et d’un manquement d’esprit et de raison par les plus sages d’entre les Payens.”

The Fall never stands alone in Sacy’s dogmatic theology. It is always paired with the Incarnation:

Depuis que le Verbe s’est fait chair et a demeuré au milieu de nous, si nous avions oublié en quelque sorte la première dignité de nostre création, sçachons au moins l’estimer par le prix inestimable de nostre redemption.

The Bible de Royaumont, a synopsis of Scripture pieced together from Sacy’s commentaries by Fontaine, emphasizes the unity of the Fall and the Incarnation by recalling the idea of felix culpa from the liturgy of Holy Saturday. Adam’s sin, viewed from the totality of sacred history, was both a necessary and happy event:

Tous les hommes sont infiniment obligez au Sauveur qui a réparé ce mal d’une manière si avantageuse que l’Eglise puisse maintenant appeler le péché d’Adam un péché nécessaire, et sa faute une faute bienheureuse.

God permitted Adam’s sin in the first place, Sacy writes to one penitent, “pour en tirer un plus grand bien que celui de la justice originelle, par le mérite de la grâce de Jésus-Christ. Cette pensée est si solide et si véritable que toute l’Eglise s’écrie dans ses prières de la feste de Pâque: O péché vraiment nécessaire . . . O heureuse faute qui a esté réparée par un remède et par un Sauveur si grand et si divin.”

In his commentary on Genesis, Sacy explains how God produced from the Fall an even greater good than man’s original state of innocence:

Dieu a tiré du péché d’Adam, non seulement l’élévation singulière de la nature humaine au plus haut degré qu’elle pouvoit monter, mais encore un prodigieux rehaussement de sa propre gloire . . . quoy qu’il soit vray que Dieu estant l’Estre souverain, ne peut rien ajouter à sa grandeur qui est infinie, on peut dire néanmoins, que lors qu’il s’est abaissé si profondément pour sauver les hommes, il s’est relevé en quelque sorte au-dessus de lui-mesme: parce que sa puissance estant demeurée la mesme, sa bonité a paru ensuite sans compara raison plus grande.

In the whole story of man’s fall from grace, Sacy observes, there is nothing “qui ne conspire à la gloire du Créateur et à la confusion de la créature.”

This vision of the purpose of the Fall profoundly influences Sacy’s exegesis of the traditional analogy between Christ and Adam first set down by Saint Paul. Because the Fall and the Incarnation are but different sides of
the same mystery, one must constantly look for parallels between the life of Christ and "toutes les circonstances du péché du premier homme." Christ, the second Adam, became Incarnate "pour guérir les blessures profondes que la nature humaine a receuës dans la chute du premier." The life of Christ recapitulates specific details of the Fall in order to reverse their effects. Because Adam was tempted, "Jésus-Christ aussi a voulu l'estre."29

Sacy's juxtaposition of Adam's temptation and Christ's is the perfect illustration of his conception of the unity of the Old and New Testaments, of the Fall and the Incarnation. The three "flèches mortelles" with which Satan "a percé le coeur de nos premiers parents" prefigure the three ways in which the Devil would tempt Christ. Or rather, the three temptations of Christ recapitulate the three means by which human nature was corrupted and reverse their consequences in order to regenerate man's fallen nature.30

When he partook of the forbidden fruit, Adam subjected human nature to "la sensualité," or "la concupiscence de la chair." Satan, tempting Christ in the midst of his forty-day fast in the desert, challenged him to turn stones into bread, "ce qui auroit esté une faute d'intempérance." Adam and Eve succumbed to the sin of "la curiosité," or "la concupiscence des yeux," in believing Satan's promise that their eyes would be opened to discern good and evil. Christ was tempted in like manner when Satan, taking him to the pinnacle of the Temple, asked him to demonstrate his divinity by throwing himself to the ground: "ce qui auroit esté tenter Dieu par une curiosité criminelle." Satan caught Adam and Eve in a third snare, "la présomption," "lorsqu'il leur a persuadé qu'ils deviendraient semblables à Dieu." Christ was tempted by the same "piège de l'orgueil" when Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for falling down and worshiping him.31

Christ's manner of refuting Satan's temptations, Sacy observes, is "bien différente" from the actions of "nos premiers pères." Unlike Eve, "il ne raisonne point avec le démon . . . il ne luy parle point avec doute de la certitude des ordonnances de Dieu." Instead, Christ counters Satan "par l'épée de la parole de Dieu." All three of Christ's responses, Sacy observes, are citations drawn from Holy Scripture. "L'homme ne vit pas seulement de pain, mais de toute parole qui sort de la bouche de Dieu." "Vous ne tenterez point le Seigneur vostre Dieu." "Vous adorerez le Seigneur vostre Dieu et vous ne servirez que luy seul."32 By opposing Eve's attempt to "raisonner" with Satan to Christ's reliance on the Word of God, Sacy establishes a fundamental dichotomy between reason and Revelation. If man fell through attempting to rely on his reason, his salvation lies in accepting Revelation as recorded in Scripture.

In Sacy's view, it is not only the New Testament that is mysteriously part of the Incarnation. The Old Testament, even before the historical Incarna-
tion, had begun to restore man’s communication with God. The editors of the first edition of the Sacy Bible to be published separately from Sacy’s commentaries (1702) set this idea at the beginning of their Préface. They present a synthesis of Sacy’s conception of sacred history that particularly clarifies Pascal’s understanding of the origins of the Old Testament.

The Préface of 1702 opens by describing the whole universe as a “grand volume, dans lequel Dieu a imprimé tous les caractères de sa Divinité.” Likewise, the human heart is a book in which God has traced “les règles de sa conduite, par la lumière naturelle.” “La lumière naturelle,” however, no longer can serve as a means of knowing God. In fact, the contemplation of the universe “dissipe beaucoup plus notre esprit qu’elle ne l’éclaire.” “Si nous étendons nos vues sur tout ce monde visible, c’est bien moins pour nous élever jusqu’à son Auteur, que pour chercher dans quelques-unes des parties de cet Univers l’objet de nos désirs corrompus, de nos attaches criminelles, de nos passions dérégées.” Man’s inability to perceive God in nature is a direct result of the corruption of his natural reason in Adam’s sin:

Le péché [originel] a tellement brouillé ces divins caractères; il a repandu de si profondes ténèbres sur nos esprits; il a corrompu nos coeurs jusqu’à un tel point, que l’ignorance et la foiblessé sont devenues notre partage.\textsuperscript{33}

In order to “remédier” the “funestes effets” of Original Sin and to “dis-siper nos ténèbres les plus épaisses,” God did not choose to rehabilitate human reason directly. Instead, He made use of a process that the church has come to call Revelation:

Il nous a développé ses mystères les plus cachez. Il nous a expliqué ses volontez dans toute leur étendue. En un mot, il nous a fait présent d’un nouveau Livre, dans lequel nous pouvons, sans crainte d’être trompez, lire sans cesse les règles de notre conduite, tant par rapport à cet Auteur de notre être, que par rapport à nous-mêmes. . . . Le livre n’est rien autre chose que LA SAINTE BIBLE.\textsuperscript{34}

According to the Préface of 1702, the Fall resulted in the complete rupture of communications between God and man. “Dieu s’est éloigné de lui, et ne l’a plus honoré de sa conversation.” Yet man did not remain in complete ignorance of God right up until the time of the Incarnation. “Sa miséricorde ne l’a pas entièrement abandonné. S’il ne lui a plus parlé lui-même, il lui a fait parler par des hommes qu’il a inspiré, et dont il a conduit la langue et la plume.” In fact, God never stopped intervening in human history. Only with Moses’ writing of the Pentateuch, however, were these interventions—including the most important, God’s alliance with the Jews “en la personne d’Abraham”—set down for the instruction and illumination of subsequent generations.\textsuperscript{15}
This view of sacred history finds a significant parallel in Pascal’s description of the origins of the Old Testament in fragment 711/474. To prevent the story of the Fall from being forgotten by subsequent generations of mankind, God spoke through his servant Moses:

La création du monde commençant à s’éloigner, Dieu a pourvu d’un historien unique contemporain, et a commis tout un peuple pour la garde de ce livre, afin que cette histoire fût la plus authentique du monde et que tous les hommes puissent apprendre par là une chose si nécessaire à savoir, et qu’on ne pût la savoir que par là.

In this fragment, the “chose si nécessaire à savoir” to which Pascal refers is the Fall. Only the Bible, in Moses’ account of this event, provides an accurate and historically reliable exposition of its circumstances.

Both Pascal and Sacy view the whole of sacred history from the perspective of two central events. “Tout le sistème des Ecritures saintes,” concludes the Préface of 1702, “roule sur la chute d’Adam qui a rendu l’homme criminel et malheureux, et sur la venue du Messie qui l’a rétabli dans l’innocence.”

In his commentary on Genesis, Sacy did not fail to note the usefulness of such an argument. “Un des plus grands esprits de notre siècle,” he points out to his readers, used the Fall as the cornerstone of an Apology for Christianity. According to Sacy, Pascal’s argument is as follows:

Que de quelque obscurité que soit couvert le péché originel, ses effets néanmoins qui éclatent de toutes parts, luy rendent un témoignage si évident, que s’il est difficile de croire ce point de notre Religion, il paroist encore plus difficile de ne le pas croire . . . L’homme est plus incompréhensible sans ce mystère, que ce mystère n’est incompréhensible à l’homme.

When he identifies this doctrine as central to Pascal’s apologetic purposes, Sacy provides us with an important critical perspective. Sometimes, almost to the exclusion of all other Christian doctrines, the Fall seems to have preoccupied the theologians of Port-Royal. Pascal’s organization of his defense of the Christian religion did not fail to reflect this preoccupation.

**PARALLELS IN THE PENSEES: THE SPECIFICITY OF REVELATION AND THE PARADOX OF THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN**

In Sacy’s analysis, the doctrine of the Fall is a paradox. From the perspective of human philosophy, the doctrine is “obscure” and completely beyond the grasp of reason. Yet, once enunciated by Revelation, the same
doctrine clarifies what is most mysterious in the human condition. This same paradox is the touchstone of Pascal's Apology:

Pour moi, j'avoue qu'aussitôt que la religion chrétienne découvre ce principe: que la nature des hommes est corrompue et déchue de Dieu, cela ouvre les yeux à voir partout le caractère de cette vérité. Car la nature est telle, qu'elle marque partout un Dieu perdu, et dans l'homme, et hors de l'homme.

Et une nature corrompue. (708/471)

Every time Pascal presents the Fall as a transcendent doctrine beyond human understanding, he then proceeds to introduce the paradoxical idea that this same doctrine is the key to the human enigma. This paradox, in turn, takes its place within a larger system of paradoxes, a system that constitutes the core of what modern critics call Pascal's "dialectic":

Incompréhensible que Dieu soit, et incompréhensible qu'il ne soit pas; que l'âme soit avec le corps, que nous n'ayons point d'âme; que le monde soit créé, qu'il ne le soit pas; etc.; que le péché originel soit, et qu'il ne soit pas. (656/809)

The paradox of the Fall, in effect, serves as the model from which the three principal dialectical oppositions of the Pensées—"misère"/"grandeur," "l'homme sans Dieu"/"l'homme avec Dieu," and "figure"/"vérité"—take their inspiration and derive their force.

Pascal's exposition of the obscurity of the doctrine of the Fall takes the form of a series of variations on the same theme. One development stresses the doctrine's inherent irrationality. "Le péché originel est folie devant les hommes, mais on le donne pour tel. Vous ne me devez donc pas reprocher le défaut de raison en cette doctrine, puisque je la donne pour être sans raison" (574/695). One cannot expect man to be able to grasp this doctrine, "puisque c'est une chose contre se raison et que sa raison, bien loin de l'inventer par ses voies, s'en éloigne quand on le lui présente" (574/695). As does Sacy, Pascal insists that human reason, unaided by Revelation, would never be able to deduce—or, for that matter, to invent—the doctrine of Original Sin.

To explain reason's incapacity to perceive the Fall by relying upon its own forces, Pascal has recourse to an idea borrowed from Jansenius: the notion of man's "deux états." Because he is not in the state of his creation, man cannot perceive an event that took place prior to (and resulted in) the corruption of his reason. Man's ability to deduce the Fall would presuppose his ability to conceive of his original state of innocence. That too, however, escapes the powers of man's present rational faculties:

Nous ne concevons ni l'état glorieux d'Adam, ni la nature de son péché, ni la transmission qui s'en est faite en nous. Ce sont choses qui se sont passées dans l'état d'une nature toute différente de la nôtre et qui passent l'état de notre capacité présente. (683/431)
Elsewhere, Pascal insists upon the obscurity of the Fall from a somewhat different perspective. His emphasis is on God's design in hiding this truth from human reason:

Dieu, pour se réserver à soi seul le droit de nous instruire de nous-même, voulant nous rendre la difficulté de notre être inintelligible à nous-même, en a caché le noeud si haut ou pour mieux dire si bas, que nous étions bien incapables d'y arriver. De sorte que ce n'est pas par les superbes agitations de notre raison, mais par la simple soumission de la raison, que nous pouvons véritablement nous connaître. (164/131)

Reason, even in its most "superbes agitations," is incapable of deducing the cause of "la difficulté de notre être." Only "par la simple soumission de la raison" to Genesis' account of the origins of the human condition can man hope to understand those truths that God has hidden from reason.

Like Sacy, Pascal points out that the most unintelligible and difficult aspect of the doctrine of Original Sin is the notion that all men fell in Adam. "Le mystère le plus éloigné de notre connaissance . . . est celui de la transmission du péché":

Car il est sans doute qu'il n'y a rien qui choque plus notre raison que de dire que le péché du premier homme ait rendu coupables ceux qui, étant si éloignés de cette source, semblent incapables d'y participer. Cet écoulement ne nous paraît pas seulement impossible. Il nous semble même très injuste. Car qu'y a-t-il de plus contraire aux règles de notre misérable justice que de damner éternellement un enfant incapable de volonté pour un péché où il paraît avoir si peu de part, qu'il est commis six mille ans avant qu'il fût en être. Certainement rien ne nous heurte plus rudement que cette doctrine. (164/131)

It may seem odd that Pascal, in an apology whose stated aim is to "rendre la religion aimable," chooses to put such emphasis on the most difficult, and indeed most frightening, aspect of the doctrine of the Fall. Pascal is not, however, merely echoing the position of Port-Royal on the question of the culpability of unbaptized infants for the sake of doctrinal orthodoxy. He invokes the idea of the transmission of Original Sin with a particular apologetic objective in view. In chapter five I shall examine in detail the way in which Pascal puts the doctrine of the Fall in the service of apology. For the moment, it seems important not to neglect the extent to which the apologist is caught up in the defense of a neo-Augustinian interpretation of the doctrine of Original Sin, a defense that spills over from the *Ecrits sur la Grâce* and the *Provinciales* into the argument of the *Pensées*.

In order to appreciate the rigor with which Pascal adheres to a neo-Augustinian interpretation of the Fall in the fragment we have just examined (164/131), we may do well to recall the position of Pascal's adversaries. The theologians of Port-Royal accused the Jesuits of having revived the
Pelagian heresy by teaching that men are born with sufficient grace to work out their own salvation. Pascal’s response, in the Ecris sur la Grâce, clearly sets forth the position taken by Port-Royal:

Ce péché ayant passé d’Adam à toute sa postérité, qui fut corrompu en lui comme un fruit sortant d’une mauvaise semence, tous les hommes sortis d’Adam naissent dans l’ignorance, dans la concupiscence, coupables du péché d’Adam et dignes de la mort éternelle.  

Pascal draws a sharp distinction between an orthodox view of the Fall and that of the Calvinists, who teach that “le péché d’Adam s’est communiqué à toute sa postérité, non pas naturellement, comme le vice d’une semence au fruit qu’elle produit, mais par un décret de Dieu.” In order to affirm what Philippe Sellier calls “la solidarité organique d’Adam et ses descendants,” Pascal borrows from Saint Augustine not only the image of “un fruit sortant d’une mauvaise semence” but as well, like Sacy, the image of “la contagion.” Pascal’s emphasis on the hereditary nature of the transmission of Original Sin underscores his defense of the Fall as a historical event. All men are guilty of Adam’s sin because all are his biological descendents.

Pascal’s view of the practical consequences of the Fall places him on the side of what Sellier describes as “l’anti-humanisme augustinien.” Shortly before Pascal began writing his Apology, the Pelagian theses on the salvation of the “anciens justes” had begun to reappear. La Mothe Le Vayer, in his De la vertu des païens (1641), had made use of the theology of the Jesuits to argue that Socrates and Aristotle had worked out their own salvation. Pascal’s position stands in direct contradiction to the humanism of his time. Outside the church, he writes in a letter to Charlotte de Roannez, “il n’y a que malédiction.” Prior to Christ’s Incarnation, he concludes in fragment 332/301, “tous les peuples étaient dans l’infidélité et dans la concupiscence.” The virtue of the pagans, when analysed from the standpoint of Christian theology, can be shown to be but a deception:

Un bâtiment également beau par dehors, mais sur un mauvais fondement, les païens sages le bâtissaient. Et le diable trompe les hommes par cette ressemblance apparente, fondée sur le fondement le plus différent.”

Pascal’s analysis of the “anciens justes” throws into relief the literalistic character of neo-Augustinian theology. His emphasis is on the specificity of the Christian Revelation. The “païens sages,” though they achieved a kind of virtue, were incapable of achieving that specific virtue which alone leads to salvation. The former is of human origin, the latter can be obtained only through the merits of Christ’s death. Pascal’s analysis recalls Sacy’s judgment on the pagan philosophers’ perception of the Fall: “Ils ont inventé un péché originel, n’ayant pas pu découvrir le véritable.”  

Though
they were able to deduce from expérience the fact of man's fall from a better state, their conclusion was of no use whatsoever in advancing their salvation. The Fall deduced by the pagan philosophers was not "le véritable," the one revealed in Genesis and bound up with the mystery of the Redemption. Like the virtue of the "païens sages," it is built on a "mauvais fondement" and falls totally outside Revelation.47

Pascal's rigorous adherence to a neo-Augustinian view of the Fall has profound consequences with regard to the kind of apology he writes. The corruption of human reason is permanent and irreparable. In the words of the Bible de Royaumont, the Fall "aura jusqu'à la fin du monde [ses] si effroyables suites."48 The Incarnation, though it reversed the Fall by taking human flesh into the Godhead, did not rehabilitate human reason. Therefore, since human reason is irreparably impaired, apology cannot make use of metaphysical proofs:

Les preuves de Dieu métaphysiques sont si éloignées du raisonnement des hommes et si impliquées, qu'elles frappent peu. Et quand cela servirait à quelques-uns, cela ne servirait que pendant l'instant qu'ils voient cette démonstration. Mais une heure après, ils craignent de s'être trompés. (222/190)

Pascal notes that he has considered the usefulness of those apologies that seek to prove "la divinité par les ouvrages de la nature." Such proofs, when addressed to "personnes destituées de foi et de grâce," are supposed to rekindle in their minds the idea of a Supreme Being. Yet, Pascal observes, such apologies rarely have their intended effect. Those unbelievers who are asked to ponder the course of the moon and of the planets in the hope of finding God, "ne trouvent qu'obscurité et ténèbres." Metaphysical proofs of God's existence, Pascal concludes, have the worst possible effect on those to whom they are addressed. "Rien n'est plus propre à leur en faire naître le mépris" (644/781).

Why are proofs drawn from nature of so little use? Had not Saint-Cyran taught that nature is the very image of Grace? The great majority of Christian apologists in the seventeenth century made use of metaphysical proofs drawn from scholastic philosophy. To understand why Pascal rules out the use of such proofs, it is useful to recall the opening of the Préface to the 1702 edition of the Sacy Bible. Though the universe is indeed "un grand volume dans lequel Dieu a imprimé tous les caractères de sa Divinité," the Fall has "tellement brouillé ces divins caractères" and "répandu de si profondes ténèbres sur nos esprits," that "la lumière naturelle" is no longer an avenue to knowledge of God.49 Such is exactly the position of Pascal. In fact, he goes so far as to argue that it is Christianity's very rejection of "la raison naturelle" in favor of a radical reliance on Revelation that distinguishes it from all other religions:
Toutes les religions et les sectes du monde ont eu la raison naturelle pour guide. Les seuls chrétiens ont été astreints à prendre leurs règles hors d'euxmêmes, et à s'informer de celles que Jésus-Christ a laissées aux anciens pour être transmises aux fidèles. (634/769)

Pascal warns that proofs drawn from scholastic reasoning might lead the unbeliever to “le déisme.” Those who do not really understand Christianity might imagine that deism—“l'adoration d'un Dieu considéré comme grand, puissant et éternel”—is a step in the direction of Christianity. But such is not the case. “Le déisme . . . [est] presque aussi éloigné de la religion chrétienne que l'athéisme.” “[Ce] sont deux choses que la religion chrétienne abhorrë presque également” (690/449).

Once again, we encounter the literalism of Pascal’s neo-Augustinian theology. Revelation, like the Incarnation, limits itself to specific and concrete manifestations. Analogies arrived at by purely human reason are ultimately devoid of meaning. The virtue of the “païens sages” and their deduction of man’s fall from a better state must not be taken to bear any real relationship to that unique virtue merited by Christ’s sacrifice or to the Fall as recounted by Genesis. Likewise, there exists an unbridgeable gulf between the god of the deists and the God revealed in Christ.

Those who confound deism and Christianity think that they have discredited the Christian God when they have but proved the impossibility of the god of the deists. “Ils concluent que cette religion n'est pas véritable, parce qu'ils ne voient pas que toutes choses concourent à l'établissement de ce point, que Dieu ne se manifeste pas aux hommes avec tout l'évidence qu'il pourrait faire” (690/449). The god of the deists must necessarily manifest himself in the universe. The God of the Christians, by contrast, has chosen to hide Himself in the Incarnation, in Scripture, and in Revelation. The opponents of Christianity, when they discredit the god of the deists by documenting his apparent absence in the universe, only confirm what Christianity already teaches.

The doctrine of the Fall accounts for God’s apparent absence in the universe. Man’s corrupted reason, it tells us, prevents him from perceiving God in nature. The hidden character of the Christian Revelation invalidates the anti-deist argument as an argument against Christianity:

Qu'ils en concluent ce qu'ils voudront contre le déisme, ils n'en concluront rien contre la religion chrétienne, qui consiste proprement au mystère du Rédempteur, qui unissant en lui les deux natures, humaine et divine, a retiré les hommes de la corruption et du péché pour les réconcilier à Dieu en sa personne divine.” (690/449)

Pascal’s limitation of man’s knowledge of God to what is contained in Revelation profoundly affects the scope of his projected Apology.
ies like the Fall and the Incarnation are beyond the grasp of man's fallen reason. Therefore, he explains, it has been necessary to rule out metaphysical proofs either of God's existence or of particular Christian doctrines:

C'est pourquoi je n'entreprendrai pas ici de prouver par les raisons naturelles, ou l'existence de Dieu, ou la Trinité, ou l'immortalité de l'âme, ni aucune des choses de cette nature; non seulement parce qu je ne me sentirais pas assez fort pour trouver dans la nature de quoi convaincre des athées endurcis, mais encore parce que cette connaissance sans Jésus-Christ est inutile et stérile. Quand un homme serait persuadé que les proportions des nombres sont des vérités immatérielles, éternelles et dépendantes d'une première vérité en qui elles subsistent et qu'on appelle Dieu, je ne le trouverais pas beaucoup avancé pour son salut. (690/449)

In discarding the use of metaphysical proofs, Pascal observes that the Bible, the very source of Revelation, never once makes use of ontological or metaphysical arguments. "C'est une chose admirable que jamais auteur canonique ne s'est servi de la nature pour prouver Dieu" (702/463). A document addressed to fallen humanity, Scripture takes into account the corruption of man's reason. It presents something more accessible to man's intellect than metaphysical proofs: the intervention of God in history. "Le Dieu des chrétiens ne consiste pas en un Dieu simplement auteur des vérités géométriques et de l'ordre des éléments." Rather, He is the God who has visibly intervened in human history: "le Dieu d'Abraham, le Dieu d'Isaac, le Dieu de Jacob" (690/449).

"L'ORDRE DU MONDE": THE FALL TRANSLATED INTO THE LANGUAGE OF EXPERIENCE

Before proceeding to a historical proof of Christianity, Pascal's apologetic itinerary calls for what amounts to a radical departure from traditional Christian apologetics. Revelation, though beyond the grasp of reason, will be shown to bear a direct and demonstrable relationship to the whole of human experience. The doctrine of the Fall will be shown to afford the unique answer to an enigma upon which reason and philosophy, and indeed the net experience of the human race, have been unable to cast any light.

Pascal's demonstration derives its force from the idea that the Fall is a paradox. While totally escaping rational analysis, this doctrine at the same time illuminates what is most enigmatic in the human condition. Though "folie devant les hommes" and "une chose contre [la] raison," the doctrine of Original Sin nevertheless surpasses "toute la sagesse des hommes." Without it, it is impossible even to define man. "Sans cela que dire-t-on qu'est l'homme? Tout son état dépend de ce point imperceptible" (574/695). "Sans ce mystère le plus incompréhensible de tous nous sommes in-
compréhensibles à nous-mêmes. Le noed de notre condition prend ses replis et ses tours dans cet abîme" (164/131).

In fragment 690/449, having just established the Fall and the Incarnation as the core of Christian theology, Pascal suggests “qu'on examine l'ordre du monde sur cela, et qu'on voie si toutes choses ne tendent pas à l'établissement des deux chefs de notre religion” (italics mine). What does Pascal have in mind when he suggests that “l'ordre du monde” will provide confirmation of the doctrine of the Fall? Does he plan to use an argument like the one we have already seen Sacy use? Does he intend to explain that the hereditary transmission of physical illnesses renders the transmission of Original Sin more credible?  

Evidence exterior to the Pensées suggests that Pascal did consider such a tactic. Filleau de la Chaise, in his Discours sur les Pensées, presents Pascal as attaching particular importance to the way in which the Bible “faisait voir clair dans l'ordre du monde” (italics mine). According to Filleau, Pascal proposed to a group of friends that he intended to demonstrate that Genesis' account of the Fall “démêl[ait] ces questions impénétrables qui ont tant tourmenté les plus grands esprits du paganisme”:

Pourquoi, par exemple, cette étrange diversité entre les hommes, qui sont tous de même nature? Comment la chose du monde la plus simple, qui est l'âme, ou la pensée, peut-elle se trouver si diversifiée? . . . Si l'âme passe des pères aux enfants, comme les philosophes le croyaient, d'où peut encore venir cette diversité? Pourquoi un habile homme en produit-il un sans esprit? Comment un scélérat peut-il venir d'un honnête homme? Comment les enfants d'un même père peuvent-ils naître avec des inclinations différentes?

"Toutes ces difficultés," Pascal would have pointed out to his adversary, "ne cessent-elles pas par cette chute de la nature de l'homme, que ce livre [la Genèse] dit être tombé de son premier état?"  

The irregularities in human heredity, Filleau presents Pascal as arguing, are “des suites nécessaires de l'assujettissement de l'âme au corps . . . qui la fait dépendre de la naissance, du pays, du tempérament, de l'éducation, de la coutume et d'une infinité de choses de cette nature, qui n'y devraient faire aucune impression."  

In other words, the Fall subjected man to "cette étrange diversité" that has been the great stumbling block in philosophy's attempt to explain the origins of human nature. From the same historical event results "cette confusion qu'on voit dans le monde, qui a fait douter à tant de philosophes qu'il y eût une providence":

Pourquoi les méchants réussissent-ils presque toujours, et pourquoi ceux qui semblent justes sont-ils misérables et accablés? Pourquoi ce mélange monstreux de pauvres et de riches, de sains et de malades, de tyrans et d'opprimés? Qu'ont fait ceux-là pour naître heureux, et avoir tout à souhait; ou par où
ceux-ci ont-ils mérité de ne venir au monde que pour souffrir? Pourquoi Dieu a-t-il permis qu'il y eût tant d'erreurs, tant d'opinions, de moeurs, de coutumes, de religions différentes?

Filleau reports that Pascal went on to show that Scripture explains the origins of an enigma that human philosophy has been unable to resolve. "Tout cela est encore éclairci par un petit nombre de principes qui se trouvent dans ce livre: . . . que ce n'est pas ici le lieu où Dieu veut que se fasse le discernement des bons et des méchants . . . que ce n'est pas ici non plus le lieu de récompense; que ce jour viendra; que cependant Dieu veut que les choses demeurent dans l'obscurité; qu'il a laissé marcher les hommes dans leurs voies; qu'il les laisse courir après les désirs de leur coeur."

Filleau's Discours provides us with a valuable perspective on the apologetic method of the Pensées. Those particular arguments concerning the Fall's clarification of the mystery of human diversity do not appear in the Pensées at all. Pascal would seem to have laid them aside as too specific for use in illustrating how "l'ordre du monde" reflects the consequences of the Fall. Instead, Pascal adopts a more global approach.

In fragment 181/148, Pascal attempts to embrace the whole of human experience. His emphasis is not on the inexplicable diversity of human experience, but rather on the one goal that all men hold in common:

Tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux. Cela est sans exception, quelques différents moyens qu'ils y emploient. Ils tendent tous à ce but. Ce qui fait que les uns vont à la guerre et que les autres n'y vont pas est ce même désir qui est dans tous les deux, accompagné de différentes vues. La volonté [ne] fait jamais la moindre démarche que vers cet objet. C'est le motif de toutes les actions de tous les hommes. Jusqu'à ceux qui vont se pendre.

Et cependant depuis un si grand nombre d'années jamais personne, sans la foi, n'est arrivé à ce point où tous visent continuellement. Tous se plaignent, princes, sujets, nobles, roturiers, vieux, jeunes, forts, faibles, savants, ignorants, sains, malades, de tous pays, de tous les temps, de tous âges et de toutes conditions.

The collective experience of the whole of human history, Pascal observes, "une épreuve si longue, si continuelle et si uniforme," should have served to convince us of "notre impuissance d'arriver au bien par nos efforts." "Mais l'exemple nous instruit peu:"

Il n'est jamais si parfaitement semblable qu'il n'y ait quelque délicate différence, et c'est de là que nous attendons que notre attente ne sera pas déçue en cette occasion comme en l'autre. Et ainsi, le présent ne nous satisfaisant jamais, l'expérience nous pipe, et de malheur en malheur nous conduit jusqu'à la mort qui en est un comble éternel. (181/148)

This paradigm of the human condition serves to demonstrate that man's present state could not possibly be the state in which he has always been.
Man's search for the "souverain bien" is the clue to the enigma of the human situation, the most telling symptom of his fallen state:

Qu'est-ce donc que nous crie cette avidité et cette impuissance, sinon qu'il y a eu autrefois dans l'homme un véritable bonheur, dont il ne lui reste maintenant que la marque et la trace toute vide, et qu'il essaie inutilement de remplir de tout ce qui l'environne, recherchant des choses absentes le secours qu'il n'obtient pas des présentes, mais qui en sont toute incapables, parce que ce gouffre infini ne peut être rempli que par un objet infini et immuable, c'est-à-dire que par Dieu même. Lui seul est son véritable bien. Et depuis qu'il l'a quitté, c'est une chose étrange qu'il n'y a rien dans la nature qui n'ait été capable de lui en tenir la place: astres, ciel, terre, éléments, plantes, choux, poireaux, animaux, insectes, veaux, serpents, fièvre, peste, guerre, famine, vices, adulte, inceste. Et depuis qu'il a perdu le vrai bien, tout également peut lui paraître tel, jusqu'à sa destruction propre, quoique si contraire à Dieu, à la raison et à la nature tout ensemble. (181/148; italics mine)

Pascal's argument is not entirely of his own invention. Presenting the same analysis of man's present state in the "Lettre sur la mort de son père," (1651), Pascal says he draws upon the observations of "deux très grands et très saints personnages." 56 Philippe Sellier identifies Pascal's sources, perhaps not to our surprise, as Jansenius and Saint Augustine, indicating in particular the opening of the Confessions. 57 On the other hand, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the role of Pascal's sources and fail to recognize his originality in this passage. The apologist has taken a traditional motif of Christian polemics—that the impulse to find a lost God is at the root of all human activity—and turned it to his own purposes by giving it a more global expression.

In order to illustrate the way in which "l'ordre du monde" reflects man's fallen condition, Pascal seeks to avoid citing any example that might be objected to as in any way less than universally valid. He therefore borrows from the philosophes their conclusion that the absolute common denominator of the human condition is man's search for "le souverain bien." His emphasis is on the universal validity of this principle. All men search for the "souverain bien," "sans exception." "La volonté ne fait jamais la moindre démarche que vers cet objet." "Personne, sans la foi, n'est arrivé à ce point où tous visent continuellement" (181/148).

Pascal's example seeks to embrace—vertically and horizontally—the whole of human experience. From the perspective of history, mankind's whole collective experience—"une épreuve si longue, si continue, et si uniforme"—testifies to man's failure in his quest for happiness. To reinforce the idea that this failure is common to all sorts and conditions of men, Pascal makes use of a sociological dénombrement: "princes, sujets ..., de toutes conditions." His use of enumeration to render his illustration global in its application recurs with particular effect in an exposition of the
fact that “rien dans la nature” has been able to fill the void of God’s absence in man’s heart:

Et depuis qu’il l’a quitté, c’est une chose étrange qu’il n’y a rien dans la nature qui n’ait été capable de lui en tenir la place: astres, ciel, terre, éléments, plantes, choux, poireaux, animaux, insectes, veaux, serpents, fièvre, peste, guerre, famine, vices, adultère, inceste. (181/148)

This second dénombrement is, in part, a survey of all the traditional categories of created things: “astres,” “ciel,” “terre,” “plantes,” “animaux.” “Eléments” falls under the category of “terre,” “choux” and “poireaux” under “plantes,” and “insectes, veaux, serpents” under “animaux.” To these categories of naturally created things, Pascal then adds those phenomena that have invaded nature since the Fall (“peste, guerre, famine”) and concludes his dénombrement of “rien dans la nature” by picturing man as seeking “le souverain bien” even in his own “vices,” of which “adultère” and “inceste” serve as specific examples. His argument is reinforced with an example that represents the furthermost extreme of man’s search for happiness, “sa destruction propre” (181/148)

Such a straightforward analysis of this passage, however, does not take into account what Jean Mesnard calls “une ironie très apparente.” Not all Pascal’s examples strike with the same effect. “Guerre” reiterates an idea proposed earlier in the passage: “Ce qui fait que les uns vont à la guerre et que les autres n’y vont pas est ce même désir [d’être heureux] qui est dans tous les deux, accompagné de différentes vues” (181/148). Likewise, the idea that man seeks a lost God not only in all of created nature but even in “vices” such as adultery finds its place immediately within the rational framework of Pascal’s argument. On the other hand, is there not something unusual in the notion that man seeks his lost Creator in “insectes, veaux, serpents,” in “choux” and in “poireaux”?

“Veaux” is probably an allusion to the Golden Calf of Exodus 32. “Serpents” perhaps recalls the ancien serpent who tempted Eve, or perhaps the “fiery serpents” of Numbers 21. And one might take “poireaux” and “choux” to be emblems of ordinary human activity, as representing man’s search for God in the cultivation of his everyday garden. It seems important, however, not to overlook the function of these examples on a purely rhetorical level. Pascal cites “choux,” “poireaux,” “serpents,” and “insectes” to achieve a particular effect. Because they are slightly nonsensical, these examples serve to make the point that in the whole of the created universe there exists not even the most minor exception to the principle of man’s search for the “souverain bien” or to the conclusion that man has not been able to find what he lost at the Fall in even the most particular of created things.

Pascal’s choice of examples such as “choux” and “serpents” has a definite
ironic function. To search for God in any created thing, he implies, is as foolish as to search for happiness in a cabbage or a snake. Fragment 181/148 is of obvious scriptural inspiration and reflects Pascal's constant meditation on the early apostolic preaching recorded in the Pauline Epistles. The folly of searching for God in created things was a favorite theme of Saint Paul, as it would be for Saint Augustine, Jansenius, and the theologians of Port-Royal.

While bearing in mind the close parallel between Pascal's exposition of how "l'ordre du monde" reflects man's search for paradise lost and Sacy's observation that the doctrine of the Fall "éclaircit ce qu'il y a de plus inexplicable" in the human condition, we should attempt to place fragment 181/148 in the larger context of Pascal's apologetic strategy. By showing that the doctrine of the Fall bears a direct and demonstrable relationship to the most fundamental common denominator of human experience, Pascal seeks to persuade his interlocutor to consider the whole of Revelation. The Fall is a doctrine anchored in historical fact. So too, Pascal will attempt to demonstrate, is the rest of Revelation.

THE ABSENCE OF A SCRIPTURAL EXPOSITION OF THE FALL IN PASCAL'S ARGUMENT

In chapter five, I shall trace Pascal's use of the Fall to effect a transition from experience to Revelation. In chapter six, I shall examine his proofs of the historicity of Revelation. First, however, a problem remains to be considered. Given the centrality of the Fall not only to Pascal's argument but to his very definition of Christianity (681/427; 313/281; 258/226; 690/449), it seems striking that nowhere in the text of the Pensées is to be found an exegesis of chapter three of Genesis. In the extensive catalogue of biblical citations that figure in the Pensées, there is not to be found a single citation that seems to anticipate an exposition of the Fall in explicitly biblical terms.

Considering the importance of the doctrine that such missing citations would have served to document, this lacuna warrants our consideration.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to show that Pascal's interpretation of the Fall cannot be viewed as other than literal and historical. Making use of the Écrits sur la Grâce, I have pointed out the obvious implications of Pascal's insistence on Adam's fatherhood of the entire human race. Sacy's understanding of the specificity of Revelation has thrown into relief an equally stringent view on the part of Pascal with regard to the concrete and historical forms that, he argues, Revelation always takes. In effect, I have argued that Pascal's arguments everywhere and always presuppose a historical Fall.

The whole force of Pascal's proof of the authenticity of the Pentateuch points to the importance he attaches to the Fall as a historical event. More-
over, evidence external to the *Pensées* indicates that Pascal intended to make use of the very scriptural exposition of the Fall that does not figure in his notes for the *Apology*. Etienne Périer, in his *Préface* to the Edition de Port-Royal (1670), and Filleau de la Chaise, in his *Discours*, present Pascal as directing his *libertin* to Genesis in order to find the solution to the enigma of the human condition.\(^{63}\)

Why does Pascal never present an exegesis of Genesis 3 in the course of an argument built around the doctrine of the Fall? Might we conjecture that Pascal simply assumed his reader's acquaintance with Genesis 3 and never thought it necessary to present the Fall in explicitly scriptural terms? If so, Pascal's failure to document a doctrine of capital importance in his argument would seem totally at odds with his usual practice of documenting every other facet of Christian doctrine with citations drawn from the Bible. Once the Bible had been shown to be historically credible, an exegesis of Genesis 3 could have served as Pascal's ultimate proof of the doctrine of the Fall.

This consideration brings us to a second possibility. Is not the logical place for a scriptural exposition of the Fall *after* a historical proof of the credibility of Revelation? This part of Pascal's projected *Apology* is after all the most unfinished, at times consisting only of lists of biblical citations. Perhaps Pascal, interrupted in his work by devastating illness, simply never had time to develop what in fact amounted to an essential aspect of his argument. This idea has merit. Critics rarely accord enough importance to the fact that the *Pensées* represents an *Apology* interrupted not only in the course of its organization but in the course of its writing.

The only problem with this second hypothesis is that from what we can judge from the text itself (i.e., from the arrangement and contents of the 28 *liasses*), Pascal did not anticipate any extensive treatment of the Fall subsequent to his historical proofs. To the contrary, the Fall is assigned a major thematic role in those sections that precede the historical proofs. It figures, in fact, in the most finished sections of the *Pensées*. Its very purpose is to provide a means of convincing the *libertin* to take a closer, and perhaps more sympathetic, look at the whole of Revelation.

The absence of a scriptural exposition of the Fall in those sections of the *Apology* that precede the historical proofs is undoubtedly bound up with Pascal's apologetic method. In chapter five, I shall argue that Pascal refrains from citing the authority of Revelation until he has proved its historical credibility. I shall make a critical distinction between the perspective of the *libertin* and that of Pascal himself. From the point of view of the apologist, the Fall is a doctrine grounded in indisputable historical fact. As far as the *libertin* is concerned, however, it remains no more than a plausible theory. For the *libertin*, the potential credibility of the Fall resides not in its
status as a scriptural doctrine but rather in its apparent empirical confirmation by “l'ordre du monde.”

In developing the idea that the Fall is a paradox, Pascal clarifies the direction of his apologetic method. Analyzing man’s “deux états,” he draws a conclusion concerning the Fall’s ability to illumine human nature that is quite different from that of fragment 181/148. Man, because of the corruption of his natural reason, is able to conceive “ni l'état glorieux d'Adam, ni la nature de son péché.” Yet even if human reason could comprehend these mysteries, the course of man's salvation would not be significantly advanced. “Tout cela nous serait inutile à savoir pour en sortir.” (683/431)

Though only the doctrine of the Fall can make sense of human nature, Pascal insists, such a demonstration is not the ultimate end of his Apology. “Ce qu’il nous importe de connaître est que nous sommes misérables, corrompus, séparés de Dieu, mais rachetés par Jésus-Christ.” Explaining the doctrine of the Fall in either scriptural or theological terms would have little chance of leading the nonbeliever to such a recognition. Therefore, the doctrine of the Fall is to be presented in terms of human experience, in terms with which Pascal's interlocutor can personally identify. “Et c'est de quoi nous avons des preuves admirables sur la terre” (683/431).

The entire first half of Pascal's Apology grows out of the idea that the Fall has left a visible imprint on nature, on man, on man's perception of the universe, and on man's perception of himself. “Misère”/“grandeur,” the principal dialectical thread running through the first twelve/eleven dossiers of the Pensées, represents Pascal's attempt to translate the doctrine of the Fall into the language of human experience.

“Misère”/“grandeur” is a commonplace in neo-Augustinian theology. The Bible de Royaumont makes Adam and Eve the first model of this emblem of man’s fallen condition:

Ils voyoient partout des traces sanglantes de leur péché. Ils se souvenoient des biens ineffables qu'ils avoient goûtez . . . et ressentant les maux qu'ils s'étoient attirés eux-mêmes, cette triste comparaison qu'ils pourvoient faire infiniment mieux que nous par l'expérience et la lumière qui ne peut tomber dans aucun des hommes, les abîma dans une profonde douleur.64

Pascal has taken this theological commonplace and transformed it into the cornerstone of his Apology. By universalizing Adam's predicament [“Félicité de l'homme avec Dieu”/“Misère de l'homme sans Dieu” (40/6)], he turns the doctrine of the Fall to the uses of apoloogy.

1. See Marie-Louise Hubert, Pascal's Unfinished Apology: chapter 1, for an overview of these various editions.
2. Les Pensées de Pascal, p. 140.
3. La Genèse, Préface, Seconde Partie, partie ii.
4. La Genèse, p. 234 (italics mine).
6. “Car comme le péché est entré dans le monde par un seul homme, et la mort par le péché; ainsi la mort est passée dans tous les hommes par ce seul homme en qui tous ont péché” (Sacy's translation).
7. La Genèse, pp. 233–34.
10. La Genèse, p. 247.
11. La Genèse, p. 247.
13. La Genèse, pp. 248–49.
15. La Genèse, pp. 250–52.
16. La Genèse, Préface, Seconde Partie, partie ii.
17. La Genèse, pp. 108–9. Philo (54 B.C.), attempting to render the Old Testament acceptable to the Greek mentality of Alexandrian Jews, had formulated what would be known in the middle ages as “anagogical” exegesis. Long before him, the Greek philosophers, shocked by the morality of the Homeric epics, had allegorized the Iliad and the Odyssey in order to make the gods symbolize forces of nature or aspects of the soul. Philo, borrowing their method, turned all the characters of Genesis into symbols of vices or virtues.
18. La Genèse, p. 89.
22. La Genèse, p. 252.
25. Lettres chrestiennes, 2:331.
26. La Genèse, p. 196 (italics mine).
27. La Genèse, p. 168.
29. La Genèse, p. 173.
33. La Sainte Bible . . . traduite en françois . . . avec de courtes notes tirées des Saints Pères, Préface, p. i.
34. La Sainte Bible, Préface, p. i.
35. La Sainte Bible, Préface, p. xxviii.
36. La Sainte Bible, Préface, p. xxviii.
39. Cf. the title of *liasse* XVIII/XVII, "Rendre la religion aimable."
40. Lafuma, p. 317.
41. Lafuma, p. 319 (italics mine).
43. In the *Comparaison des chrétiens des premiers temps avec ceux d'aujourd'hui* (Lafuma, p. 361), Pascal explains that the modern church practices infant baptism in order to deliver unbaptized enfants from "la contagion du monde." Cf., Sacy, *La Genèse*, p. 248, for a discussion of "la contagion."
44. *Pascal et Saint Augustin*, p. 262.
45. Lafuma, p. 267.
46. *La Genèse*, Préface, Seconde Partie, partie ii.
47. Pascal devotes an entire *liasse*, "Fondements" (XIX/XVIII), to developing the idea of the specificity of Revelation.
49. *La Sainte Bible*, Préface, p. i.
50. Cf. 1 Corinthians, 1:25: "... Ce qui paraît en Dieu une folie, est plus sage que la sagesse de tous les hommes" (Sacy's translation).
51. Sacy's argument in *La Genèse*, (pp. 247–50).
52. Brunschvicg, 12:ccxii. *Discours sur les pensées de M. Pascal où l'on essaie de faire voir quel était son dessein*.
53. Brunschvicg, 12:ccxii. Cf. fragment 159/126: "La coutume est une seconde nature qui détruit la première. Mais qu'est-ce que nature? Pourquoi la coutume n'est-elle pas naturelle? J'ai grand peur que cette nature ne soit elle-même qu'une première coutume, comme la coutume est une seconde nature."
54. Brunschvicg, 12:ccxiii.
56. Lafuma, p. 277.
57. *Pensées*, p. 104 n. 4. "Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te" (*Confessions* 1. i). Sellier observes that "Et depuis qu'il a perdu ... à la nature tout ensemble" is a "lieu commun de la polémique chrétienne," a traditional theme that runs from Tertullian right up through the seventeenth century (p. 104 n. 5).
59. The use of "choux" to represent ordinary human activity has at least one literary predecent in Rabelais's account of the world discovered in Pantagruel's mouth (bk. 2, chap. 32).
62. See Sellier's "Index des Citations Bibliques de l'Oeuvre Pascalienne" in his *Pascal et la Liturgie*, p. 118. Two minor fragments, neither found in the two *Copies* nor destined for the *Apology*, cite Genesis 2 and 3. Fr. 795/959, written for the *Ecrits sur la Grâce*, records "In quacumque die" (Genesis 2:17): "for in what day soever thou shalt eat of [the tree of knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt die" (Douay). Fr. 751/919, part of the *Mystère de Jésus*, cites Genesis 3:5: "Eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum," the serpent's promise to Eve. Neither of these citations can be taken as envisaging any major exposition of the Fall as a scriptural doctrine.
63. Lafuma, pp. 495–96; Brunschvicg, 12:ccviii–ccix.