
 Brothers and Sisters, Place Your Bets

PASCAL'S WAGER ON THE MORMON ROULETTE WHEEL

by Karl Sandberg

TALK ABOUT THINGS WE TAKE SERIOUSLY MAY GO on more happily if we have a metaphor to help us extend and organize our thought and to provide an arena within which to explore it. At a time when searching attention to the foundations of the Mormon venture has produced a richness of tension, talk about the nature of religious faith in a contemporary Mormon setting may gain depth and insight by a reading and a pondering of the thought of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) in its 17th century context,¹ and in particular his metaphor of the wager of faith.

When Blaise Pascal died in Paris in 1662, he was known among his contemporaries as one of the pre-eminent mathematicians of Europe, as a man of science renowned for his experiments on the void, and as a public benefactor who organized one of the first public transportation systems in Paris. He was known among his Jansenist friends as the author of a classic study of religious controversy, *Les Lettres Provinciales*, which was published anonymously in 1656-1657. But he has been best remembered for an unfinished work of Christian apologetics which he intended as a dialogue with the emerging secular culture. The measure of his success in this endeavor is seen in the fact that he has remained contemporary with each succeeding generation and has drawn the attention and reaction, both favorable and critical, of such diverse thinkers as Voltaire, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, William James, and Camus, and is studied extensively in the East as well as in the West.

What is known as "Pascal's Wager" is one note among the 27 bundles of notes, some long and some cryptic, intended for his *magnum opus* and which have since been published simply as *Les Pensées* or *The Thoughts*. To understand the wager we must see it in relation to Pascal's intended work, and in turn we have to see his intended work in light of the paradox of a sectarian faith and

a universalist mind.

To be sectarian is to be convinced that one has entered into the possession of an exclusive and all-encompassing truth. While the word is most often associated with religions, it has its secular dimensions. The thoughts of Chairman Mao are replete with the sayings of a sectarian. And a few months before his purge in 1936, Nikolai Bukharin stated that although he recognized Stalin to be a common criminal, he would not oppose him because maintaining the authority of the party was worth even the sacrifice of his life, which moreover had no meaning outside the Party.² And let us also note that even though the word "sectarian" often carries the unfavorable connotation of narrowness and fanaticism, only the faith of a sectarian has the power to move mountains or keep people on a Long March.

Pascal's faith was sectarian. He was a believer from birth. Born into a devout Catholic home and educated personally by his father, he grew up in the austere but spiritually rich atmosphere of the reform movement within the Catholic Church known as Jansenism. He developed close personal and intellectual ties with the Jansenist religious community of Port Royal. During his early adulthood he had a first conversion which served to confirm in him the teachings and attitudes of his early education.

At the same time his mind was universalist, constantly probing or over-reaching itself and thereby quickly passing into territory unmapped by sectarian doctrine. As he became known as a mathematician and scientist, he began to frequent the salons which were the intellectual centers of the period. Here he encountered the secular world in the person of newly-found friends who were refined, courteous, thinking people with all of the personal and social graces and with no sympathy at all for the idea of a divine revelation. They shared no common ground with those of the many parties who filled the bookstores with the works of religious controversy. Personality begins at birth, they believed, and ends at death. The true life is here, not elsewhere, since this life is the only

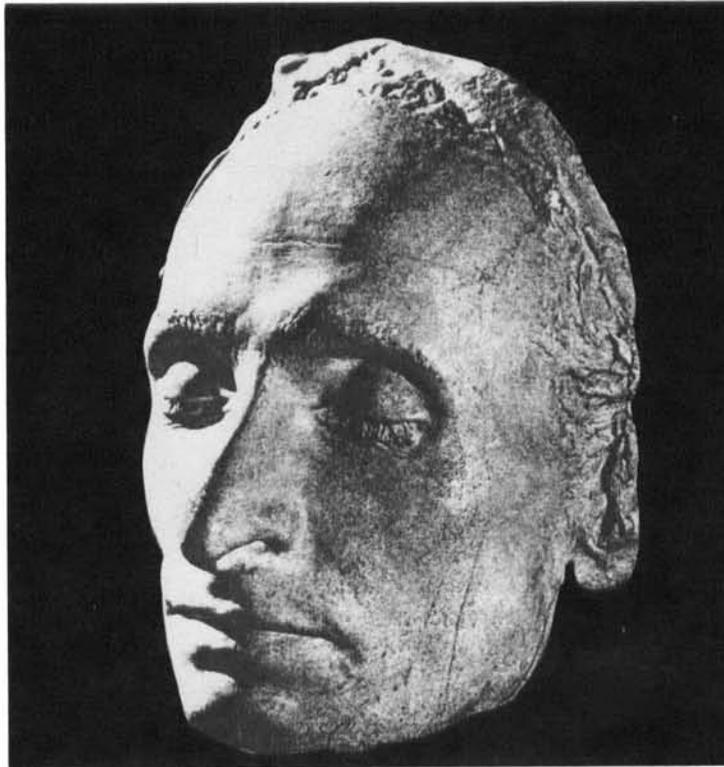
Karl Sandberg is professor of French and linguistics at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota

life. Having no inclination to submit to the authority of a revelation, even were one to exist, they saw the world in totally naturalistic terms. Typical of their view was the aristocrat Saint-Evremond, who said, "Eight days of life are worth an eternity of glory."

In the salons were gaming tables where these same people would bet and win or lose huge sums of money on the turn of a card. Pascal noted their aliveness to the chanciness and possible gain of the gaming table and their apparent obliviousness to the larger, more momentous game going on in their lives. Although he was attracted to their personal graces and fascinated by their independent way of looking at the world and the human condition, and even came to approximate their view over a period of time, he felt his life becoming arid and the world sterile and absurd as he did so. The once-born believer sees the natural world from the outside in and never knows its heights and depths. Pascal, both repelled and attracted by the natural world, was better able to take its measure for having seen it as well from the inside out.

In this state of mind and heart, Pascal had a profound religious experience. During a two hour meditation on the night of November 23, 1654, he saw, as Saint Irenaeus, "the marvelous way in which certitude replaces doubt." After Pascal's death a parchment was found sewn into his doublet containing an account, a "memorial," of his experience. Prominent among its phrases are "FIRE/God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars/Certainty, certainty, heartfelt, joy, peace/... The world forgotten and everything except God./ He can be found only in the ways taught in the Gospels./ Greatness of the human soul/... Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy... Sweet and total renunciation/... (*Pensées*, p. 309). God is a living presence, a person to be encountered in the ways of the Gospel, not an abstraction to be seized by the mind. Through this experience Pascal's world once more became open and whole. Faith is not an act of the mind. The heart has its reasons which reason cannot know. Faith is an act of will, of submitting self, which ever wants to make itself the center and ruler of everything, to the ways of the Gospel which open to the true life.

How could one talk about this kind of experience to those whose outlook was secular? This was the task Pascal set himself in his intended work. First, he abandoned the familiar procedure of reasoning from authorities and texts, which have no purchase



on the secular mind, and then placed himself on a foundation accessible to all people of all conditions. What in fact is the human condition like if we look at people and the world strictly through natural eyes to assemble the array of facts to which everyone must give assent?

The effect of Pascal's following the natural bent of his mind and seeking a universal standing ground was to demonstrate that the concerns of religion are not sectarian. While the grand key to human destiny may be reserved to the Gospels, the concerns of religion inhere in the human condition, and the people cannot ignore them without ignoring what is most fundamental to their humanity.

He thus intended to engage people at the deepest part of themselves and then lead them through scores and scores of observations of human actions to the conclusion that humans are a wondrous combination of grandeur and wretchedness, grand through their reason and wretched through their irrationality (manifesting itself variously as injustice, inconsistency, self-deception, need for diversion, and alienation from self and others) and their contingency: "Man's nature is entirely natural, wholly animal... There is nothing natural that cannot be lost" (no. 630). It is apparent that human beings exist in a middle state between the infinitely large and the infinitely small (no. 199), their lives ultimately shrouded in mystery but consisting of unavoidable choices of momentous consequence.

After a searching pre-Kantian critique of pure reason which shows reason, however admirable, to be incapable of resolving the ultimate questions of our lives one way or the other, Pascal apparently intended to propose that the Christian life was the point toward which all human experience and history tended. But since God is hidden and the reality and authenticity of the Christian life is known only through personal encounter with the divine, how can one persuade an unconvinced listener to move to the action through which alone the encounter comes? It is here, in all likelihood, that Pascal intended to insert what has become known as the wager, not as a means of intellectual persuasion, but as a means of moving to action.

The fragment which develops the wager as a metaphor for the human condition (no. 418) can be summarized freely as follows: at an indefinitely far distance in the cosmos, a game of heads or tails is being played—either God does exist or does not exist. Moreover, the game is such that we are inescapably part of it. We

have no way of knowing how the coin will come down, but we are as it were at a gaming table where we are obliged to bet. The stakes we put up are our lives. It is therefore a game with a possibility of real gains or real losses, for if we bet on the existence of God and therefore on a personal immortality and the ethical course which all that implies, and God turns out not to exist, we have lost the span of life and its alternative satisfactions which we put up as our stakes. But if we bet that God does not exist, by leading the life of egocentric satisfaction, and it turns out that God really does exist, the theology we have of God tells us that we have lost the infinity of life and happiness that was also on the gaming table as a possible gain.

When we try to figure the probabilities, the best that our reason can do in the game is to conclude that the odds are even (since reason is powerless to prove or disprove the existence of God). But we can nevertheless see very clearly that the stakes are immensely disproportionate. One finite life is staked against an infinity of life. Pascal therefore urges his reader to wager that God exists, to act as if He existed, to take masses and holy water and to take a step into the Christian (Catholic) life. As we make the bet by sacrificing our passions, which are the main impediments to belief (it is the heart that perceives God, not the intellect), we will find little by little that we have bet on a sure thing, the certainty of gain becoming great and the risk small.

To make any kind of wager we must first identify the *object of gain* and then put up the *stakes*. A wager thus first entails the possibility of real gain or loss—we must put up something we might lose in the hope of winning something else. In the Pascalian sense, the stakes are always our acts, our way of life. Second, there are the *odds*, or the probabilities which we calculate of an assertion being true or false. The odds being figured by examination of all available evidence, we cannot engage in this kind of wager without serious and searching intellectual effort, which can nevertheless never be conclusive. Third, Pascal's metaphor expresses the *necessity of choice*—in deciding what to do with our lives, the options are forced. We cannot choose not to bet, because we are already under way—“*vous êtes embarqué.*” Where Kafka's metaphor for the human condition was a trial where the defendant could never find out what he is accused of, Pascal pictures it as a gaming table where we are already seated and are obliged to bet, where even the decision not to bet is also a decision.

What is most significant in the metaphor of the wager, however, is that it aptly and vividly expresses the nature of human *autonomy*. In a wager there is an irreducible *uncertainty of the outcome* which renders choice autonomous, i.e., the human situation is such that in the things that mattermost to us we have to choose on the basis of what we want. Our faith stems ultimately from the free verdict of the heart.

To these assertions about the human condition, Pascal's work adds a second implied wager that his Christianity will stretch as wide as the world. In sounding the religious dimension of the natural world, Pascal did not cast off his doctrinal framework, which was in fact an indispensable part of his venture. The informative value of his work comes from the tension between the

deeply-held belief and the challenging variety of raw facts the world offers. The same question may be asked about any system, movement or philosophy claiming universality: Can it stretch wide enough to accommodate the world in all of its diversity?

The notion of stakes of the wager is sharpened by reflecting on William James' statement in his essay “The Will to Believe” that “if we were ourselves in the place of the Deity, we might take particular pleasure in cutting off believers of this pattern from their eternal reward,” that is, believers who might adopt a belief in God to curry favor with Him in case He turns out to exist. But Pascal is not talking about vacuous intellectual assent. He is talking about a bet where the stakes are significant, i.e., a total and lifelong commitment to a way of life. The wager cannot be made with play money, nor can it be made with safety.

The necessity of the betting can likewise be seen more clearly by considering the objection that Pascal proposes the wager in terms of a false binary choice: either God exists as described by the Christian theology of the time, or else there is no divine being as any kind. Since for us in the twentieth century, this proposition is far from exhausting all the possibilities, we might say that we are not obliged to bet. But in more fundamental terms, human life does always reduce to a binary choice of some kind. We can, for example, use Tillich's phrase, and say that either people must take something seriously ultimately, or else they must take nothing seriously ultimately. So stated, the option is forced, and is part of the furniture of the human condition.

This point is well illustrated in the Eric Rohmer movie *Ma Nuit Chez Maude* in which two old school friends happen to meet by chance, and as good Frenchmen they go into a café to talk things over. One is a struggling Catholic who has been rereading Pascal and finding little there which speaks to his faith. The other is a Marxist who confides, “I doubt very seriously that history has any meaning, but I am betting that it does, and that puts me in the Pascalian situation. Either social life and political action are devoid of any significance, or else history has a meaning. There may be only one chance in ten that the second hypothesis is right, but I have to bet on it because it is the only one that makes it possible for me to live.” In this light, the meaning implicit in the metaphor of the wager may be interpreted more generally as follows: Human life is such that we find we must make momentous decision on the basis of incomplete or uncertain knowledge. In all choices involving a belief in a transcendent or ultimate meaning, there is a fundamental uncertainty which renders us autonomous—in this situation we must choose simply on the authority of our own being that that to which we want to commit our life. Therefore, we would do well to attend carefully to discovering the greatest value potential in human life and to act accordingly.

The element of uncertainty and the consequent autonomy attending our ultimate choices rested on more than Pascal's own rational demonstration of the short tether on reason. The inter- and intra-confessional religious controversies which had raged for 150 years³ culminated during the generation following Pascal and drove the most perspicacious thinkers in all parties to the conclusion that an infallibly right choice in the things that matter

was impossible. The immense effort among the believers in the Christian revelation to determine the court of last appeal in interpreting the revelation ended in the conclusion that an authority-based faith was no longer possible and that any subsequent religious faith could rest upon only the autonomous act of individuals. Since this point bears directly on the current scene within Mormonism, we ought to look at it in some detail.

It must be understood that religion at the time was predominantly sectarian, i.e. each group made a claim of exclusive truth and each was confined to the dogmatic limits of its creed. "A heretic," said Bishop Bossuet, "is one who has an opinion. And what is it to have an opinion? It is to follow one's own thought and one's own private sentiment... whereas the Catholic is catholic, universal, and has no private opinion—he follows that of the Church without hesitation." (Hazard, p. 183.) For 150 years the major intellectual energy of Europe had been devoted to the task of defining and identifying the one true church.

We can see the dynamics of faith and controversy in an incident of 1678, when a certain Mme. de Duras, anxious about the salvation of her soul and uncertain as to the most efficacious way to assure it, invited the Catholic bishop Bossuet and the Protestant pastor Claude, the most eminent spokesmen for their respective parties, to debate their confessional differences in her presence.

The bishop pushed the pastor hard on the question of the rule of faith. Was it the contention of the Reformed party that even the most unlettered peasant reading the Scriptures alone was more likely to find the truth of his salvation than all of the councils of the Church in all ages? Claude did not hesitate an instant to answer "yes," if the peasant were inspired by the Holy Spirit and the councils were not (Hazard, p. 72).

The debate was a microcosm of the times. Whatever the questions at issue, whether transsubstantiation, ethics, the nature of grace, or the character of the church (Rex, *Essays*), all of the parties concerned accepted the existence, the validity and the authority of revelation which they firmly believed was capable of deciding all questions, were it only interpreted correctly. Thus beneath all the controverted questions lay the fundamental question of establishing the rule of interpretation. Was the court of ultimate appeal the living oracle, i.e. the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*? Or was it the decision rendered by the general councils of the church? Or was it ultimately the oral tradition of the church? Was it the Holy Spirit speaking to the minds of individuals reading the Scripture, as the Reformers contended? Or were the Arminians, the Socinians, and the Deists right to interpret Scripture by the yardstick of clear and evident ideas, thus precluding belief in the deeper mysteries such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and predestination? In this environment, faith was always authority-based, and the act of faith was to find the right authority and obey it.

The mischief done to religion by sectarian controversies was great, because authority-based beliefs are easily unsettled when the authorities lose their credibility, whether those authorities are the church, or the Scripture, or reason. The controversies inevitably turned into attacks on the foundations of the other

parties. Thus the inter- and intra-confessional disputes succeeded only laying bare the insufficiencies of all the authorities.

It was possible, for example, to undercut the Protestant reliance on Scripture, as Father Richard Simon did in 1678 in his *Critical History of the Old Testament*, by showing that errors and lapses existed in the texts, thus making it necessary to rely on the tradition of the church in order to have the correct interpretation (Hazard, pp. 165-81). But it was just as easy for one of the Protestant camp to retort, as John Dryden did in his *Religio Laici* in 1682: "Strange confidence, still to interpret true/Yet not sure that all they have explained/Is in the blest original contained." Both the Scripture and the oral tradition became less authoritative thereby.

Again, since the time of Calvin, a vigorous rationalism had been a favorite weapon of the Reformers in attacking superstitions and pagan accretions within the mother church, but in 1684 the Jansenist writer Nicole turned the Protestants' sword against themselves. Invoking Cartesian clarity and evidence as the criteria of truth, he argued that the first Reformers could not have possessed a demonstrable knowledge that they were in the right, and that therefore they were not justified in separating from the Roman Catholic confession. Astute Protestant and Catholic thinkers alike knew that the introduction of this kind of critical reason into religious controversy would be the end of religion. The house was being set on fire by those who thought to bring in light. Among the controversialists of every party—Jansenists, Jesuits, conservative Protestants, liberal Protestants, rationalists, Socinians—there had existed a virile confidence that truth could be established through controversy, but the general effect was just the opposite. What emerged undeniably in the minds of detached observers was the conclusion that there was no solid base for religious faith anywhere. The *terminus ad quem* of 150 years of controversy was expressed by one of the most incisive and vigorous of the controversialists, the Protestant writer Pierre Bayle, in his *Philosophic Commentary* (1686):

If you ask a man to do more than to follow his conscience, it is clear that you are asking him to fix his love and zeal only upon the absolute truth, infallibly recognized as such. Now in our present human condition it is impossible for us to know with certainty that that which appears to us to be truth is in fact the absolute truth. . . It is impossible for us to find any sure sign by which we might discern our true ideas, which we believe to be true, from our false ideas which we also believe to be true. . . Ever since the Protestants left the Roman Church, they have constantly heard the objection that in rejecting the authority of the Church, they attempt to find the truth by examination of the Scripture and that this examination is beyond the means of the individual. . . Let us admit the debt: neither the learned nor the ignorant can attain such certainty. . . that after having considered all the reasons to doubt, they still feel keenly that it cannot be otherwise.

Thus, the effect of all the controversy, which had intended to give an infallible reading of truth, was to give a generalized cultural confirmation to one of the terms of the wager—decisions involving ultimate questions have to be made on much less than certain evidence, simply on the subjective authority of the indi-

vidual conscience, for even if there is a leap to a position of authority, the basic decision to leap is still subjective.

It is also ironic that Pascal counted on being able to offer the new believer strong, confirming evidence drawn from historical and scriptural proofs of having embarked upon the true way. Within the next two generations, the new science of textual criticism would render this traditional approach impossible.

To summarize, Pascal shows forth fully as many wondrous contradictions as he saw in humankind. The sectarian aspects of his work, which to his mind were apparently the most solid and convincing, were soon dated, and today are valued not at all. The expansive, universalist aspect, on the other hand, is still felt to be vital and contemporary, and the questions which he raised are among the most urgent. Is there indeed a philosophy or religion whose teachings could encompass all aspects of the human condition and become universal in the 20th or 21st century?

Let us now try to relate the foregoing notions to current Mormon scene, where the roulette wheel, implying a variety of bets, seems more appropriate than simply a game of heads or tails and where some strikingly close analogies appear with the Pascal's seventeenth century environment.

The dynamics of Mormonism have replicated the authority-based faith of the 17th century very closely, and the element of uncertainty implied in the wager is likewise becoming more prominent. Mormonism began as a sectarian venture in Joseph's quest to find the one true church and in the new scripture intended to give a definitive resolution to all controverted points of doctrine, and it has always thrived on the conviction of absolute certainty. Elijah, who could not stand for people to halt between two opinions, has been one of the prophets with the most familiar spirit. It would be only natural to expect it to yield an authority-based faith, as might be seen in the phrases often heard in testimony meeting: "I have a testimony of . . ." The dynamics and rhetoric of Mormonism have traditionally and characteristically been to reach certainty concerning a given point, which then becomes the authoritative base for a whole system of belief. If, for example, one settles one's mind that Joseph Smith was a prophet, or that the Book of Mormon is true, or that the present church president is acting under God's direction, or that John Taylor's revelation on plural marriage takes precedence over all subsequent church pronouncements (or, in a more secular setting, that the accumulated findings of science are the ultimate yardstick of truth), then everything else falls into place. Faith is once more a matter of finding the right authority and submitting to it. To the extent that uncertainty comes to prevail concerning the authorities, the concept of the wager becomes more appropriate, which seems to be precisely what has happened during the past several years.

Specifically, the shaking of the foundations of belief in the seventeenth century, brought about by religious controversies, has to some extent been replicated by the "New History" in Mormondom. I do not want to suggest that I believe this is a general condition. For most Church members, when the ship of faith has struck the iceberg of fact, the iceberg has sunk, and the

ship has sailed on as if nothing had happened. But for a few, the time has come for a casting up of accounts of "faith-promoting history." When faith has been based, for example, upon the notion of an undeviating church or an infallible Joseph that must be accepted as such in order for faith to survive, faith has become vulnerable to the emergence of every new and discordant fact. When one has been taught and has taught that the Church allowed no more polygamy after 1890 and then discovers that six apostles took plural wives after the Manifesto, the authority of church pronouncements per se suffers some erosion. Those who have always believed that a man could not take additional wives without the permission of the first wife are unsettled to discover that Emma likely did not even know who all of Joseph's wives were, and that she opposed polygamy tooth and toenail. History has always been a slippery crutch for faith, and it may well turn out that the most faith-destroying practice in the Church has been to insulate members, young and old, from potential problems and conflicts, and to teach faith-promoting history that turns out to be not so.

It is at this point, when authority-based faith turns out to be no longer possible, that it may helpful to ponder some of the conclusions which are explicit or implicit in Pascal.

We might first observe in this vein that even if someone's faith in Joseph Smith or testimony of the actuality of current revelation were completely overturned, the religious questions which inhere in the human condition would not be changed in the slightest degree. In fact, the usual emphases of sectarian religions in establishing their bounds and authority turn out to have an increasingly remote connection with the religious questions of human life. The nun leaving the convent and the Catholic Church, the Moslem casting off the Koran, the French Marxist losing his faith during the de-Stalinization period, and the Mormon no longer responding to the imperatives of childhood faith still have to respond to the question, What am I going to do with my life? What would be best for me to do? Parting company with an authority-based faith may be the occasion when one confronts for the first time the fundamental questions of religion.

We may also see the value of Pascal's insight that in any act of faith there is an inescapable autonomy. When we realize that we choose on our own authority, not because we have been compelled by sure and certain knowledge, we realize we must take responsibility for our choices. There would be existential coincidence with the Mormon teaching that people should not wait for God to command them to act, but they should act by themselves by virtue of the power that is within them. We would stop waiting for the Church to give what God has already given.

It is also worth repeating that faith is not an act of the mind. The sustenance that people seek in religion comes from the encounter between persons, whether between human and human, or between human and God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or the God of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel. In any event it does not come from an abstraction.

As we come to specific wagers, we might consider the case of the "closet doubter," the person who has serious misgivings,

questions, or doubts about important aspects of Church doctrine or practice, but never expresses them because he or she wants to present the picture of the untroubled Mormon. What is on the table as the possible gain is social approval. The stakes to be put up are a life unpunctuated by self-assertion in this area. The odds of winning appear to be great. The real wager, however, where there is genuine uncertainty and greater possible loss, is that religiously, eternally, one is better off having opted for silence and social approval.

A second possible wager concerns the nature of one's belief or disbelief in the Book of Mormon. There has been much discussion recently about various aspects of the historicity of the Book of Mormon. For me, they can be summarized as follows: as a teacher of humanities I might have a reasonable expectation of one day encountering Cervantes in the Elysian Fields and of sitting down to discuss his text and of giving an account of what I have done with it. I do not, however, have any expectation of encountering Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Now in the Book of Mormon a narrator by the name of Nephi asserts that he and I will meet in a courtroom of sorts and that I will give an account of what I have done with his text. The question is, do I expect that I will meet Nephi in the same way that I might meet Cervantes, or do I classify Nephi with Don Quixote and Sancho Panza? There is no Jimmy the Greek who can tell us what the odds *really* are—each must figure them individually. Some will find them exceedingly slim, while others will find them preponderant, but at bottom, each will find him- or herself facing the irreducible distance between one and zero, and the question is therefore the object of a wager.

The stakes must be determined by a reading of the text. If I see everything that is in the text and only what is in the text, what kind of life does the Book of Mormon commit me to? It enjoins me, for example, to have charity, not to murder, steal, commit whoredoms, not to harbor envy or malice, and to live in the knowledge that all classes of people have the same standing before God, black and white, bond and free, Jew and Gentile, male and female (2 Nephi 26:30-33). It further tells me that I ought to pray (2 Nephi 32:8,9) and I ought to repent of my sins, be baptized and continue in this way of life for the rest of my life (2 Nephi 31). To this reading each one must add what individual study says is the meaning of the text. At this point, some may want to go back and refigure the odds, for the stakes that the wager entails turn out to be momentous, and some may wonder if Pascal himself would have responded to it more warmly than I responded to his invitation to take masses and holy water. But for those for whom it has become a living option, the wager must be made one way or the other. To say, "I won't bet" is to place a negative bet.

A final point concerns what is possibly the greatest wager of

Mormonism, which is that one may keep both the firmness of faith in a core of truth and yet accommodate and seek out truths of all facets of existence, that the benefits of the sectarian mode of belief will not be cancelled out by the body of truth coming from any other sources whatever.

Once again Pascal's example is instructive, for the same tension that he exhibited between the exclusive sectarian claim and the expansive, universalist quest which grounded his approach to Christianity has been in Mormonism from the beginning. In the Book of Mormon we see, for example, the lessening of the exclusive claim to truth by the teaching that God causes his word to be taught in varying degrees among all peoples (Alma 29:8). As an article of faith we seek after whatever is true or beautiful from whatever source. We might observe that the first twelve Articles of Faith have to do with beliefs grounded in Scripture and which are already part of Mormonism, whereas the thirteenth article looks outward to that great natural world which contains an indefinitely large number of truths which are also part of our religion and which we do not yet possess. Mormonism has always thrived on the desire and appetite to reach out and encompass the knowledge of things in the heavens, on the earth, and the wars and perplexities of nations. Orson Pratt once attempted what was implicit in the genius of Mormonism, to preach the general funeral sermon of all saints and sinners and also the heavens and earth. The outcome of this part of the Mormon venture is uncertain, and the ball on the Mormon roulette wheel is rolling.

NOTES:

1. The standard work on this period and milieu is still Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience européenne* Paris: Fayard, 1961. (This title in translation is *The European Mind: The Critical Years*. Also valuable for background is Antoine Adam, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. II "L'Epoque de Pascal," Paris: Domat, 1957

A good overall view of Pascal's life and work is the short, insightful essay by Alban Krailsheimer, *Pascal*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1980. The edition of Pascal cited here is Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. and ed. Krailsheimer, London: Penguin Books, 1966. This edition follows the numbering system of the Lafuma edition.

2. Georges Gurvitch, "L'Effondrement d'un mythe politique: Joseph Staline," *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, XXXIII, (1962), 8-10.

3. Walter Rex, *Essays and Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965, gives a richly researched account of all of the strands of Protestant-Catholic controversy of the time. K.C. Sandberg, *At the Crossroads of Faith and Reason*, Tucson: U of Arizona Press, 1966, gives an account of the crisis of faith and reason resulting from them.