

## ABSTRACT

The thoughts of Blaise Pascal and Simone Weil serve as the focus of this study. This is due to the fact that both individuals share numerous similarities in their understanding of the human relationship with God. In the few works that exist in which Pascal and Weil are included together, the parallels in their lives and the perspectives they share are the main focal points.

However, the author of this present work is unaware of any scholarly material that contrasts their theological perspectives. Many attempts were made to locate such, but none were discovered. Therefore, the similarities in the lives and thoughts of Pascal and Weil are only a backdrop for this monograph. To provide more insight to the field of historical theology, a concentrated effort to analyze their differences is presented herein.

Chapter one introduces the overall concept by giving a sampling of how Pascal and Weil share similarities and how they differ. This chapter also lays out the structure to the rest of the book, including definitions for various important terms.

In chapter two, the lives of both thinkers are presented. For those unfamiliar with Pascal and Weil, this chapter is crucial in helping to understand the contexts of their thoughts and lives. By looking at pertinent moments in their years, readers should be able to comprehend more fully the direction each thinker takes in theological reflection.

As for chapter three, a little time is devoted to recognizing those places where Pascal and Weil shared commonalities. Before a contrast is made between them, it is crucial to see just how similar Pascal and Weil appear when investigating their lives and thoughts. It is hoped that, by offering the analysis within this chapter, readers will recognize the value of also studying those places where Pascal and Weil diverged from one another.

Within chapter four, the contrasts in perception for salvation, incarnation and response are evaluated. Specifically, inasmuch as Pascal and Weil both believed it is important to make a

thankful response to God's propitiating work in Jesus Christ, they had distinctly different ways of understanding salvation, incarnation and the nature of an appropriate human response. Simply stated, Pascal decided to withdraw from the world, and Weil sought to jump into it as a way of displaying God's love to everyone.

Chapter five opens further the analysis of how the differing theological insights affected their lives. Pascal's *Pensées* fragments figure prominently within this chapter, as does Weil's infatuation with the theme of affliction. Readers are brought to ponder the search for a life of gratitude as Pascal and Weil regarded such.

Then, in chapter six, the life of gratitude moves into a question about how Pascal and Weil viewed the Church and/or other Christians. If the respective theologians were concerned about showing gratitude in their own lives, did they have a corresponding opinion about how or if others should be concerned too? They do, in fact, present some thoughts on the subject. Intriguingly, though Pascal retreated from the world, he wanted to convince it of the truths found in Christ and to share charity as much as possible. Conversely, Weil, who plunged into the world's most difficult circumstances to be in solidarity with the downtrodden, focused inward, attempting to understand her relationship with God on a deeper level.

Finally, chapter seven summarizes the findings of each chapter. In so doing, the contrasts in the midst of their similarities become apparent.