

## **Inquiry in the Domain of Religion and William James's "The Will to Believe"**

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### **Abstract**

William James's "The Will to Believe" is primarily concerned with the epistemology of religious belief. According to many scholars, James proposed this highly controversial criterion of believing: one has the right to decide upon a belief option via one's willing or passionate nature, despite the lack of supportive intellectual grounds, so long as certain conditions are satisfied; he then argued that this criterion is applicable to religious belief options. This paper, however, reveals that "The Will to Believe" aims to defend one's epistemic right to inquire, and claims that those who take a religious belief option as what James calls "a genuine option," have the right to follow the epistemological command that we must know the truth, to choose the path of inquiry they deem likely to work in their relevant inquiries, and to believe the opinion reached through such inquiry.

**Key Words:** William James, Blaise Pascal, epistemology, religion, right