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New readers and non-specialists will find this the most convenient and accessible guide to Pascal currently available. Advanced students and specialists will find a conspectus of recent developments in the interpretation of Pascal.

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CHRONOLOGY

1623 Born at Clermont-Ferrand, 19 June

1626 Death of his mother, Antoinette Begon (1596–1626)

1631 Moves with his father Etienne (1588–1626) and sisters
Gilberte (1620–87) and Jacqueline (1625–61) to Paris

1631–40 Educated at home by his father, moves in various
scientific and literary circles

1640 Pascal family moves to Rouen, where Etienne is placed
in charge of taxes. Publication of Jansen’s Augustinus

1641 Marriage of Gilberte to Florin Périer

1645 Dedication of a calculating machine, first devised to
help his father in his work, to the chancellor, Pierre
Séguier

1646 Etienne breaks his thigh after slipping on ice, and is
converted, along with his family, by two brothers who
care for him and who follow the spiritual teachings of
Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbot of Saint-Cyran

1647 Moves back to Paris, meets Descartes on two
occasions, and publishes the Expériences nouvelles
touchant le vide, his first work on the vacuum. Has
first contact with Port-Royal

1648 Publication of a further piece on the vacuum, Récit de
la grande expérience

1649–50 Goes with family to Clermont-Ferrand to escape the
Fronde, the period of civil unrest in Paris, in May 1649.
Returns to Paris in November of the following year

1651 Death of Etienne. Entry of Jacqueline into Port-Royal
as nun. Writes his Précis sur le traité du vide
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1651–4</td>
<td>Frequent worldly circles and works on mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1653</td>
<td>Pope Innocent X condemns the ‘five propositions’ believed to be found in Jansen’s <em>Augustinus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1654</td>
<td>Writes his <em>Traité du triangle arithmétique</em>. On 23 November has a mystical experience known as his ‘night of fire’, recorded in the <em>Mémorial</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1655</td>
<td>Goes on retreat to Port-Royal des Champs. His conversation with one of the spiritual directors, Sacy, is recorded by Sacy’s secretary Fontaine. Possible date of composition of <em>De L’Esprit géométrique</em>. Possible date of composition of <em>Ecrits sur la grâce</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1656</td>
<td>Start of his <em>Lettres provinciales</em>, defending Antoine Arnauld and then attacking the Jesuits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1657</td>
<td>Final of his <em>Lettres provinciales</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1658</td>
<td>Works on the cycloid. Presents plan of his apologetic project at Port-Royal des Champs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1659</td>
<td>Falls ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1660</td>
<td>Writes <em>Trois discours sur la condition des grands</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1661</td>
<td>Nuns at Port-Royal, including Jacqueline, forced to sign anti-Jansenist formulary. Jacqueline dies 4 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1662</td>
<td>First omnibus service instituted by Pascal in Paris. Falls ill in the spring and dies on 19 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1670</td>
<td>Posthumous publication by Port-Royal of Pascal’s <em>Pensées</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Throughout this book references to Pascal’s works are made in parentheses in the main body of the text. References to the Complete Works (Oeuvres complètes) will be from the two-volume Pléiade edition by Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 1998–2000), by volume and page number, e.g. OC i, 235. All references to the Pensées will give the Lafuma and Sellier numberings, e.g. L 177/S 208.