



## Education in Jacqueline Pascal (1625–1661)

John J. Conley

Loyola University of Maryland

The director of the convent school at Port-Royal, Jacqueline Pascal explains her philosophy of education in her treatise *A Rule for Children* (1657), wherein she recounts the practices and goals of the school. The primary purpose of education is the formation of pupils in the Christian virtues, interpreted according to the moral rigorism of Jansenism. The pupils in the school follow a strict monastic schedule. They pray parts of the divine office in chapel, learn how to sing liturgical chant, and follow the monastic discipline of silence. They learn also to practice the chapter of faults in which pupils apologize to the class and teacher for infractions committed in class.

The pupils receive a sophisticated theological education with a Jansenist orientation. The works of Jansenius and the Jansenists Saint-Cyran and Antoine Arnauld are featured in Pascal's curriculum. The teacher acts as a spiritual director for her pupils. The teaching nun is to lead the pupils in communal prayers, to give her own classroom explanations of the Bible and Christian doctrine, and to lead the pupils in the chapter of faults. Especially important are the periodic one-on-one conferences where the teacher discusses each pupil's intellectual and moral progress and offers individualized counsel for further improvement.

Jacqueline Pascal's model of education enhanced the theological authority of the teaching nun, who presides over communal prayer sessions and delivers her own informal sermons in the classroom. Significantly, it enhanced the theological culture of women pupils, usually limited in that era to simple catechesis and devotions. Jacqueline Pascal's philosophy of education was therefore an unusually advanced one for the mid seventeenth-century education of girls and women.

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