

Pascal's *Les Lettres Provinciales*
—Masterpiece in French Journalistic Literature—

ABSTRACT

Critics have said “*Les Lettres Provinciales* is a masterpiece of French journalistic literature”

Antoine Arnauld, doctor of la Sorbonne, Jansenist, was about to be condemned for heresy at the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne. This plot was laid by the Jesuits, who made up a majority of the Faculty. For the defense of Arnauld, Blaise Pascal wrote 18 Letters with the cooperation of Arnauld, Pierre Nicole and other Port-Royalists. He addressed these letters in French to ladies and gentlemen of Paris societies (salons), not to the clergymen, nor theologians, and the writers of the time reported that the letters were welcomed enthusiastically among the citizens.

Selon *Annuae Litterae Prouinciæ Franciæ ad annum Christi 1656* (*Annual Report of Jesus Society of France, 1656*) Eas autem tanto numero sparserunt, ut constet intra tres menses earum ad centum viginti millia exemplarium e diversis prælis prodiisse, quæ per emissarios suos, non per vniuersam Galliam modo, sed & in Angliam, Batauiam, Heluetios, Germaniam;... (A lot of those pamphlets were scattered; during three months, 120,000 examples were printed with various machines, and were sent not only throughout France, but also to England, Holland, Switzerland, Germany...)

key words: Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, journalistic literature