

# Reyneau, Charles René | Encyclopedia.com

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(b.Brissac, Maine-et-Loire, 11 June 1656; d. Paris, France, 24 February 1728)

*mathematics.*

Reyneau is important historically as the author of a textbook, written at the request of Malebranche, that was designed to provide instruction in the new mathematics developed at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The son of a surgeon, he studied at the Oratorian *college* in Angers. Attracted by the order, on 17 October 1676 he entered the Maison d'Institution in Paris, where, besides Malebranche, he met Jean Present, who had just published his *Éléments des mathématiques*. In 1679 Reyneau was sent to the Collège de Toulon, and in March 1681 he was ordained a priest there. In October 1682 he went to the University of Angers to replace Present as professor of mathematics, a post he held for twenty-three years. Suffering from deafness, he had former students substitute for him for several years but was finally obliged to give up teaching in 1705. Reyneau spent the rest of his life in Paris, at the Oratorian house on rue Saint-Honorè, and published his textbooks there. He was named an *associé libre* of the Académie Royal des Sciences on 12 February 1716.

Many surviving manuscripts reveal Reyneau's pedagogical ability and are valuable source for the study of mathematics in France at the end of the seventeenth century. Reyneau was only slightly aware of the projects of Malebranche and L' Hospital in 1690–1691 and of the revolution resulting from Johann Bernoulli's stay in Paris in 1692. As late as 1694 all that Malebranche had for Reyneau to do was edit Present's posthumous *Géométrie*. But, after abandoning the last shred of Cartesian mathematics, textbook required by this turnabout (1698).

Reyneau worked with two other Oratorians, Louis Byzance and Claude Jaquement, who were better mathematicians than he. Reyneau had some difficulty in assimilating the differential and [integral calculus](#) and was very interested in the debates, beginning in 1700, provoked by Rolle on this subject. Reyneau's editorial efforts were frustrated in various ways, and the textbook was not published until 1708.

In 1705 Reyneau came into possession of Byzance's papers, which included a copy of the "Leçons" that Bernoulli had prepared for L' Hospital. Unfortunately, Reyneau lent some of the documents to Montmort, who lost them. On the whole, however, he preserved as well as possible the manuscripts of the group around Malebranche; and from them he drew the inspiration for a second didactic work, published in 1714. This work, which attempted to preserve the central conceptions of the Oratorian mathematics of the end of the preceding century, was less successful than the first.

Reyneau's most notable contribution to mathematical education was *Analyse démontrée* (1708). It was from the second edition of this work that d'Alembert learned the fundamentals of the subject.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Original Works. Reyneau's writings include *Analyse démontrée ou la méthode résoudre les problèmes des mathématiques et d'apprendre facilement ces sciences, expliquée et démontrée... et appliquée... à découvrir les propriétés des figures de la géométrie simple et composée, à résoudre les problèmes... en employant le calcul ordinaire de l'algèbre, le calcul différentiel et le calcul intégral...*, 2 vols. (Paris 1708; 2nd ed., enl., 1736–1738); *La science du calcul des grandeurs en général...*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1714–1735); *La logique ou l'art de raisonner juste à l'usage des dames* (Paris, 1744); and "Trité de la marine ou l'art de naviguer". MS no. 3729, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris.

II. Secondary Literature. See an unsigned review of *L'analyse démontrée* in *Mémoires pour l'histoire des sciences et des beaux-arts*, **3** (708), 1438–1452; Bernard de Fontenelle, "Éloge du Père Reyneau", in *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences pour l'année 1728... avec les mémoires...* 112–116; and Pierre Costabel, "Deux in-édits de la correspondance indirecte Leibniz-Reyneau", in *Revue d'histoire des sciences et de leurs applications*, **2** (1949), 311–332; "Rectification et compliments..." *ibid.*, **19** (1966), 167–169; and *Oeuvres de Malebranche*, XVII, pt. 2, Malebranche et la réforme arithmétique en France de 1689 à 1706 (Paris, 1968).

Pierre Costabel