

**A DEFENCE OF FREE-THINKING IN
MATHEMATICS. IN ANSWER TO A PAMPHLET
OF PHILALETHES CANTABRIGIENSIS,
INTITULED, GEOMETRY NO FRIEND TO
INFIDELITY, OR A DEFENCE OF SIR ISAAC
NEWTON, AND THE BRITISH MATHEMATICIANS**

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A Defence of Free-Thinking in Mathematics. In Answer to a Pamphlet of Philalethes Cantabrigiensis, Intituled, Geometry No Friend to Infidelity, or a Defence of Sir Isaac Newton, and the British Mathematicians by George Berkeley

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GEORGE BERKELEY

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A
D E F E N C E
O F
Free-Thinking
I N
M A T H E M A T I C S.

In Answer

To a Pamphlet of *Philalethes Cantabrigiensis*, intitled, *Geometry no Friend to Infidelity, or a Defence of Sir ISAAC NEWTON, and the BRITISH Mathematicians*. Also an Appendix concerning Mr. WALTON'S *Vindication of the Principles of Fluxions against the Objections contained in the ANALYST*.

W H E R E I N

It is attempted to put this Controversy in such a Light as that every Reader may be able to judge thereof.

By the ^{Rev. Berkeley} Author of *The Minute Philosopher*.

Veritas odium parit.

Ter.


Ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ Μαθηματικὸς χρεῖται τοῖς Κοταῖς ἰδίαις, ἢ τὰς
τούτων ἀρχὰς ἀν' ἐν θεωρήσει τῆς Πρώτης Φιλοσοφίας.
Aristot. Metaph. l. xliij.

L O N D O N: Printed for J. T O N S O N.

M D C C X X X V.



A
DEFENCE
OF
FREETHINKING
IN
MATHEMATICS, &c.

I. HEN I read your Defence of the *British* Mathematicians, I could not, Sir, but admire your Courage in asserting with such undoubting Assurance things so easily disproved. This to me seemed unaccountable, till I reflected on what you say (p. 32.) when upon my having appealed to every thinking Reader, whether it be possible to frame any clear Conception of Fluxions, you express yourself in the following manner, "Pray, Sir, who are those thinking Readers you appeal

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“ peal to? Are they Geometricians, or
“ Persons wholly ignorant of Geometry?
“ If the former, I leave it to them: If the
“ latter, I ask how well are they qualified
“ to judge of the Method of Fluxions?”
It must be acknowledged you seem by this
Dilemma secure in the favour of one Part
of your Readers, and the ignorance of the
other. I am nevertheless persuaded there
are fair and candid Men among the Ma-
thematicians. And for those who are not
Mathematicians, I shall endeavour so to
unveil this Mystery, and put the Contro-
versy between us in such a Light, as
that every Reader of ordinary Sense and
Reflection may be a competent Judge
thereof.

II. “ YOU express an extreme Surprise
“ and Concern, that I should take so
“ much Pains to depreciate one of the no-
“ blest Sciences, to disparage and traduce
“ a Set of learned Men, whose Labours
“ so greatly conduce to the Honour of
“ this Island, (*p.* 5.) to lessen the Repu-
“ tation and Authority of Sir *Isaac New-*
“ *ton* and his Followers, by shewing that
“ they are not such Masters of Reason as
“ they are generally presumed to be; and
“ to depreciate the Science they profess,
“ by demonstrating to the World, that it
is

“ is not of that Clearness and Certainty as
 “ is commonly imagined. All which, you
 “ insist, appears very strange to you and
 “ the rest of that famous University, who
 “ plainly see of how great Use Mathema-
 “ tical Learning is to Mankind.” Hence
 you take occasion to declaim on the
 Usefulness of Mathematics in the several
 Branches, and then to redouble your Sur-
 prise and Amazement (*p.* 19. and 20.). To
 all which Declamation I reply, that it is
 quite beside the Purpose. For I allow,
 and always have allowed, its full claim of
 Merit to whatever is useful and true in
 the Mathematics: But that which is not
 so, the less it employs Men’s time and
 thoughts, the better. And after all you
 have said or can say, I believe the unpreju-
 diced Reader will think with me, that things
 obscure are not therefore sacred; and that
 it is no more a Crime to canvass and de-
 tect unsound Principles or false Reasonings
 in Mathematics, than in any other Part
 of Learning.

III. YOU are, it seems, much at a loss
 to understand the Usefulness or Tendency
 or Prudence of my Attempt. I thought I
 had sufficiently explained this in the *Ana-*
lyst. But for your further Satisfaction shall
 here tell you, it is very well known, that

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several Persons who deride Faith and Mysteries in Religion, admit the Doctrine of Fluxions for true and certain. Now if it be shewn that Fluxions are really most incomprehensible Mysteries, and that those, who believe them to be clear and scientific, do entertain an implicate Faith in the Author of that Method; will not this furnish a fair *Argumentum ad Hominem* against Men, who reject that very thing in Religion which they admit in human Learning? And is it not a proper Way to abate the Pride, and discredit the Pretensions of those, who insist upon clear Ideas in Points of Faith, if it be shewn that they do without them even in Science?

IV. AS to my timing this Charge; why now and not before, since I had published Hints thereof many Years ago? Surely I am obliged to give no Account of this: If what hath been said in the Analyst be not sufficient; suppose that I had not Leisure, or that I did not think it expedient, or that I had no Mind to it. When a Man thinks fit to publish any Thing, either in Mathematics, or in any other Part of Learning; what avails it, or indeed what Right hath any one to ask, why at this or that Time; in this or that Manner; upon this or that Motive? Let the Reader judge, if it suffice
not,

not, that what I publish is true, and that I have a Right to publish such Truths, when and how I please, in a free Country.

V. I DO not say, that Mathematicians, as such, are Infidels; or that Geometry is a Friend to Infidelity; which you untruly insinuate, as you do many other Things; whence you raise Topics for invective: But I say there are certain Mathematicians, who are known to be so; and that there are others, who are not Mathematicians, who are influenced by a Regard for their Authority. Some, perhaps, who live in the University, may not be apprised of this; but the intelligent and observing Reader, who lives in the World, and is acquainted with the Humour of the Times, and the Characters of Men, is well aware, there are too many that deride Mysteries, and yet admire Fluxions; who yield that Faith to a mere Mortal, which they deny to *Jesus Christ*, whose Religion they make it their Study and Business to discredit. The owning this is not to own, that Men who reason well, are Enemies to Religion, as you would represent it: On the contrary, I endeavour to shew, that such Men are defective in Point of Reason and Judgment, and that they do the very Thing they would seem to despise.

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VI. THERE are, I make no doubt, among the Mathematicians many sincere Believers in *Jesus Christ*; I know several such my self; but I address'd my Analyst to an Infidel; and on very good Grounds, I suppos'd that besides him, there were other Deriders of Faith, who had nevertheless a profound Veneration for Fluxions; and I was willing to set forth the Inconsistence of such Men. If there be no such Thing as Infidels, who pretend to Knowledge in the modern Analysis, I own myself misinform'd, and shall gladly be found in a Mistake; but even in that Case, my Remarks upon Fluxions are not the less true; nor will it follow, that I have no Right to examine them on the Foot of humane Science, even though Religion were quite unconcerned, and though I had no End to serve but Truth. But you are very angry (*P. 13 and 14.*) that I should enter the Lists with reasoning Infidels, and attack them upon their Pretensions to Science: And hence you take Occasion to shew your Spleen against the Clergy. I will not take upon me to say, that I know you to be a Minute Philosopher your self: But I know, the Minute Philosophers make just such Compliments as you do to our Church, and are just as angry, as you can be, at any who undertake to defend Religion by Reason. If