Gregory of St. Vincent Encyclopedia Article

Gregory of St. Vincent

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Gregory of St. Vincent

1584-1667

Italian mathematician who, in his efforts at "squaring the circle," developed the rudiments of the method now known as integration. A Jesuit, Gregory taught in Rome, Prague, and Spain, where he served as tutor in the court of King Philip IV. He also helped write the curriculum for a Jesuit mathematical school in Antwerp, where he taught from 1617 to 1621. Gregory became intrigued by the idea of constructing a square equal in area to a circle, using as his only tools a straight edge and compass—an operation mathematicians now know to be impossible. In the course of his efforts, however, Gregory discovered the expansion for $\log(1+x)$ for ascending powers of x, and integrated x^{-1} as a geometric form equivalent to the natural logarithmic function.