



Hypatia

Charles Kingsley

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Hypatia is a novel by the English writer Charles Kingsley. It is a fictional account of the life of the philosopher Hypatia, and tells the story of a young monk called Philammon who travels to Alexandria, where he becomes mixed up in the political and religious battles of the day.

The plot revolves around Hypatia the pagan philosopher; Cyril the Christian patriarch; Orestes the power-hungry prefect of Egypt; and Philammon an Egyptian monk. Philammon travels from his monastic, desert community to Alexandria, and expresses a desire to attend Hypatia's lectures despite Cyril's dislike of Hypatia. Although Hypatia has a deep-seated hatred of Christianity, Philammon becomes her devoted friend and disciple. Philammon also encounters Pelagia, his long-lost sister, a former singer and dancer who is now married to a Gothic warrior. Philammon naturally desires to convert both women to Christianity. The plot is played out against the backdrop of Orestes as the scheming prefect who hopes to become emperor of Egypt and Africa, and uses Hypatia as a pawn in his schemes. A subplot involves Raphael Aben-Ezra as a wealthy Jewish associate of Hypatia who falls in love with a Christian girl called Victoria, and converts to win her love. A series of events, some of which are orchestrated by a Jewish woman called Miriam, raise tensions between the Prefect and the Church. Hypatia undergoes a spiritual crisis and comes close to being converted to Christianity by Raphael. Before this can happen however, rumours are spread that Hypatia is the cause of unrest in the city and she is murdered by a Christian mob. Philammon, despondent, returns to the desert where he eventually becomes abbot of his monastery, albeit with a more worldly view of Christianity.

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