



Defending Hypatia (Hardback)

By Robert Goulding

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onddeMontmortwrotetothemathematicianNicolasBernoulli: It would bedesirable if someone wanted totake thetrouble toinstruct how and inwhat order the discoveries in mathematics have come about .The histories of painting, of music, of medicine have been written. A good history of mathematics, especially of geometry, would bea much more interesting and useful work .Such a work, ifdone well,could be regarded to some extent as a history of the human mind, since it is in this science, more than in anything else, that man makes known that gift of intelligence that God has given him to rise 1 above all other creatures. Ahalf-centurylater,Jean-EtienneMontuclaprovidedsuchanaccountinhisHistoire des mathem atiques (rst printed in 1758, and reissued in a greatly expanded form 2 in 1799). Montucla s great work is generally acknowledged as the rst genuine history of mathematics. According to modern historians, previous attempts at such a history had amounted to little more than collections of anecdotes, biographies or exhaustive bibliographies: jumbles of names, dates and titles, as one writer in the 3 Dictionary of Scienti c Biography characterizes them. Montucla, in contrast, was thoroughly animated by the Enlightenment...



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