



The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy (Latin and English): (Annotated)

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius

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Boethius was the last of the Roman philosophers, and the first of the scholastic theologians. The present volume serves to prove the truth of both these assertions. The Consolation of Philosophy is indeed, as Gibbon called it, "a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or of Tully." To belittle its originality and sincerity, as is sometimes done, with a view to saving the Christianity of the writer, is to misunderstand his mind and his method. The Consolatio is not, as has been maintained, a mere patchwork of translations from Aristotle and the Neoplatonists. Rather it is the supreme essay of one who throughout his life had found his highest solace in the dry light of reason. His chief source of refreshment, in the dungeon to which his beloved library had not accompanied him, was a memory well stocked with the poetry and thought of former days. The development of the argument is anything but Neoplatonic; it is all his own. And if the Consolation of Philosophy admits Boethius to the company of Cicero or even of Plato, the theological Tractates mark him as the forerunner of St. Thomas. It was the habit of a former generation to regard Boethius as an eclectic, the transmitter of a distorted Aristotelianism, a pagan, or at best a luke-warm Christian, who at the end cast off the faith which he had worn in times of peace, and wrapped himself in the philosophic cloak which properly belonged to him. The authenticity of the Tractates was freely denied. We know better now.

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