



The Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius: Medieval and Early Renaissance Christianity (Classic Books - The Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius)

Boethius

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The Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius - Boethius - Translated into English Prose and Verse by H. R. James. The Consolation of Philosophy is a philosophical work by Boethius, written around the year 524. It has been described as the single most important and influential work in the West on Medieval and early Renaissance Christianity, and is also the last great Western work of the Classical Period. The Consolation of Philosophy was written during a one-year imprisonment Boethius served while awaiting trial – and eventual horrific execution – for the crime of treason under the Ostrogothic King Theodoric the Great. Boethius was at the very heights of power in Rome and was brought down by treachery. This experience inspired the text, which reflects on how evil can exist in a world governed by God (the problem of theodicy), and how happiness can be attainable amidst fickle fortune, while also considering the nature of happiness and God. It has been described as "by far the most interesting example of prison literature the world has ever seen." Even though reference is often made to God, the book is not strictly religious. A link is often assumed, yet there is no reference made to Jesus Christ or Christianity or any other specific religion other than a few oblique references to Pauline scripture, such as the symmetry between the opening lines of Book 4 Chapter 3 and 1 Corinthians 9:24. God is however represented not only as an eternal and all-knowing being, but as the source of all Good. Boethius writes the book as a conversation between himself and Lady Philosophy. She consoles Boethius by discussing the transitory nature of fame and wealth ("no man can ever truly be secure until he has been forsaken by Fortune"), and the ultimate superiority of things of the mind, which she calls the "one true good". She contends that happiness comes from within, and that one's virtue is all that one truly has, because it is not imperilled by the vicissitudes of fortune.

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