

Alberto de Aguayo
(1469-1525)

Preface to *Libro de Boecio Severino*
(Seville, 1518)

PREFACE

Boethius Severinus, the Roman nobleman and senator, lived in the time of the Emperor Anastasius. He was a philosopher, an orator, an outstanding poet, and an expert in Sacred Scripture. Indeed, he was more skilled in the humanities than anybody of his time. He had a fine command of Greek and Latin, and translated many works by Aristotle and other philosophers from one to the other. He had a sharp mind and was well versed in Catholic doctrine. He wrote many books about the Faith, for example, *On the Trinity*, *On the Two Natures and One Person in Christ*, etc. He was tried on false charges and executed in the same year, as were his father-in-law, Symmachus, and Pope John I, by order of Theodoric, the Arrian king of the Goths. After having suffered a long banishment to Ravenna, in the year of Our Redeemer 523 he wrote this book in exile to show his sadness and sorrow over the injustice he was suffering. He turned to philosophy or natural reason ; this brought him satisfaction and consolation. He wrote in both poetry and prose: this was either to show his skill or to please his readers. It may also be that, at the time he wrote, this was the convention, as we see in Martianus Capella, Prosper d'Aquitaine, Alain de Lille and others. His story is "moralised" in the medieval way: there are no examples or authorities from Sacred Scripture. For that reason there is nothing so well known or well executed as these stories. Besides, he did not intend to teach only the Christian, but also any man in the world who lives according to the laws of nature.

In translating from Latin to Castilian, I did not work word for word, but sentence for sentence, leaving nothing out and putting in nothing of my own. In translating these books, our duty is not to count up the words, but to weigh out the sentences. True, this book has been translated several times into Castilian; and for that reason, I would ask you to compare my translation with the others to see whether you can find anything superfluous in the work. Boethius had been no better treated by his enemies than his book by his translators. And if anybody takes it as lack of responsibility to write creatively because they find it hard to bear things they have little experience of, let him remember that it was for this reason that Moses, David, Solomon and many of the Prophets wrote and spoke. And even the Lord of one and all said while he was on the Cross: "Eli, Eli, lama sabac thani." And in other words, "Non dico tibi septies, sed septuagies septies." (Matthew 18.22) And as there is nobody so ignorant or insolent to dare reproach our Saviour and the others for their mode of speaking, so one can not blame Boethius as an author and as friend to his faithful translator.