

Calchidius

FROM HIS PREFACE TO PLATO, *TIMAEUS*

[4th Century]

Through your enthusiasm for all liberal studies and the excellence of your mind, you had conceived the worthy project of undertaking a task so far not attempted. You had decided that the use the Greeks make of this book had to be shared by the Latin-speaking world. And, although you were capable of doing this easily and expeditiously, I believe that it is through your laudable modesty that you preferred to lay this charge on somebody else you thought a second self. I ask you, could I, though the task is arduous, in the face of such a great and deeply felt compliment, cry off this commission? And having never refused a duty imposed on me by urgent and seemly requests, could I go counter to such a noble and important desire? For in this matter, refusal of an important task would seem, through a cunning simulation of ignorance, concealment of future knowledge. Therefore, certain of my small ability, and not without divine help, I took on this task from you. And so, with an eager heart and a firm hope, after getting into the first parts of Plato's *Timaeus*, I not only translated them, but also wrote a commentary in the belief that, without an explanation of my translation, this image of an abstruse matter would be somewhat too obscure. My reason for dividing the work into parts was the length of the book. And also it seemed more courteous to send you an offering to be tasted by your ear and your mind. And when this did not meet with your displeasure, I was inspired with more confidence and daring.
