

## *Haec quibus uteris verba: The Bible and Boethius' Christianity*

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Boethius' Christianity is puzzling. Not just the old debate, resolved by the discovery of the Anecdota Holderi, about whether he was the author of the *Opuscula Sacra*. He was. Nor the putative trajectory of his faith. This included Momigliano's (1959) extreme position (“Many people have turned to Christianity for consolation. Boethius turned to paganism. His Christianity collapsed—it collapsed so thoroughly that perhaps he did not even notice its disappearance.”) as well as representatives of more modern compromises, described by Marenbon as “Christianizers” (e.g. Klingner) “Augustinians” (e.g. Chadwick), “Hellenists” (e.g. Courcelle) to Marenbon himself who sees the work as a dialogue between a Christian (Boethius) and a non-Christian (Philosophy).

In Cons. 3.12.22-23 appears: *est igitur summum, inquit, bonum quod regit cuncta fortiter suaviterque disponit. tum ego: quam, inquam, me non modo ea quae conclusa est summa rationum, uerum multo magis haec ipsa quibus uteris uerba delectant . . .* Boethius here is reacting to the one undisputed biblical quotation in the Cons., viz. of Sap. 8.1 *adtingit enim a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suaviter*. Aside from this passage none of the other alleged biblical allusions or echoes in Cons. (Fortescue, Klingner, Bieler, De Vogel,) is “hard” or can be made to stick, although they range from Genesis to Apocalypse. In some cases where there may be an echo, then there is a deliberate attempt to rewrite and de-Biblicize: e.g. *lucem inaccessibilem* > *inaccessam* (De Vogel) or the wise man building on sand (C.2 M 4), which studiously avoids the ecclesiological *petra* of Mt. 7.24. We are dealing, even in cases of theological matter (e.g. martyrdom [C. 2.4.29] supplicatory prayer [C. 5.3.33] and creation [C. 3 M.9]), with at very best syncretistic paraphrase.

I aim to make sense of the sort of entity we see in Boethius with specific reference to his handling of the Bible. How and why does a documented Christian avoid biblical language without explicitly problematizing it, as did Jerome and Augustine? Why does a theologian fueling contemporary ecclesiastical politics, i.e. the Acacian Schism, have no interest in the verba of the Bible, normally distancing himself from them and taking refuge in narrative summary in the De Fide attributed to him? One might compare slippery and bi-dialectal characters such as Calcidius and Ammianus Marcellinus, whose fence-sitting or explicit self-distancing from Christian terminology have been remarked. Both of the above lived much earlier. Boethius has often been praised as a man living in some sort of time-warp, the last truly learned product of ancient culture. He emerges as even odder, however, if we consider him in his contemporary social-religious (as opposed to purely theological-religious) context. What does he gain by his socio-linguistic strategy of neutralization? This paper asks an historical question and will attempt to answer it using philological and sociolinguistic methods.