HERMENEUTICAL ADVICE FOR INTERPRETERS OF SCRIPTURE IN BOOK ONE OF CASSIODORUS' *INSTITVTIONES*

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Abstract

This article studies Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, Book One in its context of the extant Latin *introductores*. It aims to identify the author's hermeneutical advice and thereby determine the significance of Book One in the early history of biblical interpretation. It will demonstrate that Cassiodorus' largely bibliographical recommendations include several important guidelines for interpreting Scripture, as well as serve the purpose of educating Christian clergy/monks in the subtle art of understanding and teaching Scripture. This article will proceed by first introducing the origin of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* in two books. After justifying this article's almost exclusive focus on Book One of the *Institutiones*, various hermeneutically relevant issues are investigated in the order that they appear in Cassiodorus' treatise. Among these are the "recommended readings" of patristic authors for particular books of the Bible, the issue of what the canonical Scripture as such amounts to, several suggestions of more technical interpretative tasks, and the required moral/spiritual disposition for the adequate understanding of God's Word. "Distilling" the hermeneutical advice from Book One of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* facilitates the comprehension of the importance of this particular treatise among the other *introductiones*. For various reasons, Cassiodorus' contribution, especially in Book One, has been either seldom acknowledged in the general histories of biblical interpretation or has been neglected altogether.

Keywords

Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* (Book One), biblical interpretation, Latin *introductiones*

Much like Victorinus, who was "first a rhetorician and then a bishop (*ex oratore episcopus*)" (*Inst*. 1.5.3, 7.1),[1] and Paulinus, "the senator who became a priest (*ex senatore presbyterum*)" (*Inst*. 1.21.2), Magnus

[1] Cassiodorus evidently combines the careers of Marius Victorinus and Victorinus of Pettau (*Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul*, trans. James W. Halporn, Translated Texts for Historians 42 [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004], 123, n. 82). A critical Latin text is that of Roger A. B. Mynors, *Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937; rev. ed. 1963).

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Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator (c. 480s-c. 580s CE) had first a brilliant secular career in the service of an earthly lord, the Gothic King Theoderic,[2] and, after his *conuersio*, entered the service of the heavenly Lord (*Exp. Ps.* Praef.).[3] Together with Pope Agapetus (535-536 CE), Cassiodorus had a plan to establish a theological academy in Rome, comparable to the higher educational institutions in Alexandria and Nisibis (*Inst.* 1, Praef. 1).[4] Unfortunately, the Gothic War prevented the materialization of their plan to open a Christian school in Rome (*Inst.* 1, Praef. 1). So, Cassiodorus built one within the walls of his own estate, in Scyllacium, in southern Italy (*Inst.* 1.29.3). He called it Vivarium after its fishponds (*uiuaria*) (*Inst.* 1.29.1).[5]

Without ever becoming a monk, priest, or bishop, Cassiodorus eventually retired to this private estate. His new calling was to take care of the intellectual shaping of Christian leaders. For that task he guided the monks in Vivarium to copy, edit, bind, and preserve the ancient Christian works both in Greek and Latin.[6] With the help of his collaborators, Cassiodorus also undertook an extensive translation project of Christian literature from Greek, "so that eloquent Greece cannot boast that it possesses an indispensable work that has not been available to you (*ne insultet habere se facunda Graecia necessarium quod uobis iudicet esse subtractum*)" (*Inst.* 1.17.1). For his library,

[2] The fall of Ravenna under the eastern jurisdiction in 540 CE ended Cassiodorus' "secular" career.

[3] For recent general accounts of Cassiodorus' life and works, see Gerda Heydemann, "Cassiodorus," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. David G. Hunter et al., at https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-encyclopedia-of-early-christianity-online, accessed April 1, 2021; Derek A. Olsen, *The Honey of Souls: Cassiodorus and the Interpretation of the Psalms in the Early Medieval West* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2017), 61-90; *Einführung in die geistlichen und weltlichen Wissenschaften = Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum*, ed. Andreas J. L. Pronay, Spudasmata 163 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2014), 1-6; Maria L. Angrisani Sanfilippo, "Cassiodorus," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo di Berardino et al. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2014), vol. 1, 440b-442a.

[4] Wolfgang Bürsgens, "Einleitung" to *Cassiodor: Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum / Einführung in die geistlichen und weltlichen Wissenschaften*, ed. Wolfgang Bürsgens, Fontes Christiani 39 (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 24-29; Pronay, *Einführung*, 23-26.

[5] For the archeological and literary evidence about this place, see Luciana Cuppo Csaki, "Il monastero vivariense di Cassiodoro: ricognizione e ricerche, 1994-1999," in *Frühes Christentum zwischen Rom und Konstantinopel, Akten des XIV. internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Wien 19.-26.9, 1999*, ed. Reinhardt Harreither et al. (Vatican: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 2006), 301-316.

[6] Sam J. B. Barnish, "The Work of Cassiodorus after His Conversion," *Latomus* 48 (1989): 157-187.

Cassiodorus even acquired "mechanical lights (*mechanicas lucernas*) made for study at night" (*Inst*. 1.30.4). Everything was in the service of studying the Word of God. "Hasten to advance in Sacred Scripture (*festinate in Scripturis sanctis proficere*)!" could have been the motto in Vivarium (*Inst*. 1.33.4). Shortly after Cassiodorus' death , the monastery was unfortunately abandoned or destroyed, and its library was probably scattered.[7]

1. The *Institutiones diuinarum et saecularium litterarum*

Cassiodorus has provided two accounts of his writings,[8] respectively in his *Ordo generis Cassiodororum* and in the Preface to his *De orthographia*. The latter account lists the works that he authored after his "conversion,"[9] that is, after Cassiodorus' increasing dedication to the life in God's service.[10]

Among these works is *Institutiones diuinarum et saecularium litterarum*, which was drafted in the middle of the sixth century, constantly updated, and received its two-part form during the last years of Cassiodorus' life. It is a concise introduction to both the "sacred" study of Scripture or *diuinae litterae* (Book One) and "secular" study of the seven liberal arts or *saeculares litterae* (Book Two) (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 5-6).[11] Yet, despite the envisioned unity of this treatise, the two books of

[7] Maria L. Angrisani Sanfilippo, "Vivarium," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, vol. 3, 929b-930b; Mariana Vuković, "The Library of Vivarium: Cassiodorus and the Classics," MA Thesis, Central European University, Budapest, 2007, 1-87, at 34-65, at https://www.academia.edu/448008/, accessed April 1, 2021. On the fate of the library of Vivarium after Cassiodorus, see also Ulrich Schindel, "Neues zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Bibliothek des Klosters Vivarium", *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 15 (2008): 1-15.

[8] In *Inst*. 1.16.4, Cassiodorus mentions Augustine's *Retractationes* and points out the usefulness of imitating Augustine's method, which means creating (a) critical-evaluative list(s) of one's own works. For an overview of Cassiodorus' works—their manuscripts, redaction, transmission, and modern assessments—see Patrizia Stoppacci and Paolo Gatti, "Cassiodorus Senator," in *La trasmissione dei testi latini del medioevo/ Mediaeval Latin Texts and Their Transmission*, ed. Paolo Chiesa et al., Millennio medievale 94 (Firenze: SISMEL. Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), vol. 4, 81-146.

[9] Pronay, *Einführung*, 6-7; Mark Vessey, "Introduction" to *Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*, 15-16.

[10] James J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1979), 107-114.

[11] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.15.1, 27.1-2, 2.1; *Orth*. Praef. 2. For the distinction between "sacred" and "secular" learning, see also Jerome, *uir. ill*. 36; Augustine, *doc. Chr*. 4.1.2; and Junillus, *Inst*. Praef. 1.

Institutiones are found together only in four manuscripts.[12] This, in turn, means that next to the separate origin of the two books of the *Institutiones* (see below), in later history, Book One and Book Two had their pretty much independent and uneven "lives" of reception.[13]

In essence, Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* is a reading program or curriculum designed for students of Scripture, "a training in the complete art of reading the Word of God."[14] At the very end of his *De orthographia*, Cassiodorus summarizes his efforts with words that would apply to Book One of his *Institutiones* equally well: "I have prepared a full course of reading to assist you in the understanding of the holy scriptures (*quemadmodum Scripturae diuinae intelligi debeant copiosissime legenda praeparaui*)" (*Orth*. Concl. 11).[15] Or, if one prefers, *Institutiones* is a sort of "Comps List" of suggested readings primarily for the Christian clergy/monks, who needed to be ready for interpreting the Word of God. According to Cassiodorus' own estimation, in his *Institutiones*, one finds "more of utility than of elegance (*ubi plus utilitatis inuenies quam decoris*)" (*Orth*. Praef. 2).

Cassiodorus was convinced that Scripture was the actual source of "secular" learning (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 6; 1.21.2).[16] In *Exp*. *Ps*. 23.9, he exhorts,

> You, masters of secular literature, realize that from here [i.e., from Scripture] have flowed forth your figures of speech, your proofs of different kinds, your definition, your teachings about all disciplines, for in such writings you find enshrined what you realize was said long before your schools existed.[17]

[12] Mynors, *Institutiones*, x-xii; Stoppacci and Gatti, "Cassiodorus Senator," 115-118.

[13] Mynors, *Institutiones*, xii-xxxix; Louis Holtz, "Quelques aspects de la tradition et de la diffusion des *Institutiones*," in *Atti della settimana di studi su Flavio Magno Aurelio Cassiodoro (Cosenza-Squillace, 19-24 settembre 1983)*, ed. Sandro Leanza (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1986), 281-312, at 281-285; Jochen Schultheiß, "Cassiodor, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum*," in *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken: von Origenes bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer et al. (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 2016), 97-110, at 109-110.

[14] Edward K. Rand, "The New Cassiodorus," *Speculum* 13/4 (1938): 433-447, at 434.

[15] Cassiodorus, *De orthographia*, ed. Patrizia Stoppacci, Edizione nazionale dei testi mediolatini d'Italia I/15 (Firenze: SISMEL. Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2010), Available at https://digiliblt.uniupo.it/opera.php?id=DLT000077&gruppo=opere&iniziale=all, accessed April 1, 2021.

[16] "As to confirm the (strictly untenable!) hypothesis that the secular disciplines were 'transferred' from the Hebrew Bible, [Cassiodorus] presents the Psalter as a virtual encyclopedia of the liberal arts" (Vessey, "Introduction," 34).

[17] *Cognoscite, magistri saecularium litterarum, hinc schemata, hinc diuersi generis argumenta, hinc definitiones, hinc disciplinarum omnium profluxisse doctrinas,*

Thus, the sequence of the two books of the *Institutiones* followed the perceived historical order: first, there was the "sacred" literature and after that, the "secular teachers" established their own disciplines. Such perceived sequence avoided a contradictory understanding of the "sacred" and "secular" studies from the start. However, it is likely that Book One was written later than Book Two,[18] and updated for several times as the holdings of the library at Vivarium increased.[19]

Book Two is a concise textbook on the "secular" "arts and disciplines (*de artibus ac disciplinis*)" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 6),[20] which, in combination with Book One, is arguably Cassiodorus' special contribution. Again, he was quite convinced that "secular" learning of liberal arts, being posterior to Scripture, was indispensable for its interpreters (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 6).[21] "Arts and disciplines" should in no way be neglected by the interpreters of the holy text, "since to a considerable degree it is by this that our minds are equipped to understand Sacred Scripture (*non* […] *minimum ad sacras Scripturas intellegendas sensus noster instruitur*)" (*Inst*. 1.28.3).[22] For example, Cassiodorus argues that knowledge of numbers

quando in his litteris posita cognoscitis quae ante scholas uestras longe prius dicta fuisse sentitis (*CCL* [1958] 97:219); *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, trans. Patrick G. Walsh, ACW 51 (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1990), 148. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 15; 150.6; Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 2.40.60; 4.6.9-7.21.

[18] Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1, Praef. 6; 1.21.2, 27.1-2 refer to Book Two as to something that already exists. See Pierre Courcelle, "Histoire d'un brouillon cassiodorien," *Revue des Études Anciennes* 44/1-2 (1942): 65-86, at 74-75. Troncarelli has suggested that Book Two existed already before the establishing of Vivarium (Fabio Troncarelli, *Vivarium* [Turnhout: Brepols, 1998], 12-21, 29-33).

[19] Although Book Two was more frequently copied than Book One (Mynors, *Institutiones*, xviii-xxxix), the latter too had its recensions due to copying and the geographical spread of manuscripts (Stoppacci and Gatti, "Cassiodorus Senator," 119-121).

[20] For this distinction, see *Inst*. 2.3.20 and Halporn, *Cassiodorus*, 107, n. 3. For the numerous explanatory diagrams of the "arts and disciplines" in the earliest manuscript of the *Institutiones* (Bamberg, Staatsbibl., Patr. 61 [HJ.IV.15], eighth century), see Michael Gorman, "The Diagrams in the Oldest Manuscripts of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*," *Revue bénédictine* 110/1-2 (2000): 27-41. For the subject-matter of Book Two, see Patrizia Stoppacci, "Liste di autori nell'opera manualistica di Cassiodoro: le *Institutiones* tra la scuola antica e la biblioteca di Vivarium," *Filologia Mediolatina* 24 (2017): 1-48, at 6-24, and for a more general overview, Bürsgens, "Einleitung," 74-85.

[21] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.1.4, 4.2, 6.2, 27.1, 28.3-7.

[22] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 2.3.22, 7.4 and *Concl*. 3. However, there was no consensus about the use of "secular" studies for Scriptural interpretation among patristic authors. While Cassiodorus, Origen (*ep*. *Greg*. 1), Adrian (*Isag*. 75-6), Junillus (*Inst*. Praef.), and Augustine (*doc*. *Chr*. 2.17.27-42.63) encouraged it, Tyconius (*Reg*. 4), Cassian (*Inst*. 5.34), and Gregory the Great (*Mor*. *ep*. 5) did not (see Prov 30:2-3; Karla Pollmann, "Re-Appropriation and Disavowal: Pagan and Christian Authorities in Cassiodorus and Venantius Fortunatus," in *Religious Identity and the Problem of*

and arithmetic proves crucial for understanding the miracles of the Lord (*Inst*. 2.4.8).[23] He admits that his keen interest in "secular" learning, as in something that facilitates biblical interpretation, comes from Augustine (*Inst*. 2, *Conclusio* 3).[24] To be more precise, Book Two of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* seems to take its lead from Augustine's early dialogues (*Inst*. 2.1.1),[25] rather than from the famous excursus in Augustine's *doc*. *Chr*. 2.17.27-42.63 (cf. 3.29.40) and Book Four of the same treatise.[26]

2. *Institutiones*, Book One

This article, however, investigates Book One of the *Institutiones*, which focuses on the "sacred"/"divine" studies, is largely bibliographical, and—as already stated above—often circulated independently from Book Two. The goal is to ascertain Cassiodorus' hermeneutical advice scattered throughout his annotated catalogue(s) of recommended readings. Since Book Two of the *Institutiones* has received more attention in modern scholarship than Book One, this article limits itself to the first book—to what there is to read about biblical interpretation (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 5).

In the *Rule of St*. *Benedict*, monks were told to meditate on Scripture with the guidance of the orthodox fathers (*reg*. 9 and 18).[27]

Historical Foundation, ed. Judith Frishman et al., Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 8 [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 289-316). Cassiodorus' list of those favoring the use of "secular" learning in *Inst*. 1.28.4 omits the counterevidence.

[23] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. 89.17 (*conclusio*); Tyconius, *Reg*. 5; Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 2.16.25, 38.56; Eucherius, *Form*. 10. See also Cassiodorus' assessment of the meaning of numbers in the final sections of (almost) every Psalm. In *Exp*. *Ps*. 12.6 (*conclusio*), he says explicitly that the number abounds "in many mysteries (*multis mysteriis*)."

[24] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 15.

[25] It also takes its lead from Boethius' handbooks on the subjects of *quadriuium* of which some are extant. Boethius was Cassiodorus' predecessor as *magister officiorum* at the court of Theoderic.

[26] The reason is that, in *doc*. *Chr*. 4.1.2 and 4.3.4, Augustine explicitly says that secular disciplines are to be taught separately (i.e., apart from his treatise on interpreting Scripture). For Cassiodorus' use of Augustine's works, see Maria Becker, "Cassiodorus," in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), vol. 2, 767a-770a. For the relation between Book Four of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* and Cassiodorus' *Expositio Psalmorum*, see Mauro Agosto, "Su Cassiodoro *in psalm., praef*. 15," *Cassiodorus* 5 (1999): 289-301.

[27] Scripture provides ample proof that guidance in interpretation is indeed necessary: e.g., Neh 8:8; 2 Chron 24:27; and 2 Pet 3:16. Cassiodorus was also following Jerome's caution that in understanding Scripture, one makes little progress without

Yet, it is nowhere said who the "orthodox fathers" exactly were whom one was supposed to follow. It so happened that a list of recommended authorities for biblical interpretation was put together by Benedict's younger contemporary Cassiodorus in his *Institutiones*, Book One.[28] In Cassiodorus' own words, Book One "contains an instruction to religious reading (*institutionem* […] *diuinarum continet lectionum*)" (*Inst*. 2, Praef. 1), which means that it includes a careful selection of recommended authors and their interpretative insights.[29]

a. What does an interpreter need to read?

In compiling his reading-list, Cassiodorus did not aim for originality. His intention was precisely not to convey his own teaching, but "the words of earlier writers (*priscorum dicta*)" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 1). As a *modernus* (*Inst*. 1.8.16),[30] he eagerly attempted to preserve the learning of "the teachers of a former age (*antiqui saeculi magistros*)" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 5), or "of the previous generations (*antiquorum*)" (*Inst*. 1.27.2). Cassiodorus makes this very clear and repeatedly so, "It will be better for you not to be drinking in striking novelty, but to satisfy yourself at the spring of the ancients (*per magistros* […] *antiquos*)"

having a guide (Jerome, *ep*. 53.6 [this epistle is mentioned in *Inst*. 1.21.2]). Cf. Tyconius, *Reg*. Praef.; Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. Prol. 1-9; and Cassian's colorful suggestion that some scriptural texts need "cooking" before their "substance" becomes available (*Conl*. 8.3).

[28] The lists of treatises in Jerome's and Gennadius' respective *De uiris illustribus* do not function exactly as "Suggested Reading" and these are also not limited to the works of biblical exegesis (Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.17.2).

[29] Vuković has meticulously listed all possible items in the library of Vivarium ("The Library of Vivarium," 66-81). Another convenient catalogue is provided by Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources*, trans. Harry E. Wedeck (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 372-375. Interestingly, around the twelfth century, Book One of *Institutiones* became itself an item among various selected readings (Mynors, *Institutiones*, xxxix-xlix). See also Lorenzo Viscido, "Augustinian Works Available in the Vivarium Library (6th Century)," *Vetera Christianorum* 23 (1986): 329-335.

[30] See Vessey, "Introduction," 6, 11. Many overviews of the history of biblical interpretation end the patristic period with Augustine and begin the medieval period with Gregory the Great or Bede (e.g., Ian C. Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation: The Senses of Scripture in Premodern Exegesis* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2018]; Henning G. Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation. Vol. 2: From Late Antiquity to the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. James O. Duke, Resources of Biblical Study 61 [Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009]). Nonetheless, and even though *Institutiones* Book One was not particularly popular in the Middle Ages, perhaps the medieval period should begin with Cassiodorus, with the first *modernus* after all.

(*Inst*. 1, Praef. 4).[31] Again, for a *modernus*, the best way to understand Scripture was indeed to study ancient scriptural commentaries as the "instructive materials of Holy Scripture (*sanctarum Scripturarum instrumenta dogmatica*)" (*Inst*. 1.32.3).

To begin with, Cassiodorus counsels that after one has learned to read, he/she should take up his *Institutiones* (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 3). However, and a bit confusingly, he also suggests that one is supposed to read Scripture,[32] as well as to follow a prescribed sequence of reading it.[33] Among other things, the requirement of reading the entire Scripture supports the hermeneutical principle of *scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*. "A matter stated obscurely in one place (*de locis obscurissimis*) is set down more clearly (*clarius*) in another book" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 2).[34] The example Cassiodorus gives, is how Hebrews explicated the obscure matters of the Old Testament.[35] In order to perform intertextual interpretation within the canon and find the meaning of particular passages, one needs to have a sense of what the whole says.[36] Accordingly, Cassiodorus' advice establishes the hermeneutical circle in which one's understanding of the individual parts of the text is determined by the reference to the whole Scripture and vice versa.[37]

A more detailed instruction for the envisioned readings besides Scripture is given in *Inst*. 1.10.1-5, 15.16. Again and alternatively, after reading Scripture, the preferred sequence of study is to start from his *Institutiones* (*Inst*. 2, *Conclusio* 9 [Bamberg manuscript]). It serves,

[31] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1, Praef. 2; 1.24.1-2.

[32] In *Inst*. 1, Praef. 8 (cf. 1.15.1), Cassiodorus mentions his own careful reading of the entire Scripture (i.e., the nine sections or codices [see below]; cf. Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 2.8.12), and in *Inst*. 1.21.2, 30.1 (cf. *Inst*. 1, Praef. 3), he adds the requirement of the repeated, careful, and thorough reading of Scripture. Nevertheless, despite his insistence on the proper order of reading (*Inst*. Praef. 3 and 5), in *Inst*. 1.24.1, he recommends yet another reading sequence: first, the five *introductiones* (see below) and after that Scripture together with its commentators.

[33] In *Inst*. 1, Praef. 2 (cf. *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 16; 150.6 [*conclusio*]), Cassiodorus suggested that Bible reading should begin from Psalms and such recommendation is entirely understandable in a monastic setting. On the other hand, in *Inst*. 1.1-9, he divided Scripture into nine sections/codices, the sequence of which obviously began with the Book of Genesis.

[34] Cf. Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 2.6.8, 9.14.

[35] For *obscuritas*, see Cicero, *Inu*. 1.15.20 (cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 2.2.8) and Quintilian, *Inst*. 7.5.6. Obscurity applies to cases where the reference of words/sentences is unclear.

[36] Already Aristotle suggested that the whole (*to holon*) had to be given a priority over the part (*to meros*) (*Rhet*. 1.13.18).

[37] E.g., Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. 104.26.

in turn, as an introduction to the other *introductores*,[38] that is, to the hermeneutical treatises of Tyconius (*Liber regularum*), Augustine (*De doctrina Christiana*),[39] Adrian (*Isagōgē in sacras scripturas*),[40] Eucherius (*Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*), and Junillus (*Instituta regularia diuinae legis*).[41] Evidently, and as was his custom, Cassiodorus gathered these treatises providing various hermeneutical insights, rules, and examples into "one collection (*in uno corpore*)" (*Inst*. 1.10.1). Nevertheless, it is somewhat perplexing that, in Book One of his *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus does not consider various hermeneutical issues on which the above mentioned *introductiones* spent significant textual space. For example, one cannot find discussions of prosopological exegesis, authorial intention(s),[42] Scripture's use of anthropomorphic language and, with the exception of a few statements, the prefigurations of Christ in the Old Testament. It could be that Cassiodorus decided to reserve his elaborations on these topics for his *Expositio Psalmorum*.[43]

However, a matter of fact is that even reading this redacted "one collection" of *introductiones* (a kind of "Readings in Biblical Interpretation") might not suffice in itself, because it may not explain everything that happened to be unclear in Scripture (*Inst*. 1.10.1-2). For this

[38] To reiterate, the existing *introductores* are precisely the literary/intellectual context in which Book One of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones* is assessed in this article. For editions with Latin texts, see *Tyconius: The Book of Rules*, trans. William S. Babcock, Texts and Translations 31 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989); *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. Reginald P. H. Green, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Peter W. Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures: An Antiochene Handbook for Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); *Eucherius: Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*. ed. Carmela Mandolfo, *CCL* 66 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Michael Maas, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: Junillus Africanus and the Instituta regularia Divinae Legis*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[39] Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* is the only text for which Cassiodorus gives the full title in *Inst*. 1.10.1. See Ilona Opelt, "Materialen zur Nachwirkung von Augustins Schrift *De doctrina christiana*," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 17 (1974): 64-73, at 66-67.

[40] Adrian's *Isagōgē in sacras scripturas* was translated into Latin "either at the Vivarium or earlier," and then again, in the seventeenth century, by Aloysius Lollin(us) (Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 10, 66-80).

[41] Cassiodorus was the first to mention Junillus' *Instituta*, which was written on the basis of a treatise of Paul the Persian and addressed to the African bishop Primasius of Hadrumetum.

[42] Cassiodorus, of course, knew very well that what a text seemed to say and authorial intention were not necessarily the same thing: there were cases where the "letter" and "spirit" were at variance with each other (*Inst*. 2.2.6).

[43] See note 70.

reason, ancient biblical commentaries have to be consulted as well (*Inst*. 1.10.2), because these are "treating at length in very clear and exact detail (*tractatum latius minutissime atque clarissime*) what was passed over for the sake of brevity in the authoritative text" (*Inst*. 1.1.1).

Here one encounters another key hermeneutical conviction, namely that Cassiodorus acknowledged the value, as well as the inevitability, of an interpretative tradition for exegeting Scripture. It was of paramount importance that students read Scripture "together with its commentators (*cum expositoribus suis*)" (*Inst*. 1.24.1) precisely because it provided the trusted interpretative tradition.[44] The works of earlier interpreters were the "Jacob's ladder (*scala*)" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 2) which enabled a *modernus* exegete to climb up to the divine realities.

In his suggested reading-list of ancient commentaries in *Inst*. 1.1-9, Cassiodorus naturally gave priority to Latin commentators (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 3-4; 1.11.3, 18-22).[45] However, if these did not suffice, further insights should be sought from Greek expositors (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 3-4; 1.8.15, 17.1-2). If no Latin commentary was found on a particular epistle of Paul, the advanced interpreter should translate John Chrysostom's commentary into Latin (*Inst*. 1.8.15).[46]

Furthermore, if no full commentary at all was available for Cassiodorus, he "wove together some fragments from the learned men into a single garment as it were (*in uno quodam uestimento*)" (*Inst*. 1.2.1). Out of such piece-meal collecting of "the most trustworthy commentators (*per tractatores probatissimos*)" emerged "a different kind of commentary, insightful and beautiful (*aliud* […] *genus expositionis acutissimum pulcherrimumque*)" (*Inst*. 1.26.2). According to *Inst*. 1.8.9, Peter of Tripoli had already annotated Pauline epistles with the works of Augustine. Arguably, such procedure laid the basis for the medieval *Glossa ordinaria*.[47]

[44] "The lexical pair of *textus* and *commentum* achieves a prominence in the *Institutiones* that is new to Latin literature" (Vessey, "Introduction," 45). So also Heydemann, "Book One provides a guide to the integrated study of scripture and its commentary tradition" ("Cassiodorus," accessed April 1, 2021).

[45] Victorinus of Pettau (Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.5.3, 9.2) was arguably the first Latin commentator in the full sense of this word (Josef Lössl, "Commentaries," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019], 171-186, at 174 and 180).

[46] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.5.4, 8.3-4, 15, 9.1, 17.1. Throughout Book One of the *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus constantly distinguishes between the more and the less skilled interpreters of Scripture and tunes his advice accordingly (e.g., *Inst*. 1.3.1, 4.4, 5.7, 8.11, 15.1, 21.2, 28.1, 28.6, and 32.2).

[47] Lesley Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Commentaria 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 53-58.

There was yet another option, if nothing else was available—Cassiodorus commissioned someone to write a commentary. For example, a priest Bellator wrote commentaries on Ruth (lost) (*Inst.* 1.1.9);[48] even the *moderni expositores*, that is, the commentaries by Cassiodorus' contemporaries, were regarded beneficial (*Inst.* 1.8.16, 23.2).

No matter whether the library at Vivarium had a Latin commentary, a Greek one translated into Latin, an eclectic commentary put together from available fragments, or a newly composed one (these options are listed in *Inst.* 1.9.5), at times Cassiodorus gave them a format of a single-volume commentary on a particular book with some extra space for possible updates and appendices (*Inst.* 1.2.12, 5.4, 15.14).[49]

In order to easily find significant exegetical passages, Cassiodorus marked the relevant sections in patristic commentaries with red abbreviation marks referring to biblical books and enlisted a key for these abbreviations at the beginning of his text (*Inst.* 1.26.1).[50] He also provided chapter-headings (*tituli*), either already existing ones or newly composed, at the beginning of a particular book, so that students could have a quick grasp of its contents (*Inst.* 1.1.10, 2.13, 5.7, 6.5).[51] Again, both features had hermeneutical implications: the first provided exegetical guidance and the second helped to read a section of a text in the light of the whole.

However, a *modernus* student of Scripture had to be vigilant in reading only the "orthodox" authors,[52] Latin or Greek. In other words, one was supposed to look for theologically "safe (*securum*)" commentaries (*Inst.* 1.8.2, 4) and be warned against "suspect commentators (*in suspectis*

[48] Bellator's commentaries on the Book of Wisdom, Tobit, Esther, Judith, and Maccabees, which are mentioned in *Inst.* 1.5.6, 6.4, are also lost.

[49] Single-volume patristic commentaries on the whole Bible became common only in the beginning of the ninth century (John J. Contreni, "The Patristic Legacy to c. 1000," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, *Volume 2: From 600 to 1450* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 505-535, at 530).

[50] For a different kind of "index" of primarily rhetorical tropes in Cassiodorus' *Expositio Psalmorum*, see Rita Copeland, "Cassiodorus' Hermeneutics: The Psalms and the Art of Language," in *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation: The Latin Fathers*, ed. Tarmo Toom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 160-182, at 162; Martina Elice, "Teoria e pratica dell'esegesi nell'*Expositio Psalmorum* di Cassiodoro. Vicende e percorsi di alcuni *schemata* retorici," *Incontri di filologia classica* 16 (2016-2017): 185-228.

[51] Cassiodorus also composed a separate treatise on chapter headings (*Liber titulorum*), as well as summaries, with occasional brief commentaries, of the epistles of Paul, Book of Acts, and Revelation (*Complexiones*), of which a single manuscript is extant (*Orth.* Praef. 6).

[52] For the semantic realm of the term *catholicos*, see Halporn, *Cassiodorus*, 111, n. 14 and Pronay, *Einführung*, 209.

expositoribus)" (*Inst*. 1.9.3). "You should look carefully for orthodox (*catholicos*) [commentaries]," and again, "We should read assiduously the orthodox teachers (*catholicos magistros*)" (*Inst*. 1.8.16, 10.3).

It might be interesting to observe here how Cassiodorus followed his own advice throughout his *Institutiones*. For example, in *Inst*. 1.1.8, he first praises Origen for his "extremely eloquent sermons (*eloquentissimae nimis omeliae*)." Yet, after that, he also draws attention to how Origen "subtly deceives the innocent (*subtiliter decepit innocentes*)" and therefore, needs to be read "against the rules of the Fathers (*contra regulas Patrum*)."[53] Cassiodorus invokes a hearsay that Origen "ought to be treated like anise; for though he seasons the food of sacred literature, he himself is to be cooked and when the flavor is extracted, thrown away (*quem quidam non immerito more anethi habendum esse dixerunt, qui dum sacrarum condiat pulmentaria litterarum, ipse tamen decoctus exsucatusque proicitur*)" (*Inst*. 1.1.8). Likewise, in *Inst*. 1.8.1, he refers to an early commentary on the letters of Paul, falsely attributed to Pope Gelasius, in which "the poison of the Pelagian error is sowed (*Pelagiani erroris uenena illic esse seminata*)." Consequently, Cassiodorus published a corrected version of Romans (*Orth*. Praef. 3).[54] Tyconius is chastised for contaminating his commentary on the Apocalypse "with the foul teaching of his poisonous belief (*uenenosi dogmatis sui fecilenta*)" (*Inst*. 1.9.3).[55] Likewise, Cassiodorus offers caveats on Cyprian's teaching on rebaptism (*Inst*. 1.19) and Cassian's teaching on free will (*Inst*. 1.29.2).[56] Does not Scripture say, "Test all things; hold fast that which is good (*Omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete*)" (1 Thess 5:21, cited in *Inst*. 1.24.1)?

After the recommendation of reading Scripture, his own *Institutiones*, the other *introductiones*, and the ancient "orthodox" commentaries, Cassiodorus also acknowledges, although briefly, the importance of the works of (systematic) theologians for adequate exegesis (*Inst*. 1.10.4).

[53] Cassiodorus marked the theologically "suspicious" passages in Origen's writings with a sign of rejection—*achresimon* (*Inst*. 1.1.8).

[54] David Johnson, "Purging the Poison: The Revision of Pelagius' Pauline Commentaries by Cassiodorus and his Students," PhD Diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989. Priscillian's *Canones* of the fourteen Pauline Epistles were likewise "purified" from "heresy" by an otherwise unknown Peregrinus.

[55] Cassiodorus adds that he has marked both the acceptable and unacceptable comments of Tyconius respectively by *chresimon* and *achriston* (*Inst*. 1.9.3). Jerome, too, in order to have an "error-free" commentary, edited Victorinus of Pettau's commentary on the Apocalypse.

[56] Cassiodorus pointed out that Cassian's works were edited by Victor of Maktar, who also "added what was missing (*et quae minus erant addidit*)"(!) in his deliberations (*Inst*. 1.29.2).

A suggested list of patristic treatises on the Trinity, the Christian faith in general, church orders, and works on moral philosophy is given in *Inst*. 1.16.3-4. Later in Book One, Cassiodorus makes the hermeneutical point of reading dogmatic treatises in a different way. Namely, he emphasizes the importance of ascertaining the overall reference (*skopos*) of Scripture—or, as Cassiodorus puts it, the "general meaning (*intentiones librorum generaliter*)" of Scripture (*Inst*. 1.24.3)—which has to govern the interpretation of its constituent parts.[57] That is, he sees the need to establish the *res* towards which Scripture points, before the meaning(s) of its particular statements can be discerned.

So, what is the overall reference of Scripture? For Cassiodorus, Scripture offers "a prayerful knowledge of the Trinity (*sanctae Trinitatis adorabilem cognitionem*)," of God who is the Creator of all things (*Inst*. 1.16.1, 3). He also identifies the twofold reference of Scripture as "the love of God and of our neighbor (*caritatem Dei et proximi*)" (*Inst*. 1.16.2),[58] just like Augustine did in his *doc*. *Chr*. 1.26.27; 35.39-36.40, and Junillus in his *Inst*. 2.5.1; 28.2. To say this differently, the overall reference of Scripture, or the summary of the Christian faith, is succinctly expressed by the creeds (or creedal statements,[59] or *regula fidei*[60]) of the ecumenical councils (*Inst*. 1.11.1-2). At the same time, one should notice that the Council of Constantinople in 553 CE is not mentioned, although it could have been. Just like in his *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita*, Cassiodorus prefers not to go beyond the Council of Chalcedon. Perhaps as an emissary of Pope Vigilius in Constantinople, he shared the western sentiments about the condemnation of the "Three Chapters."[61] In any case, Cassiodorus points out that the four ecumenical councils,

[57] For ascertaining the overall reference, see Adrian, *Isag*. 75 (the ship imagery) and Junillus, *Inst*. 1.11-20 (the theological references) and 2.1-15 (the economical references).

[58] In *Exp*. *Ps*. 133, Praef., Cassiodorus cites Matt 22:37-40 and says, "What a marvellous text, expressing under one head all that you can find in the holy Scriptures (*Admiranda complexio in uno capite dicere, quod in scripturis sanctis possis omnibus inuenire*)."

[59] Chalcedon's *Definitio fidei* is explicitly cited in *Exp*. *Ps*. 58.1.

[60] The phrase *regula fidei* occurs in *Inst*. 1.23.4 in connection with the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, and "the rules of the Fathers (*Patrum regulis*)" in *Inst*. 1.24.1, with a reminder that nothing should be discordant with their teachings. See Everett Ferguson, *The Rule of Faith: A Guide* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2015).

[61] See Barnish, "The Work of Cassiodorus after His Conversion," 158-159; O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, 168-172; Troncarelli, *Vivarium*, 10-11. In *Inst*. 1.1.8, 9.2, Cassiodorus commended the opinions of Pope Vigilius (before the latter changed his mind), endorsed Junillus' Antiochean *Instituta*, and in *Exp*. *Ps*. 138.23 (*conclusio*) praised the theological "cleverness" of Facundus of Hermiane.

together with *Codex Encyclius*[62] and the "ecclesiastical canons (*Canones ecclesiasticos*),"[63] guard an interpreter against the rocks of any heresy, as well as against any theological novelty (*Inst*. 1.11.1-2, 23.2). The conciliar "orthodoxy," in turn, is supposed to be the pre-understanding[64] in the light of which Scripture is (to be) interpreted.[65] It is the nature of hermeneutics that the interplay between one's pre-understanding of the subject-matter and the text constitutes meaning.

The recommendation of the reading procedure in *Inst*. 1.10.1-5 concludes with two suggestions: to carefully annotate patristic treatises and to be in constant conversation with experts, with "learned elders (*peritissimorum seniorum*)" (*Inst*. 1.10.5). Interpreting Scripture is, in its essence, a communal activity, where an exegete is constantly both taught and corrected by the other members of the community.[66]

b. What is Scripture taken to be?

Next, Cassiodorus turns to the topics of the content and the nature of Scripture, both of which matter a whole lot for biblical interpretation. As he already recommended, first an interpreter has to read the entire Scripture, again, primarily for having a sense of the whole.[67] But what does Scripture as such consist of; what is the "whole" of it?

First, by addressing the question of canon and what it includes, Cassiodorus identifies the hermeneutical "object", that is, the unit to be interpreted. For him, Scripture was still primarily a series of theologically normative books—a mini-library of nine codices,[68] a *bibliotheca*, rather than one thick pandect Bible:[69] Octateuch, Kings, Prophets, the

[62] The original Greek text is lost, but the document survives in the Cassiodorian Latin translation in two manuscripts (Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 383).

[63] These were translated into Latin by Dionysius Exiguus (*Codex canonum ecclesiasticorum*).

[64] Clement of Alexandria asserted that every question is solved from pre-existing knowledge (*Strom*. 8.4) and Augustine contended that one's thought is formed from what he/she knows (*Trin*. 15.50).

[65] It is telling that both Origen's *PArch*. Praef. 2-9 and Augustine's *doc*. *Chr*. 1.5.5-1.21.19 introduced the *regula fidei* before they offered more specific hermeneutical advice.

[66] See Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[67] The idea of canon, as well as the sequence of books, is almost lost for modern readers, who use Kindle or cell-phones for reading their Bibles (Jeffrey S. Siker, *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World* [Minneapolis, In.: Fortress, 2017], 62-65).

[68] For the term *codex*, see Vessey, "Introduction," 49-52.

[69] The library at Vivarium evidently had a few pandect Bibles (*Inst*. 1.5.2, 12-14; *Exp*. *Ps*. 86.1; Pronay, *Einleitung*, 18-21). For a list of Latin manuscripts of the whole

Psalter,[70] Solomon (i.e., Wisdom Literature), Hagiographa, Gospels, the Apostolic Letters,[71] and Acts of the Apostles together with the Apocalypse (*Inst*. 1.1-9). This is the "[textual] sequence of Holy Scripture (*Scripturarum diuinarum series*)" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 1). The abbreviations of these major divisions of Scripture, which Cassiodorus put at the beginning of the books, are listed in *Inst*. 1.26.1.

Curiously, Cassiodorus' order of the major divisions of the canonical Scripture does not match exactly with any of the lists that he reports in *Inst*. 1.12-14 and neither does his *codex grandior* (*Inst*. 1.14.2)[72] match exactly with what can be found in the bookcase of the Ezra image in *Codex Amiatinus*.[73] But it does match with the list found in Cassiodorus' *Exp*. *Ps*. 144.7. Since Cassiodorus addresses only the

Bible, see Edmond L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 255-257. Although several pandects are known from the earlier times, it was in the ninth century that Latin pandect Bibles became more common (David Ganz, "Carolingian Bibles," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, 325-337, at 326). See also Hugh A. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 58 and 87; and Richard Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 130-139.

[70] It is often claimed that, although composed later, *Institutiones* is a theoretical basis for the exegesis that Cassiodorus practiced in *Expositio Psalmorum* (e.g., Becker, "Cassiodorus," 767a-770a, at 769b). However, this is true only as far as one has in mind the process of identifying tropes, figures of speech, rhetorical features, symbolic numbers, and the like. As stated above, *Institutiones* Book One does not provide guidance on such things as prosopological exegesis, force (*uis*) of words (i.e., how words affect a reader/hearer), and typology. Neither does it elaborate on finding "orthodox" Trinitarian and Christological doctrines, as well as moral lessons, in almost every text of the Old Testament, as does his *Expositio Psalmorum*.

[71] For Cassiodorus, the apostolic letters include Hebrews (*Inst*. 1.8.3). Nevertheless, in *Inst*. 1.8.2, he mentions an anonymous commentary on the thirteen letters of Paul (i.e., the one of Ambrosiaster), which did not include Hebrews. Evidently, another late fourth/early fifth century anonymous commentary in Latin (namely the Budapest Commentary, called after the place where its unique surviving witness is preserved), which included, for the first time, Hebrews, was not available for Cassiodorus. Therefore, he recommends Mutianus' Latin translation of Chrysostom's commentary instead.

[72] Bonifatius Fischer, *Lateinische Bibelhandschriften im frühen Mittelalter*, Vetus latina 11 (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 10-12.

[73] For the relation between *codex grandior* (lost) and *Codex Amiatinus* (preserved in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze), see Fischer, *Lateinische Bibelhandschriften*, 9-34; Karen Corsano, "The First Quire of the *Codex Amiatinus* and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus," *Scriptorium* 41/1 (1987): 3-34; Celia Chazelle, *The Codex Amiatinus and Its "Sister" Bibles. Scripture, Liturgy, and Art in the Milieu of the Venerable Bede*, Commentaria. Sacred Texts and Their Commentaries: Jewish, Christian and Islamic 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 11-12, 31-35, 312-315; Paul Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus and the *Codex Amiatinus*," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 827-883; and Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 134-139.

issue of which books belong to the canon,[74] with the exception of a few sentences (e.g., *Inst*. 1.12.2, 14.3), he does not say much about the versions, about the type of text that the Bibles in Vivarium had.

In addition to his own division of Scripture in *Inst*. 1.1-9, Cassiodorus lists those of Jerome,[75] Augustine,[76] and the Septuagint[77] (*Inst*. 1.12-14).[78] Surprisingly, the inventory of the canonical books in Junillus, *Inst*. 1.3-6 is not mentioned.

In short, there is no absolute match between the canonical lists that Cassiodorus does mention,[79] but he thinks that no one should be alarmed by the fact that the canon has been presented "in three different ways by the different Fathers (*tribus generibus* […] *a diuersis*

[74] Cassiodorus almost postulates a canon within a canon when he admits that he pays closer attention to Psalter, the Prophets, and the Apostolic Letters, which he regards as the "summit (*arcem*)" of Scripture (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 8; cf. Pronay, *Einführung*, 197-199). In *Exp*. *Ps*. 71, Praef., he adds that the Psalms "truly embraced the treasure of the whole of divine Scriptures (*reuera liber psalmorum totius scripturae diuinae thesaurum complexus esse uideatur*)" (cf. Athanasius, *Ep*. *Marc*. 1-2).

[75] For the inaccuracies in Cassiodorus' reporting of Jerome's canonical list in *Prologus galeatus*, see Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers*, 377, n. 7; Halporn, *Cassiodorus*, 135, n. 147.

[76] Augustine's list can be found in *doc*. *Chr*. 2.8.13 (see Isabelle Bochet, "Le Canon des Écritures, la Septante et l'Itala," in *La doctrine chrétienne/De doctrina Christiana*, BA 11/2 [Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997], 506-552). Cassiodorus modifies it by placing the two books of Esdras (Ezra/Nehemiah and Esdras I [*ciu*. *Dei* 18.36]) before Maccabees, and Minor Prophets before Major Prophets. See Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Structure of the Collections that Make Up the Scriptures: The Influence of Augustine on Cassiodorus," *Revue bénédictine* 124/1 (2014): 48-64.

[77] Cassiodorus mentions that the Septuagint was variously translated by "many people (*multorum*)" (*Inst*. 1.14.3) (and this is a definite improvement on Augustine's understanding of the matter in *ciu*. *Dei* 18.42), but he says nothing about the Septuagint having different contents and arrangements (see James K. Aitken, "Introduction" to *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. James K. Aitken [Edinburgh: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2015], 1-12). While some early Christian authors extended the use of the term "Septuagint" to books other than the Pentateuch (e.g., Justin, *Apol*. 1.13.2-5), surprisingly, Cassiodorus' "Septuagint" also included the New Testament (!) (*Inst*. 1.14.1-2 [the catholic epistles are listed before those of Paul, and Hebrews is altogether missing]). Evidently, for him, number symbolism ("seventy interpreters" and "seventy books" [*Inst*. 1.14.2]) seems to have mattered more than accuracy (cf. *Inst*. 1.12.2 [the symbolism of "fifty"] and 1.14.4 [the symbolism of "seventy-five"]).

[78] For the existing Latin Christian canonical lists up to that of Pope Innocent, see Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity*, 174-235. See also Gilles Dorival, "L'apport des Pères de l'Église à la question de la clôture du Canon de l'Ancien Testament," in *The Biblical Canons*, ed. Jean-Marie Auwers and Henk J. De Jonge, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 163 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 81-110.

[79] In the Early Middle Ages, "the constitution of the canon was fluid and the permutations of book order apparently limitless" (Richard Marsden, "Introduction" to *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, 1-16, at 4).

Patribus),"[80] because the catholic/universal church accepts it all despite its diverging subdivisions (*Inst*. 1.11.3). Furthermore, if these alternative divisions were "carefully considered and treated, they seem not to disagree but rather explain one another (*non impugnare sed inuicem se potius exponere uideantur*)" (*Inst*. 1.14.3). Cassiodorus compares his somewhat tortured justification of *de facto* different canons to gospel harmonies, which likewise need to be taken with faith and be regarded "not contradictory to one another but only different (*non contraria dixerint sed diuersa*)" (*Inst* 1.14.3).[81] What constitutes the unity in difference was arguably the common faith and doctrine, which are just explicated in various ways.

The list(s) of canonical books justify the organization of *Inst*. 1.1-9, which is about which patristic commentaries are available for the canonical books and what they are worth (cf. *Inst*. 15.16). For example, Cassiodorus wishfully promises that when one reads Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* for understanding the Book of Genesis, "almost no question in it remains unclarified (*ut paene nihil ibi relinquere probaretur ambiguum*)" (*Inst*. 1.1.2). Cassiodorus is as if "giving us a guided tour of the library" at Vivarium, indicating where and in what form something was available.[82]

Second, the issue of the nature of Scripture concerns the question of how it is supposed to be regarded. Cassiodorus believes in the particular divine quality of the canonical Scripture, for it teaches only what is "true and beneficial (*uera et utilia*)" (*Inst*. 1.16.2). "Human reason indeed did not create these writings (*istas siquidem litteras non ratio humana repperit*)" (*Inst*. 1.16.2).[83] Holy Scriptures are "prophetic utterances from the Lord for our salvation (*quae a Domino prophetas* [read: *prophetata*] *sunt ad salutem*)" (*Exp*. *Ps*. 10.4). Although Cassiodorus does not provide any theory of inspiration, he is convinced nevertheless that words "spoken under inspiration of the Lord cannot be corrupt (*corrumpi siquidem nequeunt, quae inspirante Domino dicta noscuntur*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.5).[84] Consequently, Cassiodorus seems to have been uncomfortable in stating that all the idiosyncrasies in Scripture were just the mistakes of human co-authors. Rather, he

[80] In the Bamberg manuscript, the three divisions of Scripture by Jerome, Augustine, and the Septuagint are illustrated by three diagrams.

[81] Here, Cassiodorus took the lead from Augustine's *De consensu Euangelistarum*, mentioned in *Inst*. 1.7.1.

[82] Olsen, *The Honey of Souls*, 143.

[83] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. 8.4; Tyconius, *Reg*. 4.1; Augustine, *conf*. 13.29.44; *ep*. 82.1.3; Junillus, *Inst*. 2.29.

[84] Cf. Augustine, *ciu*. *Dei* 18.41, 43.

would consider the difficult readings and messed up grammar as a sort of inspired and intentional "mistakes," something like the *skandala* that Origen mentioned,[85] or alternatively, the intentional concealment that Tyconius, Augustine, and Eucherius mentioned.[86]

Nevertheless, it should also be noticed that Cassiodorus extends inspiration, however it is understood, to the works of the orthodox Fathers who are mentioned in his *Institutiones*. This indicates that he does not understand inspiration as an exclusive property of the biblical authors and the canonical books. For example, in *Inst*. 1.17.3, Cassiodorus states that "learned men […] write books by divine inspiration (*diuina inspiratione*)," and in *Inst*. 1.24.1, that the words of "the best of expositors [are] surely divine (*diuinum*)."[87] This is not to deny that inspiration of biblical authors was something special, but rather that inspiration should be viewed as a wider phenomenon not limited merely to the human authors of the canonical books.

c. What are the tasks of an interpreter?

Although being clearly aware of Augustine's *scientia signorum*,[88] for whatever reasons, Cassiodorus decided to revive the traditional understanding of the four senses of Scripture.[89] 3 Kings (1 Kings) 8:56 says, "No word falls idly (*uerbum non inaniter cadens*)" (cited in *Inst*. 1.16.2).[90] And indeed, since nothing was placed in Scripture without purpose, without being a symbol of something else (*Inst*. 1.5.2, 24.3),[91] everything in Scripture is supposed to be spiritually

[85] Origen, *PArch*. 4.2.8-9; 3.11.

[86] Tyconius, *Reg*. Prol.; Augustine, *en. Ps*. 131.2; and Eucherius, *Form*. Praef.

[87] Augustine too thought that an interpreter of Scripture needed to be inspired in order to understand the inspired Scripture. He told his congregation that they could understand Scripture only when they were inspired by the inspiration that first inspired the uneducated fishermen (*s*. 341.5).

[88] The methodological relevance of Augustine's *scientia signorum* for biblical hermeneutics is that it provides a comprehensive system in which all possible cases of exegesis, both literal and figurative, can be considered. See Tarmo Toom, "Augustine's Hermeneutics: The Science of the Divinely Given Signs," in *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation*, 77-108.

[89] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 14; Jerome, *ep*. 120.12; Cassian's *quadriga* in *Conl*. 14.8; Eucherius, *Form*. Praef.; Junillus, *Inst*. 1.2.2; 2.27. See Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis. Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebanc (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 117-159; Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, trans. Anne E. Nash (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius, 2007), 159-171.

[90] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.24.3; *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 10; 46.1, 144.1.

[91] Cf. Origen, *PArch*. 4.3.5; *c*. *Cels*. 2.69.

useful.[92] "It always speaks to some purpose (*ad utilitatem aliquam*)" (*Inst*. 1.24.3). After all, the reason for Christians to read their Holy Writ is for gaining "useful and redemptive wisdom (*proficuam salutaremque sapientiam*)" (*Inst*. 1.28.3, 16.2).

Therefore, if a literal reading does not provide a spiritually useful reading,[93] one has to consider (a) figurative reading(s). To put this differently, if something is not "perfectly clear (*planissimus*)" (*Inst*. 1.24.2) in a literal sense, one has to take recourse to the figurative senses.[94] After all, Scripture speaks about the "heavenly truth (*caelestis ueritas*)" in parables—just as Ps. 77:2 says (cited in *Inst*. 1.16.1). For instance, Cassiodorus gives an example of how historical accounts "have been written with regard to the most excellent moral virtues (*propter uirtutes excellentissimas morum*)" (*Inst*. 1.6.5). There is also a neat example in *Inst*. 1.5.2 of how priestly dress becomes "several mysteries of the Lord (*plurima Domini sacramenta*)."[95] Consequently, this means that the literal sense cannot be the only legitimate sense of the biblical text. For example, in *Exp. Ps*. 138.1-2, Cassiodorus investigates three fitting figurative interpretations, because the scriptural words are like colors of jewels which "glow with varying light (*uaria luce radiare*)" (*Exp. Ps*. 52.7 [*conclusio*]). Thus, together with Augustine and others, Cassiodorus definitely affirmed the legitimacy of polysemy.[96]

In addition, the fact that Cassiodorus draws attention to tropes and figures of speech,[97] that is, to phrases or words which have other meanings than their literal meanings, is also an implicit acknowledgement

[92] 2 Tim. 3:16 (cited in *Exp. Ps*. Praef. 15; 73.7); Origen, *PArch*. 4.2.6; Tarmo Toom, "Early Christian Handbooks on Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, 109-125, at 114. Augustine likewise claimed that biblical events "were not recorded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for nothing (*non enim frustra* […] *administratione Spiritus sancti haec gesta conscripta sunt*)" (*ex. Gal*. 40.7; *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Eric Plumer, Oxford Early Christian Studies [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 194-195).

[93] E.g., Cassiodorus, *Exp. Ps*. 6.7; 95.1.

[94] Tyconius drew to the attention of the readers of his *Liber regularum* that the Spirit "wanted one thing to sound forth, another to be understood (*aliud sonare aliud intellegi uoluit*)" (*Reg*. 6; Babcock, *Tyconius*, 110-111); cf. Augustine, *doc. Chr*. 3.37.56; Adrian, *Isag*. 73.13 (recension 2); Eucherius' catalogue of the figurative meanings (*Formulae*), and Junillus, *Inst*. 1.5.

[95] Cf. Adrian, *Isag*. 1.2.12; Eucherius, *Form*. 9.

[96] For Augustine, see Isabelle Bochet and Goulven Madec, "Pluralité des interprétations scripturaires," in *La doctrine chrétienne/De doctrina Christiana*, 558-562; Tarmo Toom, "Augustine's Case for the Multiplicity of Meanings," *Augustinian Studies* 45/2 (2014): 183-201.

[97] Cf. Augustine, *doc. Chr*. 3.29.40-1; Adrian, *Isag*. 73.1-22; 76.

of figurative senses. According to *Orth*. Praef. 4, Cassiodorus even wrote an entire treatise about such features of language (*De schematibus*) and detected many of these in his *Expositio Psalmorum*.[98]

Cassiodorus also postulated the criteria for figurative interpretation: a biblical text has to be interpreted so that it

> urges justice or reproves impiety, either preaches tolerance or attacks the vices of inconstancy, either condemns pride or exalts the virtues of humility, either checks those who are not at peace or consoles those who are most full of love, or tells something that urges us to good conduct and turns us away from evil thoughts by its respect for goodness (*Inst*. 1.24.2).[99]

Above all, to read the Old Testament Christologically[100] is to read it figuratively.[101] For example, in the Psalms, various things "are said figuratively when referred to the Lord Christ (*talia tropice dicuntur de Domine Christo*)" (*Exp*. *Ps*. 60.7). Likewise, in *Inst*. 1.3.2, Cassiodorus commends Jerome's commentary on Isaiah, who "'ought to be called not so much a prophet as an evangelist (*non tam propheta quam euangelista*),' because he clearly made reference to the mysteries of Christ and of the church (*Christi ecclesiaeque mysteria*)."[102] He also remarks that the Fathers had claimed that Ecclesiastes refers "only to Christ the Lord (*ad Christum Dominum solummodo*)" (*Inst*. 1.5.6).

[98] Elice, "Teoria e pratica dell'esegesi nell'*Expositio Psalmorum* di Cassiodoro," 185-228; Gerda Heydemann, "The Orator as Exegete: Cassiodorus as a Reader of Psalms," in *Reading the Bible in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jinty Nelson and Damien Kempf, Studies in Early Medieval History (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 19-42.

[99] […] *modo tamen aut iustitiam persuadet aut impietatem redarguit, aut tolerantiam praedicat aut uitia mobilitatis accusat, aut superbiam damnat aut bona humilitatis exaltat, aut impacatos reprimit aut caritate plenissimos consolatur, aut aliquid tale commemorat quo ad probos mores incitet et a nefariis cogitationibus respectu pietatis abducat*. Cf. Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 3.10.14, "Anything in the divine discourse that cannot be related either to good morals or to the true faith should be taken as figurative (*ut quidquid in sermone diuino neque ad morum honestatem neque ad fidei ueritatem proprie referri potest figuratum esse cognoscas*)" (Green, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 147).

[100] Cassiodorus' *Expositio Psalmorum*, rather than his *Institutiones* Book One, is a prime example of his Christological (as well as moral) interpretation of the Old Testament. Rom 10:4a ("For the end [*finis*] of the Law is Christ"), which is cited already in *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 3, is invoked in the titles of several Psalms which begin with the Latin words *in finem*.

[101] "All allegorical reading in the early church is governed by the axiom that Christ is […] the universal subject of the scriptures" (Mark Edwards, "Figurative Readings: Their Scope and Justification," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible. Volume 1: From the Beginnings to 600*, ed. James C. Paget et al. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 714-733, at 733). Cf. Adrian, *Isag*. 74.3; Junillus, *Inst*. 2.16 (typology of events), 2.22 (predictions of Christ).

[102] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. Praef. 13.

After elaborating on the various senses of Scripture and recommending especially the figurative method of interpretation, Cassiodorus supplies some practical and more technical advice for the interpreters. One of the reasons for this might be his acute awareness of the fact that not all interpretative problems can be solved by mere reading of the *introductiones* and the biblical commentaries of the Fathers (*Inst*. 1.24.2). Thus, Chapter 15 of Book One is about correcting scribal mistakes, about *emendatio*,[103] and arguably Cassiodorus is at his best here.[104] "This kind of correction is, in my opinion, the most beautiful and glorious task of learned men (*istud enim genus emendationis, ut arbitror, ualde pulcherrimum est et doctissimorum hominum negotium gloriosum*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.1, 30.1).[105] Chapter 15 is also the longest chapter in Book One of the *Institutiones*. In his ripe age of early nineties, Cassiodorus also wrote a treatise *De orthographia*, which contains numerous otherwise lost excerpts from eight ancient grammars and discusses further the delicate work of a textual critic.

Right before Chapter 15 of Book One, Cassiodorus brings up Augustine's suggestion in *doc*. *Chr*. 2.15.22 to correct the Latin Bible translations on the basis of the Greek text(s) (*doc*. *Chr*. 2.15.22 is explicitly quoted in *Inst*. 1.14.4). In the process of transmission and translation, texts inevitably change and thus a corrector has to deal with what has been called "scribal interpretations."[106] So, starting with *Inst*. 1.15.8, Cassiodorus considers the cases "in which the scribes' errors (*librariorum uitia*) are to be corrected." In other words, constant copying of biblical manuscripts introduced both intentional

[103] *Emendatio* meant "correction of errors in orthography, usage, style, and grammar with reference to an authoritative norm" (Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350-1100*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 19 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 75).

[104] While already *Inst*. 1, Praef. 2 mentions the "corrected books (*in codicibus emendatis*)" of Scripture, Chapters 14 and 15 give more detailed advice. See Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, 74-78, 195-209; Thorsten Fögen, "Cassiodorus on the Role of Language and Culture in Divine and Secular Learning," *Antike und Abendland* 61/1 (2016): 86-113, at 98-101.

[105] Cassiodorus' concentration on *emendatio*, collation of texts, and providing punctuation (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 8-9) at least partially follows the approach of Jerome (Aline Canellis, "Jerome's Hermeneutics: How to Exegete the Bible?" in *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation*, 49-76). Cassiodorus particularly liked that Jerome "added the sweetest variety of examples from pagan writers (*gentilium exempla dulcissima uarietate permiscuit*)" to his texts whenever possible (*Inst*. 1.21.1). Interest in grammatical and rhetorical approaches also links the respective "introductions" of Cassiodorus and Adrian.

[106] Reinhart Ceulemans, "The Septuagint and Other Translations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, 33-53, at 33.

and unintentional mistakes, as well as "barbaric" orthography to the new copies. Therefore, with time, *emendatio* proved ever more pertinent.[107] For the task of collating, Cassiodorus secured "a complete Greek Bible in seventy-five books (*Graecum pandectem* […] *in libris septuaginta quinque*)" for his library, as well as several other works in Greek (*Inst*. 1.14.4).

Yet, Cassiodorus cautions the eager and confident correctors against messing with the many Hebrew idioms, which may sound strange for Latin speakers and, thus, may be regarded as mistaken and violating common usage (*Inst*. 1.15.2, 8).[108] For those who struggle with Hebrew idioms,[109] Cassiodorus recommends the discussions in Augustine's *Locutiones in Heptateuchum* (*Inst*. 1.15.2, 1.4)[110] and cautions against "mutilating the sacred books by taking undue liberties (*nec libros sacros temeraria praesumptione lacerarem*)" (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 8). Interestingly, in the works that Cassiodorus had collected for his library at Vivarium, he had marked the idioms, which "are not to be rashly altered (*nulla praesumptione uiolentur*)," with the sign P^P (*Inst*. 1.26.2).[111]

Likewise, one should be very careful in correcting, if at all, the Hebrew names of persons and places, since each of these is tied "to a great mystery of something (*magno sacramento rei alicuius*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.3).[112] What becomes evident here is Cassiodorus' preference

[107] Cf. Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 2.14.21; 3.1.1. See Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "The Latin Bible c. 600 to c. 900," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, 69-92, at 71; and Malcolm B. Parkes, "Reading, Copying, and Interpreting a Text in the Early Middle Ages," in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 90-102.

[108] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. 118.82; 123.5. Augustine too mentioned the particular style of Scripture (*doc*. *Chr*. 2.9.14; *loc*. *in Hept*. 1.136, 152) and Adrian's entire *Isagōgē* investigated the peculiarities of the Hebrew literary style.

[109] See Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, 203. "It is quite remarkable that, instead of making intelligent guesses, the Jerusalem Bible (1967) boldly uses ellipses […] in places where the meaning of a Hebrew idiom is unknown (e.g., Ezek. 21:28, where the footnote says, "What follows is unintelligible")."

[110] In his comment on his *Locutiones in Heptateuchum*, which assesses the existing Latin translations of Hebrew and Greek idioms, Augustine says that understanding particular idiomatic expressions clarifies many obscure things in Scripture (*retr*. 2.54).

[111] As the *notae* in Cassiodorus' *Expositio Psalmorum* explain, P^P means *hoc in idiomatis, id est propriis locutionibus legis diuinae*. A picture of this sign in a manuscript can be seen in Olsen, *The Honey of Souls*, 105.

[112] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. 2.1; 107.8; Eucherius, *Instr*. Book 2. Although focusing on Jerome rather than Cassiodorus, see Eyal Poleg, "The Interpretations of Hebrew Names in Theory and Practice," in *Form and Function in the Late Medieval*

for the natural theory of language and his consequent interest in etymology. In fact, he wrote a whole treatise about etymologies (*Orth*. Praef. 4) and defined it as follows: "Etymology is an either true or likely interpretation that explains the source of words (*Etymologia uero est aut uera aut uerisimilis demonstratio, declarans ex qua origine uerba descendant*)" (*Inst*. 2.1.2).[113] In *Inst*. 1.1.6 and 3.5, Cassiodorus recommends Jerome's *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum*, which also appears as an accessory text in some early medieval Latin gospelbooks.[114]

Cassiodorus further observes that one and the same word can be used in a positive or negative sense and suggests, again, that commentators are of great help here (*Inst*. 1.15.4).[115] He also addresses the cases where the words are used in a way which contradicts the human art of grammar (*Inst*. 1.15.5).[116] The principle here is, once more, that since the inspired Scripture just cannot be "corrupt," there has to be a (divine) reason for such idiosyncrasies (*Inst*. 1.15.5, 11). This principle applies likewise to the grammatical irregularities concerning cases and grammatical genders of words (*Inst*. 1.15.6). In order to avoid hypercorrections of Scripture on the basis of human grammar, Cassiodorus recommends checking one's reading against "two or three old and corrected copies (*priscorum emendatorumque codicum*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.6), and against "the authority of ancient copies (*priscorum codicum auctoritate*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.7).

And finally, Cassiodorus considers the intriguing cases where "some words make no sense (*absurde*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.11) and therefore, the interpreter may need the help of Hebrew scholars. On the other hand, the somewhat awe-stuck Cassiodorus suggests that Jerome "has given to us in his translation of Divine Scripture so much that we hardly need to go to the Hebrew original (*qui nobis in translatione diuinae Scripturae tantum praestitit, ut ad Hebreum fontem paene non egeamus accedere*)" (*Inst*. 1.21.1).[117]

Bible, ed. Eyal Poleg and Laura Light, Library of the Written Word 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 217-236.

[113] What Cassiodorus does not explain is how to reconcile the (Origenean) natural understanding of language, presupposed in etymological deliberations, with the (Augustinian) conventional understanding of language, which he also introduces in *Inst*. 2.3.11.

[114] Dorothy Shepard, "Latin Gospelbook, c. 600-1200," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, 338-362, at 345.

[115] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp. Ps*. Praef. 15; 64.10; 67.24; 77.68; 118.48, 70. Multiple references of various words were discussed, for example, in Tyconius, *Reg*. 2; Adrian, *Isag*. 57.1-4; 59.1-6; and Eucherius, *Form*. 7.

[116] Cf. Eucherius, *Form*. Praef.

[117] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp. Ps*. 67.32.

The bottom line seems to be an acknowledgement of the distinctness of divine speech, which has its own particularities and does not have to match with the use of language in human compositions (*Inst*. 1.15.7).[118] For example—and this concerns the use of tenses (*Inst*. 1.15.9)—common discourse uses the future tense to speak about the thing yet to come, but Scripture speaks about future "as if it had already taken place (*quasi iam perfecta narrantur*)" (*Inst*. 1.16.1).[119] Allegedly, such "realized eschatology" is not a grammatical mistake to be corrected, but a characteristic of the prophetic discourse. Again, "Sometimes it is right to pass over the rules of human expression and instead keep the arrangement of divine speech (*expedit enim interdum praetermittere humanarum formulas dictionum, et diuini magis eloquii custodire mensuram*)" (*Inst*. 1.15.7).

In short, the correction of biblical manuscripts that Cassiodorus recommends in Book One concerns grammar and orthography (*Inst*. 1.15.9), proper spelling (*Inst*. 1.15.10, 30.2), and punctuation (*Inst*. 1.15.12), which enables the recognition of the sense lines/units and is consequently an interpretive device of a crucial importance.[120] In the latter passage, Cassiodorus mentions his own punctuation of the Psalms, but he does not elaborate on what his exact criteria for doing so were. He only recommends the work(s) of Donatus the Grammarian (*Inst*. 1.30.2).[121]

In *Inst*. 1.15.14, Cassiodorus moves beyond the biblical commentaries to emendating other useful literature for interpreting Scripture, such as letters and homilies, theological and ecclesiological treatises, and works on morality and history (*Inst*. 1.16.4, 17.1-2, 28.6). The passages of Scripture that these works quote (that is, various patristic citations of Scripture) have to be handled with utmost attention, because they often "clarify (*aperire*)" the form and content of scriptural verses/passages (*Inst*. 1.17.3).

Recommending books on history, Cassiodorus explains that, while Scripture "describes the past without fiction (*sine falsitate*)" (*Inst*. 1.16.1), the historical writings of the Fathers proceed teleologically by attaching all events to the providence of the Creator God (*Inst*. 1.17.1). Thus, as the church histories describe the past "they

[118] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.15.9; *Exp*. *Ps*. 7.9; 15.4.

[119] Cf. Cassiodorus, *Exp*. *Ps*. 16.11; Adrian, *Isag*. 61.1-3; 74; Augustine, *Jo*. *eu*. *tr*. 99.5; 105.5.

[120] Cassiodorus contends that Jerome provided *cola et commata* for "his entire translation, according to the divine authority (*omnem translationem suam in auctoritate diuina*)" (*Inst*. 1.12.4, 15.12). Evidently, the contradicting information in *Inst*. 1, Praef. 9 is closer to the truth than what he states in *Inst*. 1.12.4.

[121] According to *Orth*. Praef. 4, Cassiodorus compiled an anthology of Donatus' *Ars grammatica* and his commentators.

inevitably instruct the minds of the readers in heavenly matters (*necesse est ut sensus legentium rebus caelestibus semper erudiant*)" (*Inst*. 1.17.1). Later on, he also adds works on geography for contextual interpretation (*Inst*. 1.25) and on medicine (*Inst*. 1.31), and in *Inst*. 1.28.6 and 31.1, he adds works on gardens, fertilizers, vegetables, bees, doves, fish, herbs, drugs, and other items.[122] Such appendices express a belief that all kind of treatises on all kind of subjects are beneficial for interpreting Scripture.

The sequence of topics and the structure of the later chapters in Book One (*Inst*. 1.25-33) remains a puzzle, or perhaps there is no intended structure to be discovered for these arguably (post?)-Cassiodorian editorial "appendices" in the first place. Nevertheless, these chapters either enforce the points made previously, elaborate on them, or provide additional information.

d. What else does an interpreter need?

Cassiodorus concludes Book One of his *Institutiones* by mentioning three important prerequisites for interpreting Scripture: prayer, pure heart, and illumination.

First, in *Inst*. 1.28.2 and 32.6, and just like Augustine and Cassian,[123] Cassiodorus emphasizes prayer, without which Scripture is never adequately understood. Since understanding/wisdom is a "sweet gift (*suauissimum donum*)" of God, the "opening" of what is closed, is for God to give to those who pray for it (*Inst*. 1, Praef. 7, 10; 1.28.2, 4).[124]

Second, he contends that "pure heart" is another requirement for understanding anything in Scripture,[125] for an interpreter "may not be blinded by darkening sin (*nullis peccatis caligantibus obscuremur*)" (*Inst*. 1.33.1). He knows that true understanding of Scripture requires a "perceptive heart (*perspicuo corde*)" and not just an ordinary sight (*Inst*. 1.5.2). Yet, unlike Cassian[126] and very much like

[122] Cf. Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 2.16.23-24, 25.38-40.61; Eucherius, *Form*. 7-9. See Stoppacci, "Liste di autori nell'opera manualistica di Cassiodoro," 24-36.

[123] See also Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1, Praef. 7; *Exp*. *Ps*. 118.125; 141.8 (*conclusio*); Cassian, *Inst*. 5.33-4; *Conl*. 14.9; Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. 4.30.63. In *doc*. *Chr*. 3.37.56, Augustine ends his hermeneutical discussions with an injunction to pray for understanding. He considers this absolutely necessary.

[124] Similar phrases about "opening" the "closed" text of Scripture can be found in Tyconius, *Reg*. Praef.; Augustine, *doc*. *Chr*. Prol. 1; and Eucherius, *Form*. Praef.

[125] E.g., Cassiodorus, *Inst*. 1.32.7; *Exp*. *Ps*. 8.2, 11; 102.22.

[126] Christopher J. Kelly, "Cassian's Hermeneutics: Purity of Heart and the Vision of God," in *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation*, 109-132.

Augustine, Cassiodorus immediately (*Inst*. 1.28.3) balances his prayerful "pure heart" approach (Matt 5:8) with the requirement of studying the "secular" arts.

Third, an interpreter needs to be taught by God (1 Thess 4:9). "Happy the man whom You instruct, O Lord (*Beatus homo quem tu erudieris, Domine*)" (Ps 94[93]:12, cited in *Inst*. 1.28.2). "Let him [i.e., God] enlighten our minds (*sensus nostros illuminet*)!" (*Inst*. 1.32.7).[127] Without God's illuminating activity, one makes little progress in his/her understanding of Scripture. "Without the true light [they] have been submerged in the blindness of ignorance (*et uero lumine priuati ignorantiae caecitate demersi sunt*)" (*Inst* 1.28.3).[128]

The two-book *Institutiones* ends precisely with emphasizing these ideas: "Let us not, therefore, trust in our own merits but in the grace of our Lord, and continually ask that sight of him be given to us (*quapropter non de nostris meritis sed de gratia Domini praesumentes, illum conspectum concedi nobis iugiter postulemus*)" (*Inst*. 2, *Conclusio* 9). After all, it is through prayer and by God's grace and illumination, rather than by one's own diligence and effort, that the divine "things" are adequately understood.

3. Conclusion

Quite some time ago, an eminent Cassiodorus scholar, James O'Donnell, appraised, "There is in fact still room for much further study of patristic and medieval exegesis."[129] Many new studies have appeared since then. This article too has identified and teased out Cassiodorus' hermeneutical advice in Book One of his *Institutiones* as yet another "further study" of early Christian exegesis.

In this treatise and among other topics, Cassiodorus considers the importance of one's theological preunderstanding for interpreting Scripture (i.e., the *regula fidei* and creeds), points out the necessity of having "orthodox" exegetical guidance and a hermeneutical tradition (i.e., reading the trusted patristic commentaries and theological treatises),

[127] Here might be an echo of Augustine's "theory" of illumination. In *en*. *Ps*. 118(117).3, the bishop of Hippo pointed out that humans could not do what the Lord did; namely, "Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (Lk 24:45).

[128] Cassiodorus' mammoth commentary of Psalms likewise ends with a prayer which says, among other things, "You give sight to minds that are blind (*qui caecis mentibus donas aspectum*)" (*Exp*. *Ps*. 150.6 [*oratio*]).

[129] O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, 136.

and acknowledges the basically collective character of adequate biblical interpretation (i.e., consulting the "elders"). He also discusses the canonical shape of Scripture and reminds all the would-be interpreters that Scripture needs to be taken as the Word of God. In order to discover the spiritual usefulness of everything that Scripture says as the Word of God, Cassiodorus acknowledges the legitimacy of polysemy and consequently, recommends figurative interpretation. In addition, he highlights the importance of working with the corrected copies of Scripture which have not mutilated the particular style and grammar of the scriptural discourse (i.e., figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, names, etc.). Last but not least, Cassiodorus emphasizes the necessity of having a proper disposition and a profound realization that "the Lord will help you to understand all these things" (2 Tim 2:7).

All what is discussed above hopefully facilitates a deeper appreciation of the place and significance of Cassiodorus' *Institutiones*, as a particular *codex introductorius*, in the history of biblical interpretation. Even though Book One was not widely read in the Middle Ages, it summarizes several patristic insights into biblical hermeneutics and provides at least one of the impetuses for the medieval glossing of the Bible, translating relevant treatises, establishing libraries, the copying and correcting of the manuscripts of the Bible, and communicating its content eloquently and in an informed manner.[130] Cassiodorus ends his *Institutiones* with these words:

> Since the two books of the *Institutiones* that briefly considered divine and human readings have been assembled, as far as I thought, and carefully treated, it is time that we now should read the edifying rules of the ancients (*tempus est ut nunc edificatrices ueterum regulas* […] *legere debemus*);[131] i.e., the introductory codex, which serves as a noble and beneficial introduction to sacred readings (*id est codicem introductorium* […] *qui ad sacras litteras nobiliter ac salubriter introducunt*) (*Inst*. 2, *Conclusio* 9 [Bamberg manuscript]).

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[130] For a careful assessment of the importance of Cassiodorus for the Middle Ages, see Vessey, "Introduction," 80-91; also Olsen, *The Honey of Souls*, 274-303, and the listing of medieval manuscripts in Stoppacci and Gatti, "Cassiodorus Senator," 115-118.

[131] The critical text edited by Mynors has added these words found in the Bamberg manuscript only in a footnote (p. 163).