



Publié sur *La Vie des Classiques* (<https://96.ip-213-32-20.eu>)

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PRIMASIUS AND HIS COMMENTARY ON REVELATION

Few will have heard of Primasius, bishop of Hadrumentum in Vandal Africa. What little we know about him comes from the obscure chronicle by Victor of Tunnuna (who is NOT Victor of Vita),^[1] and from Isidore of Seville (*De viris illustribus* 22). The Italian continuation of Quasten's *Patrology* published by Marietti (*Patrologia IV: I padri latini (secoli V-VIII)*) tells us:

On Primasius we are informed by Victor of Tunnuna and Isidore (Vir. Ill. 22). Bishop of Hadrumentum, he was among the African bishops summoned to Constantinople in 551 because of the controversy over the Three Chapters. Initially he took a position against Justinian and did not participate in the council of 553. In consequence he was exiled to a monastery. But then, according to Victor, in order to obtain the position of primate of the late Roman province of Byzacena, roughly equivalent to modern Tunisia, he sided with the emperor and began to persecute the defenders of the Three Chapters.

His *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* in five books is also mentioned by Cassiodorus (*Inst.* I, 9). This is presented in the prologue as a work of compilation, based upon Augustine – although Primasius notes that Augustine had never written a commentary on Revelation as such – and Tyconius. Tyconius had been a Donatist, so Primasius took care to declare this, and that he had selected the best bits, taken the gem out of the dung, etc. ...

Apparently Primasius also wrote three books on Heresies, to bring up to date the catalogue of Augustine. Cassiodorus knew the first book of this, but it has not reached us. The work under his name in PL 68 is the commentary of Pelagius on Paul, reworked by Cassiodorus, and supplemented by a work by Halberstadt.

CPL 873-4; PL 68, 793-936; PLS 4, 1208-1221; A.W.Adams, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* CCL 92 (1985). ...

Which is useful stuff as far as it goes.

The commentary only survived in seven manuscripts. Strangely it is easier to find one of these in Google than anything else. This, the oldest manuscript, is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 140, which is late 7th century. A page of it, fol. 4r, following the preface and the capitula for book 1, is shown [here](#) at the British Library website; the ms. is online [here](#) and [here](#).

¶ Regulam m. an
tum tunc p. p.
disignatur
a loc
ur

E Libro apocalypsis beati iohannis adiu-
uante dno tractatum debemus necer-
sario interpretari titulum designa-
re locum. narrare causam. In sinuare per-
sonam ut eius continentia. Nomine nuntietur.
Loco dinoscatur et tempus. per causam dig-
nitas clareat meritum. persona unum sig-
nificet in colligio ceterorum. cui ad signari
^{i. commmendari}
specialiter oporteat munus indultum; **C**ui eni
^{i. immutatio} singulos quosque libror diuersimodum con-
tinet uoca-
^{i. libri} bu lorum titulari epigraphie huius id est super
in scriptionem apocalypsis decurt appellari;
inter graecos enim positus et hebreos tene-
^{i. sonum} rem libri proprietate graeci sermonis ex-
pressi. Apocalypsis enim interpretatur
reuelatio. **I**n autem dñr xpr talia reuelaret
^{i. mirabilia} actanta. Nisi illi quem praeceteris discipulis
^{i. maximo} sic praecipuo amore dilexit. ut hic adhuc posi-
^{i. inter} tur praesentiae corporali superiduum pectus
faceret pelcisorte discumbere. et de ipso ui-
^{i. occulta} tae fontae spiritalia ueritatis arcanis afli-
^{i. precedente} enter haurire. ut praefunte huius dilectio-
nis indicio nulli putare tur dubium tali iohanne
revelatione condignum. Magnitudinem quip-
pe reuelationis commendari primum decur-
^{i. mirabilia} it magnitudine caritati. Nec autem eo
tempore uidere promeruit. quo in patimor
insula pro xpō admittiano caesare exilio mi-
sur. et metallo damnatur. terminis arcebat

Sept 21 1842

1. ^[1]The chronicle has been translated in John R. C. Martyn, *Arians and Vandals of the 4th-6th centuries*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.↩
