

## Quintilian, Tyconius and Augustine

CHARLES KANNENGIESSER

That Augustine was an original thinker and a gifted writer was readily acknowledged by his contemporaries, Christian and pagan alike. His boyhood teacher in Madaura, the grammarian Maximus, writing to Augustine in 391 shortly after his appointment as assistant to bishop Valerius of Hippo, celebrated "that vigorous eloquence which has brought you to universal fame."<sup>1</sup> At the core of this eloquence Maximus could have identified Cicero's paradigmatic legacy. Even sacred scripture when recommended to the convert from Africa by the learned bishop Ambrose of Milan had to comply with the undisputed authority of Cicero in Augustine's mind. The reading of scripture appeared "to be unworthy if compared with the dignity of Cicero," the bishop of Hippo recollected a decade later in his *Confessions*.<sup>2</sup>

No such cult of literary devotees ever developed around Quintilian in Latin Christian literature. "After two centuries of oblivion, . . . Quintilian regained recognition during the fourth century, mainly among grammarians like Diomedus. In the period of the third through the fifth century he was imitated and quoted by Christian authors, such as Lactantius, Hilary of Poitiers, Rufinus and Sidonius Apollinaris."<sup>3</sup> Among his contemporaries, Juvenal mentions him three times in his *Satires* (6. 75, 280, 7. 185–96) and Martial invokes him in one of his *Epigrams* (2. 90). He was also known to the author of the *Historia Augusta*, as well as to Ausonius.<sup>4</sup> So much for a rather discreet *Nachleben* in late antiquity.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it is the more intriguing to find a replica of the Roman rhetor's notion of *regula* in the

<sup>1</sup> "Facundiae robore atque expulso, qua cunctis clarus es," *Saint Augustine. Select Letters*, ed. by J. H. Baxter, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, MA 1930) 18–19 (no. 5 = *Ep.* 16).

<sup>2</sup> *Conf.* 3. 5. 9 ("illa scriptura) uisa est mihi indigna, quam Tullianae dignitati compararem."

<sup>3</sup> E. Bolaffi, *La critica filosofica e letteraria in Quintiliano*, Collection Latomus 30 (Brussels 1958) 8.

<sup>4</sup> The latter mentions Quintilian in the opening of his *Commemoratio professorum Burdigalensium* (1. 2, 16) and in the poem *Mosella* (404); O. Seel, *Quintilian, oder Die Kunst des Redens und Schweigens* (Stuttgart 1977) 231–40.

<sup>5</sup> For Hilary, see also F. Barone, "Quintilianus et Hilarius," *Vita Latina* 78 (1980) 10–15 (in Latin).

central rhetorical notion with which Tyconius operated in the late fourth century.

Tyconius<sup>6</sup> was the author of the earliest systematic attempt known to us of a scriptural hermeneutics inside Christian traditions.<sup>7</sup> Augustine disliked that schismatic fellow Christian from Africa, but he admired his work, in particular *The Book of Rules*, which he quoted extensively in his essay *On Christian Doctrine*. Hence the three parts of my paper. First, I must establish the proper status and meaning of *regula* in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, I should outline the use of *regula* in the work of Tyconius. Thirdly, it would be my contention that the Ciceronian genius of the former rhetor Augustine did not allow the elderly bishop Augustine to acknowledge the proper value of *regula*, as taken over by Tyconius from Quintilian. My conclusion would be that we have to deal here with a failed opportunity in the otherwise very fertile history of biblical interpretation in Roman Africa.<sup>9</sup>

### I. Quintilian's *Regula Loquendi*

In Book 1 of the *Institutio* the three main qualities of a speech, considered as a whole, are said to be "correctness, lucidity and elegance" (*ut emendata, ut dilucida, ut ornata sit* 1. 5. 1). Quintilian adds the following advice: "The teacher of literature therefore must study the rule for correctness of speech (*loquendi regula*), this constituting the first part of his art." *Loquendi regula*, in the singular, repeats partially the parallel statement by which the previous chapter of Book 1 had been introduced: "Haec igitur professio, cum breuissime in duas partes diuidatur, recte loquendi scientiam et poetarum enarrationem, plus habet in recessu quam fronte promittit" (1. 4. 2). Both phrases, *loquendi scientia* and *loquendi regula*, belong to initial statements introducing a presentation of what grammar is all about. They function as formal definitions of the whole matter under scrutiny.

In chapter 6 of Book 1 Quintilian pleads in favor of correctness of style in spoken as much as in written language. He starts, in 1. 6. 1, by a general statement, comparable with the one which we noted above in 1. 4. 2, and in

<sup>6</sup> P. Bright, "Tyconius," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York and London 1990) 917-18; E. Romero Pose, "Tichonius," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (Cambridge 1992) (= *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane* [1983-88] II 838-39; M. Dulacy, "Tyconius," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* XV (Paris 1991) 1349-56.

<sup>7</sup> P. Bright's *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame 1988) presents a first comprehensive analysis of the *Book of Rules*, a critical edition of which had been secured by F. C. Burkett as early as 1894.

<sup>8</sup> J. Cousin, *Etudes sur Quintilien* (Paris 1936); G. Kennedy, *Quintilian* (New York 1969); J. J. Murphy, *Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking and Writing*, transl. from Books 1, 2 and 10 of the *Institutio Oratoria* (Carbondale, IL 1987).

<sup>9</sup> C. Kannengiesser and P. Bright, *A Conflict of Christian Hermeneutics in Roman Africa: Tyconius and Augustine*, Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, Colloquy 58 (Berkeley 1989). In what follows, Quintilian is quoted in the translation of H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, MA 1920-22).

any case significant of his love for correct speech: *Sermo constat ratione, uetustate, auctoritate, consuetudine*, "Language is based on reason, antiquity, authority and usage." By "reason" (*ratio*), as he adds at once, correct speech rests mainly on the appropriate treatment of "analogy" and sometimes of "etymology." He examines the role of etymologies from 1. 6. 28 on, first in a more general way (28–31), secondly in specific cases (32–38). In 1. 6. 33 he observes that etymology can help sometimes to identify the proper meaning of words, even when words differ only by a single letter, as in the case of *tegula, regula*, and the like." Small matters of that sort make sense, ponders Quintilian, if only one keeps being interested in the logic behind the play of words. For etymology helps to catch precisely the *ratio* of a name, or of a given spelling. Once more, *regula*, in the singular, seems to cross Quintilian's mind at the precise moment when he discusses some fundamental procedure of language.

Still in 1. 6, where "usage" is pondered in common language, after the discussion of etymologies and archaic words, Quintilian becomes candidly exhortative when he remarks that "here the critical faculty is necessary, and we must make up our minds what we mean by usage" (1. 6. 43). With professional fervor he concludes: "So too in speech we must not accept as a rule of language (*pro regula sermonis accipiendum*) words and phrases that have become a vicious habit with a number of persons" (1. 6. 44). The lovers of amended language do not conform to the practice of the common people. That would be "a very dangerous prescription" (*periculosissimum praeceptum*). "I will therefore define usage in speech as the agreed practice of educated men": *Ergo consuetudinem sermonis uocabo consensum eruditorum* (1. 6. 45). In other words, consistent correctness of speech (*ratio*) rests on education, and education calls for a tradition of learning: It presupposes the *consensus eruditorum*.<sup>10</sup>

1. 7. 1 follows immediately 1. 6. 45, completing by some complementary remarks on faultless spelling what has just been stated for oral speech: "Having stated the rule which we must follow in speaking, I will now proceed to lay down the rule which we must observe when we write; let us style it the science of writing correctly" ("Nunc, quoniam diximus, quae sit loquendi regula, dicendum, quae scribentibus custodienda, quod Graeci ὀρθογραφίαν uocant; hoc nos recte scribendi scientiam nominemus"). The perfect equivalence between *regula* (always recurring in the singular) and *scientia* in such statements is highly significant. In 1. 5. 1, *loquendi regula* had paralleled *loquendi scientia* from the initial sentence of 1. 4. 2. Here, *loquendi regula* and *scribendi scientia* impose a similar normativity on the oral and the written level of communication. Finally, when recapitulating chapters 5 to 8 on grammar, Quintilian chooses again in

<sup>10</sup> V. Bonmati Sanchez, "Norma y uso segun Quintiliano," *Revista Española de Linguística* 18 (1988) 343–45, shows that *usus* means *consensus eruditorum* based on the authority of books.

1. 9. 1 the phrase *ratio loquendi*, which echoes his use of *ratio* in 1. 6. 1: *Et finitae quidem sunt partes duae, quas haec professio pollicetur, id est ratio loquendi et enarratio auctorum, quarum illam methodicen hanc historicen uocant*, "I have now finished with two of the departments, with which teachers of literature profess to deal, namely the art of speaking correctly and the interpretation of authors; the former they call *methodice*, the latter *historice*."

The *ratio loquendi*, "correctness of speech," is as much an objective reality as the *enarratio auctorum*, the "interpretation of authors," when one considers both of them in their social dimension. Both activities aim at a well-defined allegiance to the normative tradition by which a language, oral or written, remains integrally secured in a given society. *Regula*, in any case, does not mean a "grammatical rule" in the modern sense. It has a completely different extension, bound as it is to the cultural institution of human speech in an educated society. In fact, it means that very institution of educated language in its most immediate and vital exercise, namely the correct spelling of words and the sound formation of sentences.

In the final section of his immense work, when Quintilian starts using again the concept of *regula*, the ample and fundamental significance of "rule," as understood by him, becomes even more obvious. In 9. 4. 1-2, the study of *compositio*, which includes at once *ordo*, *iunctura*, *numerus*, "order, connexion and rhythm" (9. 4. 22), places the author in a vicinity closer than ever to the overpowering figure of Cicero. Therefore a critical caveat seems appropriate: "I shall deal more briefly with those points which admit of no dispute, while there will be certain subjects on which I shall express a certain amount of disagreement." In short, "I intend to make my own views clear" (9. 4. 2). What Quintilian does *not* observe is that his notion of *regula* is one of the most significant features of his independent thinking in the final part of the *Institutio*.

First, he launches a vibrant protest against those "who would absolutely bar all study of artistic structure (*curam omnem compositionis*) and contend that language as it chances to present itself in the rough is more natural and even more manly" (9. 4. 3). Against such a contestation of all cultural traditions, Quintilian underlines the fact that the adverse opinion, if ever admitted as true, would mean the end of "the whole art of oratory." And he gives his main reason: "For the first men did not speak with the care demanded by that art nor in accordance with the rule that it lays down" (*Neque enim locuti sunt ad hanc regulam et diligentiam primi homines* 9. 4. 4). Civilization, with rhetorical culture at its core, did not yet exist. The *regula*, or human communication normed by *compositio*, in other words the social institution of civilized language, was missing in the proto-history of humankind. That *ars loquendi* developed only much later, when the birth of civilized language became possible. Therefore, going back to the original human beings, *primi homines*, would necessarily mean a collapse of all cultural values.

In Book 10, dealing with "imitation," Quintilian states that the use of chosen words is normally determined by the perception of their traditional value, "the one sure standard being contemporary usage" (*ut quorum certissima sit regula in consuetudine* 10. 2. 13). A living tradition in its present shape rules all educated language, and the creative process which underlies the latter is said to be a *certissima regula*. Quintilian himself illustrates the process of creating one's own language in conformity with tradition. When distinguishing between "what is expedient" and "what is becoming," he notes: "I have followed rather the usage of common speech than the strict law of truth" (*Et nos secundum communem potius loquendi consuetudinem quam ipsam ueritatis regulam diuisione hac utimur* 11. 1. 12). During the fourth century C.E., an anonymous contemporary of Tyconius would pick up the phrase *ueritatis regula* and give it creedal relevance in his Latin translation of Irenaeus of Lyons's *Aduersus haereses*.<sup>11</sup> Tyconius himself used it as equivalent to *regula fidei*.

Finally, Book 12 includes a last mention of Quintilian's *regula*: "On the other hand, the written speech which is published as a model of style must be polished and filed and brought into conformity with the accepted rule and standard of artistic construction (*ad legem et regulam compositum esse oportere*), since it will come into the hands of learned men" (12. 10. 50).

Thus, throughout the *Institutio*, Quintilian witnesses a consistent usage of *regula*: The "rule" is always in one way or another the logical foundation and intrinsic principle of educated speech, oral or written. The author of the *Institutio* refers to that "rule" always in the singular. He acknowledges it as a source of discernment and distinctive correctness, which transcends the actual speaker or writer. He states that it is universally available all through the centuries, being one of those categories without which no educated communication between people would ever happen.

It should not be seen as fortuitous that Quintilian recurs to the notion of *regula* only in Books 1 and 9–12. Without making a proper statement about it, his very usage of the notion shows that he gives it the value of a basic hermeneutical concept, capable of enriching the logical frame of his whole work.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> S. Lundström, *Studien zur lateinischen Irenäusübersetzung* (Lund 1943) and "Text-kritische Beiträge zur lateinischen Irenäusübersetzung," *Eranos* 43 (1945) 285–300. According to H. Jordan and A. Souter, as quoted by J. Quasten, *Patrology* I (1986; 1st ed. 1950) 290–91, the Latin translation of Irenaeus was made in Roman Africa between 370 and 420.

<sup>12</sup> *Regula* is not registered in E. Zundel, *Clavis Quintiliana: Quintilians "Institutio oratoria" aufgeschlüsselt nach rhetorischen Begriffen* (Darmstadt 1989), but *ratio* is noted (p. 83). G. Kennedy (above, note 8) 58 traces *scientia* (in Quintilian's basic definition of rhetoric: "the science of speaking well" 2. 15. 34) back to the Stoics Cleanthes and Chrysippus, but neglects the semantic constellation *ratio, regula, scientia*, in Quintilian himself.

II. Tyconius's *Regulae Mysticae*

A "lay theologian and biblical commentator of the Donatist church of Roman Africa,"<sup>13</sup> Tyconius flourished between 370 and 390. His intellectual endeavor concentrated on the riches of the local Christianity in Carthage. In line with Tertullian and Cyprian he deepened the properly African self-definition of the Christian church, with the paradoxical aim to free his church from sectarian isolation.<sup>14</sup> A Donatist by family status and social conformity, he fought an endless battle in order to reintegrate the schismatic African tradition into mainstream Christianity, with the only result that he was severely censured by his own bishop, Parmenian of Carthage, in 378,<sup>15</sup> and ridiculed about fifty years later, by Augustine, in Book 3, chapter 42 of *De doctrina christiana*. His works, despite the *damnatio memoriae* engineered by Augustine and his friends, exercised a long-lasting influence through the Western Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> A commentary on the Apocalypse by Tyconius survives only in fragments and quotations from later authors.<sup>17</sup> Tyconius's most striking work, *The Book of Rules*, handed down to us, it seems, in its integrality, was deliberately neutralized by the elderly Augustine, when quoting it in the final part of *De doctrina christiana* 3. Thus deliberately taken out of Christian hands through its biased quotation by this vigilant guardian of church orthodoxy, and de facto reduced to a forgotten relic, Tyconius's *Book of Rules* offers the oldest systematic essay on biblical hermeneutics ever written by a Christian theologian.<sup>18</sup>

Tyconius himself introduces it as a *libellus regularis*. Such a use of *regularis* was apparently unknown before him. It announces in any case that "rules" are the central, I should say, the unique issue at stake in the book. There are seven "mystic rules," the author explains, which determine a sound understanding of the divine revelation contained in the bible. Like the seven "seals," which kept the heavenly book closed in Revelation 5. 1, the seven "rules," according to Tyconius, hide and preserve from profane reading the biblical message about God's deeds in the history of Israel and

<sup>13</sup> P. Bright (above, note 6) 917.

<sup>14</sup> The reception and interpretation of the bible in Roman Africa is currently subjected to intense research. Between studies on the so-called *Vetus Latina*, the Latin text of the bible older than Jerome's Vulgate, and work accomplished on Donatism (mainly in the field of literary history by P. Monceaux and in a socio-political perspective by W. H. C. Frend), the hermeneutical tradition which culminated in Tyconius still represents a terra incognita.

<sup>15</sup> Bishop of Carthage 362-391/2. See W. H. C. Frend's entry on Parmenian in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (above, note 6) II 651.

<sup>16</sup> P. Cazier, "Le Livre des Règles de Tyconius. Sa transmission du 'De doctrina christiana' aux 'Sentences' d'Isidore de Seville," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 19 (1973) 241-61 and "Cassien auteur présumé de l'épitomé des Règles de Tyconius," 21 (1975) 261-97.

<sup>17</sup> K. Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius: A History of its Reception and Influence* (Frankfurt a.M., Bern and New York 1987).

<sup>18</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, Book 4, with which the *Book of Rules* is sometimes compared, shows no intention of producing such a systematic hermeneutics.

in view of universal human salvation. Only in applying the sort of initiatory logic thought out by Tyconius would someone be able to interpret correctly the divine message. I quote the preamble of *The Book of Rules*:<sup>19</sup>

Necessarium duxi ante omnia quae mihi uidentur libellum regularem scribere, et secretorum legis ueluti clauēs et luminaria fabricare. sunt enim quaedam regulae mysticae quae uniuersae legis recessus obtinent et ueritatis thesauros aliquibus inuisibiles faciunt; quarum si ratio regularum sine inuidia ut communicamus accepta fuerit, clausa quaeque patefient et obscura dilucidabuntur, ut quis prophetiae immensam siluam perambulans his regulis quodam modo lucis tramitibus deductus ab errore defendatur.

The seven "rules" are then enumerated as seven titles provided by Tyconius for the different sections of his compact pamphlet: 1. *De domino et corpore eius*, 2. *De domini corpore bipartito*, 3. *De promissis et lege*, 4. *De specie et genere*, 5. *De temporibus*, 6. *De recapitulatione*, 7. *De diabolo et eius corpore*. One may note at first glance that 1 and 7 secure a perfect framing in being symmetrical. A closer look would admit the same for 2 and 6, as well as for 3 and 5, 4 being central, with the most explicit reference to grammatical and logical categories, *species* and *genus*.

The whole work reflects the skills of a trained rhetor. Rules 1 and 2 display the author's *inuentio*; Tyconius explores the complex reality of the church at large. In the light of the social body of the church he introduces his main categories: *scriptura*, *regula*, *transitus*, *recessus*. It may be worth remembering that the first part of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was filled with statements about society at large, past and present. Statements used for forensic communication were conveniently elaborated on the basis of the social context. Rule 3 completes the *inuentio* of 1 and 2 in an argumentative way. The moral institutions of *repromissio* and *lex*, as found throughout scripture, turn Tyconius's analysis into a more psychological study. Hence Rule 3 deals with the inner experience of church people, namely their passions, memories and expectations, along the centuries of biblical and ecclesiastical history. A similar turn had happened in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where the psychological behavior of people was constantly mentioned in order to explain and legitimate juridical procedures. Thus Rule 3 intends to prove the legitimacy of the social body of the church in the history of salvation.

<sup>19</sup> "Above everything else that came to mind, I considered it necessary to write a book of rules and so to fashion keys and lamps, as it were, to the secrets of the law. For there are certain mystic rules which obtain in the inner recesses of the entire law and keep the rich treasures of the truth hidden from some people. But if the sense of these rules is accepted without ill will, as we impart it, whatever is closed will be opened and whatever is dark will be illumined; and anyone who walks the vast forest of prophecy guided by these rules, as by pathways of light, will be kept from straying into error" (W. S. Babcock, *Tyconius. The Book of Rules*, translated, with an introduction and notes, SBL Texts and Translations 31, Early Christian Literature Series 7 [Atlanta 1989] 3).

Rule 4 could well be entitled separately "On Style." It belongs to a genre of rhetorical essays popular in late antiquity. Here the way of writing under consideration is attributed to the divine Spirit, the sole author of sacred scripture admitted by Tyconius. The Spirit hides genus in species when speaking of old and new Jerusalem, of old Israel and universal church: *in speciem genus abscondens*. As an additional insight Quintilian had also recommended that one observe carefully in a narrative the shifts between specific and generic notions. Both, the Roman rhetor of the first century C.E. and the African Donatist of the fourth century, underline the "subtlety" of such procedures.<sup>20</sup>

Rule 5, "On Times," adds a classical chapter on ornamentation of style, with a rhetorical definition as its introductory statement: "Temporis quantitas in scripturis frequenter mystica est tropo synecdoche, aut legitimis numeris, qui multis modis positi sunt et pro loco intelligendi; synecdoche uero est aut a parte totum, aut a toto pars."<sup>21</sup> Rule 6, in direct continuity with 5, tracks down another "subtlety" of the Spirit, when speaking of "then" and "now": "The seal of recapitulation guards some things with such subtlety that it seems more a continuation than a recapitulation of the narrative."<sup>22</sup> Additional remarks on analogy and allegory complete Rule 6. Rule 7, aiming at a deliberate inclusion, parallels Rule 1: "The relation of the devil and his body can be conceived in short order, if we keep in mind here also what we have said about the Lord and his body."<sup>23</sup> This final chapter has more than twice the length of the preceding one, and it is longer than 1, 2 or 5. It adds to 6 and 7 a few more remarks on allegorical and symbolic forms of speech in scripture. In short, the last three "rules" enjoy a continuity of their own.

When Tyconius announced an "essay on rules" in his carefully crafted preamble, he had in mind what he called "mystic rules," *regulae mysticae*. But "mystic" did not imply any subjective experience due to those rules; it referred to the objective and proper nature of the "rules" themselves. They were in Tyconius's view divine revelation instituted and made available in a given literary way, exclusively characteristic of scripture. They were constitutive of the grammar assumed by the Spirit, when articulating divine truth in sacred scripture; or, in borrowing Quintilian's terms, they were the seven-fold *ratio*, or *regula loquendi*, exclusively proper to the biblical message. Their affinity with Quintilian's *regula* rests essentially on their

<sup>20</sup> In 4. 5. 25 (*quo subtilius et copiosius diuisisse uideantur*), Quintilian links "subtlety" with the use of the distinction between *genus* and *species*. In 7. 1. 59 (*qui subtiliter quaeret*), "subtlety" is recommended for a correct perception of the *ordo* between *genus* and *species*.

<sup>21</sup> "Temporal quantity, in scripture, often has mystic significance through the rhetorical figure of synecdoche, or through the specific numbers involved. The latter are used in a variety of ways and must be understood according to the context. In synecdoche, however, either a part represents the whole or the whole represents a part" (Babcock [above, note 19] 89).

<sup>22</sup> Babcock (above, note 19) 109.

<sup>23</sup> Babcock (above, note 19) 115.



objectivity. Just as human language keeps being established in its own "correctness, lucidity and elegance" throughout ages and cultures in constant change, so does sacred scripture keep the integral truth of its message, from David's day in biblical antiquity to "now" in Roman Africa, thanks to "mystic rules" which regulate its ageless relevance.

No literal dependency, not even a literary resemblance, could be claimed as linking Quintilian's work and the *libellus* of Tyconius. But the latter's approach to scripture, conditioned as it was by the cultural consensus in fourth-century Roman Africa, was thought out entirely in terms of rhetoric. Tyconius needed to elaborate a theoretical construct regulating scriptural interpretation in the light of burning issues proper to the African tradition. He conceived his *libellus regularis* with such a concern in mind.

The Tyconian "rules" are allegedly fixed by the Spirit of scriptural inspiration for the very composition of scripture as handed down to the churches, scripture being entirely conceived and even written out by the Spirit in Tyconius's hermeneutics. In other words, the "rules" are inner, structural principles, which belong to the very core of scriptural literature. Well understood, those principles make the whole of scripture become intelligible. They are *objective* criteria, bound to the letter of scripture itself. The interpreter discovers them there. He or she would never invent them as a subjective method of interpreting, because they originate only from the Spirit's own initiative as the divine author of sacred scripture. The interpreter perceives and unfolds the "rules" in the best of cases, thanks to appropriate hermeneutical tools, like those furnished by Tyconius's *libellus*. Those tools are essentially notions taken over from the traditional curriculum of rhetoric. In the metaphorical announcement of his preamble quoted above, Tyconius needed *ueluti clauas et luminaria fabricare*, "to fashion keys and lamps," in order to explore "the secrets of the law."<sup>24</sup> What sort of rhetorical notions were those "keys and lamps" in fact?

For catching the proper significance of Rule 1, Tyconius uses as "keys" the notions of *persona* and *transitus*. For Rule 2, "Concerning the Bipartite Character of the Lord's Body," he recommends another *transitus*, no longer vertical, but "the transition (*transitus*) and return (*reditus*) from one part of the body to the other, from the right-hand part to the left, or from the left to the right." The second rule by itself signifies that the church is bipartite, but in order to find this truth in scripture one must apply systematically the bilateral *transitus* exemplified here. Rule 3 opens the clear understanding of "the promises and the law," if only one applies correctly the handbook notion of "the matter" under scrutiny, or as Tyconius calls it insistently, the

<sup>24</sup> Babcock's translation, "so to fashion keys and lamps," suggests an equivalency of "rules" and "keys": "I considered it necessary to write a book of rules and so . . ." Nothing in the Latin calls for "so," whereas *ueluti*, which qualifies properly *clauas et luminaria*, is well rendered by Babcock's "as it were."

*opus: Omne opus nostrum fides est.*<sup>25</sup> In using now properly that notion of the narrative *matter*, one may read correctly, with the assistance of the Spirit, what mattered for God on the distinctive levels of the law and of the promises.

The chapter entitled "Rule 4" is introduced by the significant observation: "De specie et genere loquimur, non secundum artem rhetoricam humanae sapientiae . . . sed loquimur secundum mysteria caelestis sapientiae magisterio Spiritus Sancti."<sup>26</sup> Thus the grammatical notions of *species* and *genus* serve here for the enlightening exercise of Rule 4, which reveals how the Spirit is "concealing the general in the particular" (*in speciem genus abscondens*) or, vice versa, "how he passes from the particular to the general"<sup>27</sup> (*ab specie in genus*), "thanks to a variety of transition and order" (*uarietas translationis et ordinis*). Tyconius calls expressly "spiritual" the secret realities revealed in Rule 4 (*omnia spiritualiter*). Again Rule 5 is introduced by a technical remark, already mentioned above: "Temporis quantitas in scripturis frequenter mystica est tropo synecdoche." In applying the notion of "synecdoche," which means that "either a part represents the whole or the whole represents a part," Tyconius uses another "key," able to deliver the *ratio* of what he calls the "mystical significance" of "temporal quantity" which would otherwise be kept secret by Rule 5.

Finally, the *ratio* of Rule 5, cleared up by the appropriate key-notion of synecdoche, develops into a brilliant and rather complex arithmology, by which one may try to compute and analyse the "mystical quantity" of many periods of time in the Old Testament. It looks as if Tyconius anticipated here Augustine's numerological arguments. But the backgrounds of both men are very different; in the case of Augustine it is philosophical, in the case of Tyconius it is properly theological with a symbolic ecclesiology as its focus.

Rule 6 calls for the rhetorical notion of "recapitulation" as its proper key, being a rule "by which the Spirit has sealed the law so as to guard the pathway of light,"<sup>28</sup> especially on the level of biblical narratives. The subtlety (*subtilitas*) of the Spirit<sup>29</sup> uses grammatical means (*tunc, illa hora, illo die*) or, in Tyconius's words, *futurae similitudines*, which one would hardly notice, so that the narrative seems simply to continue instead of

<sup>25</sup> Babcock (above, note 19) 34.

<sup>26</sup> "I am not referring to the particular and the general as they are used in the rhetorical art devised by human wisdom. Rather I am speaking with reference to the mysteries of heavenly wisdom in relation to the teaching of the Holy Spirit" (Babcock [above, note 19] 55). As "rhetorical art devised by human wisdom" Babcock recalls in note 12 "Quintilian *Institutio Oratorica* [sic] 7. 1. 23-28." The translator in the Loeb Library could have suggested to him that he keep *species* and *genus*, instead of using "particular" and "general," which lose Tyconius's express reference to defined notions of grammar.

<sup>27</sup> In Babcock's unfortunate translation.

<sup>28</sup> Babcock (above, note 19) 109.

<sup>29</sup> See above, note 19.

being "recapitulation." By this term "recapitulation" Tyconius introduces an interpretive key, which opens the correct meaning, prophetic and "spiritual" as it was, of many biblical narratives. Indeed, by the very fact of telling stories about the patriarchs or other figures in the Old Testament, those narratives announce secretly the present truth of the church. The key proper to Rule 6 "recapitulates" the narratives in "actualizing" them explicitly in the light of current church experience: "What Daniel mentioned is happening now in Africa."<sup>30</sup>

Rule 7 concerns the teaching of the bible about Antichrist. More than the other six rules it is eschatological. Its mysteries are brought into daylight by the same key used already for Rule 1: *Transitus namque a capite ad corpus eadem ratione dinoscitur*, "The transition<sup>31</sup> from head to body is recognized by the same kind of reasoning." Precisely there is an Antichrist because the "devil's body" signifies the reality of evil inside the "body of Christ," and in proportion with it. This last rule in Tyconian hermeneutics keeps hidden the true nature of the "bipartite" church: It is "in the midst" of Christianity, spread over the world, that evil culminates.

In summary, the seven *regulae*, described by Tyconius in his *libellus regularis*, are as objective and essential in regard to God's biblical discourse as seemed to be for human speech the *regula loquendi* identified by Quintilian. They are declared *mysticae* precisely because they command the very nature of the divine discourse in scripture. More needs to be said about the "mystic" nature of the Tyconian rules.<sup>32</sup> Here the analogy with Quintilian's *regula* called only for a precision about their objective structuring inside scripture. A final clarification about them is unwillingly given by Augustine, to whom we owe in fact the miraculous preservation of Tyconius's amazing *libellus regularis*.

### III. Augustine's *Regulae uel Clauae*

Augustine's journey, from the day when he left Carthage for Rome until the day of his return to Roman Africa as a Christian convert, tells us the story of a fascinating quest for the truth and the very nature of human language, a quest determined mainly by the sort of Neoplatonic philosophy absorbed by Augustine in Milanese circles, and foremost by his inveterate need to trust in divine transcendence for solving his personal problems. As a professional rhetor he could have reached true enjoyment and security in cultivating a critical pursuit of what human language represents. He chose to give priority to the disrupting trends of his religious quest. His whole

<sup>30</sup> Babcock (above, note 19) 111.

<sup>31</sup> *Transitus*, with an active sense, implies in Tyconius a deliberate transfer of meaning from one reality to another. If one translates it by "transition," one may well miss the proper sense of the term in the *Book of Rules*. Quintilian used it in the more common way (*unde etiam uenusti transitus fiunt* 9. 2. 61) when commenting on Cicero's oratorical style.

<sup>32</sup> I hope to fulfill this task in a *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, in preparation for Brill.

awareness about the vital gift of language turned into what he called "confessions." It also called for a more theoretical assessment which he entitled *De doctrina christiana*, the "doctrine" in question focusing on the divine message of scripture as it takes on the form of human language and as it calls for a critical understanding articulated in one's own culture.

When quoting Tyconius and his *Book of Rules* in a later section of his own hermeneutical essay, Augustine relies on an experience thirty years before, still vivid in his memory and most probably well retracable for him on the basis of his notebooks. In 396 he had apologized in a letter to Bishop Aurelius of Carthage (*Ep.* 41. 2): "On my part, I am not forgetting what you asked about the seven rules or keys of Tyconius, and as I have written many times, I am waiting to hear what you think of it." Indeed, during one of the earliest encounters between Augustine and Aurelius, after Augustine's return to Africa, most probably after 395, when the famous rhetor had become the assistant of Bishop Valerius in Hippo Regia, the primate of Carthage found it very convenient to lend a copy of Tyconius's *libellus* to his newly appointed and subordinate colleague, who was indeed more qualified than anyone else to give him a competent opinion.

To his surprise Aurelius found the learned Augustine at a loss after having read the *libellus regularis* of the Donatist lay theologian. He never received the easy information which he had expected, but when he heard that the newly appointed bishop of Hippo intended to write a complete essay on rules for interpreting scripture, entitled *De doctrina christiana*, he hoped that Augustine's response to Tyconius's essay on the same issue would finally come out. His disappointment must have been real when he realized that the zealous and passionate new pastor of Hippo had interrupted his hermeneutical tractate and postponed its completion *ad kalendas graecas*. Finally, when getting a hand on a copy of what had in fact been written out of that tractate, he suspected more than by a simple guess that the unfortunate interruption was precisely due to Augustine's puzzlement about the Tyconian "rules." Indeed, thirty years later, in 426, almost a decade after Aurelius's death, the old bishop of Hippo decided to review as many as a hundred or so of his literary works, and to add to them a list of *retractationes*. In the unique case of *De doctrina christiana* he went so far as to decide to complete the essay according to its original plan, as announced at the start of its first book. He wrote out the missing section at the end of Book 3, the one which had caused his literary inhibition in 396; then he felt free to secure the composition of Book 4.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See my remarks on the "Local Setting and Motivation of *De doctrina christiana*," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine, Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. by J. T. Lienhard, E. C. Muller and R. J. Teske (New York 1993) 331-39, and on "The Interrupted *De doctrina christiana*," in *Augustine of Hippo. De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. by D. W.-H. Arnold and P. Bright (Notre Dame 1995).

In 3. 25. 36 through 29. 41, the seventy-two year old bishop succeeded in completing the discussion of "figurative locutions" with variable significations. He also added some remarks about tropes. Any reader would be aware of a certain change of style and vocabulary, even a deeper richness in the references to scripture, in comparing that final section of Book 3 with its former parts. One would be right in attributing the change to the author's more profound experience of scripture after three decades of intense studying and preaching. But a more specific explanation becomes possible from 3. 30. 42 on, where Augustine introduces his quotation of Tyconius. One needs only to read the work of Tyconius, which completely occupies the final section of *De doctrina christiana* 3, from 30. 42 through 37. 56, in order to see that the changed tone and the more technical argumentation from 25. 36 through 29. 41 anticipate in all details the subsequent statements about Tyconius in the rest of Book 3. To state it bluntly, it is with the Tyconian *Book of Rules* in mind that the old bishop engaged the completion of *De doctrina christiana* in 426.

Does it mean that Augustine had at last overcome the initial inhibition which had prevented him from discussing Tyconius in his hermeneutical tractate thirty years earlier? One can hardly doubt it, in observing the magisterial tone with which Augustine not only quotes the *Book of Rules*, but even celebrates its merits, and insists that students of scripture should learn from it. A positive treatment given to the work of a schismatic teacher, who deserves only to be despised or at least ignored by anyone who cares for ecclesiastic orthodoxy, remains unparalleled in the whole of patristic literature.

In fact, Augustine's behavior is far from simple. At the time of his *Retractationes*, he no longer hesitated to introduce Tyconius in the frame of his incomplete *De doctrina christiana*, to quote him and to summarize his whole *libellus*. For Augustine was now armed with his own arsenal of biblical proof-texts, the result of manifold and exacting exercises in scriptural exegesis. In his summarizing paraphrase of each of Tyconius's rules, he found it normal and legitimate to replace the Tyconian apparatus of scriptural references by his own. In doing so he projected into that paraphrase his own understanding of scripture, church and Christian identity. As a result, the same Augustine, who contributed more than anyone else to preserving the very text and memory of Tyconius's *libellus* for centuries to come, "failed to understand the very purpose of the *Book of Rules* as well as the hermeneutical theory that lay behind it."<sup>34</sup>

In 396, writing to Aurelius of Carthage, the young bishop of Hippo complained about his own failure to catch the meaning of Tyconius's "seven rules or keys" (*septem regulis uel clauibus*). In 426, the same

<sup>34</sup> For a thorough analysis of Augustine's quotation, see P. Bright, "Tyconius and his Interpreters: A Study of the Epitomes of the *Book of Rules*," in Kannengiesser and Bright (above, note 9) 23-39, esp. 37.

bishop, in the final stage of his prodigious career, introduced at last the adversary whom he could not help but acclaim as a master, by the words: "A certain Tyconius . . . wrote a book which he called *of Rules*, since in it he explained *seven rules with which as with keys* (emphasis mine) the obscurities of the divine scriptures might be opened." The quoted preamble of the *liber regularum*<sup>35</sup> follows almost immediately, with the explicit mention of the "regulae mysticae quae universae legis recessus obtinent et ueritatis thesauros aliquibus inuisibilis faciunt." Following Augustine's introductory remarks in 3. 30. 42 ("rules with which, as with keys, the obscurities of the divine scriptures might be opened"), the manuscript tradition manipulated the wording of Tyconius's prooemium, and all modern translations until very recently agreed with D. W. Robertson, Jr., who translated: "For there are certain mystic rules which *reveal* (for *obtainent!*) what is hidden in the whole Law and *make visible* (for *inuisibilis faciunt!*) the treasures of truth which are invisible to some."

Thus, from Tyconius's "rules," considered as the vital structure of scriptural discourse, in analogy with Quintilian's "rule" which was the establishing principle of educated language, the focus has shifted over, in *De doctrina christiana*, to Augustinian hermeneutics determined by Ciceronian *praecepta*.

*Concordia University, Montreal*

<sup>35</sup> Augustine cites Tyconius's essay as *liber regularum*, whereas the latter introduced it as *libellus regularis*. The translators render *libellus regularis* by "Book of Rules."