VISUALIZING APOCALYPSE:
IMAGE AND NARRATION IN THE TENTH-CENTURY
GERONA BEATUS COMMENTARY ON THE APOCALYPSE

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The illuminations that accompany the Gerona Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse have long been considered pictorial accompaniments to the written text of the New Testament Book of Revelations that function as visual aids for readers. This is only partly true, for several of the Beatus manuscripts contain illuminations that do not pertain to the Apocalypse but to other books of the Bible, though the text is absent. The Gerona Beatus, the most elaborately decorated of the Beatus manuscript family, is such an example, containing not only depictions of Old Testament stories but also a series of illustrations of the life of Christ not found in other manuscripts of its family. Produced in 975 AD, the Gerona Beatus continues the tradition of medieval apocalyptic thought in which the Antichrist was perceived of as embodied in the Muslim presence in Spain of the eighth through the fifteen centuries. As instruments of learning and meditation used by monks and other religious during the monastic practice of lectio divina, the Gerona Beatus illuminations functioned as more than simple graphic accompaniments, for they recreated a new narrative in which the reader could visualise the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies from both the Old and the New Testaments. By presenting the reader with a series of emotive symbols, depictions of Christ, and the images of the Apocalypse, the artists created a supernarrative in which various books of the Bible come into contact with one another and symbolically carry the reader into a ritual time in which earthly
temporality ceases and a heightened level of spiritual understanding, which Saint Augustine calls *visio spiritualis*, is achieved. Through *lectio divina*, it was believed, the reader could access divine wisdom and, in so doing, prepare his soul for *visio intellectualis*, or divine understanding of God. The social climate in Spain the late tenth century caused concern among the Christian religious, who believed that Christ’s Second Coming was near and that the Church would soon conquer the perceived evil of Islam. The Gerona Beatus aided the religious to prepare themselves for that victory and for the Final Judgment that they believed imminent.
Dedicated to my parents,

Clifford and Sybil Poole
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INTRODUCTION

“It is the one great poem which the first Christian age produced, it is a single and living unity from end to end, and it contains a whole world of spiritual imagery to be entered into and possessed.”¹

The Apocalypse, or the Revelation to Saint John, has captivated the minds of the religious and the laity alike, the world over, for nearly two millennia. The last book of the New Testament, it is, without a doubt, the most difficult to understand, for its twenty-two chapters contain an enigmatic message that leaves even the most astute of scholars perplexed. It is the narrative of Saint John’s mystical vision of the end, in which all are judged according to their earthly deeds, evil is destroyed, and the Heavenly Jerusalem is established for eternity on Earth. A story of strange symbols and baffling events, it is, in short, the culmination of all Biblical wisdom, the final battle in which Christianity finds its victory and the salvation for those who have lived according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. The events of this narration represent for Christianity the end of centuries of struggle and the beginning of everlasting happiness in the presence of God.

Within just two centuries after Saint John’s Revelation, which Biblical scholars believe to have taken place sometime late in the 1st century AD or early in the 2nd, his writing underwent the scrutiny of the first known Christian exegetes, Tyconius (4th century) and Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Living in North Africa where, as part

¹ Farrer, Rebirth, p. 6.
of the Roman Empire, Christians often faced death as martyrs, these two early Church Fathers began a tradition that would last to today’s time, that of analysing and explaining the books of the Bible in written commentary form. Since their time, no book of the Bible has gone unnoticed by Christian exegetes, yet none has met with the curiosity of commentators to the extent of the book of Revelations.

At certain points in history this apocalyptic book has held special importance for Christians world-wide: because of calculations carried out by monks at the beginning of the Middle Ages, many believed the year 800 to be the prophetic beginning of the Seventh Age of Man in which the culmination of Biblical prophecies was to take place; others believed the year 1000 to mark the commencement of the Apocalypse prophecies; still others believed that the Christian triumph over Islam (whenever that were to take place) would bring the establishment of God’s Kingdom on Earth; and more recently, the approaching third millennium brought many to fear that the end was near. Wars, dictatorial regimes, and even natural disasters for centuries have inspired people to link the apocalyptic narrative to the events of their own time period, and, in effect, people have long seen in contemporary society the signs pointed to in the Book of Revelations as marking the second coming of the Christ. This was precisely the case with Spanish society of the Middle Ages.

In the two to three centuries preceding the year 1000 there began in Spain a tradition that would last to the beginning of the sixteenth century: the copying of a manuscript that we now refer to simply as a *Beatus*. Though we use this name when talking about the individual copies of the original manuscript, the word itself actually is that of the author of the written text, Beatus of Liébana, an eighth-century presbyter of
the (then) Asturian monastery of San Martín de Liébana. For reasons that no one has explained fully, in 776 Beatus wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelations entitled *Commentaria in Apocalipsin*, in which he compiled in neatly organized form many of the teachings and exegetical discussions of the previous Church Fathers regarding the last days. Beatus later rewrote his *Commentaries* twice, each time adding new information and directing the third edition at the Adoptionist heresy that had begun to cause religious dissent in various parts of Iberia and even in Southern France.² Throughout the following centuries, this third manuscript was copied at least thirty-four times, and of those at least twenty-six contained illustrations. Of the non-illustrated copies, several have spaces where an illustration would have been placed had the manuscript been finished, thus showing the desire to continue this artistic trend. Because of the extent of the Beatus manuscript tradition, the Apocalypse became as popular a text to illustrate in Spain during the Middle Ages as did Books of Hours and the book of Psalms in other parts of Europe at the same time period. In fact, it is because of the illustrations, not the textual commentary, that the Beatus manuscripts have come to occupy the important position in art and cultural studies that they now have.

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² Based on the polemical writings against Adoptionism that circulated during the latter part of the eighth century, we know that Beatus directed this third copy mainly at proving what he considered to be the diabolic nature of the Adoptionist heresy. Beatus tells us in the introduction to the *Commentaries* that he has long pondered the works of the Church Fathers regarding the Apocalypse and has decided to compile them into an easily-read and understood manuscript. He gives us no further evidence as to his reasons for having written the *Commentaries*. Marqués Casanovas prefers to see Beatus’s work as a response to the religious needs of the new Kingdom of Asturias: “[D]uring the lifetime of Beato, King Alfonso II (791-842), according to the *Crónica Albeldense*, ‘established in Oviedo the entire order of the Goths, disposing all matters both for the Church and the Palace in accordance with the observances of Toledo.’ In such surroundings, it is evident that the priests had need of a book offering them the necessary texts for the proper commentary and interpretation of the Apocalypse. Beato wrote his book in order to satisfy that need, adding, by way of a gloss, the commentaries of the Holy Fathers appropriate to the extract from the sacred text.” (“Beato of Gerona”, pp. 222-223)
The Present Study

The present study will focus on those illustrations, particularly those of the Gerona Beatus Apocalypse, the most unique of the extant Beatus manuscripts, finished in the year 975. Like the other illustrated Beatus commentaries, the Gerona manuscript contains illustrations of various episodes of Old Testament history, a separate illustrated commentary on the apocalyptic visions of the Book of Daniel, as well as the illustrations depicting the narrative of John’s Apocalypse found in the Book of Revelations. Unlike the other Beatus manuscripts, that of Gerona also contains a series of illustrations depicting the life of Christ. This added series of illustrations alters the narrative structure of the Beatus commentaries by presenting to the reader the fundamental concept that must be kept in mind while reading the Apocalypse narrative: the divinely appointed birth, death, and resurrection of Christ as humanity’s gateway into Heaven. These illustrations of the life of Christ, coupled with those of the Old Testament and of the Apocalypse, form a supernarrative composed of various smaller narratives that is meant to serve as a spiritual guide, leading the reader through the history of humanity from Adam’s fall in the Garden of Eden to the new covenant established by Jesus Christ, and finally to the glorious end toward which Christ directs His followers. These illustrations aid the monastic reader in his lectio divina, or divine reading, by bringing him to the state of visio spiritualis, or spiritual understanding of the scriptures. Their finality is to

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3 The illustrations depict scenes from chapters 1-8 and chapter 10 of Daniel.
4 The later Turin manuscript also contains this series of illustrations, but only because it is a direct copy of the Gerona manuscript.
provide a concrete visualization of the narratives of the Apocalypse and related texts in order that the reader may contemplate in more direct form the messages of the revelation to Saint John.

Besides the fact that the Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse manuscripts were so richly illuminated, they represent the largest extant manuscript family known today from the European Middle Ages. As I have already pointed out, we know of at least thirty-four copies of the Beatus commentaries, of which twenty-six have illuminations in some form. As we will see in the next chapter, the popularity of Beatus’s commentaries results partly from the perceived “Muslim Antichrist” that was seen to have plagued Spain during the Middle Ages. The belief that the Christian defeat of Islam would bring the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth spurned many to contemplate the Final Judgment and to see in their society the signs of the fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecies. Thus, for the Iberian Christians, the Book of Revelations was seen as the most pertinent of the Biblical writings to their particular social and religious situation, for it described the events that would take place as part of the spiritual battle that they sensed was transpiring in their own land. This particularly Spanish condition is made clear in the fact that the Beatus Apocalypse retained most of its popularity within the Iberian Peninsula: all but two of the extant manuscripts come from monasteries as far

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5 Joaquín González Echegaray believes that we can add at least another six manuscripts to the list of the Beatus family: “El número de ejemplares que actualmente constituye la serie de beatos es de treinta y cuatro, a los que hay que añadir al menos una media docena de ejemplares, hoy día perdidos, pero de cuya existencia en bibliotecas, hasta épocas relativamente recientes, se tiene noticia histórica fidedigna.” (“The number of copies that today constitute the series of Beatos is thirty-four, and to those we can add at least another half dozen copies, now lost, but of whose existence in libraries, until relatively recent times, we have had faithful historical evidence.”) González Echegaray, “Los Códices”, p. XXV.
west as modern Portugal to the far northeastern-most regions of Catalonia. The other two manuscripts, from the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, were made in Southern France and Central Italy, respectively.\(^6\)

In the original manuscript, Beatus organized the text of the Apocalypse and his commentary in such a manner as to insert illustrations, even referring to those illustrations in the body of his commentary. This, of course, gave rise to the copyists’ desire to add illustrations to their productions – book illustrations were a fairly common phenomenon in the Middle Ages, but Beatus’s *Commentaries* are of a special nature in that they actually point to the illustrations as an added means of interpreting the biblical text. As we will discuss later, these illustrations were meant to serve as visualizations of the apocalyptic text and as an instrument which the reader could use to reflect more easily on the passages that he had just read. It is, in fact, because of these illustrations that the Beatus *Commentaries* have gained such fame.

As an actual commentary on the Apocalypse, Beatus’s work lacks originality but may be seen as a compendium of the teachings of the Church Fathers on that particular book of the Bible. As a source of visual art, the Beatus manuscripts were surely considered in the Middle Ages as treasures of extreme value, just as they are now. They are the most elaborately decorated of the Spanish manuscripts from the Middle Ages, and the most numerous of any manuscript family in all of Europe. André Vauchez reminds us that, in the Middle Ages, the Church “had disseminated in the collective conscience the conviction that time is not simply a flux, but that it is oriented toward the final return

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\(^6\) I refer the reader to Appendix A for a complete list of the Beatus manuscripts and for a comparative survey of their relation to one another.
of Christ and the advent of the celestial Jerusalem.”7 To the Medieval Iberians, Jesus’ return could come at any point, for the Antichrist had already arrived, and so preparing the faithful for the Final Judgment must have comprised a large part of the preaching of the time. Likewise, the life of the monastery was, metaphorically, a reflection of the life of the Celestial Jerusalem: a commentary such as that of Beatus of Liébana, with its dozens of illustrations, would have served the purpose of leading the monk in his contemplation of his present situation with eyes fixed on the parousia. For these reasons did the Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse gain such importance during the Spanish Middle Ages, as reflected in its extensive reproduction.

The first chapter of this study will survey the socio-historical environment in which the Beatus tradition took root and flourished, from its beginnings with Beatus of Liébana and the Adoptionist controversy of the late eighth century through the Central Middle Ages and the Christian preoccupation with the “Muslim Antichrist.” Polemic texts such as those of Beatus of Liébana himself, Archbishop Elipandus of Toledo, Eulogius and Alvarus of Córdoba, and Joachim de Fiore will be considered. Historical support will come from the works of Vicente Cantarino, Kenneth Baxter Wolf, Jaime Marqués Casanovas, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, Henri Focillon, Juan Gil, as well as Stanley Payne and Angus Mackay (among others). In chapter 2 we will explore the various uses of the illustrations in the Beatus manuscripts: such topics as Pope Gregory the Great’s “books of the illiterate” and Saint Augustine’s tripartite visio theory will be presented with the intent of outlining the uses for which the illustrated medieval

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7 “había difundido en la conciencia colectiva la convicción de que el tiempo no es un simple flujo, sino que está orientado hacia el retorno último de Cristo y el advenimiento del Jerusalén celeste.” André Vauchez, Occidente, p. 56.
manuscripts were made. The visual studies of Lawrence Duggan, William Diebold, M.T. Clanchy, Mieke Bal, Mireille Mentré, Michael Camille, Cynthia Hahn, and Suzanne Lewis will serve as theoretical support to the theological discussions of that chapter, which come mainly from Saints Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Thomas Aquinas. The third chapter will take an in-depth look at the Gerona illustrations: a discussion of form and structure of the manuscripts, as well as its decorative illuminations will be presented first, followed by detailed discussions of the representation of time and space, movement, and dialogue within the narrative illustrations. The narratological studies of Eugene Dorfman, Seymour Chatman, Gerard Genette, and Julia Kristeva will form the terminological basis upon which this chapter is built. Also important to the arguments of this chapter are the studies presented in the introductory notes of the *Obras Completas de Beato de Liébana*, realized by Joaquín González Echegaray, Alberto del Campo, and Leslie Freeman; and the notes to the 1975 facsimile edition of the Gerona codex completed by José Camón Aznar. In the fourth and last chapter, I will offer a commentary on the intertextual dependence of the Apocalypse and extra-apocalyptic illustrations in the formation of the Gerona supernarrative. As will be pointed out, the supernarrative consists of the intertextual dependency of former Apocalypse commentaries on the work of Beatus of Liébana, as well as the presence of the illustrations, and works as an instrument that carries the reader toward spiritual enlightenment. A fusion of the theological teachings of Leclercq and the intertextual teachings of Kristeva allows us to elucidate the monastic and spiritual desire behind the creation of the Gerona Beatus. Throughout the study I will refer to the study entitled *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, by Jean Leclercq, and to various art historical
studies by John Williams. Both authors provide clear insight into monastic culture and artistic production, respectively, in the Middle Ages and are, therefore, fundamental to the understanding of the Beatus Apocalypse tradition. With this study I hope to elucidate for the reader the importance placed on the Apocalypse in Spanish society of the Middle Ages, as well as to provide an understanding of the illustrations given in the Gerona Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse.
CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL BACKDROP TO THE BEATUS APOCALYPSE TRADITION

There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their licentious ways, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. 8

There has long existed among scholars of the Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse the discussion of the reasons for which Beatus of Liébana took upon himself the task of writing a commentary on the Book of Revelations. Beatus himself gives us no real clue as to his particular reasoning, except for his desire to make the teachings of the Church Fathers regarding the Apocalypse readily accessible to those who wish to read them. Though Beatus appears as one of the major defenders of orthodoxy and defeaters of the Adoptionist heresy of the late eighth century, we cannot look to that controversy as a stimulus for his having written the first draft of his Commentaries, nor even for the revision of the second draft. We can, however, say that Adoptionism stimulated additions to the third and final draft of the apocalyptic text of 786, for much of what Beatus had said in his Apologeticum to the heretical Bishop Elipandus of Toledo appears in this third edition. At the same time, Islam had arrived to the Iberian Peninsula just a

few decades before (711), and some have suspected the new religion of affecting Beatus, at least indirectly, in his writing of the first drafts of his Commentaries, despite the fact that he makes no reference to Islam in any of his writings. We may not know Beatus’s original intentions for having written the commentaries, but it is my opinion that both Adoptionism and Islam played very important roles in the development of what we know today as the Beatus Apocalypse tradition: Beatus responded to the Adoptionist heresy, which he considered a force of evil within the Church with the Antichrist Bishop Elipandus at its head, with a third version of his commentaries in which the theology of Adoptionism is put to test against the words of the Church Fathers; and Islam, though not as powerful in the peninsula during Beatus’s day as it would later become, represented the cause for which later copyists and illustrators promoted the Beatus Commentaries. In this chapter we will consider both Adoptionism and Islam as Medieval Christian perceptions of the embodiment of Antichrist that resulted in societal and theological reflection on the Apocalypse.

1.1 Beatus and His Religious Environment

1.1.1 Beatus of Liébana

As is the case with most writers of the Early Middle Ages, we know very little about the man now known as Beatus of Liébana. We do not know in which year Beatus was born, or even where his birth took place. Some have speculated that he may have been born in a southern territory of the peninsula and carried north at a young age with those who fled the rule of the Muslims. Nor do we know in which year Beatus died: based on the scarce documentation of the time in which he is named, most historians
agree that Beatus’s death probably occurred in the middle years of the first decade of the
ninth century (ca. 805), although Jaime Marqués Casanovas claims that Beatus both
became abbot of his monastery and died in the year 798. Of equal mystery is the official
monastic title that Beatus held. Relying on writings about the Adoptionist controversy
produced by the English monk Alcuin of York (735-804) while he worked as advisor to
Charlemagne in Aachen during the later eighth century, many historians, Marqués
Casanovas included, believe that Beatus held the position of abbot of his monastery of
San Martín de Liébana (later changed to Santo Toribio de Liébana), at least in the last
months of his life. Alcuin never knew Beatus personally, though the two did share
correspondence, and since his writings are the only proof that we have of Beatus’s
abbacy, we have no clue as to when he assumed the position or how long it lasted (if, in
fact, he was abbot). Likewise, in letters that reference the Adoptionist heresy of the late
700s, Alvarus of Córdoba (†861) refers to Beatus as a *libanensis presbyter*, which
some have interpreted as a “priest” from Liébana while others simply say that this term
refers to his simply being a resident of Liébana; but again, with Alvarus’s lack of
personal knowledge of Beatus, it is difficult to determine Beatus’s true social or religious
status.

What we do know for certain is that Beatus lived in the second half of the eighth
century in the monastery of San Martín de Liébana in the western corner of the present-
day Spanish *autonomía* of Cantabria that, in the days of our monk, formed part of the

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10 For a discussion of Alcuin of York’s correspondence with Beatus, as well as his role in the Adoptionist
controversy, see Menéndez-Pelayo, *Heterodoxos*, pp. 355-387. Vázquez de Parga supposes the letter from
Alcuin to Beatus written in either 799 or 800 (“Ambiente”, pp. 39-40).
11 Flórez, *España Sagrada* XI, pp. 120 and 127.
young kingdom of Asturias. We also know, based on documentation of the time, that
Beatus had been called to León to serve as tutor to Queen Adosinda, wife of King Silo
(reigned 774-783), and that, after Silo’s defeat and death, Beatus witnessed Adosinda’s
admission into the convent life:

He has been presented as a friend of Queen Adosinda and, as such, in her service. This
arbitrary conjecture, based only on his attendance at the taking of the
religious habits of the aunt of the future Alfonso II, when Mauregatus, the
illegitimate son of Alfonso I, after disposing of the young sovereign brought to
the throne by his aunt the queen, made her – his sister – take vows in a convent, in
order to fulfil an old legal precept of the Visigothic period that obliged widowed
queens to consecrate themselves to God.12

As a writer, Beatus’s fame stems from the Commentary on the Apocalypse that he
wrote in the later decades of the eighth century. Beatus wrote at least three versions of
this work – one in 776 AD13, the second in 78414, and the third, definitive version in
786.15 It was the last of the three that would later be copied at least thirty-four times,
with twenty-six of those copies being illustrated. It is Beatus’s name, of course, that we
use today when referring to those individual manuscript copies (the Beatus of Valcavado,
the Beatus of Magio, the Beatus of Gerona, etc.), making no real reference to the actual
content of the text. We also know Beatus for two other texts – as the co-author of the
Apology (also known as the Letter from Etherius and Beatus to Elipandus), a two-book
document written towards the end of 785 against the Adoptionist teachings of Archbishop

12 “Se le ha querido presentar como amigo de la reina Adosinda y, por tanto, a su servicio. Gratuita
conjetura, sólo basada en su asistencia a la toma de hábitos por la tía del futuro Alfonso II, cuando el
bastardo de Alfonso I, Mauregato, tras deponer al joven soberano llevado al trono por su tía la reina, hizo a
ella – su hermana al cabo – profesar en un convento en cumplimiento de un viejo precepto legal de la
época visigoda que obligaba a las reinas viudas a consagrarse a Dios.” Sánchez Albornoz, “Asturorum
Regnum”, p. 28.
13 Two extant copies of this manuscript are housed in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid and the
Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.
14 The codex of the Real Academia de la Historia was made from this manuscript.
15 This version contains the added commentary on the Old Testament book of Daniel by Saint Jerome
following the commentary on the Apocalypse.
Elipandus of Toledo; and as the possible author of *O Dei Verbum*, a sixty-line acrostic hymn sung on the feast of Santiago, containing the phrase “O Raex Regum Piium Maurecatum Aexaudi Cui Prove Oc Tuo Amore Preve” (in honour of Mauregatus, the Visigoth king of Asturias at the time of the hymn’s composition – somewhere between 783 and 788). Though Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel attributes the hymn to Beatus, Manuel Díaz y Díaz believes that we have no reason for believing in such authorship: “[...] no positive argument has been found that directs us to the author of the hymn: it is not very possible that Beatus of Liébana composed it, but if we try to substitute this name with another, we find none other to use.” I mention this poem as a possible work by Beatus with the intent of showing the monk’s literary production, but we will spend no more time on it: not only does it lack the precise authorship that the other two mentioned works enjoy, but it is also very different in content and style from the others. We will, however, return to the *Apology* very soon.

Confused possibly by the monk’s name, some historians have conferred upon Beatus the title of “Saint”, though nowhere can we find a record of the canonization of our author. This confusion may be a result of those historians’ personal views regarding Beatus’s participation in bringing down the Adoptionist heresy; it may stem from their misunderstanding of the name Beatus; or they may simply be following a long-held Asturian tradition of referring to Beatus with such title. Antoni Cagigós Soro explains

17 “[...] ningún argumento positivo se ha podido encontrar que nos oriente sobre el autor del himno: es poco probable que lo haya compuesto Beato de Liébana, pero si a este nombre quisiéramos sustituirle otro no hallaríamos cuál poner.” Díaz y Díaz, *Isídoro*, pp. 260-261.
very clearly that Beatus “is a male Christian name such as Beatrice is a female one, the
[only] difference being [that] Beatus as a male Christian name is not in use any more,
while Beatrice is.” Father Cagigós goes on to explain that, for the people of Liébana,
Beatus is a regional saint whose feast day falls on February 19; however, the Cult of
Saint Beatus is incorrect in its dedication to and veneration of the body it believes to be
Beatus, housed in the monastery of Valcavado: the body is actually that of Obeco, artist
of the illustrations found in the Valcavado manuscript produced nearly two centuries after
Beatus’s death. Thus, although not officially sanctioned by the Church, there is
evidence in the writings of other monks regarding Adoptionism that referring to Beatus
as a “saint” was a popular custom as far back as the early ninth century.

1.1.2 Beatus and Adoptionism

One possible reason for which many may consider Beatus a saint, and for which
he may have written the later versions of his Commentaries on the Apocalypse, lies in his
open opposition to the Adoptionist heresy of his times. The main propagators of the
heresy in Spain were Elipandus, Metropolitan of Toledo, and Félix, Bishop of Urgel, and
it is because of the latter that many referred to it as the haeresis feliciana. In its basic
form, the doctrine formulated by these two bishops stated that Jesus was the legitimate
Son of God in spirit, but only an adopted son in human form, basing their belief on the
Biblical reference to Jesus as the “Son of Man”. Not accepting the divinity of Jesus in all

19 Cagigós Soro, La Seu d’Urgell, p. 11. The corrections in brackets were made to clarify the translator’s
faulty English syntax. I have been unable to consult the original Catalan version and must rely on the
English translation, grammatically incorrect though it be. The translator’s rendition of this sentence is:
“Beatus – also Beatus in Latin – is a male Christian name such as Beatrice is a female one, the difference
only being the Beatus as a male Christian name is not in use any more, while Beatrice is”
20 Ibid., p. 13.
His forms, this doctrine met opposition from both the northern Iberian Christians and from those of the Frankish kingdoms under Charlemagne’s rule. Beatus and the Bishop of Osma, the young Etherius, served as the voice of orthodox Christianity in Iberia, the former referring to Elipandus as the Antichrist in letters both to the Toledan archbishop and to other bishops of Northern Spain and Gaul.

Some scholars choose to see in the Adoptionist heresy influences of earlier heresies from throughout the Christian world: various are the studies that try to connect Adoptionism to the Arians, the Donatists, the Priscillianists, and even to the Jews and the Muslims. One only has to read through the first few chapters of Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo’s famous *Historia de los Heterodoxos*, already quoted above, as well as Heinrich Denzinger’s *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* to find the sources of those scholars’ ideas, for in both the authors expound upon the primary texts from the Middle Ages related to the numerous heresies that arose during that time. In a somewhat generalizing manner, without referencing any religion or doctrine specifically, Cesar Dubler claims that “there can be no doubt that [Adoptionism’s] intellectual roots lay in the heresies of the Near East”. However, we need only to look at the years directly preceding those of the Adoptionist controversy to find its roots, for it was from Archbishop Elipandus of Toledo’s repudiation of the Migetian heresy that he developed his ideas regarding Adoptionism.

Other than what Archbishop Elipandus and Pope Adrian I (772-795) have left us in their writings regarding the Migetian heresy, we know nothing about the actual man Migetius. In a letter to the Spanish bishops, Pope Adrian tells that the papal

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21 Freiburg: Herder & Co., 1921.
representative sent to Spain from France, Egila, had fallen into disgrace: “It has come to our ears the news that Egila does not preach sound doctrine, but defends and wishes to introduce the errors of Migetius, his teacher.” Though we have no records as proof, from this we can assume that Migetius must have held at least the rank of priest, for he was charged with the education of a future papal legate and bishop. Likewise, he must have been held in high esteem by at least some members of the clergy, for he quickly gained a following among both them and the laity in the south of Spain, causing uproar among the Spanish bishops and even the pope himself. This uproar stemmed from Migetius’s beliefs regarding the Holy Trinity: in his view, the Old Testament David was to be considered the first person of the Trinity, the Eternal Father from whom the line of Jesus had sprung; since Jesus had descended from David in human form (*qui factus est de semine David secundum carnem*)^24^, only in human form did He constitute the second person of the Trinity; the third person, the Holy Spirit, found its being in the person of Saint Paul since Jesus had commissioned him to teach the truth (*Spiritus qui a Patre meo procedit, ille vos docebit omnem veritatem*)^25^. Migetius’s notion of the Holy Trinity lacked the mystic nature with which the Church had imbued it, thus turning each of the three persons into mere human symbols of the concepts of eternity (David), sacrifice (Jesus), and word (Paul). While his reduction of the Trinity to human form was the one aspect of Migetius’s teachings that caused the largest commotion among the Church hierarchy, there were two other aspects of his teachings that also caused panic. First,

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23 “Eius fama in auribus nostris sonuit: non recte ille Egila praedicat, sed errores quosdam Mingentii magistri sui sequens, extra catholicam disciplinam, ut furtur, conatur docere.” Taken from Flórez, España Sagrada, p. 538.
basing his ideas on the facts that Jesus had called Peter the rock upon which He would build His church, that Peter had been martyred in Rome, and that Rome was to be considered the new Jerusalem seen by Saint John descending from the sky in his apocalyptic vision, Migetius considered that all Romans were saints and that the Church existed only in Rome. All those professing Christianity outside of the walls of Rome, priests included, belonged not to the true Church but to some other entity that Migetius failed to name. Secondly, Migetius taught that Christians should dine only with other Christians, and that the “infidels” should be shunned from their tables.

Although Elipandus of Toledo and Félix of Urgel wished to quell the Migetian heresy and to convert its followers back to the orthodox doctrine of the Church, it was from that heresy that they actually developed yet another, this time centred specifically on the nature of Jesus, as referred to at the beginning of this section. As Metropolitan of Toledo, Elipandus was faced with the task of responding directly to the author of the Migetian heresy. In doing so, he would have to rely on Church doctrine and sacred scripture as his primary sources for proving Migetius wrong and his own writings as divinely inspired *ex cathedra*. His first response came in the form of a sarcastic accusatory letter directed to Migetius, in which he refutes every aspect of the Migetian trinity with quotes taken directly from the Bible. He places special attention on Migetius’s interpretation of who comprises Christendom, again using Biblical extrapolations to prove that the Church included all Christians, both inside and outside of the Roman walls, and that Christ himself had dined with social outcasts. Elipandus’s second response came in the form of his approval of the Creed of Seville, written during the Council of Seville in October of 784 with the double intention of opposing Migetius
and of establishing the Church’s doctrine on Christ. Elipandus had earlier consulted Bishop Félix of Urgel about the nature of Christ: the Catalan bishop had told him that Christ was to be considered the spiritual Son of God but that Jesus was to be considered the man adopted by God in which the spiritual Christ would take form. That is, Jesus Christ was the *natural* Son of God in his divine state but merely the *adopted* son of God in his human state.\(^{26}\) With this new doctrine the Creed of Seville was formulated. Jaime Marqués Casanovas prefers not to see Adoptionism as a heresy per se, but as “an inexactitude in the formation of a dogma”\(^{27}\) that “fostered theological studies in general and led to the creed being expressed in more suitable forms.”\(^{28}\) As it may be true that the Adoptionist controversy contributed to the Church’s revaluation of the creed and of Christological dogma in general, there is no doubt that in the eighth century Bishops Félix and Elipandus’s ideas were considered heresy. This is, of course, the conclusion that we must make based on both the religious and the political writings of the time.

It is at this point that Beatus of Liébana enters the scene, and, as we will see, he was a staunch enemy of the Adoptionist teachings. With Elipandus’s approval of the Creed of Seville, the new Christological doctrine began to spread throughout Iberia and, with the influence of Félix of Urgel, into Charlemagne’s Frankish kingdom. To Beatus this teaching may have represented a new Muslim invasion on the spiritual plane, as Márques Casanovas points out,\(^{29}\) for indeed, Elipandus’s new doctrine seemed to equate

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\(^{26}\) For a more detailed history of both the Megetian and the Adoptionist heresies in Spain, the reader is advised to see pages 353-368 of volume I of Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo’s *Historia de los Heterodoxos*, Gary Blumenshine’s edition of the *Liber Alcuini contra Haeresim Felicis*, and Ramón de Abadal’s *La batalla del Adopcionismo en la desintegración de la iglesia visigoda*.

\(^{27}\) Marqués Casanovas, “Beatus of Liébana”, 33.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, p. 37.

\(^{29}\) Beatus “conceived the doctrine of Elipandus to be a kind of new Muslim invasion on a spiritual plane. If Christ were merely the adopted Son of God, He was barely distinguishable from a prophet such as
Jesus to the Muslim Mohammed in that both were seen by their respective followers as humans who had been selected by God for a specific prophetic function within the plan of salvation. Upon hearing of the spread of the Adoptionist beliefs, Beatus immediately wrote a letter (now lost) explaining to Elipandus the error of his ways, for which the Toledan archbishop felt greatly insulted – so insulted that, in a letter to the Asturian abbot Fidel, Elipandus accuses Beatus of arrogance and even goes so far as to call him a mangy little sheep and a disciple of the Antichrist. It was, of course, unthinkable that a lowly monk from the mountains of Asturias could teach anything to those of Toledo, especially the Archbishop:

They do not question me, but try to teach me, they who are servants of the Antichrist […] Yet never has it been heard that someone from Liébana taught a Toledan […] It is known to all people that Sacred Doctrine clearly has its beginnings in this See, and it never puts forth anything schismatic. And now a fetid sheep desires to be our teacher. 30

Likewise, in other letters to the bishops of Spain and Gaul, Elipandus continuously refers to Beatus as the “fetid” disciple of the Antichrist who takes pleasure in prostitutes and bestiality – an apparent invention on the part of Elipandus in order to win the support of fellow bishops. Elipandus’s sarcastic accusations and name-calling must have served as Beatus’s impetus to write the Apologeticum, for in this same work he turns the Toledan’s words back on him, entwining passages from the Bible and from the Holy Fathers in order to prove through his own form of logic that, in fact, Elipandus was the Antichrist, not him. This, of course, brought on a doctrinal war in which the power that Elipandus

Mohammed was for Islam; He was no longer the true God. Beatus felt that he had been elected by God to play the part of a new, spiritual Pelagius and oppose the invasion, although he knew full well that he was like David confronting Goliath.” Marqués Casanovas, “Beatus of Liébana”, p. 41.

30 “Non me interrogant, sed docere quiserunt, quia servi sunt Antichristi…Nam nunquam est audatum ut Libanenses Toletanos docuissent…Notum est plebi universae, hanc sedem sanctis doctrinis ab ipso exordio fidei claruisse, et nunquam schismaticum aliquid emanasse. Et nunc una ovis morbida, doctor nobis appetis esse.” Apologeticum I, in Obras Completas, pp. 931-945.
enjoyed as Metropolitan of Toledo came under the scrutiny of not only the Spanish
bishops, but that of all bishops in Europe and even of the pope himself. Beatus proved to
be not the mangy little sheep who could be dominated by the powerful Metropolitan and
his followers, but an acutely learned man who was able to gain the backing of the Church
in various kingdoms in defence of orthodoxy.

In his two-book letter to Elipandus – of which Bishop Etherius of Osma is
considered to have been co-author, although this is highly doubtful despite his name
appearing in the title – Beatus uses the power of logic to show that the Toledan
archbishop embodied the Antichrist, basing his argument on the Biblical passage from 1
John 2:22 that states that “all who believe that Jesus is not the Son of God are liers and,
therefore, the Antichrist.” 31 By characterizing Jesus as the adopted son of God,
Elipandus had implicitly claimed that He was not the true Son of God; this claim
automatically forced Elipandus into the category of Antichrist, according to Saint John’s
teaching. Expounding upon these arguments and taking advantage of the episcopal
support of Etherius, Beatus was able to incite action by the Iberian and the Frankish
bishops against Elipandus, both religiously and politically. Recognizing Asturias as the
symbol of Iberian independence from the Muslims and from Christian heterodoxy,
Beatus turned to both Pope Adrian I and to Charlemagne for help in the battle against
Elipandus. Both pope and king were interested in expanding Christian influence and
exterminating Muslim control, and so Beatus’s ideological connection of Adoptionism
with Islam proved beneficial to his efforts in gaining support. Beatus’s arguments made
a strong impact on the religious leaders of France: Alcuin of York (the English religious

31 “Omni qui confitetur quod Iesus non est Filius Dei, mendax est, et ipse est Antichristus.”
advisor to Charlemagne), Paulinus of Aquilaea, Theodulph of Orléans, Benedict of Aniane, and Richbod of Trier all wrote against the Adoptionist doctrine, and it was partly as a result of their writings that Bishop Félix of Urgel was brought to trial at Charlemagne’s residence in Regensburg (792) and sent to his imprisonment in Rome. Other Church councils – Rome (789), Ratisbon (792), Frankfurt (794), and Aix-la-Chapelle (799) – dealt heavy blows to the Adoptionist teachings, putting an end to them completely at the beginning of the ninth century when both Félix and Elipandus had grown too old to continue preaching and eventually died.

Though Beatus had finished his first edition of the *Commentaries on the Apocalypse* before the Adoptionist controversy took place, by the third edition it was evident that he considered Adoptionism as one of the signs of the last days. Comparing the *Commentaries* to the *Apology* written to Elipandus shows that Beatus depended on many of the same sources for the development of his ideas, and, as Juan Gil correctly points out, Beatus simply copied many of the passages from the *Apology* into the *Commentaries*. This leads us to believe that Beatus had found a special interest in the Book of Revelations long before Elipandus formed his doctrine and may even have been searching for the signs in his own surroundings to link the Apocalypse to the events of his day. Elipandus’s claim that the human Jesus was simply an *adopted* son of God gave Beatus the sign that he needed in order to proclaim that the Antichrist had arrived and that the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies was near. He had already developed a rather complicated set of calculations with which one could supposedly determine the year in

32 Gil, “Terrores”, pp. 215-247. On page 231 of this study, the author gives a list of the parallel passages and explains that, in most cases, they are exact copies of one another; though, in a few cases, Beatus elaborated slightly more in either of the two texts.
which the Final Judgment would take place, and it is very possible that, relying on those
calculations, Beatus automatically fit Elipandus into his more generalized scheme. Thus,
Beatus had found in his calculations the reason for which to write a commentary on the
Apocalypse, and his writings on Adoptionism served as the loci in which he could
expound upon the enigmatic figure of the Antichrist

1.1.3 Beatus’s Millenarianism

Though the New Testament clearly says that the day and time of Christ’s coming
is unknown even to Christ Himself (Matthew 24:36), it was not uncommon in the Middle
Ages for people to search the pages of the Bible for information that could lead them to
unravel the mysteries surrounding the parousia. Julián of Toledo (7th century) and Juan
de Bíclaro (mid-8th century) had written calculations in which they tried to predict when
the Sixth Age would end, thus ushering in the beginning of the Apocalypse; even the
Venerable Bede († ca. 735) had been suspected of heresy because of his calculations,
which came too close to reflecting those carried out by Jewish exegetes. There is
something about how and when the world will end that seems to have always captivated
the minds of the educated and the uneducated alike, from all time periods, and in all
places. It certainly captivated a monk in the small monastery of San Martín de Toribio in
the Picos de Europa, so let us now see when he expected the Final Judgment to take
place.

In a letter to the bishops of Gaul toward the end of 794, Elipandus of Toledo
rather sarcastically tells of an incident that, if taken as true, shows Beatus’s millennial
views put into practice. Reflecting general medieval belief regarding the Final Judgment,
Beatus had written in the *Commentaries*, book IV chapter 5, that the Judgment would take place on a Sunday: since Jesus had resurrected from the dead on a Sunday, then the same would happen with the dead who must be resurrected to face the Final Judgment – “Regarding the day we read that, just as our Lord rose from the dead on a Sunday, we also hope to rise in the last age on a Sunday.”\(^{33}\) Playing off of this idea, Elipandus tells of a certain Easter Vigil in which Beatus had proclaimed to the multitudes that they should prepare for the Judgment, for it would take place that very midnight. As a sign of penitence, Beatus had asked those present to abstain from food during the remainder of the night and into the following day. When, on noon of the following day, Jesus had not appeared to judge those gathered, Ordoño, the priest who had been chosen to preside over the Vigil Mass, declared, “Let us eat and drink, for if we are to die, then we should do so with our bellies full!”\(^{34}\) Though we have no evidence to prove the anecdote true, there must be at least a small amount of truth to it: Beatus had concerned himself in his *Commentaries* with the use of numbers and the calculation of when the Judgment *could* possibly take place. Although in his writings he admits to not knowing the exact time (that is known to God alone), he shows zeal in proclaiming that the end must be very near since according to his calculations the Antichrist – whom he later recognizes as Elipandus – has already come into existence.

The year 800 held for the theologians of the 8\(^{th}\) century a very special importance, for it was in that year that they believed the Sixth Age, or the six thousand years of earthly existence, would come to an end. Each millennium of the six thousand years

\(^{33}\) “Nam de die legimus; quia, sicut Dominus noster Iesus Christus die Dominico resurrexit a mortuis, ita et nos resurrecturos in novissimo saeculo die dominico speramus.” *Obras Completas*, pp. 378-380.

\(^{34}\) See Gil, “Terrores”, pp. 222-223, for a discussion of this anecdote and its possible exaggeration on the part of Elipandus.
represented for them one of the days of Creation: since God rested after the sixth day of work, it was believed that God’s creation would last six Ages (i.e., six thousand years) and would be admitted to everlasting peace only in the Seventh Age, the Eternal Sabbath. Relying on Biblical genealogies and events, both Saints Jerome and Julián of Toledo had calculated Jesus’ birth as having taken place in either the year 5199 or 5200 of creation, respectively. This meant that the end of the Sixth Age and the beginning of the culmination of the apocalyptic prophecies would have to take place in either 800 or 801 AD in order for the six thousand years to come to fruition. Beatus repeated the calculations in the following manner:

The six days in which the Lord realised his work is a week and represent the figure of six thousand years, which are expressed in a week. The first age, from Adam to Noah, are 2,242 years. The second, from Noah to Abraham, are 942 years. The third, from Abraham to Moses, are 505 years. The fourth, from the exit of Israel’s children from Egypt to their arrival to the Promised Land, were forty years. And from the arrival to the Promised Land until Saul, the first king of Israel, there were judges for 355 years. Saul reigned for forty years. From David until the beginning of the construction of the temple forty-three years passed. The fifth age, from the first building of the temple until the exile in Babylon, there were kings for 446 years. The people were held captive after the destruction of the temple for seventy years. From the restoration of the temple to the Incarnation of Christ passed 540 years. The time from Adam to Christ sums up to 5,227 years. And from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ to the present era, that is, the year 822, there have been 784 years. If you add from the first man, Adam, to the present time, year 822, you will have a total of 5,987. Therefore, the sixth millennium has fourteen years remaining. With that, the sixth age will end in the year 838.35

35 “Quia sex dies, in quibus operatus est Dominus, hebdomada est, et sex millium annorum figuram ostendunt, quae in una hebdomada nuncupantur. Prima aetas ab Adam usque ad Noe, et fiunt anni II.CCXL.II. Secunda, a Noe usque ad Abraham, et fiunt anni DCCCXLII. Tertia ab Abraham usque ad Moysen, fiunt anni DV. Quarta ab exitu filiorum Israel ex Aegypto usque ad introitum eorum in terram repromissionis, per annos XL. Et ab introitu terrae repromissionis usque ad Saul primum regem Israelis, fuere iudices per annos CCC.I.V. Saul regnavit annos XL. A David usque ad initium aedificationis templi anni XLIII. Quinta aetas a prima aedificatone templi usque ad transmigrationem in Babilonem, fuere reges per annos CCCCXLVI. Fuit autem captivitas populi a desolatione templi annis LXX. Et restauratur a Zorobabel annis IIII. Post restaurationem vero templi usque ad incarnacionem Christi anni DXL. Colligitur omne tempus ab Adam usque ad Christum anno V.CXXXVII. Et ab adventu Domini nostri Iesu Christi usque in praesentem Eram, id est, DCCCCXXII, sunt anni DCCLXXXIV. Computa ergo a primo homine
Taking into consideration that Iberia of Beatus’s time submitted to the Mozarabic calendar, which followed a calculation thirty-eight years ahead of the Roman calendar, the final year given in Beatus’s calculations (838) turns out to be 800 AD.

Beatus goes on to tell in the third edition of his Commentaries (786) that, although the calculated year of the Parousia is fourteen years into the future, God could see fit to shorten those years. Thus, Christians should live each day as if it were the last:

In which season, which year, which hour, which day, which period will the resurrection take place? We do not know if these fourteen days will be shortened, for only God knows that […] All Catholics should understand, wait and fear, and consider these fourteen years as if they were one hour: day and night, in ash and cilice, cry as much for your own destruction as for that of the world, and do not become too interested in the computations of time; and do not try to investigate excessively the day or the season of the end of the world, which no one knows except for God. Everyone should think about his own end, just as the Scripture says: ‘in all your actions keep present your end, and you will never commit a sin.’

Without doubt, Beatus must have felt that what he had written would have an impact on the society in which he lived. While preparing their sermons preachers could have used commentaries of this sort, or they could have been used by the religious as a form of meditative reading. Whatever the case may be, it is evident from this passage that Beatus intended his Commentaries to be used as a tool for religious teaching. He truly felt that Christ’s coming was imminent, and with his added perception of Elipandus as Antichrist,

Adam usque in praesentem Eram DCCCXXII et invenies annos sub uno V.DCCCCLXXXVII. Supersunt ergo anni de sexto millenario XIV. Finiet quoque sexta aetas in Era DCCCXXXVIII.” Obras Completas, pp. 376-378.

Beatus probably saw his moral and religious duty as that of warning other Christians of what lay ahead, with the intention of aiding them along the path of perfection so that they would be prepared for the Final Judgment that he believed to be so close.

1.2 The Illustrated Beatus Tradition

When in the year 800 the Apocalypse did not come to pass, religious thinkers began to reanalyse their thoughts on the *Book of Revelation* and to revise their calculations. Some looked to historical events for help in determining the year of the pending End, whereas others looked to the stars and even to magic. Some set the new dates for either of the years 900 or 1000, while others simply awaited certain events, such as the victory of Christianity over Islam, for the Apocalypse to take place. We do not know what Beatus of Liébana thought about his mistaken calculations, for we have no other documents from the time either written by him or about him from which to draw conclusions on the subject. Likewise, we know not what Elipandus must have thought about Beatus’s error in identifying him as the Antichrist: based on the tone of his writings, however, we can be quite sure that Elipandus might have a had a few spiteful comments to make regarding the matter. What we do know is that the religious and cultural interest in the millennium and in eschatological matters in general did not die, for Beatus’s *Commentaries* enjoyed several hundred years of being copied and illustrated throughout Northern Spain and Southern France – the manuscript would be copied at least thirty-four times throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages. With Beatus’s mistake in the millennial calculations and with Adoptionism having come to an end
without catastrophic events taking place, why would the monks of Spain and France
diffuse the *Commentaries* so widely? The answer lies in the presence and the perceived
threat of Islam in Spain and other parts of the Mediterranean.

1.2.1 Islam as Antichrist

Although Yarza Luaces presents the arrival of the Muslims as one of the possible
reasons for which Beatus of Liébana may have written his *Commentaries*\(^{37}\), nowhere in
the texts of either the *Commentaries* or the *Apology* does Beatus mention the presence of
Islam in Iberia (though he does compare Islam and Adoptionism in letters sent to the
various bishops). As I have pointed out, for Beatus the Antichrist was to be found in the
person of Elipandus of Toledo and his Adoptionist teachings. In the days of Beatus and
Elipandus, Islam still had not reached the necessary level of power in the northern
territories of the Iberian Peninsula to be considered a true threat to Christianity there –
many simply saw the new religion as yet another heresy that would eventually be put
down by the Church.\(^{38}\) Likewise, as Kenneth Baxter Wolf points out, the first invaders of
Iberia in 711 and subsequent years were of a questionable socio-religious status: most

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\(^{38}\) Speaking of the northern kingdoms of Spain during the early Reconquest, Stanley Payne states that “[u]ntil the eleventh century, the Muslim population of the Christian states was small, consisting exclusively of prisoners carried back to the north. They were reduced to semislave status but were also more apt than not to be converted to Christianity […] In the more settled areas, particularly Galicia, captured Muslims were frequently absorbed by the local society within a generation or two. No major centers of Muslim population were captured during the first three centuries of the Reconquest; most Muslims in the path of Christian advance withdrew, and only a comparative few were seized. Thus in the early Middle Ages they formed no ethno-religious bloc in the north.” (*History*, p. 47-48). Likewise, John Williams tells us that “[n]ot long before Beatus composed his commentary, John of Damascus (d. ca. 749), in a Christian territory occupied by Muslims at the other end of the Mediterranean, included Islam in his catalog of Christian heresies […] Islam, poorly known as it was, would have been seen in the peninsula in Beatus’s era as a heresy, not an antagonistic religion.” (”Purpose”, p. 227). As Williams goes on to discuss, it is not until the following century that Islam gains the apocalyptic reputation given by the Christian polemic writers.
were Berbers who had been brought under Arab domination just a very short time before and who probably did not understand completely the new religion, which was, itself, still in its initial stages of formation. At the same time, the first settlements of the newcomers were too sparse and militarily weak to have a major impact on the Christian population already present in Southern Spain. Thus, Islam, though familiar to the ears of Beatus and his northern contemporaries, did not present a direct menace to them, especially at the level of considering it the embodiment of the Antichrist. Not until the ninth century did the Arab population begin to have a noticeable stronghold on the Peninsula, having established towns in major river valleys and created trade routes between Iberia and the East.

By the tenth century, the Muslim presence in Spain had grown to such extent that the land controlled by the Arabs was proclaimed a caliphate, taking as its name the Caliphate of Córdoba. In that century the Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse experienced a sudden rise in both readership and copy – twenty-three of the twenty-six extant illustrated manuscripts come from the years between the second decade of the tenth century and the year 1220, the period of greatest Muslim influence stretching from the Caliphate of Córdoba and the subsequent Taifa kingdoms, the declining years of the Almoravids, the Almohads, the Benemerins, and the territorial reduction to the Kingdom

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39 “But the fact that the Latin documentation of eighth-century Spain as a whole is practically bereft of references to Islam as a religious phenomenon suggests that Beatus may simply not have regarded Islam as the kind of challenge to the peninsular church that would merit apocalyptic speculation […] there are real questions as to the religio-cultural status of the men who comprised the invading armies. How Muslim could they have been, given that the bulk of their members were ethnically Berbers who had been brought under Arab domination only a few short years before? What did it mean to be a Muslim anyway at a time when the jurists in the East were still engaged in the process of defining precisely what an Islamic society should or could be? […] the conquered peoples of Spain did not immediately conceive of the invaders from Morocco in religious terms. The original settlement of Arabs and Berbers was simply too sparse and, as a result, too militarily insecure to have any major immediate impact on the daily lives of the vastly larger Christian population.” ("Muhammad", p. 4)
of Granada in 1231. John Williams confirms this in his discussion of the tenth-century Beatus manuscripts when he says that the extensive glosses and correlations that mark such commentaries as the Vitrina 14-1, the Morgan 644, and the Gerona Beatus testify to readership and to the seriousness accorded the texts. Erasures that mark the face of Satan in such commentaries as Tábara (125r) and Lisbon (e.g., 186v, 201r) speak eloquently of individual contact with, and reaction to, the Beatus commentary.40

During this time there developed in both Spain and in other parts of Europe the general belief that either Mohammad or the Islamic religion embodied the Antichrist (whose face could not be looked upon, thus the erasures mentioned by Williams), and that extinguishing Islam would bring about the thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth mentioned in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelations. It was partly to this end that the Crusades were declared in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.

Because of the circumstances in which Spain saw herself in the tenth centuries and those that followed, as the only European Mediterranean territory in which Islam and Arabian culture had been able to make a lasting impression, the desire to defeat the new religion held special importance. On the one hand, Christendom saw Spain, alongside the Holy Lands, as a battleground between the forces of good and evil as described in the text of the Apocalypse. On the other, during the Central and Later Middle Ages, there developed in Spain a belief that there would exist at some point in the near future a “Last World Emperor” who would turn his earthly empire over to God in Jerusalem. Angus Mackay explains that

aroused eschatological expectations. Was the new king the Encubierto or the Bat who would defeat the Antichrist in Andalusia, retake Granada from the Muslims, cross the sea, defeat all Islam, conquer the Holy City of Jerusalem, and become the last world emperor? When would the Hidden King reveal himself?\footnote{Mackay, “Late Middle Ages”, p. 92.}

To the disappointment of the Spanish people and of Christendom in general, this belief came to its end with the death of Ferdinand the Catholic in 1516: he and Isabel had seen the Christian takeover of the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, the Kingdom of Granada, in 1492; yet, with the queen’s death in 1504 and Ferdinand’s political obligations at home, he never accomplished what the Encubierto was expected to have done.

Beatus of Liébana did not write his Commentaries with these ideas or beliefs in mind, but there is no doubt that they greatly affected the later copyists and illustrators of his text, especially those of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. This is evidenced in other texts of the time.\footnote{For a concise survey of the anti-Islamic Christian literature of the period, see Cantarino, “Notas”, and Lozano Escribano, \textit{Literatura Apocalíptica}.} Probably the two most famous works to appear in Spain, in which Mohammad is conceived of in derogatory and even satanic ways, are the ninth-century \textit{Indiculus luminosus}, by Alvarus of Córdoba, and the \textit{Liber apologeticus martyrum}, by Eulogius of Córdoba. Cantarino explains that the \textit{Indiculus} takes as its target readers the \textit{christiani muti}, or those Christians who accepted life under Muslim rule, even to the point of assimilating Arabian social habits. Alvarus connects Muslim domination to the beast in the prophecies of Daniel 7:23, which is, of course, the Antichrist.\footnote{Cantarino, “Notas”, 127-128.} Eulogius’s work portrays Mohammad as a brutal animal and a sexual deviant, the opposite of what one would expect of a divine prophet. Wolf explains that Eulogius

\footnote{Mackay, “Late Middle Ages”, p. 92.}
\footnote{For a concise survey of the anti-Islamic Christian literature of the period, see Cantarino, “Notas”, and Lozano Escribano, \textit{Literatura Apocalíptica}.}
\footnote{Cantarino, “Notas”, 127-128.}
concentrated his efforts on casting the Muslims as persecutors of the church of the classical pagan Roman type and depicting Muhammad as a false prophet who, like Arius, had challenged the divinity of Christ. For his part Alvarus followed the parallel but distinct path of identifying Muhammad with the Antichrist, by reinterpreting key passages in scripture.\(^{44}\)

Wolf does not seem to believe that these two writers’ works had much of an influence on later writers or theologians, but I do not wholly agree. Although other writers may not have directly quoted Alvarus or Eulogius in later writings, these two did contribute to the beginnings of polemical literature in Spain against the Muslims, proposing how Christians should view the other religion and its followers. These ideas would be repeated over and over again in the centuries that followed, both in and out of Spain.

Two examples from outside of Spain come from the Cluniac abbot Peter the Venerable (ca. 1092-1156) and from the Cistercian Joachim de Fiore (ca. 1135-1202). As a result of Peter the Venerable’s visit to the Cluniac monasteries of Spain in 1141 and the translation of the Koran that he ordered made for him\(^ {45}\), the abbot wrote a treatise known as the *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim saracenorum*, which directly links Mohammad to the Antichrist in the prologue:

> If you want to know who the greatest forerunner of Antichrist and the devil’s chosen disciple, Mohammad, was or what he taught, read this prologue attentively, in which are briefly contained all this book contains: his most foul and false genealogy, his most impure and unspeakable life and doctrine, and the utterly laughable and insane fables produced by him and his followers.\(^ {46}\)

\(^{44}\) Wolf, “Muhammad”, p. 6.
\(^{45}\) Iogna-Pratt tells us that Peter the Venerable ordered the Koran translated “to enable him to refute Muhammad’s sectaries in his *Contra sectam Sarracenorum.*” *Order*, p. 138.
\(^{46}\) “Si vis scribere quis fuerit vel quid docuerit maximus precursor Antichristi et electus discipulus diaboli Muhamet, prologum istum intente lege, in quo breviter continentur omnia que liber ieste continet, sive de genealogia eius turpissima et mendossisima, sive de vita ipsius vel doctrina incestissima et nefanda, sive de fabulis tam ab ipso quam a sequacibus eius conflictis omni ridiculositate et deliramento plenis.” Quoted in Iogna-Prat, *Order*, p. 340.
The book consists of an eighteen-part outline of the reasons for which a Christian must not give in to the temptations of the Islamic teachings. According to Peter, the main point about Islam that all Christians must remember is that the Muslims deny that Christ is the Son of God, though they do revere him as a sinless prophet. If Mohammad had accepted Jesus as a divine prophet, how, then, could he be the precursor of the Antichrist or, even more, the Antichrist himself? The answer lies in the deceptive nature of the Antichrist: in order to win converts, the Antichrist must express an appealing proposition to those he wishes to gain to his side. By preaching in favour of a more “carnal” lifestyle, yet not fully denying the sanctity of Jesus, Mohammad had been able to take control of a large part of the known world, according to Peter. Using the same argument that Beatus of Liébana had used against Elipandus of Toledo, Peter strikes Mohammad down as an antichrist because of that very denial of Jesus’ divinity. Peter understands that Mohammad may not have been the Antichrist of the Apocalypse, for THE Antichrist of the end days is prefigured by many smaller antichrists, but he warns that following Mohammad’s teaching will lead the disciple into the hands of the Devil.

In an attempt to explain the seven seals that are broken during the events of the Apocalypse, Joachim de Fiore calculated in his various exegeses of the Bible and the Book of Revelations that his generation was living at the time of the breaking of the sixth seal. The Antichrist had already been set loose into the world to persecute the Christian faithful, and that the breaking of the seventh seal would bring the Heavenly Sabbath. In calculations that echo those of the exegetes of Beatus’s days, Joachim explains that the time of the sixth seal consists of only one human generation, whereas

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the preceding seals totalled forty generations all together. Thus, at some point within his lifetime, Joachim de Fiore expected the seventh seal to be broken and the Celestial Jerusalem to be established on earth. Joachim was considered by both himself and those around him to be a man of great insight and prophetic abilities, and in a meeting with King Richard I of England in 1191 the monk made a startling, though erroneous prediction. R.W. Southern summarizes the event as follows:

When King Richard I was on his way to the Holy Land in 1191 he met Joachim at Messina, and Joachim outlined to him a view of history which brought the apocalyptic visions of the ninth century Spanish martyrs up to date. For him, as for them, the end of the world was at hand, and for him also the chief instruments of Antichrist were the Saracens. On the two flanks of Christendom, in Spain and the Holy Land, he saw the strength of Islam renewed under the Almohads in Spain and Saladin in Palestine. But with regard to the future, he had to feel his way with care. He seems to have assured King Richard that he would defeat Saladin, and in this he was certainly wrong. But the most interesting addition he made to the apocalyptic picture was his assurance that the final Antichrist was already alive and in Rome, and that he was destined to obtain the papal see.48

Thus, Joachim de Fiore did not consider Islam as the Antichrist, as did others, but simply the helpers of the Antichrist. The true Antichrist would come from within Christianity and work against it as its leader. Interestingly, we see the same idea of the “Last World Emperor” in this story as Mackay explains regarding Spain: the prophet Joachim de Fiore had seen in Richard the image of the monarch who defeats the Muslim rulers and opens the way for the Kingdom of God to be established on earth.

Apart from the religious writings of the time, certain events transpired that brought about a general feeling of apocalyptic doom. Besides the invasion of 711 and the establishment of the Caliphate of Córdoba in 912, three other events in particular led the European Christians, and the Iberians especially, to view the Muslims as the forces of the

48 Southern, Western Views, pp. 40-41.
Antichrist in the Early and Central Middle Ages: the sacking of the first basilica of St. Peter’s in Rome in 846, Al-Mansur’s attack on Santiago de Compostela in 997, and the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre by Al-Hakim’s forces in 1009. Each of these events affected Christianity in a very special way, for all were centres of pilgrimage to which the faithful travelled in penitence or to pray for their own particular needs, and Rome itself had been established as the seat of Christendom. All had been locations of significant activity in the first years of Christianity: Jerusalem, on whose outskirts Jesus had been crucified and from which the Apostles were sent into the world; Rome, the ancient pagan city that had been converted to Christianity and in which the Apostle Peter had been crucified, which later became the Holy See for all of Christianity; and Santiago de Compostela as the final resting place of Saint James, whose remains had been discovered there in the ninth century. The destruction of these sacred places struck a blow to Christianity that would later contribute to Pope Urban II’s proclamation of the First Crusade in 1095 and to the admission of the Reconquest of Spain to the crusading efforts by Pope Calixtus II in 1123.

In the Summer of 997 the illegitimate ruler of the Caliphate of Córdoba, Muhammad ibn Abi ‘Amir ("Al-Mansur" – the Victorious One) made his way north to the territories of Galicia where he oversaw numerous attacks on the Christian populations of that area. Having made forty-seven attacks already, Al-Mansur led his men on what

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49 David Blanks makes a very interesting point when he says that “[a]t the turn of the first millennium, Latin Christendom’s greatest pilgrimage centers were anything but central; on the contrary, Compostela, Rome, and Jerusalem were situated on the cultural and military periphery. This made for good penance. The distance and difficulty involved in these pilgrimages accounted, at least in part, for their popularity. From an alternative perspective, however, the shrines of these cities were located at the center of the Christian spiritual compass. Hence, cartographers placed Jerusalem at the center of the earth, and pilgrimage narratives nearly always describe the ‘going to’ and hardly ever the ‘coming back.’” (“Pilgrim”, p. 257)
has been called a “jihad for domestic consumption” in order to turn Santiago into a Muslim stronghold from which further attacks on the northern territories could be launched.\textsuperscript{50} In the course of the campaign against Santiago, Al-Mansur ordered the bells of the cathedral taken down and dragged back to Córdoba by Christian prisoners-of-war. As Blanks says, “[by] removing (and silencing) the bells, al-Mansur opened public aural space for the call to prayer; by displaying them in Córdoba, he proclaimed his status as Muslim hero.”\textsuperscript{51} These bells were not returned to Santiago until 1236, under the rule of Ferdinand III. Chronicles of the ninth century tell us that the church of St. Peter in Rome had suffered a similar fate at the hands of the Aghlabid rulers of Sicily. In 846 the church and surrounding areas were completely sacked by the armies of this ruling family, only to be attacked once again in 875 after a short rebuilding project. With the second attack Arab armies were able to take control of the regions just south of Rome, which they held until their defeat at the hands of the Greeks and the Latins in 915.

If the attacks on the pilgrimage city of Santiago de Compostela and the papal city of Rome were not devastating enough, the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in the year 1009 was cause for widespread panic. According to Blanks, this was the one event above all others that was seen by contemporary commentators to link the Muslims to the Apocalypse:

In 1009 the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim ordered the total destruction of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. If there was one event in the early Middle Ages that linked the Saracens to Apocalypticism, this was it. In his youth, Abbo of Fleury had heard a preacher in Paris promise the end of the world

\textsuperscript{50} Blanks, “Pilgrim”, p. 258.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 258.
in the year 1000 and nothing happened – ten years later, the Apocalypse spoke. The destruction of the Holy Sepulcher was the portentous event that seemed to liberate suppressed millennial fears.\textsuperscript{52}

Rudolfus Glaber, a Cluniac monk of the time, reports in his \emph{Historiarum libri quinque} that, even though the actual destruction took place on the orders of the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim, the actual cause lay in the deceptive nature of the Jews who lived in the Frankish regions of Orléans. Out of jealousy at the large numbers of pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem, those Jews concocted a lie and had it sent to al-Hakim – according to them, the Christians were planning a secret attack on the caliphate during which al-Hakim would be dethroned. The only way to subvert such an attack would be for the “Prince of Babylon” to destroy the Holy Sepulchre. This destruction led Ademar of Chabannes, another important monk of the same century, to connect the \emph{rex Babilonius} (al-Hakim) to the Antichrist, and the destruction of the temple to the persecution of the Christians that would take place in the last days. For this writer and preacher, the Muslims were to be seen as the primary sources of evil, with the Jews as their helpers; only by eradicating them could the Seventh Age of peace on earth be established.

\textbf{1.2.2 Concluding Comments}

This was the religious and cultural environment in which Beatus’s \emph{Commentaries on the Apocalypse} were copied and distributed – an environment in which the Muslim (and Jewish) “other” were seen as the forces of evil working against Christianity in the same manner in which the Antichrist would perpetuate deceit and destruction in the last days before Christ’s second coming. It should be of no surprise, then, that Beatus’s text

\textsuperscript{52} Blanks, “Pilgrim”, p. 260.
was copied and illustrated so many times during the course of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, for the biblical book of the Apocalypse outlined the events that would lead to the establishment of the Celestial Jerusalem on earth. Likewise, it should come as no surprise to us that the Spanish monasteries in particular would produce so many copies of a commentary on that book, for the prolonged Muslim presence in Spain placed the Iberian Christians at the forefront of the Crusades against the infidels, and they viewed their own Reconquest as a crucial part of the fight against the Antichrist. The protection of the shrine at Santiago de Compostela as a place of Christian pilgrimage, and the recovery of Iberia for Christianity with the purpose of regaining the favour of God that the Visigothic kings had lost, created in Spain an eschatological environment in which the end was perceived to be near. It was, however, a welcomed end inasmuch as it would bring Christian victory over evil and the establishment of God’s kingdom as depicted in the Beatus illustrations.
CHAPTER 2

THE BEATUS ILLUSTRATIONS: TEXTS FOR THE ILLITERATE OR PATH TO SPIRITUAL PERFECTION

Image is for the eye and word for the ear. Reaching the house of memory through image and word is clear since memory, which guards the treasure that mankind acquires through his own ingenuity, makes that which comes from the past seem to be of the present. And one comes by way of image and word. For when one sees a painted story, whether it be of Troy or of any other thing, one sees the acts of brave men from the past as if they were in the present. 53

Numerous are the reasons to which art and manuscript historians attribute the presence of illuminations in documents from the Middle Ages. However, we may divide the arguments into three general categories: those that support the notion of works of visual art as “books for the illiterate” in which the uneducated “read” stories told through pictures; those that consider illustrations as visual aids that support a written text and, thus, bring readers to a fuller comprehension of ideas and concepts discussed therein; and, to a lesser degree, those that give manuscript illustrations the visually mnemonic function of assisting the reader in remembering a written text after it has been read or told. It is my opinion that each of these approaches to illumination studies is valid in its

53 “Painture sert a l’œil et parole a l’oreille. Et comment on puist repairier a le maison de memoire et par painture et par parole, si est apparan par chu ke memoire, ki est la garde des tresors ke sens d’omme conquiert par bonté d’engien, fait chu ki est trespassé ausi comme present. Et a che mieisme vient on per painture et per parole. Car quant on voit painte une estoire, ou de Troies ou d’autre, on voit les fais des preudomes ki cha en ariere fuerten, ausi com s’il fussent present.” Fournival, Bestiaire, p. 27.
own unique fashion, though I do not believe that manuscript illustrations served only one of the mentioned purposes. If we take into account the theological teachings regarding visual images developed in the Middle Ages (particularly those of Saints Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure), we see that these three objectives are conjoined with one common finality – that of leading the reader/viewer to an elevated level of spirituality toward which the monastic life endeavoured. It is upon that finality that my discussions in this chapter are built. I will first look at the concept of literacy and book reception in the Middle Ages, before moving on to some of the “practical” uses of illustrations (i.e., memorization or glossing of written texts). This chapter will end with a discussion of the spiritual uses of illustrations, based on the teachings of the aforementioned saints, and an application of those teachings to the Beatus manuscripts. This will prepare the reader for the analysis of the individual Beatus illustrations that I will present in the third chapter.

2.1 Images for the Illiterate

2.1.1 Gregory the Great and Reading in the Middle Ages

Sometime in the year 599 Pope Gregory I “the Great” (540-604) received news that Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles, had ordered all visual images in the churches of his diocese destroyed, thus exhibiting his allegiance with the iconoclastic faction in the Church of the time. He had physically destroyed many works of art himself, while having others take care of the task in areas of his ecclesiastic domain beyond his own reach. In response, Gregory sent Serenus a cordial letter praising the bishop for his zeal in ensuring that no one worship graven images, but also informing him of the unhappiness that he had caused in Rome as a result of his actions:
And certainly we praise you for your zeal lest something manufactured be adored, but we judge that you should not have destroyed those images. For a picture is displayed in churches on this account, in order that those who do not know letters may at least read by seeing on the walls what they are unable to read in books.\(^{54}\)

As we see in this segment of Gregory’s letter, the pope did not take the same stance regarding graven images as did Serenus. Whereas Serenus believed them to be inherently evil inasmuch as they could be worshipped and adored, Gregory regarded images as a source of teaching that could be used for the benefit of those who could not read the Holy Scriptures for themselves.

Serenus, stubborn and refusing to believe that the letter had come from the pope, but had instead been written by the pope’s messenger Cyriacus, disregarded Gregory’s words and continued with the elimination of images in his diocese. He had almost succeeded in “cleansing” his diocese of perceived idolatry before Pope Gregory received word that the French bishop had not adhered to papal authority. Gregory then wrote to Serenus a second time, but in a much harsher tone and repeating what he had previously proclaimed:

> For what writing offers to those who read it, a picture offers to the ignorant who look at it, since in it the ignorant see what they ought to follow, in it they read who do not know letters; whence especially for gentiles a picture stands in place of reading […] Thus that should not be broken which has been set in churches not for adoration but only to instruct the minds of the ignorant.\(^{55}\)

Here Gregory points out to Serenus that the destroyed images had not been placed in the churches for the purposes of adoration but in order to instruct those who could not read.

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\(^{54}\) “Et quidem zelum uos, ne quid manufactum adorari possit, habuisse laudauimus, sed frangere easdem imagines non debuisse iudicamus. Idcirco enim pictura in ecclesiis adhibetur, ut hi qui litteras nesciunt saltem in parietibus uidendo legant, quae legere in codicibus non ualent.” Quoted in Chazelle, “Pictures”, p. 139.

\(^{55}\) “Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cementibus, quia in ipsa ignorantes uident quod qui debeant, in ipsa legunt qui litteras nesciunt; unde praecipue gentibus pro lectione pictura est […] Frangi ergo non debuit quod non ad adorandum in ecclesiis sed ad instruendas solummodo mentes fuit nescientium collocatum.” Quoted in Ibid, p. 140.
With these proclamations, Gregory the Great set forth a defence of religious images that Kenneth Clark considers as “one of the crucial events in the history of art”\textsuperscript{56}, and to which Ernst Kitzinger makes reference when he claims that “[i]n the entire history of European art it is difficult to name any one fact more momentous than the admission of the graven image by the Christian Church.”\textsuperscript{57} Indeed, Gregory’s comments held special importance in the discussions of the Council of Nicaea (787), in which theologians attacked both his ideas and those of the Greek Church (discussed below) regarding images. The Council was unsuccessful in its attempts to discredit the pro-iconographic notions of Pope Gregory, as is evidenced in the numerous theological writings of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance on that very topic.

Although Pope Gregory I admitted that he could not read Greek, knowledge of Greek iconographic and iconoclastic ideas may have come to him through the Latin translations of the Greek patristic fathers Basil (329-379) and his brother Gregory of Nyssa († ca. 386). Just over two centuries before Gregory the Great wrote his letters to Serenus, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa had likened pictures to “silent sermons” and to “speaking pictures”, respectively. In his nineteenth homily (\textit{In sanctos quadraginta martyres}), for example, Basil had talked extensively on the use of pictures to represent tangibly what a preacher says, summarizing his ideas by saying that “what the sermons show of the story through hearing, the silent picture puts before the eyes by imitation.”\textsuperscript{58} Likewise, Gregory of Nyssa states in his sermon \textit{De S. Theodoro martyre} that “often

\textsuperscript{56} Clark, \textit{Moments}, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{57} Kitzinger, “Cult”, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{58} “[…] quae enim historiae sermo per auditum exhibet, ea ab oculos ponit silens pictura per imitationem.” Quoted in Duggan, “Was Art”, p. 229.
silent pictures on the wall speak, and even more, they aid [the spectator].” Thus, Pope Gregory’s ideas regarding the pictorial as representations of the word, though not intrinsically original, go a step beyond what the Greek fathers had taught: as Duggan explains, the latter did not explicitly link the written word to the visual, but they did consider the visual as a tool for explaining the spoken word. Gregory the Great simply added the idea that images could visualize the written as well as the spoken.

We cannot know exactly which types of “images” Gregory the Great referred to in his letters to Serenus, for those images are not specified in the documents referring to the case, but we can speculate that they must have included statuary, frescoes, and/or tapestries that hung on the walls of the churches. Despite the ambiguity of historical detail, the fact stands that Pope Gregory I understood the concept of “reading” as would other medieval scholars – one could read the words of a sermon or of the scriptures, but one could also read the images visually presented before him, for those images depicted for the eye Biblical and other holy writings. This contrasts greatly with the idea of reading in modern society, in which the verb “to read” is linked directly to written text. However, the written text in medieval society did not share the same social importance as it does in modern society. The lack of mechanical printing made books rare items to which the vast majority of society had no access, which, in turn, made text-based reading nearly impossible for most. Likewise, the vast majority of medieval society lacked the ability to read written language. As a result, we may classify medieval culture as a visual culture in which people “read” the images around them: the visual sign became for them

60 For a brief discussion of this topic, see Diebold, Word and Image, pp. 62-64.
a text in which concepts and even narrative were displayed. Medieval culture was one in which the masses were conditioned to make use of the visual elements of their environment in communicative and perhaps even educational ways.

The question is, then, what did reading consist of in the Middle Ages? Traditionally, medievalists have maintained that reading was an action enjoyed only by the educated, who consisted primarily of those in religious orders and within the Church hierarchy, and, to a much lesser degree, secular members of the nobility (we must specify secular nobility since much of the clergy also came from noble families). If we take the verb to read in its modern sense, then those scholars are correct – a very small minority of medieval Europeans knew how to read written texts. This type of reading was normally taught at the monastic or cathedral schools, to which only certain people could gain entrance, despite mandates by bishops requiring free education for all.\(^\text{61}\) The flaw in this line of argumentation, however, lies in its application of modern ideas to the Middle Ages. Modern readers are classified as such because of their ability to understand written text, and today’s governments establish scales of literacy using quantitative data collected from their citizens. Many modern scholars disregard ideas such as those of Gregory the Great and apply modern quantitative analysis to the Middle Ages in order to speculate what percentage of the population could read the text of the Bible, a legal document presented to them in Latin, or identify their name within a text. However, if we factor in

\(^{61}\) Clanchy points out, for example, that the ninth-century bishop Theodulph of Orléans had mandated that “priests should have schools throughout the villages and teach children free of charge.” However, the fact that this mandate was repeated time and time again is evidence that the priests did not always follow the letter of the law. In fact, as Clanchy points out, many village priests were poor and ignorant themselves and barely knew more than the basic elements of Latin or even the alphabet. The reader is referred to Clanchy, Memory, chapter 7. A literary reference to the fact that not all priests received the same education may be found in the thirteenth-century Spanish poet Gonzalo de Berceo’s Milagros de Nuestra Señora, miracle entitled “El clérigo simple” in which the Virgin Mary intercedes on the part of a priest who can say only one Mass because he has not learned to read.
Gregory’s conceptualisation of reading, then the readers’ level of literacy is of little importance, for *reading* does not depend necessarily on *textual literacy*, and we arrive to a broader idea of reading much closer to that of the Middle Ages: reading was to be considered a visual activity in which the readers’ eyes recognized signs as devices that, taken individually, communicated ideas or concepts and, taken along with other signs, could possibly communicate narrative. Thus, for the textually illiterate, those signs consisted of symbols and pictures; for the literate, they included not only symbols and pictures but also written words. In this light, the activity of reading was undertaken by the visually literate.

### 2.1.2 Words, Pictures, and Communication

Though the medieval mind conceived of reading in terms of both the linguistic and the pictorial, could both forms communicate the same types of information? That is, could the textually illiterate receive from a pictorial representation the same message that a textually literate person could receive from a reading of the written text? I believe the answer to be no. In order for the textually illiterate to understand fully the depictions he has before his eyes, he must either have the written text read to him or have the visual narrative explained in some other verbal fashion. As Duggan points out, Saint Augustine “castigated those who tried to read pictures instead of the Scriptures” out of fear that they would misread them instead of grasping the true meaning of their contents.⁶² Paulinus of Nola (354-431), contemporary of Augustine, took a more tolerant stance when he argued

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⁶² Duggan, “Was Art”, p. 229. Duggan’s statement is based on Saint Augustine’s *De consensu evangelistarum*, I, cc. 9-16, found in Migne 34: 1049-1053.
that paintings could “excite the interest of the rustics by their attractive appearance”\textsuperscript{63},
though they required the use of explanatory inscriptions (which would, of course, have to be read to them by a literate person). The Venerable Bede (672-735), drawing on these ideas, states that

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\ldots \text{why should it not be allowable to recall to the memory of the faithful by a}
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\[
\text{painting, that exaltation of our Lord Saviour on the cross through which he}
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\[
\text{conquered death, and also his other miracles and healings through which he}
\]
\[
\text{wonderfully triumphed over the same author of death, and especially since their}
\]
\[
\text{sight is wont also to produce a feeling of great compunction in the beholder, and}
\]
\[
\text{since they open up, as it were, a living reading of the Lord’s story for those who}
\]
\[
\text{cannot read? The Greek for } \textit{pictura}\text{ is indeed } \zeta \gamma \rho \omega \phi \iota \alpha, \text{ that is, ‘living writing.’}\textsuperscript{64}
\]

Key to Bede’s argument is the phrase “to recall to the memory”, for, as the Anglo-Saxon theologian understood, pictures served the purposes of reminding the faithful of the stories that they had already in their memories. Thus, Bede validates Augustine’s fears: the viewer of a picture could very well misinterpret the images depicted if he had not already heard or read the written text of the narration laid out in pictorial form. This said, we see that, in this context, the visual depends directly on the linguistic, for without either the spoken or the written form of a narration, the pictorial representation lacks meaning.

In his discussion of the transmission of Christian beliefs from Mediterranean Europe to the British Isles by French missionaries in the early Middle Ages, William Diebold questions whether or not pictures have the power to convey ideas in the way a written text does. Because the Anglo-Saxons were unfamiliar with Latin and had no pictorial tradition similar to that developed by Christianity (the iconography of which had

\textsuperscript{63} Cited in Duggan, “Was Art”, p. 229.
\textsuperscript{64} “\ldots \text{cur non licet exaltationem domini salvatoris in cruce qua mortem uicit ad memoriam fidelibus}
\]
\[
\text{depingendo reduci uel etiam alia eius miracula et sanationes quibus de eodem mortis auctore mirabiliter}
\]
\[
\text{triumphauit cum horum aspectus multum saepe compunctionis soleat praestare contuentibus et eis quoque}
\]
\[
\text{qui litteras ignorant quasi iuuam dominicae historiae pandere lectionem? Nam et picture Graece id est iuua}
\]
\[
\text{scriptura, uacatur.” Translation by Paul Meyvaert in “Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow.” } \textit{Anglo-Saxon England} 8 (1979), 69.

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come from the reformulated images of the Greco-Roman world), they would not have had the ability to “read” the new images presented to them in the manner for which they were intended. Diebold’s comments are of substantial importance to the study of image reception in the Middle Ages, for they reflect the test case that one needs in order to assess the validity of the claims made by Gregory the Great and subsequent theologians regarding images. Based on the discussion of the act of reading presented earlier, we cannot deny the fact that images may be read and even “misread”, as Augustine feared. However, the case of the Anglo-Saxons gives evidence that images may not be intrinsic transmitters of knowledge. Though the Anglo-Saxons may have found the Christian artwork odd, they would have doubtless extrapolated some basic idea reflected by the pictures. They would not have been capable of reading the images in the manner for which they had been produced, however. Such an act would have required their previous knowledge of the image or narration depicted, a knowledge that the Anglo-Saxons lacked when the first Christian missionaries arrived in the late sixth century.

Because of the nature of both pictures and words, there can never be a direct one-to-one relationship between the two. The painter would be hard-pressed to express pictorially such deictic words as “this”, “that”, “these”, or “those”, for example. And the writer would be equally as hard-pressed to describe in exact detail Velázquez’s Las

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65 “The Anglo-Saxons neither wrote Latin nor spoke it, so the words of the missionaries required translation into the vernacular. Pictures could thus have played a crucial part in the transmission of ideas because they are already in a kind of vernacular, accessible to all. Or are they? […] The media of these images, painted panels and illuminated manuscripts, were unfamiliar; the illiterate Anglo-Saxons had no tradition either of books or of painting. And their forms, rooted in classical illusionism, would have been odd, perhaps even incomprehensible; anthropologists, psychologists, and art historians are still debating whether the illusionistic representational schemes used in the Mediterranean are naturally comprehensible or if the ability to read them is culturally determined.” Diebold, Word and Image, pp. 19-20.

*Meninas*, to give just one example, in such a way that the reader could form a mental image of the painting as the artist created it. This is not to say, however, that words and images cannot complement one another, that illustrations cannot visualize for a reader the words printed on the page before him or that writing cannot give a linguistic analysis of an image. It simply means that there will always be gaps in the complementary nature of the two. In the case of manuscript illustrations and paintings or statuary in a church, the image depends necessarily on a prior linguistic text that must be recognized by the viewer in order to be comprehended in its visual form. Mieke Bal points out that

> the study of images supposedly meant to illustrate well-known stories (e.g., Biblical episodes) shows the same obvious fact. Although those images, especially when painted on walls or windows of churches, did function as a replacement of texts in partly illiterate societies [...] they did so on the basis not of total redundancy, but of overwriting the previous text.

That is, illustrations cannot exist without the stories to which they refer (the narration of the Apocalypse, in the case of this study). However, for the visual reader who has previous knowledge of the written or spoken text (be that reader literate or illiterate), the image becomes another separate text in and of itself: it is a pictorial rewriting that does not replace the text, but becomes a new text of the same story. Like written or spoken texts, visual texts “propose for the viewer’s consideration a propositional content, an argument, an idea, inscribed in line and color, by means of representation.” They become the didactic visual texts that Gregory the Great envisioned inasmuch as they embody in vivid style the recognized linguistic narrative text to which they correspond.

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67 E. H. Gombrich, for example, claims that an image, because of the lack of “such formators as definite and indefinite articles is unable to signify the distinction between the universal and the particular.” (Gombrich, “Review”, p. 72). Likewise, Hermeren believes that one may easily illustrate a text that says that “a horse is red”, but that no painting can depict such a sentence as “all horses are red.” (Hermeren, *Representation*, p. 78.)


69 *Ibid*
2.2 Practical Uses of Images: Glosses and Memorization

Up to this point we have discussed images in a somewhat abstract manner, in reference to their “readability” and deictic nature of pointing to something already held in one’s mind. What has been said regarding the necessity of prior knowledge in the comprehension of images may be applied to those found in the tympanums above the entrances of churches, to frescos or tapestries inside of churches, as well as to book illustrations. Likewise, it applies regardless of the literacy level of the spectator. But we must now turn to a more practical discussion of images, and from this point on the analysis will focus primarily on illustrations of the type found in the Beatus manuscripts; images that, in some cases, simply accompany the written text in a more-or-less ornamental manner or that, in other cases, narrate the same story in graphic form. Medieval art was, as Clanchy points out, a “synthesis of the beautiful and the functional”\(^70\), and it is this second element that I wish to explore in the remainder of this chapter. As Gregory the Great taught, images should be used in ways conducive to learning: preachers, for example, could make use of statuary or paintings in churches as part of their sermons, and carved entrances of churches could be used as a means of reminding the people of the respect owed the place into which they were entering. However, manuscript illuminations did not reach that same spectator public in the Middle Ages, and those images often took on quite different uses from the ones found in conjunction with ecclesiastic or monastic architecture. Book illustrations directed mainly to the members of the monastic community or the priesthood served the purposes of

\(^{70}\) Clanchy, Memory, p. 280.
glossing a written text with the intent of making its contents more readily understandable, or providing a visual that would impress the mind and thus allow the reader to remember the text more easily.

2.2.1 Images as Glosses of Written Texts

One of the most common types of religious books in the Middle Ages was the commentary on the books of the Bible, particularly Genesis, Job, the Gospels, and Revelations. Like modern Biblical commentaries, these books provided preachers and the other religious with a series of references from the great exegetes of the past regarding certain Biblical passages, while also providing spiritual material that the reader could reflect upon during his personal study and meditation. Often these commentaries, as in the case of the Beatus Apocalypse tradition, were stocked with illustrations that gave visual support to the text in which they were found. This support often appeared in the form of a simple unframed drawing of a figure presented as in photographic form, a snapshot of an action in progress; or, alternately, it was presented in the form of a complex framed illustration of various figures and several actions occurring simultaneously. Regardless of their form, they function as visual aids for the reader. Mireille Mentré makes an interesting observation regarding medieval book illustrations (specifically, Mozarabic ones) when she states that:
just as a scientific text demands figures placed alongside at every step [of the explanation], in the same way narrative texts are glossed by painters with a series of successive scenes, each one of which presents a unifying character of time, space, and action.  

Whereas the written text of the narrative in question may present emotive visual language or complex ideas that the reader must decipher as he reads, the illustration serves as a visualization of the written text that makes clear to the reader the miniscule yet significant articulations of the linguistic text. Just as a modern scientific text presents jargon and complex language that must be analysed through the use of “cartoons” (as the scientific community calls them), the complexity of ideas, not to mention that of the Latin grammatical structures, of the medieval Bible commentaries lent itself to the use of illustrations as explanatory references. In this way, both texts, linguistic and visual, depend upon one another: each necessarily makes the other present through what I prefer to call reciprocal reference (one text referring to a second, which in turn refers back to the first), neither text taking responsibility for the narrative message but rather working together to point to the “transcendent signifier of the Biblical moment.”

An idea largely embraced during the Middle Ages with respect to the study of the Bible was one set forth by Cicero’s *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (1st century BC), which claims that a text is best explained and understood through the use of the rhetorical devices of *expolitio* and *interpretatio*. *Expolitio* in general refers to an author’s use of

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71 “[...] así como un texto científico exige a cada paso figuras colocadas al lado, de igual modo los textos narrativos son desglosados por los pintores en una serie de escenas sucesivas, cada una de las cuales presenta un carácter unitario de tiempo, de lugar y de acción.” Mentré, *Estilo*, p. 117.

72 For a concise discussion of illustrations as explicative glosses of a written text, I refer the reader to the chapter of Mireille Mentré’s book, from which the preceding quote was extracted.

repeated cross-referencing (i.e., historical, literary, artistic, etc.) as a means of explaining or clarifying a text’s contents, in much the same way that modern scholars quote from other sources as a way of supporting the claims that they make with regards to a particular topic. Beatus, for example, extracts passages from Saints Augustine and Jerome (among others) in his clarification of the many symbols found within the Book of Revelations. The use of quotes from numerous ecclesiastic or theological authorities, though they may state the same ideas in different ways, solidifies for the reader the teaching that Beatus wishes the reader to extract from the text: it not only grounds that teaching in the words of Church Fathers but also provides the repetitive mechanism by which the particular teaching in question becomes engrained in the mind of the reader. Interpretatio, on the other hand, though very similar to the concept of expolitio, takes a much more liberal form and depends mainly on the personal ideas and conceptualisations of the interpreter. Like expolitio, interpretatio depends on repetition, but as an explanatory device dependent not necessarily on previous writings but on the author’s ability to connect abstract teachings to concrete examples. We find this in Beatus’s

74 “Expolitio est cum in eodem loco manemus et aliud atque aliud dicere videmur. Ea dupliciter fit: si aut eandem plane dicemus rem, aut de eadem re. Eandem rem dicemus non eodem modo – nam id quidem obtundere auditorem est, non rem expolire – sed commutate. Commutabimus tripliciter: verbis, pronuntiando, tractando.” (“Refining consists in dwelling on the same topic and yet seeming to say something ever new. It is accomplished in two ways: by merely repeating the same idea, or by descanting upon it. We shall not repeat the same thing precisely – for that, to be sure, would weary the hearer and not refine the idea – but with changes. Our changes will be of three kinds: in the words, in the delivery, and in the treatment.”) Cicero, Rhetorica, pp. 364-365. English translation by Harry Caplan.

75 “Interpretatio est quae non iterans idem redintegrat verbum, sed id commutat quod positum est alio verbo quod idem valeat, hoc modo: ‘Rem publicam radicitus evertisti, civitatem funditus deiecisti.’ Item: ‘Patrem nefarie verberasti, parenti manus scelerate attulisti.’ Necessum est eius qui audit animum commoveri cum gravitas prioris dicti renovatur interpretatione verborum.” (“Synonymy or Interpretation is the figure which does not duplicate the same word by repeating it, but replaces the word that has been used by another of the same meaning, as follows: ‘You have overturned the republic from its roots; you have demolished the state from its foundation.’ Again: ‘You have impiously beaten your father; you have criminally laid hands on your parent.’ The hearer cannot but be impressed when the force of the first expression is renewed by the explanatory synonym.”) Cicero, Rhetorica, pp. 324-325.
application of the Apocalypse to the events occurring in his own time period – the Antichrist embodied by the followers of Adoptionism. Here Beatus goes beyond an exegetical reading of the Apocalypse in order to make a real-life application of its literary contents to the world in which he lived. Repetition of teaching regarding the Antichrist and the signs of the culmination of the prophecies, intertwined with Beatus’s own ideas on Adoptionism repeated throughout the commentaries, give readers a very clear understanding of the apocalyptic events of Saint John’s vision and their perceived connection to the world in which Beatus lived.

As the Beatus illustration tradition proves, we may also consider the images placed in the copies of Beatus’s work as another form of interpretatio. Not only does each manuscript contain a different number of illustrations, but those present differ in many cases from those found in other manuscripts of the same family. This fact points us to two very important issues with regards to the artists’ interpretation of the Beatus commentaries: on the one hand, each of the illustrators, either on his own or under the direction of another monk, decided which scenes from the Apocalypse (in addition to those specified by Beatus’s original work) would receive graphic attention; and on the other, each illustrator was charged with designing his illustrations in his own interpretative manner. There are, of course, certain primary scenes from the Apocalypse that appear with frequency (the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem, Christ seated in majesty, the Whore of Babylon, for example), and there are basic similarities among the majority of the repeated scenes. However, the differences in illustration design and, even
more, the decision as to whether a particular scene should be represented graphically or not, forces us to view the illustrations not only as pictorial *explanatio* but also as interpretative.

Though we classify the illustrations of a medieval text as a form of *interpretatio*, their interpretative value can be difficult to comprehend, for an illustrator may not have been conscious of the fact that he was providing interpretation instead of mere graphic accompaniment. Unlike a preacher or an exegete, who consciously interprets scripture with regards to historical or contemporary events as a way of connecting with the recipient public, the illustrator bases his work on the literality of the text itself, and his interpretation of that text depends not so much on the scholarly knowledge that he has but on the psychological impact that he wishes to make on the reader. His product may be decorative and appeal to the readers’ sense of beauty, as Clanchy has said, but it also has the function of *illuminare* – to clarify in visual format the fundamental meaning and significance of the objects it portrays to the readers.  

It must present in graphic form the narrative structure of the written text in such a way that the story told is not only made clear but is also impressed upon the mind in both linguistic and visual form. In this way, the written text and the illustrations depend one upon the other in communicative symbiosis: the reader “follows the text and the images more or less simultaneously, the image presenting a gloss to the text and the text a caption to the image.”

The communicative symbiosis of word and image may have presented for some religious orders of the Middle Ages a solution to Saint Benedict’s rule of silence. In chapter six of his monastic rule, Benedict had stated that “[i]ndeed, so important is

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77 Ringbom, “Conventions”, p. 41.
silence that permission to speak should seldom be granted even to mature disciples, no matter how good or holy or constructive their talk.”

Yet Benedict had later stated, in chapter forty-eight, that monks were to spend part of their time reading:

> From the first of October to the beginning of Lent, the brothers ought to devote themselves to reading until the end of the second hour. At this time, Terce is said and they are to work at their assigned tasks until None. At the first signal for the hour of None, all put aside their work to be ready for the second signal. Then, after their meal, they will devote themselves to their reading or to the Psalms. During the days of Lent, they should be free in the morning to read until the third hour, after which they will work at their assigned tasks until the end of the tenth hour. During this time of Lent, each one is to receive a book from the library and is to read the whole of it straight through. These books are to be distributed at the beginning of Lent.

Many are the studies that attempt to prove that the act of reading in the Middle Ages consisted of moving the mouth and vociferating the words on the page in order for the ear to perceive the pronunciation of the words and to internalise them into the mind. Michael Camille, for example, believes that “reading was a matter of hearing and speaking, not of seeing” and claims that monks not only read aloud but also wrote aloud. However, I do not fully agree that this was the case: the Rule of Saint Benedict, although it was not the only monastic rule in existence in the Middle Ages and not always followed to the letter of the law, was considered to be the basis for monasticism in medieval Europe, and the

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79 “A kalendas autem octobres usque caput quadragesimae usque in hora secunda plena lectioni vacent; hora secunda agatur tercia; et usque nona omnes in opus suum laborent quod eis inuigatur. Facto autem primo signo nonae horae, deiuungant ab opera sua singuli et sint parati, dum secundum signum pulsaverit. Post refecctionem autem vacant lectionibus suis aut psalmis. In quadragesimae vero diebus, a mane usque tertia plena vacant lectionibus suis, et usque decima hora plena operentur quod eis inuigitur. In quibus diebus quadragesimae accipiant omnes singulos codices de bibliotheca, quos per ordinem ex integro legant; qui codices in caput quadragesimae dandi sunt.” English translation in Fry, p. 48; Latin from Glenstal, p. 229.

80 Camille, “Seeing and Reading”, p. 28.
Benedictines in general did observe the rule of silence even during the hours of required reading. At most, the monks would have whispered only very lightly the words that they were reading, for the combined voices of the monks during the reading hours would have severely disrupted the calm of the monastery.

Partly for this reason were illustrations of such great importance. By following the written passage and the illustrations in simultaneous literary and visual reading, either in silence or as a whisper, the individual monk observed the rule of silence but also internalised into his memory the text being read. Through the faculties of sight, the reader would recognize the written words and associate them with the images placed alongside them, thus turning the act of reading into a visual activity that mentally linked words to the things that they represented, as in Isidore of Seville’s definition (which states that words are *indices rerum*, “indicators of things”). Hearing the word spoken and seeing its reference depicted would have been the most desired manner of reading in the Middle Ages, but practicality according to the Rule simply would not have allowed that to happen in many instances. In those cases, the graphically glossed text would have aided the reader in understanding the text that he was (semi)silently reading or in remembering what he had read before when returning to a previously studied text.

### 2.2.2 Images and the Memory

This brings us back to the idea of memory to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter. As has been discussed, in order for a visual reader to have an appropriate understanding of an image, he must already know the story depicted. Once the story has

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been heard or read, the illustrations no longer serve as an accompanying gloss but as a separate text that may be read alone or in conjunction with the written text either as an interpretation or as graphic reminder of the story’s contents. As such, illustrations visualize for the reader the principal details of the story and aid him in achieving the understanding of the Biblical message needed in order to reach the spiritual realm to which he aspires.

Of great importance to the monastic communities of the Middle Ages (indeed, even today) was the remembrance of the stories of the Bible and of the saints. One of the reasons for which Saint Benedict obliged the monks to read was for their own personal spiritual edification, and part of that spiritual growth came in the memorization of passages of important books and even of the Holy Scriptures. Books were a precious commodity in the Middle Ages, and the opportunity to read one more than once was most unlikely (unless the reader happened also to be the owner or a member of the owner monastery). Committing a book’s words to memory became for the monks a way of building a mental library from which they could extract ideas or memorized passages when writing their own commentaries or theological treatises. Likewise, with the Holy Scriptures and other writings committed to memory, a monk carried with him at all times a storehouse of wisdom on which to meditate and, thus, to grow spiritually. Memory
became in the Middle Ages a topic about which many thought and wrote, for a visual culture, as that of the Middle Ages was, must naturally be, by default, a culture of memory.

There were various ideas in the Middle Ages regarding the nature of memory and its relation to the visual. Suzanne Lewis tells us that, for the people of the Middle Ages, illustrations were seen as instruments of ideological conservation used by those who participated in “solitary discourse between the self and the page”: “[a]s opposed to the ephemeral character of a spoken text, the written word was enduring, and interpreted meaning could be held visually in the memory with the aid of illustrations.” Despite the fact that many believe reading to have been primarily a public and/or voiced activity, there is evidence to lead us to think otherwise. I have already pointed out that Saint Benedict, in his Rule, allowed for each monk to read a book entrusted to him during certain times of the year, thus making reading a solitary activity. Moreover, as Lewis points out, both Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141) and John of Salisbury (1115-1180) recognized reading as an activity that could take place both in group and alone, for reading consisted principally of recognizing words as “visual symbols of concepts” and illustrations as “metadiscursive imagery that finds its special distinction in its inherent

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82 Aristotle, for example, had written On Memory and Reminiscence in ca. 350 BC, on which both Saints Albert the Great (1206-1280) and Thomas Aquinas wrote commentaries. The already-mentioned work of Cicero treats memory extensively, as do Roger Bacon in his Opus Maius (1267) and Bono Giamboni in the Trattato della memoria artificiale (1280s). Likewise, Hugh of Saint Victor treats the topic numerous times in the Didascalicon, linking the ars memorandi to divine reading and meditation. From the East, works treating memory and optics by Al-Kindi (801-873), Avicenna (980-1037), and Alhazen (965-1040) were being translated to Latin and studied by philosophers and religious alike; and the Spanish-born Averroes (1126-1198) had also become a known philosopher and writer on such matters.

83 Lewis, Reading Images, p. 3.

84 As is well known, it has been tradition in monastic communities, from the Middle Ages to the present, to listen to a reading of the scriptures during meal times. However, this is not the only time during which reading takes place, as is discussed in the following explanations.
silence, seeming to enter the mind directly and thus transcending the mundane.”

It was, thus, in this silence that illustrations were contemplated and impressed upon the memory: the solitary reader, confronted with the written text and the illustrations, analysed the text critically and considered the visual interpretation of that text in such a way as to embed its narrative into his memory through the images that he saw.

As we have already seen earlier in this chapter, the Venerable Bede believed that pictures could be used to “recall to the memory of the faithful” the stories from the Bible and, thus, lead them along the path of righteousness. This teaching, of course, assumes that the stories of the Bible are already familiar to the spectator and that contemplating them in visual form leads one closer to spiritual perfection. With this in mind, it would not be surprising to find readers scanning or simply ignoring the written text altogether in order to give attention to the illustrations themselves. Saint Boniface (ca. 675-755) had commented that Holy Scripture contained grammatical subtleties that the uneducated could have no possibility of understanding, and that only those astutely educated in Latin would have the knowledge needed to comprehend a reading of the scripture.

Considering what has been said before about the lack of education among many monks and priests of the Middle Ages, the illustrations would have become the primary source of scriptural study for some. Those monks and priests who had never learned to read or who read very little would have already known the text to which the illustrations referred due to aural familiarity with the Holy Scriptures. Hrabanus Maurus, ninth-century abbot of Fulda and archbishop of Mainz, had evidently become familiar with this situation for, as he points out in a poem written to Hatto of Mainz, he believed that illustrations could

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85 Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 3.
86 See Jean Leclercq’s comments on Saint Boniface in *Love*, pp. 38-40.
be used to spur the memory of the reader, though he scoffed at the idea that they could ever replace the scriptures or be read without a close reading of the Holy Writ alongside.\(^87\) Based on the evidence that we have from throughout the Middle Ages, however, I would venture to say that many monks depended more on their memory and the aid of the illustrations than on the actual written text during their moments of contemplation and prayer.

Of special interest to the study of memory and image in the Middle Ages are the ideas of Gilbert Crispin (abbot of Westminster from 1085-1117), Richard of Fournival (1201-1260), and Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274). Their conceptualisations of images and memory, though inherently different one from the other, give us a much deeper understanding of what memory meant in the Middle Ages. By combining their ideas, we arrive at a medieval hermeneutic of memory that will lead us toward the spiritual ends for which Bible illustrations, and those of the Apocalypse in particular, were created.

In an attempt to imitate the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, Gilbert Crispin of Westminster claims of images that “just as letters stand in one way as images and notations of words, so also pictures exist as likenesses and notations of things written.”\(^88\)

As has been noted, Isidore had claimed that words were “indicators of things”, but

\(^87\) "Nam pictura tibi cum omni sit grator arte, / Scribendi ingrane non spernas posco laborem. / Psallendi nisum, studium curamque legendi, / Plus quia gramma valet quam vana in imagine forma, / Plusque animae decoris praestat quam falsa colorum / Pictura ostentans rerum non rite figuras. / Nam scriptura pia norma est perfecta salutis / Et magis in rebus valet, et magis utilis omni est, / Promptior est gustu, sensu perfectior atque / Sensibus humanis, facilis magis arte tenenda. / Auribus haec servit, labris, obtutibus atque, / Illa oculis tantum paucar solamina praestat.” In *Monumenta Germaniae historica inde ab anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quingentesimum. Poetarum latiorum Medii Aevi*, II. E. Dümmler (ed.). Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1884. p. 196.

Gilbert Crispin expanded upon the idea in a reciprocal fashion. He agreed with Isidore of Seville in considering words as indicators of things. Interestingly, however, Crispin refers to those “things” with the word *images* (‘figure’), for the “things” that the words reference must already be in the memory of the reader upon hearing or seeing the word. Thus, written words refer to things in the real world, but only through the mental images that one has formed and contains in his memory. At the same time, according to Crispin’s formula, images refer back to the words that reference them. Seeing an image brings to the spectator’s mind the lexical item that it depicts, thus forming a relationship of dual reference similar to that theorized by modern semioticians. Following this formula, words remind the reader of images, while images remind the reader of words. The conjoining of word and image, as in the case of manuscript illustrations, has the goal of leading the reader to the original vision that had led to the writing of the text. The *Apocalypse* illustrations, seen in this light, not only visualize the events of the *Apocalypse* but also aid the reader in imagining the mystical vision that Saint John had experienced on the island of Patmos.

For Richard of Fournival, memory functions as a result of the opening and closing of the metaphorical doors of the eyes and the ears, which Saint Bonaventure reduces mainly to the sense of sight. Richard of Fournival’s idea, quoted from the *Bestiare d’Amour* at the beginning of this chapter, stems from the basic concept that one must first be told the story before he is capable of remembering it. Indeed, narrative was traditionally passed from one generation to the next through the oral tradition, which depended primarily on the telling, remembering, and retelling of stories. However, this

89 For a discussion of Gilbert Crispin’s ideas, see Clanchy, *Memory*, pp. 288-289.
concept may be extended to include the eyes, since, for the literate, it is through the reading of the printed word that one may also introduce a story into his memory. Clanchy seems to believe that we cannot know exactly what Richard of Fournival meant when he said that “painture sert a l’œil”, since “painting” could refer either to the word painted on the page (i.e., calligraphic writing) or to actual pictorial images. We have already discussed the fact that, in the Middle Ages, reading included the action of seeing the written word as if it were, like pictures, a graphic representation of ideas and concepts, but we also know the Middle Ages to be a time of great production of visual images. Even more, Richard of Fournival goes on to claim that the act of seeing the deeds of the past painted makes them seem as though they were in the present. As we know from preceding discussions, Richard of Fournival lived in a time when sight, both of words and of images, was a primary tool for the introduction of narrative into the mind. Because of this, we cannot discount the idea that Richard of Fournival probably thought of pictorial images when he wrote his comments on memory in the Bestiare d’Amour.

It was Saint Bonaventure who gave us the definitive rationale on images and memory that we must look to in any study of this topic. Likewise, it is his argument that will take us into the next section of this chapter, which deals with images as spiritual guides, for it is through the sight of religious images and the memories that they evoke in the spectator that one may contemplate the scriptures and come to a more complete understanding of their message. Bonaventure’s tripartite defence of religious images (found in manuscripts, as part of ecclesiastic architecture, or in other forms found inside of churches and monasteries) states that:
1) They [images] were made for the simplicity of the ignorant, so that the uneducated who are unable to read Scriptures can, through statues and paintings of this kind, read about the sacraments of our faith in, as it were, more open Scriptures.

2) They were introduced because of the sluggishness of the affections, so that men who are not aroused to devotion when they hear with the ear about those things which Christ has done for us will at the least be inspired when they see the same things in figures present, as it were, to their bodily eyes. For our emotion is aroused more by what is seen than by what is heard.

3) They were introduced on account of the transitory nature of memory, because those things which are only heard fall into oblivion more easily than those things which are seen.\(^90\)

Part one reminds us of Pope Gregory the Great’s letters to Serenus in which he teaches that images are to be considered as books for the ignorant. Parts two and three, however, hold special importance for this study: each outlines an idea relevant to the use of illustrations in Biblical commentaries. Part three refers to the practical use of images for the conservation of religious history and teachings as well as in the transmission of narrative sequences. In part three, Saint Boniface warns us that with the oral tradition stories change and are even forgotten since their telling is a product of memory. Images, which are much less transitory in nature, keep narrative intact through their constant visual reminder of the events to be told. Going back to part two, we find that Bonaventure recognized the very real psychological impact that images have on

\(^90\) Sentenciarum liber III, dist. IX, art 1, quaestio II. Translation by Charles Garside, Jr., in Zwingli, p. 91.
spectators: not only do religious images remind people of the stories of the Bible or from other sources, but they also provide a direct visual means by which the spectator may relate on an emotional level with the characters of the story, without first having to formulate mental images of the narration. By allowing the spectator to bypass this step, the painter’s images force the reader-spectator to react from the emotional level, which further persuades him to react spiritually in response to the emotions that the images cause. In his discussion of Avicenna’s Liber de anima, Michael Camille points out that, for the medieval thinker, images have both a physical form and an intentio – “a reaction to the image, after its apprehension in the sensus communis and storage in the imaginatio.”91 Images, as Avicenna argued, are more than passive elements that one stores in his memory, but contain an emotional component that rouses the faculties of the spirit to movement.92 Indeed, as Camille notes, the image of the suffering Christ does not have to be “realistic”, for the visual reminder of the blood and the emaciated body are cue enough to stir the emotive faculties to action.93 It is to this emotive nature of pictures that we now turn.

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93 This consideration of the emotive effects of visual imagery shows up again in later religious writings by such monks and preachers as Gottschalk Hollen (15th century), who believed that pictures were more effective than a sermon in moving a person to piety; and Johannes Herolt who, in his Summa Praeceptorium states that images are necessary to the religious life “in order that we may embrace a knowledge of things unknown, in order that we may be animated toward doing the same thing, in order that through the image we may remember, in order that we may venerate him whose image it is.” Further explanation of these two men may be found in Garside, Zwingli, p. 92.
2.3 Image, Emotion, and Spiritual Growth

In an article outlining the concept of vision and visuality in the Middle Ages, Cynthia Hahn tells us that the “[e]arly medieval visual experience of the divine can be described as received by the individual in community and focused on an instantaneous and powerful effect, which struck or engraved the heart”, and that, by the later Middle Ages, visual experiences of the divine were “constructed in solitary contemplation or from the private reading of the pages of a book, and figured as an act of entrance.”

Though Hahn differentiates between the Early and the Late Middle Ages, tracing the evolution from group spectatorship (gathered en masse inside of churches or chapels) to that of the individual seated in solitary reading, the main goal of her study is to show that visuality, whether as glance or as gaze, is an act that forces images into the memory of the spectator and, as a result, engraves them on the heart or soul. In this manner, images remind the spectator of stories heard or read, but memory goes beyond a function of reminiscence to being a “constitutive force of character.” Thus, with respect to Bible commentaries and their illustrations, the images depicting the Biblical stories studied become instruments through which the reader develops his own personal character, which, as the twentieth-century Benedictine monk Jean Leclercq tells us, is a character motivated toward spiritual enlightenment and salvation.

A reading of Saint Benedict’s Rule leads us to a two-part conclusion: the author expects that his monastic charges attain knowledge of letters in order to read the scriptures and the other holy writings passed down through the generations, and

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95 Ibid, p. 177.
96 See chapter 1 of Leclercq, Love.
furthermore, they are to seek God in all that they do. Leclercq tells us that “one of the principal occupations of the monk is the lectio divina, which includes meditation: meditari aut legere.”

Through the reading of the scriptures, meditation on and contemplation of their messages, and prayer the monk gains knowledge of the divine and, in doing so, fosters his own spiritual growth – this is, as Leclercq points out, the reason for the existence of monasticism:

its [monasticism’s] reason for existing is to further the salvation of the monk, his search for God, and not for any practical or social end […] The whole organization of monastic life is dominated by the solicitude for safeguarding a certain spiritual leisure, a certain freedom in the interests of prayer in all its forms, and, above all, authentic contemplative peace.

Fear of God, or rather, the fear of losing God’s presence, becomes one of the motivating factors in the monk’s way of life. As he searches for God through prayer and contemplation of the scriptures, he does so out of love for the God before whom he stands in humility. Leclercq reminds us that, for the religious, fear is one of the roots of virtue – not fear of a revengeful God, but fear of losing that which is loved – which is founded upon the premise that “the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God.”

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98 Ibid, pp. 18-19.
99 “initium sapientiae timor Domini.” Leclercq, Love, p. 76. Though the concept of lectio divina is treated in the works of both Saint Augustine and Saint Benedict, among others, I find the best definition of this spiritual activity in what has come to be known as Abbot Guillaume de Saint-Thierry’s 1144 Lettre d’Or, or Letter to the Brothers of Mont-Dieu. Here the French Benedictine explains that: “Deinde etiam certis horis certae lectioni vacandum est. Fortuita enim et varia lectio, et quasi casu reperta, non aedificat, sed reddit animum instabilem, et, leviter admissa, levius recedit a memoria. Sed certis ingenios immorandum est, et assuefaciendus est animus. Quo enim spiritu scripturae factae sunt, eo spiritu legi desiderant; ipso etiam et intelligendae sunt. Numquam ingredieris in sensum Pauli, donec usu bonae intentionis in lectione ejus, et studio assiduae meditationis, spiritum ejus imbibes. Numquam intelliges David, donec ipsa experientia ipsos psalmorum affectus indueris. Sicque de reliquis. Et in omni Scriptura, tantum distat studium a lectione, quantum amicitia ab hospitio, socialis affectio a fortuita salutatione. Sed et de cotidiana lectione aliquid cotide in ventrum memoriae demittendum est, quod fidelius digeratur, et sursum revocatum crebris ruminetur; quod proposito conveniat, quod intentioni proficiat, quod detineat animum, ut aliena cogitare non libeat. Hauriendum est de lectionis serie affectus, et formanda oratio, quae lectionem interrupat, nec tam impediat interrumpendo, quam puriorem continuo animum ad intelligentiam lectionis
With this in mind, we are able to look back to the aforementioned discussions of manuscript illustrations in a new light. Illustrations do not simply visualize and clarify for the reader that which is written, but, as Camille comments in his study of Avicenna and Gregory the Great, they strike at the heart of the reader and move him emotionally and spiritually. Illustrations are, in short, spiritual material upon which the monk fixes his eyes in contemplative prayer, and the miniaturist who prepares those illustrations (also a monk) does so with this in mind. As a monastic artist, the miniaturist considers the phenomenological fact that his product will act upon the spectator’s emotional faculties and inspire devotion, which Saints Augustine, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas supported in their teachings on images. For W. J. T. Mitchell the human mind

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restituat. Intentioni enim servit lectio. Si vere in lectione Deum quærít qui legit, omnia quae legit cooperantur ei in hoc ipsum, et captivat sensus legentis, et in servitutem redigit omnem lectionis intellectum in obsequium Christi. Si in aliud declinat sensus legentis, omnia trahit post semetipsum; nichilque tam sanctum, tam pium invenit in scripturis quod seu per vanam gloriam, seu per distortum sensum, seu per pravum intellectum, non applicet suae vel malitiae, vel vanitati. In omnibus enim scripturis legenti initium sapientiae debet esse timor Domini, ut in eo primo solidetur intentio legentis, et ex eo exurgat et ordinetur totius lectionis antellectus vel sensus.” (“Certain times should be given to a determined reading. A reading done by chance, without continuation, far from edifying the soul, throws it into instability. Welcomed easily, it disappears from the memory even more easily. On the contrary, lingering on the intimacy of chosen masters, the upright soul becomes familiar with them. The Scriptures in particular demand to be read and understood in this way, in the spirit with which they were spoken. You will never enter the thoughts of Paul if from the constant attention to reading and the assiduous application of meditation, you do not inebriate yourself with his spirit. You will never understand David if your own experience does not cover you with the sentiments expressed in the Psalms. The same holds for other authors. And in all Scriptures, reading and study differ one from the other just as friendship does from hospitality or confraternal affection from an occasional salutation. It is also necessary each day to separate some mouthful of daily reading and confide it to the stomach of the memory: a passage that is digested better and that will form the object of frequent rumination, a thought more connected to our way of life, able to sustain attention, to capture the soul, and to render it insensible to alien thoughts. Of continued reading it is necessary to draw affectionate enthusiasm, to form a prayer that interrupts the reading. Such interruptions less disturb the soul than render it immediately more lucid to the understanding of the text. Reading is at the service of the intention. If the reader truly searches for God in the reading, all that he reads cooperates with and for him in that purpose, and renders the intelligence of the text to the honour of Christ. But if he moves away from that goal, his intention will drag everything behind it. He will find nothing holy or pious in the Scriptures that serves him, whether out of pride, distorted sentiments, or deprivation of the intellect, but either malice or vanity. Indeed, in all readings of the Scriptures the beginning of wisdom should be the fear of God: in this the reader solidifies his intention from the beginning, and from him pours forth harmoniously the intelligence and the sense of all readings.”) Saint-Theirry, *Lettre*, pp. 238-240.
forces one to link words and images in order to understand concepts, for pictures take ideas out of the abstract and make them concrete:

The image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as (or, for the believer, actually achieving) natural immediacy and presence. The word is its “other,” the artificial, arbitrary production of human will that disrupts natural presence by introducing unnatural elements into the world – time, consciousness, history, and alienating intervention of symbolic mediation.100

In following with this idea, Bernard McGinn writes that images, those of the Apocalypse in particular, allow for visionary experiences, which are “a form of religious authentification for messages of God.”101 To understand the foundations of this idea better, let us look at the teachings of Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas regarding images, visions, and spiritual understanding.

As has been pointed out in the commentary on Gilbert Crispin, one of the ideas behind a series of illustrations, especially those of the Apocalypse, may be to relive the original vision that led to the writing of the vision text. This idea finds its beginnings in the Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by the Roman grammarian Macrobius (flourished from 395-423)102, in which the author explains how we should consider dreams: they are instruments through which one may explore the spiritual realm of his own existence, for it is through dreams that the soul communicates with the body. For the medieval thinker, Macrobius’s dream theory related to religious images inasmuch as the latter were also to be considered as a means by which the body, through the use of the eyes and of the imagination, could influence the soul; likewise, the soul moved by the

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100 Mitchell, Iconology, p. 43.
102 We know very little about this author. He claims in his own writings not to be Roman, but he gives no clue as to where we may place his origins. Because of the presence of other Roman and even Christian officials of the same name during the time of this author, we cannot know for certain whether he was actually one of those men or a completely separate person. Until further evidence is given, we cannot attribute to him more than the little that we know based on his writings.
sight of the image, would prompt the body to physical response (i.e., prayer, devotional work, even the tears or laudatory cries that we find in the works of the sixteenth-century mystics John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila). Whereas for Macrobius dreams led “to knowledge that transcends bodily limitations,” for the medieval reader images had the power to carry the soul beyond the physicality of ordinary sight and into the realm of the divine in which truths not known to the world but only to the soul can be attained.

One of the most important texts for the study of medieval notions of vision as outlined by Macrobius is chapter twelve of Saint Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*, in which the author explicates the New Testament passage of II Corinthians 12: 2-4. His explanation of this passage became for many medieval thinkers a supplement to or a Christian reformulation of Macrobius’s ideas regarding dream imagery. In the course of his commentary, Augustine outlines three levels of vision that, taken strictly, refer only to the physical and mental aspects of vision, but which medieval thinkers revaluated in order to explain visual imagery of a religious nature. The three levels of sight are:

1) corporeal vision (*visio corporealis*)

2) spiritual or imaginative vision (*visio spiritualis* or *imaginativa*)

3) intellectual vision (*visio intellectualis*).

Saint Augustine explains these levels of vision as a progression whose beginning lies in physical visual perception but which ends in intellectual understanding that surpasses the need of either the physical or the mentally visible. Taking the sentence *you shall love*

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103 Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 62.
104 In this passage, Saint Paul states that, “I know someone in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows). And I know that this person (whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows) was caught up into Paradise and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter.”
Augustine explains that the first level of vision consists in simply perceiving the physical presence of the person to be loved (i.e., one sees his neighbour). The second level of vision, however, consists of one’s mental perception of that already-seen neighbour – one remembers and is able to think about that person, thus formulating a mental image of the person’s physical characteristics. For Augustine, the memory of the person’s physical nature constitutes the spirit of the person that has been impressed upon the viewer’s memory, and for this reason does he give this level of vision the double name of *visio spiritualis* and *visio imaginativa*. Remembrance of the person allows one to experience the emotion that he feels for the neighbour and to arrive to a heightened level of intellectual understanding of love: as an emotion, or an abstract concept not embodied in any physical object, the viewer perceives not through the imaginative eye but through the intellect that which the spirit of the neighbour has caused in both mind and soul. As he continues his explanations, Saint Augustine extends this tripartite *visio* to the experience of God’s presence, which must begin with the physical sight of the Word through Holy Writ and inspirational images, but which ends with the intellectual understanding of the Essence of God either by ways of ecstatic visions or in the life received after physical death.  

Taking into account Jean Leclercq’s comments regarding the monastic practice of *lectio divina* and the monk’s desire for complete understanding of God, we find that it is to the third level of vision that a monk aspires, for he must be in constant search of spiritual enlightenment. He begins his spiritual life at the first level, seeing as any human sees, with the eyes of the body. Through study, contemplation, and prayer he arrives to
the second level of vision in which the spiritual truths that he believes ever present in the
Scriptures become manifest to him mentally and pervade his every moment. However,
the third level of vision – the *visio intellectualis*, or complete understanding and vision of
God – is only reserved to a select few whom God graces with visions of ecstasy. As
Erickson notes, Augustine’s three levels of vision correspond to a “hierarchy in which
increasing clarity of vision was linked to increasing cognition of truth.”\(^{106}\) By studying
the scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as by dedicating himself to
the monastic rule under which he lives, the monk aspires to the third state of spirituality
in which he experiences the “increased cognition of [the] truth” of the Biblical message,
which may consist of prophetic insight and that will guide him to the fullness of glory in
Paradise upon reaching the end of earthly life.

For Saint Thomas Aquinas, as outlined in the “Treatise on the Last End”\(^{107}\), all
humans have as their final goal that of attaining happiness in Paradise, which is, in
Augustinian terms, the realisation of the *visio intellectualis*. In Article VIII of Question
3, Thomas states that “[f]inal and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the
vision of the Divine Essence”,\(^{108}\) after which he explains that one’s curious nature brings
him to a closer understanding of God through the study and contemplation that he carries
out in order to know God. For this contemplative life Saint Thomas admits that one
needs certain physical objects that will guide him in the search for God’s truth:

> For perfect happiness, such as can be had in this life, external goods are
necessary, not as belonging to the essence of happiness, but by serving as

\(^{106}\) Erickson, *Medieval Vision*, p. 38.
\(^{107}\) Saint Thomas Aquinas, “De ultimo fine hominis.” *Summa Theologica* 1a, 2ae.
\(^{108}\) “Dicendum quod ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae.” *Summa
Theologica* 1a, 2ae, Q. 3, art. VIII. Translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Revised
instruments to happiness, “which consists in the operation of virtue,” as stated in the *Ethics*. For man needs, in this life, the necessaries of the body, both for the operation of contemplative virtue, and for the operation of active virtue, for which latter he needs also many other things by means of which to perform its operations.109

Though he does not specify what he means by “external goods” and “instruments to happiness”, by the context in which these words are found, as well as in light of Thomas Aquinas’s scholarly disposition, we can conclude that he included books and works of religious art as instruments by which one could gain a deeper knowledge of Christian doctrine and through which one could gain the *visio spiritualis* needed to live the life of virtue and preparation for the *visio intellectualis*. In this sense, Biblical commentaries and the illustrations contained in them serve the soul as “instruments to happiness”, conducting the reader/spectator toward his final end, the beatific vision of God. Thus, the final end toward which one journeys is the very cause that brings about that journey – the love of learning and the desire for God, as Jean Leclercq points out in the title of his book on monasticism.

Thomas Aquinas’s possible reference to books and images is further supported earlier in the *Summa Theologica*, in the section of Part I, called the “Treatise on Man.”110 Here he speaks of the nature of the soul and its union with the body, explaining that the soul is the *intellectus agens* of the human body, which in turn serves the soul through its physical sense faculties: “the intellectual soul […] holds the lowest place among intellectual substances; for it is not naturally gifted with the knowledge of truth, as the

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109 “Dicendum quod ad beatitudinem imperfectam, qualis in hac vita potest haber, requiruntur exterior bona, non quasi de essentia beatitudinis existentia, sed quasi instrumentaliter deservientia beatitudini, ‘quae consistit in operatione virtutis,’ ut dicitur in I Eih. ‡. Indiget enim homo in hac vita necessaries corporis tam ad operationem virtutis contemplativae, quam etiam ad operationem virtutis activae, ad quam etiam pluram aliam requiruntur, quibus exerceat opera activae virtutis.” *Summa* Ia, 2ae, Q. 4, art. VII. Translation in Sullivan, p. 635.

110 “De homine.” *Summa* Ia, 1ae.
angels are, but has to gather knowledge from individual things by way of the senses.”

Using this argument, Thomas Aquinas explains that the soul that has not yet reached Happiness must, by necessity, be attached to a body containing sense organs, proving that the *anima intellectiva* must not only have the power to know but also the faculties of sense (*sentiendi*). Of the five senses, Thomas Aquinas believes that of sight to be the most perfect instrument by which the soul may attain knowledge:

But the more immaterially a thing has the form of the thing known, the more perfect is its knowledge. Therefore, the intellect which abstracts the species not only from matter but also from the individuating conditions of matter, has more perfect knowledge than the senses, which receive the form of the thing known, without matter indeed, but subject to material conditions. Moreover, among the senses, sight has the most perfect knowledge because it is the least material, as we have remarked above (Q. LXXVIII, A. 3), while among intellects the more perfect is the more immaterial.

In Article 7 of the same Question, Thomas Aquinas focuses his vision theory on a small discussion of painted images (or, *phantasms*, as he calls them). For him, images are a necessary element of spiritual development and of comprehending that which, to the human mind, is of an abstract nature. To the question of whether or not the intellect may understand concepts without the need of *phantasms*, he answers:

In the present state of life in which the soul is united to a passible body, it is impossible for our intellect to understand anything actually except by turning to the phantasms […] anyone can experience this of himself, that when he tries to understand something, he forms certain phantasms to serve him by way of examples, in which as it were he examines what he is striving to understand. It is

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111 “Anima autem intellective, sicut supra habitum est, secundum naturae ordinem, infimum gradum in substantiis intellectualibus tenet; intantum quod non habet naturaliter sibi inditam notitiam veritatis, sicut angeli, sed oportet quod eam colligat ex rebus divisibilibus per viam sensus, ut Dionysius dicit, VII cap. De Div. Nom. ‡.” *Summa* Ia, 1ae, Q. 76, art. V. Translation in Sullivan, p. 395.

112 “Quanto autem aliquid immaterialius habet formam rei cognitae, tanto perfectius cognoscit. Unde et intellectus, qui abstrahit speciem non solum a materia, sed etiam a materialibus conditionibus individuantibus, perfectius cognoscit quam sensus, qui accipit formam rei cognitae sine materia quidem, sed cum materialibus conditionibus. Et inter ipsos sensus, visus est magis cognoscitivus, quia est minus materialis, ut supra dictum est. Et inter ipsos intellectus, tanto quilibet est perfector, quanto immaterialior.” *Summa* Ia, 1ae, Q. 84 art. II. Translation in Sullivan, p. 443.
for this reason that when we wish to make someone understand something, we lay
examples before him, from which he can form phantasms for the purpose of
understanding.\textsuperscript{113}

Thus, in his understanding of the human mind, Thomas Aquinas supports what has
previously been said about the need for pictorial representation in order to understand
complex ideas such as those regarding the spiritual world to which the human eye is not
privy. Applying this to his other teaching regarding the use of certain “instruments” for
the attainment of spiritual understanding, we find that Thomas Aquinas, like
Bonaventure, Gilbert Crispin, and the other Christian writers that have been mentioned
here, considered images as an important tool by which one could visualize the often
perplexing passages of the Bible and to which one could look for spiritual understanding
and meditative contemplation. As a Dominican, Aquinas was closely acquainted with the
ordered life and the call to strive toward spiritual insight; as a scholar who had received a
doctorate in theology from the University of Paris in 1257, he was well versed in the
Church’s teachings regarding pictorial images and in the long-held discussions of how
they impress upon the mind and the soul the truths held in the scriptures. His teachings
lead discerning readers of images to see illustrations as spiritual texts that carry them out
of the realms of the \textit{visio corporealis} and into those of \textit{visio spiritualis} where images
have the potential for scriptural insight and spiritual enlightenment.

\textsuperscript{113} “Dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori
coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata […] Secundo, quia hoc quilibet
in seipso experiri potest, quod quando aliquis conatur aliquid intelligere, format sibi aliqua phantasmata per
modum exemplorum, in quibus quasi inspiciat quod intelligere studet. Et inde est estiam quod quando ali
quam volumes facere aliquid intelligere, proponimus ei exempla, ex quibus sibi phantasmata formare possit
ad intelligendum.” \textit{Summa} Ia, 1ae, Q. 84, art. VII. Translation in Sullivan, p. 449.
2.4 The Beatus Apocalypse Illustrations as Spiritual Guides

In the first chapter of this study I characterise Medieval Iberian culture as “apocalyptic” inasmuch as many Iberian Christians viewed the presence of either Adoptionism or Islam as that of the Antichrist. I also state that the Beatus Apocalypse tradition is a direct product of that culture, for contemporary thought regarding Islam led the religious to contemplate more than ever the last book of the New Testament, with the hopes that Christianity would soon prevail over Islam and thus bring about the establishment of the Celestial Jerusalem on earth. Pilgrims journeyed to Santiago de Compostela, Rome, and Jerusalem as a sign of penitence and also to offer prayers for the crusaders, and in the monasteries the religious prayed for a Christian victory over the Muslims in both Spain and in the Holy Lands. As is evident in the fact that Beatus’s Commentaries on the Apocalypse were copied at least three dozen times from the ninth century to the end of the Middle Ages, the Apocalypse was a topic on the minds of many and preparation for the Final Judgment became a concern in a large number of the monasteries in Northern Iberia and Southern France.

The Apocalypse commentaries held a special importance for the Iberian monasteries not only because of the Reconquista and the Crusades, but also because of the mystic nature of monastic life. Jean Leclercq tells us that monks consider the life of the monastery as “an anticipation of celestial life” and “a real beginning of eternal life”, and that everything done inside the monastery is “judged according to its relationship with the final consummation of the whole of reality.”\textsuperscript{114} The monastery itself becomes a metaphor for the Heavenly Jerusalem in which the activities of the monks – prayer and study –

\textsuperscript{114} Leclercq, \textit{Love}, p. 66.
reflect the *otium quietis* of Paradise. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) had referred to monks as dwellers in Jerusalem (*monachus et Ierosolymita*), defining Jerusalem metaphorically as “those who, in this world, lead the religious life; they imitate, according to their powers, by a virtuous and orderly life, the way of life of the Jerusalem above.”¹¹⁵ This “virtuous and orderly life” reflects the desire to reach the real Heavenly Jerusalem and is, as such, an eschatological form of life as it awaits the end of the imperfect earthly life in anticipation of the perfection of Heaven. This innate quality of monasticism, coupled with the socio-cultural environment of Medieval Iberia, created a unique condition in which the Beatus tradition could flourish.

One way in which the monk prepares himself for life in the Celestial Jerusalem is through the *lectio divina*, which includes the reading of and meditation on the scriptures. Beatus’s *Commentaries*, with its numerous illustrations, served such a purpose. Although Kenneth Steinhauser believes that the third and definitive edition of the *Commentaries* cannot truly be read as *lectio divina*, but rather as polemic against the Adoptionists¹¹⁶, I believe that the inherent quality of the commentary as divine reading is not lacking in the third edition. If anything, the additional illustrations that Beatus ordered placed at the beginning of the text (i.e., those depicting Adam and Eve, the Evangelists, and the Alpha and Omega), along with the additional texts taken from Saint Augustine’s *De civitate*

¹¹⁶ Steinhauser, “Narrative”, p. 186. Steinhauser claims that “Beatus transformed his commentary from contemplative reading into polemical invective without removing any original text or illumination”. He also states that, “The third and final edition of Beatus’s work clearly reflects turmoil of the adoptionist controversy. The *lectio divina* – a pious commentary for monks – is now transformed into a polemical work echoing the content and spirit of *Adversus Elipandum*. Beatus changed the communicative strategy of his commentary without removing any illustrations or text. Instead, he planned and directed extensive literary and artistic additions. The theological position of *Adversus Elipandum* provided the rationale for the third edition” (p. 200).
Dei, Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiarum libri*, and Jerome’s commentary on the book of Daniel, added to the spiritual nature of the text and allowed for a broader range of contemplative material upon which the reader would meditate.

In the preface to the *Commentaries*, Beatus says that the Apocalypse is the summary of the rest of the Bible and the key to understanding it: “Consider this book as the key to the entire library”\(^{117}\). As such, the book of the Apocalypse was to be studied after having read the other books of the Bible and as a way of encapsulating the entire message of Holy Writ into a final summarising vision: for those under the Mozarabic rite, not only did the Apocalypse appear as the final book of the New Testament, but by regulation it was to be read during the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost to prepare the faithful for the Celestial Jerusalem that the Risen Christ of Easter had opened to them. Mireille Mentré points out that “the Apocalypse – Hispanic exegesis has it especially in mind – is directed, as a Revelation that it is, at all Christians, and more particularly to those who make a profession of living here below preparing for Eternity”.\(^{118}\) During the fifty days of public reading of the Apocalypse, all present have the opportunity to hear its message spoken and to apply it to the previous readings of the Lenten season. However, Beatus’s commentaries take this message a step further: they present the Biblical text in its entirety along with commentary from the Church Fathers, but they also have the additional visual text that allows the reader to visualize the written text heard during liturgy and read on the preceding page. Both Beatus and Etherius must have realized that the visualisation of the apocalyptic text allowed clearer access to the spiritual vision of

\(^{117}\) “Omnium tamen librorum theca hunc librum esse claviculam.” Beatus, *Obras Completas*, p. 32.

\(^{118}\) “[...] el Apocalipsis – la exégesis hispánica lo tiene muy especialmente en cuenta – se dirige, como Revelación que es, a todos los cristianos y más particularmente a aquellos que hacen profesión de vivir aquí abajo preparando la Eternidad.” Mentré, *Estilo*, p. 239.
Saint John: as Mentré points out in her study of Mozarabic art, Beatus and Etherius believed Biblical truths to manifest themselves through both intellectual mental activity and direct contact. That is, the student of the text only arrives to the knowledge of the truth through study of the words and the visualization of the story told – a concept very similar to Saint Augustine’s second level of seeing, *visio spiritualis*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Though long, I believe it necessary to quote from pages 239-240 of Mentré’s study regarding this, for it highlights very clearly the ideology of Beatus and Etherius regarding the Commentary’s illustrations: “Nuestras pinturas pudieron tener muy bien como resultado el hacer olvidar lo sensible y ayudar a acceder a la visión espiritual; porque los religiosos, explican Beato y Eterio, deben conocer las realidades bíblicas por el raciocinio y a la vez por el conocimiento directo, y entonces es cuando la verdad se les manifiesta. Ambos autores distinguen claramente esos dos acercamientos complementarios e indispensables a la Escritura, a pesar de no desarrollar retóricamente este punto: *longum est dicere et de manifestationibus* (P.L. 96, 1005). Establecen claramente dos niveles: el racional y el manifestado. Ahora bien, añaden, la condición obligada para que las verdades divinas se manifiesten al hombre es precisamente el emmudecimiento de sus facultades meramente humanas y terrenas: *Facilius ergo Deus videtur, cum secundum Apostolum, exterior homo corrumpitur; et quantum plus corrumpitur de die in diem, tantum plus in agnitione Dei de die in diem renovatur* (P.L. 96, 1012). Este tipo de idea está muy difundido y es muy bien conocido a lo largo de toda la Edad Media, igual que el resto de los argumentos del *Liber de Adoptione Christi Filii Dei* de Beato y Eterio, que resumimos aquí. Mediante esta visión sublime el hombre supera su propia naturaleza humana: *quia qui divina sapient, sine dubio supra homines sunt* (P.L. 96, 1013). Y podemos razonablemente considerar que la elección de colores crudos y de oposiciones chocantes y anti-referenciales entre esos colores no son fenómenos sin conexión con estas especulaciones de los clérigos de la Hispania cristiana. Así queda reducido el riesgo de una visión puramente corporal y terrena, y ello hace posible la captación directa de los misterios de Dios: *Quia sine dubio visio nunc per fidem inchoatur, sed tunc in specie perficitur* (P.L. 96, 1014). Des esta suerte, puede superarse la visión insuficiente, e incluso totalmente falsa, de los ojos carnales: *Credimus videre Deum, non quia videmus per oculos corporis* (P.L. 36, 1012-1013).” (“Our paintings could very well have had as a result that of making one forget the sensitive and to aid access to the spiritual vision; because the religious, as Beatus and Etherius explain, should know Biblical realities through the intellect and at the same time through direct contact; that is when truth is made manifest. Both authors clearly distinguish these two complementary and necessary approaches to the Scriptures, though they do not rhetorically develop this point: *longum est dicere de rationalibus et de manifestationibus* – PL 96, 1005. They clearly establish two levels: the intellectual and the manifest. Now, they add, the necessary condition under which divine truths become manifest to man is precisely the muting of his merely human and worldly faculties: *Facilius ergo Deus videtur, cum secundum Apostolum, exterior homo corrumpitur* – PL 96, 1012. This type of idea is widespread and very well known throughout the Middle Ages, just as with the rest of the arguments from the *Liber de Adoptione Christi Filii Dei* by Beatus and Etherius, which we summarise here. By way of this sublime vision man supercedes his own human nature: *quia qui divina sapient, sine dubio supra homines sunt* – PL 96, 1013. And we can reasonably assume that the selection of raw colours and of clashing oppositions among those colours are not phenomena without connections with these speculations of the clergy of Christian Hispania. In this way the risk of a purely corporal and worldly visualisation is reduced, which makes possible a direct apprehension of the mysteries of God: *Quia sine dubio visio nunc per fidem inchoatur, sed tunc in specie perficitur* – PL 96, 1014. This way one can override the insufficient, and even totally false, vision of the bodily eyes: *Credimus videre Deum, non quia videmus per oculos corporis* – PL 36, 1012-1013.”)
For Saint John, the recollection of his vision in the book of the Apocalypse demonstrates his desire for us as readers to share in the vision and to be transformed by the experience in which he had participated. The monastic reader of the Middle Ages, beholder of the concept of the *lectio divina*, would have read Saint John’s revelations in such a manner, with the intent of imagining in graphic form the narration told in the scriptures. As has already been made clear, the concept of reading as both a physical and a mental activity in the Middle Ages included not just the understanding of written words but also the comprehension of pictorial systems of communication, and the combination of word and image provided a multi-faceted text from which the reader could extract spiritual guidance regarding the Apocalypse through both linguistic description and the embodiment of the divine vision through the illustrations. Suzanne Lewis tells us that “[f]or John of Patmos, as well as for medieval readers and exegetes, spiritual understanding was an act of seeing,”\(^\text{120}\) and that Saint John confides in the reader the visual revelation that he experienced in order to lead Christianity to the keys of the Divine Plan.\(^\text{121}\) For the reader of the vision experience, the illustrations placed alongside the Biblical text serve as a “pictorial itinerary or map, with John ever present as guide, describing the brilliant montage of marvels, miracles, and dangers along the route” toward the Celestial Jerusalem.\(^\text{122}\)

Though some consider the tenth-century monastic artist Magius (illustrator of the Morgan Beatus) as the archipictor of the Beatus illustration tradition, we must look further back in time, for the final version of the *Commentaries* exhibits Beatus’s desire

\(^{120}\) Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 12.

\(^{121}\) Ibid, p. 22.

\(^{122}\) Ibid, p. 33.
for this text to include illustrations. We find such evidence in Beatus’s several direct references to the illustrations that either he or another monk included in the version from 786. The very structure of the Commentaries also leads us to believe that the illustrations are of vital importance to the overall meaning of the book, for they appear directly after the biblical passages and before the exegetical commentary on those passages: Biblical passage – Illustration – Commentary. In other cases, images such as those of Noah’s Ark and the Palm Tree, for example, appear within the commentaries and reference a spiritual teaching that Beatus wishes to make clear for the reader. Because of this structure, I believe the illustrations and the written text to function as dual texts which must be read simultaneously, and to which the commentaries that follow refer. That is, the commentaries explain both written text and pictorial representation. To put this in the words of Steinhauser,

> the unique configuration of text and illumination must be interpreted as a unity. This will reveal the overall program which Beatus designed out of literary and artistic elements. Any separation of text from illumination destroys the intention of the author and clouds the possibility of arriving at a genuine understanding of the original work as Beatus wrote it in 776.\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^3\)

Beatus understood the three levels of vision that Saint Augustine had formulated, and he laid them out for all to understand in his Commentaries. The Apocalypse text is read with the eyes and absorbed into the mind in an abstract manner, through *visio corporealis*. The illustration takes the reader further, allowing him to visualize and, thus, to come to a more complete understanding of the apocalyptic wisdom through *visio*

\(^{123}\) Steinhauser, “Narrative”, p. 192.
spiritualis. Only after reading both linguistic and visual text, as well as Beatus’s commentaries, can the reader be brought to the enlightened preparation needed to face the final truth, which is the visio intellectualis.

Spain of the Middle Ages was a land wrought with religious disunity and political turmoil, which are made manifest in the illustrations of the Beatus Commentaries. Klein, de Palol, and Williams point out in their studies of the Beatus artwork that many references to Islam may be found in the depiction of the Feast of Balthassar, in which the architecture of the scene reminds the reader of the Mosque of Córdoba, as well as in the dress and manner of sitting of the forces of evil depicted in the illustrations. This proves to be very important, for it shows that the illustrators of the Beatus manuscripts perceived Islam as the evil over which Christianity must prevail, and as the adversary of the Apocalypse narration. For the medieval Iberian monk, especially those of the frontier regions, the Beatus illustrations served as a reminder of the message of the Apocalypse and of the monastic life that they had chosen to live; but they also brought the Apocalypse to life in that they visualized for the reader his own perceived reality of the situation in which he lived. For the medieval Iberian monk reading the images of a Beatus Apocalypse, the visio corporealis quickly led to the visio spiritualis in which the monk perceived the truths of the Apocalypse as occurring within his own society. He read in both the written and the pictorial texts the message that called for his preparation for the End, the culmination of human existence in the Final Judgment and life in the Celestial Jerusalem. And he saw, unfolding before the eyes of his contemplative soul, the end of the deceptive forces that plagued his land and the final establishment of the

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124 Klein, “Tradición”; Palol, “Precedentes”; Williams, “Beatus Commentaries”.

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Kingdom of God. Such a vision, though introduced through the physical sight of the illustrations, would have made a deep and lasting impact on the mind and heart of the medieval reader, allowing him to perceive through the eyes of the spirit that which Saint John was allowed to see in visionary form. Thus was the desire of Saint John in recounting that vision, and thus was the desire of Beatus in illustrating his Commentaries.
CHAPTER 3

IMAGE AND NARRATION IN THE GERONA BEATUS
COMMENTARIES ON THE APOCALYPSE

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.  

We have come to the point in this study in which we must now turn to the Gerona manuscript of the Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse. Based on the discussion up to this point, we know that for Medieval Europeans, particularly those from Iberia, the story told in the Book of Revelations was of utmost concern when interpreted in relation to the events taking place within their own time. Because of those events, Beatus and those who copied and illustrated his Commentaries on the Apocalypse saw as their task that of educating the reader in such a way as to teach him of the revelations of Saint John but also to prepare his soul for the impending judgment that was to take place in the near future. This spiritual preparation reached its zenith when the reader effectively combined the written word with the visualizations of the Apocalypse provided in the illustrations and reached a level of understanding that superseded that achieved by reading the written text alone (or, alternately, by looking at the illustrations without the use of the written word). In both this chapter and in chapter four we will analyse more closely the relation

\[125\text{ St. Matthew 24: 29-30.}\]
between the written text of the Apocalypse and the illustrations presented in the Gerona manuscript of the Beatus tradition. This chapter will focus on the narrative structure of the illustrations of the Gerona manuscript, whereas chapter four will consider the interrelationships among the Apocalypse and the extra-apocalyptic illustrations, culminating in a discussion of the spiritual “supernarrative” that the Gerona illustrator created with the combination of the various pictorial sequences taken from both the Old and New Testaments.

Before moving forward, a clarification of terminology should be made for the reader. Following the discussions of narrative structure set forth by Eugene Dorfman, I will use the term “narreme” to refer either to groupings of narrative illustrations or to complex individual illustrations that depict actions or incidents within a closed structure. Though many may be tempted to consider narremes as episodes, I refrain from using that term: based on its use within medieval narrative, the episode often has little relation to the larger narrative framework in which it is found. Jonathan Evans tells us that the “character of the episode […] is such that the absence of a given episode per se disrupts little.”

The Book of Revelations has a unified structure in which actions follow a particular order and characters depend on one another for the completion of the narrative, much like a ritual narrative. Because of this, no part may be extracted without disrupting the narrative sequence of the Apocalypse. Narremes are “central incidents,

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126 “… the incidents, as structural units, may be divided into two main classes: central or core incidents, whose function is to serve as the central focus or core of a larger episode, and marginal incidents, which structure around the core, supporting it and filling out the episode. The structure of a narrative may thus be analysed in two ways: as a larger chain, containing all the incidents, central and marginal, that form the complete story; and as a much smaller chain of functionally central incidents, linked to each other in an organic relationship. By reason of their special function as core incidents in the structure of the narrative, these central units will be called narremes.” Dorfman, Narreme, p. 5.

127 Evans, “Episodes”, p. 32.
linked to each other in an organic relationship” and, thus, vital to the narrative
development of the story. In reference to individual actions that occur within narremes, I
will use Seymour Chatman’s term “kernel.” Following this structure, a series of
kernels narrated together as a narrative whole comprise a narreme, each having its own
beginning and ending, but which cannot be deleted from the apocalyptic narrative
without destroying a part of that larger narrative structure. I will use both of these terms,
narreme and kernel, with reference to both the written and the pictorial texts of the
Gerona Beatus. Let us now enter into that narrative world.

3.1 The Gerona Manuscript

We know from the artists’ colophon on the Omega page at the end of the Gerona
Apocalypse (folio 284r) that this manuscript was completed in 975 by two people known
as Emeterius and Ende (or En), the former a monk and the latter a nun who, according
to Wilhelm Neuss, lived in one of the “double monasteries” (i.e., admitting both males
and females) of Asturias. John Williams, on the other hand, believes the manuscript to
have been produced in León. The colophon reads:

128 Chatman defines kernels as “moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events […] nodes
or hinges in the structure [that] cannot be deleted without destroying the narrative logic.” Chatman, Story
and Discourse, p. 53.
129 Some scholars read this name in the colophon of the Gerona codex as “Ende pintrix”, whereas others
read it as “En depintrix.” In keeping with the more popular of the two among Beatus scholars, I will use
the name “Ende” throughout this study.
130 Neuss, “Miniatures”, p. 49.
131 Refuting claims by Mireille Mentré and Jacques Fontaine that the Gerona manuscript had been produced
in Catalonia, Williams argues that the script of the manuscript is Visigothic miniscule, which had already
been replaced by the end of the tenth century with Caroline in the Carolingian regions of the peninsula (i.e.,
Catalonia). Williams further supports his claims of the Leonese patronage: “Another indication that it was
written in León is the commendation of Fredenando Flaginiz in the colophon […] Although no scriptorium
is designated, Senior and Emeterius were named in the colophon of the Tábara Beatus and it is reasonable
to assign Girona to the same scriptorium. The vellum was prepared in a manner similar to that in the

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Presbyter Senior wrote it, Abbot Domenicus had the book made, Ende painter and servant of God, Emeterius monk and presbyter. The book was successfully completed on Friday, 6 July. In those days Fredenando Flaginiz was at Villas, the Toledan town, fighting the Moors. The year was 975.132

Emeterius had been a student of Magius, the painter of the Pierpont-Morgan Beatus, and in 970 was called to the monastery of Tábara to complete another Beatus begun by Magius and left incomplete at his death two years earlier.133 Nothing is known of Ende except for her presence in the monastery as co-artist of the Gerona manuscript and her title of “Dei aiutrix” as stated in the colophon. Though scholars have tried to distinguish between the illuminations painted by Emeterius and those of Ende, such attempts have proven futile: with the exception of the illustrations of the Book of Daniel, which appear to be copies of earlier illustrations, the remaining Gerona illuminations exhibit no characteristics that may be linked positively to either Emeterius or Ende.

As with a great many manuscripts from the Middle Ages, the exact history of the Gerona Beatus is unknown to us. Marqués Casanovas points out that it must have arrived in Gerona at some point in the central years of the eleventh century: by order of a will dated October 6, 1078, the manuscript, among other books, was donated to the cathedral Tábara Beatus […] Although the participation of Ende suggests that Tábara was a monastery housing both monks and nuns, there is no corroborating evidence.” Williams, The Illustrated Beatus II, p. 51. 132 “Senior presbiter scripsit, D(omi)nicus abba fieri preceptit, Ende pintrix et D(e)i aiutrix, fr(a)t(e)r Emeterius et pr(e)bite(r). Inveni portum volumine VIa F IIa n(o) a s iulias. In is diebus erat Fredenando Flaginiz a Villas toleta civitas ad devellando Mauritania. Discurrenta era millesima XIII.” English translation by John Williams. Williams points out that “in 975 July 6 fell on Tuesday rather than on Friday as stated here.” Williams, The Illustrated Beatus, p. 51.

133 Evidence for this comes from his own handwriting in the colophon of the Tábara manuscript, where he states “Tribus mensis incurviur sedit et cum omni sua membra calamum conquastus fuit”, and in the accompanying depiction of himself seated in the tower of the monastery of Tábara he has written “Ubi Emeterius Prsbr fatigatus sine salus.” (Transcribed by Menéndez Pidal in “Mozárabes y Asturianos”, p. 204.) One should note the emotive language used here to describe the work of the illuminator – he sits in such a position that his body, hunched over the worktable, becomes curved and pained, resulting in deep fatigue and “lack of health.”
by the *caput scholarum* (headmaster of the cathedral school).\textsuperscript{134} Since then, it was rebound by the orders of Bishop Guillermo Ramón Boil in 1512, and has remained housed at the Cathedral of Gerona. Because of its artistic detail and its uniqueness among the Beatus Apocalypse manuscripts, it has recently become the object of interest among scholars of Mozarabic artistic production.

The Gerona manuscript is made up of 284 folios measuring 400x260 mm each, with a total of 144 illuminations (114 illustrations, and the remainder composed of genealogical tables and decorative images). Both sides of the folios are used: some contain only written script of the commentaries (written in two columns of thirty-eight lines), while others contain both script and illumination. In the case of the latter, the combination of script and illustration on the same page is presented in an arbitrary manner: the illustration may take up part of one of the columns, the lower half of the page, or the upper half. A small number of illuminations cover the entire side of a folio, and an even smaller number cover two consecutive pages.\textsuperscript{135} The script of the Gerona Beatus is Visigothic/Mozarabic, which Marín Martínez defines as a slightly evolved form of the Roman miniscule script used in Spain from the seventh through the twelfth centuries.\textsuperscript{136}

The Gerona manuscript comes to us from the most industrious period of Beatus manuscript production, the tenth century. As I have pointed out, we know the Beatus tradition because of the fame of the illuminations contained in the various copies. These illuminations make up, perhaps, the most brilliant and varied of the illuminated...
manuscript families of Medieval Europe, for the oldest of the extant illustrated manuscripts is from the ninth century, while the most recent was produced in the thirteenth.\textsuperscript{137} Thus, the artistic styles span from the Mozarabic of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries to the Romanic of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the Gothic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Likewise, the extant manuscripts originate from as far west in the Iberian Peninsula as Lorvão in present-day Portugal, across the entirety of the northern kingdoms of the peninsula to the eastern Iberian town of Ripoll, as well as from Saint-Sever in France and from Central Italy. One of the most distinguishing characteristics that unify the illuminated manuscripts is the narrative quality of the illustrations. Regardless of the time or of the place in which the manuscripts were produced, the Beatus illustrations exhibit a vivacity of emotion and movement on the part of their characters, which shows the artists’ intent to create a visual narrative that parallels the textual narrative of Revelations and that visualises for the reader the experience that Saint John underwent on the Greek island of Patmos.

Because of its artistic complexity and the additional images that do not appear in other copies of the Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse, the Gerona manuscript is special among those of its family. Not only did Emeterius and Ende create a visual narrative that reflects the spatial relations, the speech acts, the movement and actions that

\textsuperscript{137} I refer the reader to Appendix A for a comparative list of the illustrated Beatus manuscripts. There are other manuscripts from as recent as the sixteenth century, but which lack illuminations.
make up Saint John’s vision, but they generated a new form of narrative that I choose to refer to as a “supernarrative” – a text comprised of many smaller interrelated texts that function symbiotically in both a metatextual and a genotextual manner.138

3.2 Decorative Illumination in the Gerona Beatus Manuscript

Before analysing the illustrations of the Gerona Apocalypse, we must first distinguish between the two types of images that we find therein. Of the 144 illuminations in the Gerona Apocalypse, 114 are to be considered as narrative illustrations: they depict for the reader either the actions that take place as part of the apocalyptic vision described in Revelations, or particular scenes from the Old Testament book of Daniel and the New Testament Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life. The remainder lack narrative quality when taken individually and serve either as decoration or as

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138 As with any metatext, the Gerona Beatus (indeed, all of the Beatus manuscripts) is a commentary on another text. Thus, it serves as a didactic tool that aids the reader in understanding the Book of Revelations. Beatus’s written commentary on Revelations, coupled with the emotive function of the illuminations (both apocalyptic and extra-apocalyptic) create what Julia Kristeva refers to as a phenotext (that which is bound by communicative structure) that allows the reader to experience, or at least to come into contact with, the genotext (the “unconscious energy” or, in the case of the Beatus manuscripts, the spiritual drive that informs the creation of the illustrated commentaries). I refer the reader to chapter 1 of Julia Kristeva’s Revolution in Poetic Language. In a beautifully written paragraph that closes the manuscript, Beatus lays the groundwork for the metatextual study of his Commentaries: “In the same manner, distributed by sections following the order of the dozen books, this is a codex of many books and is a book of only one volume; and it is called a codex because of the symbolism of the bark of trees and vines, similar to the trunk of a tree that holds up various books, like branches […] The leaves of the books are called such either because of their similarity to the leaves of trees or because books are made of “bellows”, that is, of skins that are normally taken from sheep once they have been sacrificed, whose faces are called pages, because they are assembled one with the other.” (Ita duodenario ordine librorum incisione distincto, codex multorum librorum est et liber est unius voluminis; et dictus codex per translationem a corticibus arborum seu vitium, quasi caudex, quod ex se multitudinem librorum, quasi ramorum contineat […] Foliæ autem librorum appellatae sive ex similitudine foliorum arborum seu qua ex follibus fiunt, id est, ex pellibus, quibus occisis pecoribus detrahi solent, cuibus partespaginate dicuntur, eo quod sibi invicem conpinguntur.”) Obras Completas, pp. 660-662.
symbolic tools for the development of the supernarrative (to be discussed in chapter 4). For the ease of the reader, I will use the term “illustration” with reference to narrative images, and “illumination” to those of non-narrative character.

Though the purely decorative illuminations in the Gerona manuscript are not the main focus of this study, we cannot simply disregard them. From almost the beginning of manuscript production in the Early Middle Ages to the beginning of computerized large-scale printing in the twentieth century, decorative illuminations have comprised an important part of the making of manuscripts and have even become a topic of much interest in the field of art history.\textsuperscript{139} With regards to the Beatus manuscripts, numerous are the studies that have analysed artistic influences from outside the Iberian Peninsula on the decorative motifs of the Commentaries, the uses of such motifs, and the evolution of a purely Iberian form of decorative and margin illuminations.\textsuperscript{140} Indeed, the twenty-six illustrated Beatus manuscripts provide scholars of illumination studies with a wide range of artistic motifs that allow us to analyse the evolution of the Hispanic style of manuscript decoration from the early tenth century to the thirteenth, a period of heightened manuscript production throughout Europe in general. Even more intriguing is the fact that

in the 150 years that span from approximately 940 to 1090, there are no less than eighteen examples of this work dedicated to the Apocalypse, while in the same period of time other Holy Writings, both the Bible proper and the Evangelists, for example, are relatively rare.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{139} I refer the reader especially to the works of Jonathan J. G. Alexander and Michael Camille for information and bibliography related to decorative illuminations of medieval manuscripts.
\textsuperscript{140} The most important of these studies have been carried out by José Camón Aznar, Mireille Mentré, Joaquín Yarza Luaces, John Williams, John Beckwith, Xavier Barral, J. Ainaud de Lasarte, and J. Guilmain. We find in these studies great evidence for the belief in both Celtic and North African influence on manuscript art in Spain of the Middle Ages.
\textsuperscript{141} [...] en los ciento cincuenta años que van del 940 al 1090, aproximadamente, se cuentan no menos de dieciocho ejemplares de esta obra dedicada al Apocalipsis, mientras que en el mismo lapso de tiempo los
Not only is the Apocalypse the most illuminated book of the Bible during this time, but the Beatus manuscripts, for the most part, carry the names of the copyist and the illustrator, the locations of their production, and the year in which they were finished. This is, as Stierlin points out\textsuperscript{142}, much more information than what we have for many other manuscripts of the same time period for which whose data must be guessed based on script, illumination type, and the raw materials used in the manuscript composition. Because of this, we are able to track artistic trends of both decorative illumination and narrative illustrations over time and geographic space much more easily than with other medieval manuscript families.

The most common of the decorative illuminations found in the Gerona Beatus are the initial letters. After twenty folios of images that trace the lineage of Christ, the life of Christ, the map of the world, and other illustrations, the Commentaries begin on page 20\textsuperscript{v} with an illuminated box surrounded by birds and plant-life in which is printed with colourful capital letters, “IN NOMINE DOMINI NOSTRI IHESU CHRISTI INCIPIT LIBER REVELATIONIS IOANIS DOMINI NOSTRI IHESU CHRISTI.” This is the most detailed of the calligraphic illuminations, as the large opening letter, I, is composed of interlacing latticework out of which grows a system of vines and upon which rest three birds. Upon inspection of this opening letter, we find that it is not only the first letter of the first word of the opening script (“IN”), but that the artist intended the reader to view it also as a stand from which a tapestry or a flag (i.e., the text box) would hang: from the upper level of the letter extends a horizontal bar from which the text box seems to hang.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p. 171.
and upon which sit three more birds. Below the text box tapestry is the ground from which two small trees grow and upon which sit two more birds, while a third bird rests in the tree to the right side. The artist painted this initial statement in an appropriate manner, for flags and standards were often used in the Middle Ages as a means of signalling the entrance of an important person or group, or of pointing out the main entrance to important buildings or homes. Thus, this opening statement makes clear for the reader, both linguistically and graphically, that he is leaving the worldly realm in which he lives and entering that of the spiritual, that of “OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

Despite its largeness and secondary function of standard-bearer, this initial I is no different from the other decorative letters found throughout the Gerona manuscript. As a general rule each division of the written text (the text of the Apocalypse and the subsequent commentaries) begins with an ornamental letter as a means of visually cuing the reader to those divisions. Camón Aznar describes these initial letters as “[p]atterns of interlacings of basketwork of complicated interweaving” whose “forms are adapted to the structure of the letters” and which are “monotonous” since “the formula is always the same.” Decorative filler for these letters, if used, may consist of animals (see the A of folio 94r, for example), plant-life (folio 154v), decorative swirls and geometric figures (folios 170r and 223v), or simply contrasting colours (folio 209r). In several studies of letter decoration in Medieval Iberian manuscripts, Guilmain points out that this form of illumination was not particular to Iberia, but arrived by way of Franco-Irish influence in the centuries preceding those of the Beatus tradition. He explains that “the venerable iconographic traditions of Christological and reconquest symbolism, and Carolingian art

143 Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 122.
as well as Early Christian models [...] provided the foundation upon which tenth-century Spanish manuscript illuminators built these large adorned letters, using the repertory of northern design and interlace decoration as major building blocks.\textsuperscript{144} Though the decorative letters of the Beatus manuscripts are not dissimilar in shape or style to those of other manuscripts from other parts of the Christian West of the same time period, we should not consider them as non-Iberian: as most art historians and architects agree, those visual manifestations of Iberian artwork that we today classify as Mozarabic or even Romanesque share features with art forms from other parts of Europe, but also exhibit a profound presence of Arabian influence. Such may be seen in the contrasting use of colours that adorn many of the illuminating figures or in the geometric designs particular of Arabian art and architecture in which the Celtic lacework appears in the manuscripts.

\textbf{3.3 Narrative Illustrations in the Gerona Beatus}

The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to an analysis of a selection of the narrative illustrations of the Gerona Beatus Apocalypse. The study will not focus on the “material” elements of the illustrations (i.e., explanations of colour patterns or of particular designs and motifs that have little or nothing to do with the narratological quality of the illustration), though these will be mentioned when necessary as a means of describing the narrative characteristics of the illustrations. The narratological elements that will be analysed in this chapter are spatial use, speech acts, and movement. Since the

\textsuperscript{144} Guilmain, “Northern Influences”, pp. 75-76. Other studies in which this scholar examines the letter decoration of the Beatus manuscripts include “Zoomorphic Decoration and the Problem of Sources of Mozarabic Illumination.” \textit{Speculum} XXXV (1960), 17-38; “Interlace Decoration and the Influence of the North on Mozarabic Illumination.” \textit{The Art Bulletin} XLII (1960), 212; and “Observations on Some Early Interlace Initials and Frame Ornaments in Mozarabic Manuscripts of León-Castile.” \textit{Scriptorium} XV (1961), 24.
illustrators of the manuscript intended to provide a faithful graphic representation of the written text of the Apocalypse, these narratological elements will be discussed in relation to both the written and the visual texts to which they apply. This will bring us to a clearer understanding of how word and image form a symbiotic union in the Gerona manuscript, which, in turn, will lead us to a more patent comprehension of the “supernarrative” that will be discussed in the fourth chapter. The one narratological element that will not be discussed with great emphasis in this chapter is time: dream and vision narratives do not submit to the temporal structures that other types of narratives exhibit. Though the narremes of the Apocalypse occur in a pre-ordained chronological fashion, there exists, as Susan Lewis states,

> a contradiction, even an antagonism, between the form-generating principle of the whole and the temporal form of its separate parts. Each image strains toward fulfilling its potential within a megastructure shaped by the kinetic drive of the allegorical action. Dominated by the otherworldly vertical axis of the dream-vision, narrated events violate elementary temporal relationships and perspectives.\(^{145}\)

As we shall see in chapter 4, time as a narrative element in the Gerona Beatus illustrations is a function not only of the Apocalypse illustrations but also of the inclusion of the Old Testament and Gospel illustrations. The illustrators of the manuscript included illustrations from the Book of Genesis, the Book of Daniel, the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life, and the Book of Revelations enclosed within the opening symbol of the Cross of Oviedo and the closing Omega as a means of graphically representing the human inability to comprehend Celestial Time. Since the events of the Apocalypse, as the culmination of all of the events of the Bible, take place in visionary Celestial Time, on the synchronic vertical axis of the temporally incalculable, time may only be studied in

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\(^{145}\) Lewis, *Reading Images*, p. 51.
an allegorical manner, as a series of diachronic narrative events that, paradoxically, occur synchronically. We will return to this point in the next chapter. For now, let us turn to the organization of space and setting in the Gerona illustrations.

3.3.1 Spatial Organization of the Gerona Apocalypse Illustrations

The spectator of the Gerona illustrations (indeed, of any of the illustrated Beatus texts) will note immediately two specific artistic characteristics: the presence of decorative frames around some illustrations but not around others, and the horizontal division of some framed illustrations into anywhere from two to five interconnected sections. With regards to the first, the general rule of all Beatus manuscripts is to place scenes of the Apocalypse inside of framed boundaries, but to leave other illustrations (those from the Books of Genesis or Daniel, for example) frameless, as if floating in the blank spaces of the page. Each segment contains a background shaded with a colour that contrasts with the others and in which the apocalyptic characters act and interact in accordance with the Biblical passage depicted. In some illustrations, the artists employed the framed divisions as a means by which to repeat figures with the intent of depicting a large number of people. In other cases, the divisions refer to the spatial territories of Heaven, the Cosmos, Earth, and Hell. However, the divisions of an illustration never reflect an artistic intent to show actions separate from one another narratologically; that is, illustrations never combine narremes, but depict the collective events of one narreme or, more specifically, individual kernels from a narreme.

Though one might be tempted to believe that the central division of the illustration depicts the central or most important element of the illustration, we must shy
away from such thoughts. Likewise, one might think that this visual separation within
the illustration implies vertical perspective or rank of importance of the personages
depicted, but again we cannot make such assumptions. As Mireille Mentré points out,
framed illustrations depict “distinct happenings that follow one another within the same
storia, which implies a continuous development in duration, a stretch of time that
constitutes a closed unity.”146 As a result, there is no pre-established spatial pattern that
individual illustrations follow in the development of that narrative: each illustration
reflects the narrative characteristics of the specific narreme that it depicts, as well as the
artistic desires of the particular artist who created it. As would be expected, narremes in
which the Celestial comes into contact with the earthly are depicted with the heavenly in
the upper segments and the human in the lower segments; however, the presence of a
segmented illustration does not prefigure this dichotomy. Because many of the
segmented illustrations represent distinct kernels within the same narreme, the reader’s
perspective must remain unchanged when viewing each part of the illustration. Referring
to this same idea, Mentré claims that in any given illustration from the Beatus tradition,
the spectator must not take a vertical perspective (that is, reading the illustration from top
to bottom or as a human character looking to the heavens of the upper segment of the
illustration), but rather place himself before each element of the illustration in a direct
manner:

One of the characteristics that also seems very important and specific is the fact
that, in a given image, each of the elements represented in it are presented in such

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146 “[…]acontecimientos distintos [que] se siguen unos a otros dentro de una misma storia, lo que implica
un desarrollo continuo en la duración, un especie de tramo de tiempo que constituye un conjunto cerrado.”
Mentré, Estilo, p. 175.
a way as to force the eye to situate itself each time at exactly the same level as said element.\textsuperscript{147}

However, Mentré goes on to state that this lack of vertical perspective places the objects or characters depicted in direct union with the spectator and, in doing so, removes all cohesion from the illustration and causes a fragmented vision of the scene. The only cohesion that the illustration may claim, says Mentré, is “more at the level of concepts than of tangible realities; the representation is, above all, more a tool for comprehension and reflection than a verisimilar place of a real scene.”\textsuperscript{148}

Though I do agree that the Beatus illustrations, as described by Mentré, force the reader to take a horizontally direct perspective with relation to the illustrations, I do not believe that this perspective subtracts from the narrative cohesion that, in my opinion, the artists intended as a fundamental characteristic of their productions. Keeping in mind the discussion presented in chapter two regarding the visualization of the Apocalypse as an instrument of direct contemplation of and preparation for the Final Judgment, this horizontal frontal perspective provides a more easily understood text in which the reader is allowed to perceive the apocalyptic narrative in its entirety without narrator-enforced point of view. For the medieval reader of the Beatus Apocalypse, the representation before his eyes depicted the reality of contemporary thought regarding the end, both in its conceptual and its realistic form. For this reason the images are presented within decorative frames: the enclosed format symbolically and narratologically links the images presented within its boundaries as pertaining to the same narreme, just as the elements of

\textsuperscript{147} “Una de las características que también nos parece muy importante y específica es el hecho de que, en una imagen determinada, se ofrezca a la vista cada uno de los elementos representados en ella como si el ojo se situase cada vez exactamente al mismo nivel que dicho elemento.” Mentré, \textit{Estilo}, p. 165.

\textsuperscript{148} “[...] a nivel de conceptos más que de realidades tangibles; la representación es ante todo un soporte para la comprensión y la reflexión, más que un lugar verosímil de una escena real.” Mentré, \textit{Estilo}, p. 165.
a framed story within a written narrative are conjoined by their very presence within the narrative framework. Let us now turn from this abstract discussion of perspective and space to a more concrete analysis of three Gerona illustrations.

3.3.1a The Enthroned Christ (folio 107r, Revelations 4: 1-5)

And that voice which I had heard before, like the sound of a trumpet that spoke to me, said, ‘Come up here, for I am going to show you what must happen later.’ And I was carried there in spirit. I saw a throne in the heavens with someone sitting on it. He who sat there had the aspect of jasper and sardonyx. A rainbow with aspect of emerald surrounded the throne. I saw twenty-four thrones around that throne, upon which were seated twenty-four elders in white robes and golden crowns upon their heads. From the central throne emanated lightening, loud voices, and thunder. In front of the throne burned seven lamps, which are the seven Spirits of God. Facing the throne there was a transparent sea similar to crystal.\(^{149}\)

As a common characteristic of the Beatus illustrations, scenes of either God or Jesus enthroned in Heaven appear within circular frames, often at the top of an illustration or, in the case of this example from the Gerona manuscript, in the centre of the more elaborate scene placed within a rectangular frame. The illustrator represented these verses within four distinct spaces: the lower region in which Saint John has prostrated himself below the feet of twelve of the elders, the circular region in which Christ sits upon his throne, the yellowed region to each side of Christ’s throne, and the upper region in which the remaining twelve elders sit. The placement of the characters and the open space in the illustration reflects various factors that the illustrator

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necessarily took into consideration as he or she prepared the scene. Of primary importance is the description given by Saint John, which the illustrators evidently intended to depict as faithfully as possible. However, we know that most medieval manuscripts were the creation of not just one, but at least two distinct people: the copyist and the illustrator. In most cases, the former copied the text from one that had been borrowed from another monastery, leaving blank spaces in which the illustrator would later insert illustrations. Though Beatus’s text makes direct reference to certain illustrations, the various manuscripts of the Beatus tradition contain different numbers of illustrations that correspond to the copyists’ (not necessarily Beatus’s) desires for what should be included in the graphic representations. Emeterius and Ende based the structure of their illustrations on the space provided to them. Instead of creating a rounded illustration for the depiction of this vision, which would seem the most appropriate due to the narration’s description of the twenty-four elders seated around the enthroned Christ, the illustrators chose to represent the scene in such a way as to fill out the blank space with which they were provided. Because of the dimensions of the page, depicting a circular scene would have left a great amount of emptiness around the edges of the page, and the elders would have been reduced to much smaller figures than they are in the actual illustration. Likewise, scenes of the enthroned Christ held much importance for the monastic reader, as well as within the Apocalypse narrative, and reducing the scene to smaller-than-necessary depiction may have been considered a great dishonour. Thus, in order to provide an altered, yet still faithful, representation of the verses, while also working with the physical space provided for the illustration, Emeterius and Ende obviously felt compelled to restructure the scene to fit into a rectangular frame.
As a judge, Christ is depicted holding in his left hand a book toward which he points with his right hand. Though the scripture says nothing about the book itself, tradition holds that the enthroned Christ always grasps the Book of the Life in which the deeds of all have been written – He is, after all, the Great Judge of the Final Judgment. As Jesus draws the spectator’s attention to the book with this gesture, the twenty-four elders do the same with their own deictic gesture in which they point toward Jesus as the centre of the visionary scene. Saint John lies prostrate at the bottom of the illustration, with the eyes of his spirit set on that toward which the elders point. It is in the central region surrounding the throne of Christ that the artists chose to depict the thunder, lightening, and voices that emanate from the throne itself, according to the scripture. Though arrows representing the lightening fill the region to the left and the right of the throne, the artists evidently found no way to represent graphically the aural phenomena of thunder and voices. For this reason, the legend surrounding the throne’s halo states that, “From the throne proceed thunder and voices” (*De trono procedunt fulgura et voces*). Above the red lightening-arrows hang the seven lamps, representative of the seven Spirits of God: though the scripture does not claim that the lightening originates in these seven lamps, their placement at the top of the central band, as well as their likeness in colour to the lamps, gives the appearance of their having such derivation. Though we cannot assume that this was the intent of the illustrators, we likewise cannot rule it out as a possibility.

Though not the central focus of the scene, probably the most interesting aspect of the use of space in this illustration is the presence of Saint John. As has already been pointed out, he lies at the bottom at the illustration, with eyes closed, as if in a state of
quiet rest. In his description of the vision, John says that his spirit, not his physical body, was taken into the Heaven to presence Christ and the twenty-four elders. Giving special attention to this statement, Emeterius and Ende depict Saint John in the true state of physical absence but spiritual presence: though they placed him below the feet of the elders of the lower horizontal band, we must not consider John as physically present in the scene, for the legend written next to his head states that “Here John went before the throne in spirit” (Ubi Joannes fuit in spū ante tronum). It is important that John be depicted at the bottom of the illustration, for in the scripture text God’s voice calls him to “come up here”, which he does graphically by ways of the dove painted to Christ’s right side. Based on the scene of Jesus’ baptism in the third chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, in which the spirit of God descends on Christ in the form of a dove, this bird has long symbolized in Christian art the spirit, be it that of a human or of a celestial being such as God. Mindful of this, the illustrators embodied Saint John’s spirit in the form of a dove that flies from his mouth toward the right hand of Christ: one should notice that from John’s mouth proceeds a wavy white line that leads the spectator’s eyes from the bottom of the illustration where the visionary lies, through the lower group of elders, to the centre of the painting where Christ sits in glory. This is a very subtle artistic manoeuvre that creates an equally impressive effect on the viewer, for it links the physical space of Saint John’s world to the celestial visionary space of Christ in His magnificence. The artists exhibit a preoccupation with showing Saint John as the instrument through which the visionary experience takes place, for it is through his spiritual eyes represented by the dove that we as spectators are enabled to participate in the apocalyptic narrative as he expresses it in the scriptures.
3.3.1b The Sixth Seal (folio 131v, Revelations 6:12-17)

I continued watching when the Sixth Seal was opened and a great earthquake took place: the sun turned as black as sackcloth and the entire moon as red as blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth in the same way that unripe figs fall when the tree is blown by a heavy wind. The sky was opened like a rolled scroll, and all the mountains and islands were moved from their places; the kings of the earth, the magistrates, the military officers, the rich, and all, both slave and free, hid in the caves and among the crags of the mountains. And they all said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall upon us and hide us from the sight of Him who is seated on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb. For the great day of their anger has come, and who can withstand it?\textsuperscript{150}

In the illustration of Jesus and the elders we saw that earthly space and heavenly space were linked by way of the dove that represented John’s spirit having ascended to the realm of the divine. That realm composes the entirety of the illustration except for the extreme lower segment where we see John lying in ecstasy. The illustration of the Sixth Seal likewise presents a scene in which both Heaven and Earth come into contact within the framed visual narreme; here, however, the earthly figures do not represent a physical presence as did Saint John in the previous illustration, but are visionary images contained within the revelation itself. Whereas in the previous illustration the wavy line that connects Saint John to the vision of Christ brings together the two realms of the holy vision and the physically mundane, the artists created five separate spaces in the illustration of the Sixth Seal, all related because of their presence within the narrative structure of the narreme but distinctly separate one from the other in the illustration.

In this scene, which Camón Aznar believes to be of “imposing simplicity”, there are two main happenings that the eyes focus on: the appearance of God in Majesty at the top of the illustration, and the taking cover of the men in the lower section. This, of course, represents the interaction of the divine space of Heaven with that of Earth. As has already been pointed out, the Celestial realms in the Beatus illustrations are customarily depicted within circular frames. In this illustration two angels (labelled cerubin and serafin), grasping the circular frame of Heaven (Tronus Domini), pull back on the celestial borders, opening to the eyes of those below the sight of God on His throne. Though Mireille Mentré and José Camón Aznar believe that these angels simply give visual physical support to the circular frame of Heaven, thus adding a decorative dimension to the illustration, I believe them to play a much more important role: the two angelic beings have been charged with rolling back the sky and exposing all to the sight of God. The text says that “the sky was opened like a rolled scroll”, and that those below cry out for the mountains to protect them from the “sight of Him who is seated on the throne.” Emeterius and Ende exhibit in all of their illustrations the desire to depict the realism of the scriptures as they are presented textually, and the problem of representing the sky as a scroll being opened finds its solution in the cherubim and the seraphim. With uplifted wings and grasping opposite edges of the frame, the two angels seem to fly in contrary directions with the intent of parting the skies and exposing the Divine Throne.

The lower of the four horizontal bands represents Earth, as it is the depicted space of the mountains and the men mentioned in the scripture, and the space toward which the stars of the second horizontal band fall. Written in the open spaces between the

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151 Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 144.
mountains and the stars falling among them is the legend “Ubi omnes dicebunt,” “Ubi stelle ceciderunt in terra,” and “Montibus cadete sup nos et collibus cooperite nos.”

Though mis-proportioned when compared to the tree-covered mountains behind them, the fourteen men sitting in the foreground of the lower horizontal segment reflect through their postures and facial expressions the despair that they articulate in the written text of the scriptures. Some appear to be sitting below the mountains, whereas others have taken a kneeling or a lying posture, their faces resting in their hands. These bodily positions achieve two artistic effects: they reflect the textual description of the men crouching within the crevices of the mountains, assuming physically lowered positions, as a means of protecting themselves from the wrath of God; they also provide a means by which the space may be used to reflect graphically the multitudes. Alternating sitting, kneeling, and reclining figures allows for a more efficient use of the artistic space while also presenting the desired visual effect of multiplicity of people.

In the central region of the illustration, the artists have painted two more horizontal regions. In the upper of the two are the Quatuor Seniores and the lower halves of the bodies of the cherubim and seraphim. The lower of the two bands contains the remainder of the stars that have yet to fall to the Earth, as well as the darkened sun (Hic sol obscuravitur) and the blood-coloured moon (et luna in sanguine versa est). This coupling of horizontal bands in the centre of the illustration represents the region in which the divine meets the corporeal: the upper of the two contains celestial beings that have their origin in the heavenly court, whereas to the lower of the two pertain the sun, moon and stars, the physical creations of the Book of Genesis. This division of the

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152 “Here men call out,” “Here stars fall to the earth,” and “Mountains, fall upon us and, hills, cover us over,” respectively.
firmament into two regions corresponds to the arguments of the early exegetes related to the shape and location of Heaven, summarized in Books XII and XIII of Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* and in the second book of his *De Genesi ad litteram*. In the former, Augustine gives a very heart-felt discussion of the Creation, praising God for the various designs of His labours, but describes Heaven as a “canopy of skins above us” which, in the Apocalypse, will be “folded up like a scroll”. He goes on to explain that above the earthly firmament there are other celestial levels in which live the “peoples of your city, your angels […] they gaze upon your face and there, without the aid of syllables inscribed in time, they read what your eternal will decrees.” In the latter of the two books, Augustine argues from a more objective point of view that the various theories regarding the shape of Heaven all point to one generalized spherical vault that covers the skies of the physical universe and in the centre of which lies Earth. This vault is Heaven itself in which the celestial beings live “uncorrupted” by the earthly beings below. With the opening of the Sixth Seal of the Apocalypse, however, the cherubim and the seraphim open that vault, and the two firmaments of Heaven and Earth are united. The corrupted below must face the divine above, while separating the two are the darkened sun, bloody moon and the falling stars, all representations of the darkening of the physical light upon which humankind depends and the arrival of the new celestial light to which all must submit, shown in the cowering postures of the figures at the bottom of the illustration.

154 Ibid., p. 322.
And I saw another powerful angel, who came from the sky wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow around his head, his face like the sun, and his legs like columns of fire. In his hand he carried an open book. He placed his right foot over the sea and the left over land and screamed with a strong voice, like that of the lion’s roar. And when he screamed, his voice was heard in seven thunders. Hardly had the seven thunders made his voice heard when I started to write it down, but I heard a voice from the heavens say, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.’ Then the angel whom I had seen over the sea and the land raised his right hand to the sky and swore by the one who lives forever and ever, Amen, He who created the heavens and all that is in it, the earth and all that is on it, ‘There will be no more delay. On the day that you hear the seventh angel blow his trumpet, the Mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he had promised to his prophets.’ The voice that I had heard from the heavens spoke to me once again and said, ‘Go, take the open book from the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and the land.’ I went to the angel and told him to give me the book. He said, ‘Take it and eat it. It will sour your stomach but will taste as sweet as honey in your mouth.’ When I ate it, it turned my stomach sour. Then he said to me, ‘You must prophesy again about many people, languages, nations and kings.’ Then a measuring rod that looked like a staff was given to me, and the angel stood up, saying to me, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar and those who worship in it. But do not measure the atrium that is outside of the temple, for it has been given over to the Gentiles so that they may walk upon the Holy City, and they will do so for forty-two months.’

This complicated passage from the Book of Revelations is met with an equally complex illustration in the Gerona Beatus. Because of the appearance of Saint John three times within the narrative frame of the illustration, and the division of the action into three distinct spaces, the illustration embodies what Lew Andrews calls a continuous or polyscenic narrative: that is, “a number of actions occurring at different moments but involving the same characters are presented together in a single unified space.”

Whereas the apocalyptic narrative relates three major events in this passage – Saint John receiving the book from the angel, his receiving the measuring rod from either the same or another angel, and his measuring of the interior of the temple – the illustration exhibits the desire of the illustrators to depict those actions as a unified whole. Instead of dividing the three actions into three smaller illustrations, as is the case with other multi-kernel narremes, Emeterius and Ende created an artistically intricate single illustration in which all three of the events take place. Interestingly, however, without having read the text of the Apocalypse first, the spectator may not guess that the three figures representing Saint John actually do so: in each kernel, the visionary is dressed in a different manner, and the halo representing his sanctity is also of a contrasting colour each time. This takes us back to the discussions in chapter two regarding the reading of images and the correlation between the linguistic and the pictorial texts. An understanding of this illustration in particular depends on a comprehension of the above-quoted text: not only does the inconsistency of Saint John’s depiction cause confusion, but the spatial arrangement of

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156 Though Franz Wickoff had already used this term in his study Die Wiener Genesis, his definition seems too limiting as far as spatial unity of an artwork is concerned. Andrew’s definition is more general and thus, encompasses many more works of art that Wickoff’s definition would have excluded. See the introductory chapter to his Story and Space in Renaissance Art: the Rebirth of Continuous Narrative (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) for a detailed discussion of this term and its application to Medieval and Early Modern art.
the three kernels may also lead to misunderstanding. Indeed, according to Camón Aznar, of the Beatus illustrations of this passage, that of the Gerona manuscript “has the most complicated structure and the most brilliant colour.” In generic form, the three kernels take the arrangement as seen on page 109.

The first narrative space of the passage, marked as “1” in the diagram, depicts the descent of the angel from whom Saint John takes the book that he must later eat. Though the written text describes the angel as having a “face like the sun” and “legs like columns of fire”, as well as presenting the narrator with thunderous voices, the illustration fails to show such detail. The angel that descends from the heavens (represented as the semicircular band of stars and clouds at the top of the illustration) arrives inside of a blue cloud, looking to the celestial regions above his head and even pointing to them as a means of linking the book that he passes to the narrator to the realm of the divine. The same angel, as described in the text, places his right foot on the sea and his left foot on land, which Emeterius and Ende depicted in an ingenious manner: the lack of physical space in which to paint the scenes in all of their complexity must have presented some difficulty for the artists, but the flow of the sea up the left margin of the illustration and its sharp turn towards the land provides an effective use of the space in which the setting as described for kernel 1 is provided in a visually impressive way that also functions as a frame for the action depicted in kernel 3. In the place where the sea meets the land, the angel, facing Saint John, has been painted in such a manner as to appear walking on a beach – there is a small darkened area in which the land seems to have been soaked by the water of the sea, and it is in this place that the angels legs are separated and his feet

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157 Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 150.
placed on the opposing topographies. Because of its metaphorical interpretation, the visualization of this scene does not present the seven thunders or Saint John actually eating the book: Beatus tells us in his commentaries on this passage that the seven thunders represent the seven churches (which, as a group, represent the one Church); the act of eating the book represents the acquisition of Biblical knowledge, which, according to Beatus, is as sweet as honey for those who understand the scripture and love God, but sours the stomachs of those who stand in need of repentance. Thus, this kernel, replete with sensual imagery and making nearly three-fourths of the text, is presented as nothing more than a simple exchange between the angel and Saint John.

Figure 3.1 Graphic Organization of Illustration on Folio 161v
Kernel 2 takes place within the realms of the sector marked as such in the diagram, though the illustration itself makes no such division. As has been mentioned, the clothing worn by Saint John in this illustration changes with each kernel, and the reader finds himself forced to refer either to the written text of the scriptures or to the legends placed within the illustration for aid in interpreting what has been laid before the eyes (Ubi Johannes angelo arundinem accepit). As the legend points out, kernel 2 depicts Saint John receiving from the angel the rod with which he has been ordered to measure the temple. The text does not state that this second is the same as the first, yet it does not state the contrary either; the illustration exhibits that ambiguity. In the same manner that Saint John takes on newly fashioned vestments in the second kernel, so too does the angel (who, interestingly, also experiences a change in wing colour). Though the space of the second kernel is not separated from that of the first by a physical border, John’s having turned in the opposite direction points to a change in and progression of action: if we are to read the illustration from left to right, with Saint John as the protagonist of all three kernels, then his looking to the left side of the illustration in kernel 1 would point to the beginning of the narreme’s story. Likewise, his turning in order to walk toward the right side of the illustration (depicted in his left foot flat on the ground while his right foot is angled in a walking position) and to interact with the second angelic being indicates a progression of action in both time and space. This action on John’s part, as well as the presence of the legend between his two representations within the same horizontal segment, denotes a change of space.
Saint John appears for the third time in kernel 3 of this illustration, again with altered vestments and a different halo. In this scene he uses the rod given to him in the second scene to measure the interior of the temple, while seven worshipers with upraised hands look on. Because of the task that Saint John has been ordered to carry out, the temple comprises the major part of the space designated for this scene. John stands before an altar holding the staff upwards in order to measure the height of the horseshoe arch under which he stands, above which the artists painted a patchwork of brown, yellow and blue squares that seem to be held together by criss-crossed threads. Though the illustration only depicts John measuring the height of the temple, we know through the text that he is also to measure the altar and the people inside. Beatus explains in his commentary that this scene, like the voice commanding John to eat the book, pertains to the domain of allegory: the measuring rod represents the measure of one’s faith, and John’s task is to prove that the Church (both its deeds and its people) is the storehouse of faith. Because the outer atria of the temple belong to the Gentiles and are not part of the sancta sactorum, they cannot be measured (for one cannot measure the faith of an unbeliever) and, consequently, do not appear in the illustration.

3.3.1d General Conclusions Regarding Spatial Use in the Gerona Beatus

With regards to space and how Emeterius and Ende organized it within the pictorial narrative of the Apocalypse, we have only seen three examples. However, these three give a very clear idea as to how narrative space is used in the Gerona manuscript. The most obvious characteristic of the illustrations that we have seen in each of the three presented here (and which is a generalized feature of the Beatus illustrations, be they of
the Gerona manuscript or not) are the horizontal bands that make up the background. In some cases, these bands separate one topographic region from another (as in the illustration of the opening of the Sixth Seal), whereas in other cases they simply add depth of colour (as in we see in the illustration of Christ sitting in the midst of the twenty-four elders). Likewise, another general trait of the Beatus illustrations is the depiction of Heaven within a circular frame. In each of the three illustrations that we have seen in this section, Heaven is presented in circular fashion: in folio 107r Christ sits in Glory in the centre of a circle around which sit the twenty-four elders; at the top of folio 131v God sits inside of a circular Heaven whose borders are expanded by the flying angels; and in folio 161v the angel descends from a circular region in order to deliver the book to Saint John.

Regarding use of the physical space of the illustrations, we have seen three very different organizational structures, which is indicative of the variety of ways in which space may be used in the pictorial narrative of the Gerona Beatus. In the narreme of Jesus and the elders, we see the desire to create a three-dimensional planar scene on the vertical space of the page: in his vision narrative, Saint John describes Jesus as sitting in the centre with the twenty-four elders placed around Him, with seven lamps and a crystal sea before Him. The description suggests a circular setting in which Jesus’ physical placement might be of higher vertical status in relation to the elders, though the artists do not depict the narreme in this way because of the one-dimensionality of the page. Instead, they reorganized the narrative space in such a way as to place some elders at the top of the page and others at the bottom, leaving Jesus in the centre and thus creating the illusion of a circle. Depicting the horizontal plane on the vertical space of the page resulted problematic for Emeterius and Ende, and we see in this illustration precisely how
they overcame this difficulty. Because the narreme is made up primarily of description
of setting, lacking action on the part of any of the characters, the entire scene gives
nothing more than a depiction of that description in a manner that efficiently
encompasses all aspects of the setting as described by Saint John.

The other two illustrations present a more dramatic use of the space in which they
are depicted. The depiction of the narreme of the Sixth Seal necessarily presents action
in two separate locations, Heaven and Earth, for the heavens are opened for those below
to look upon God on His throne. In this case, unlike in the previous illustration, the
artists would have had little difficulty: the scene takes place on the vertical plane in
which Heaven is depicted above and Earth below, with the stars falling toward the lower
regions of the picture. This illustration, as differentiated from the other two that have
been discussed, exhibits a desire for realism through the use of space in which the
depicted scene reflects the snapshot effect of a photograph: we have a representation of
angels in flight, of God looking upon the people, of the people taking shelter, of stars
falling; but that representation takes the form of a still shot in which the artists have
shown the various movements as if suspended in mid-act. Though highly embellished,
the scene presented reflects for the spectator the absorption into one space of the frightful
realism of this narreme. Unlike the first illustration, in which voices and thunder cannot
be visibly represented, and the third, which is divided into several narrative spaces, this
second illustration shows a use of space that reflects the unified narreme as it exists in the
written text.
The third illustration, that of Saint John receiving the book and the measuring rod, presents its narreme not in a photographic manner but more in the fashion of a moving picture. As I have already explained, the artists present three distinct spaces within this illustration, in which Saint John moves and interacts with other characters of the narreme. Because of the complexity of this particular narreme, with the necessity of depicting sea and land, as well as a book, a staff, a temple, and worshipers, the artists again were forced to organize the space provided to them in such a way as to show with as much realism as possible the various actions that take place. To do so, they chose a theatrical mode in which Saint John would advance from one kernel to the next within the same illustration, thus guiding the spectator along the way through his own actions. The narration begins in the upper left corner of the illustration and advances toward the right in order to end at the bottom of the page, thus reflecting the Western standard of reading from left to right and from top to bottom. For Dagobert Frey, a Gothic painting “rolls off, as it were, like a film before the observer, except that the successive pictorial impressions do not depend upon the mechanical movement of the film, but upon the intellectual movement of the view.”

With these three illustrations we see that the artists did not depend on a standard spatial organization for the illustrations that they provided. Each illustration reflects the artistic necessities presented by the particular narremes depicted, thus forcing the artists to organize the space in such a way as to reflect in the most logical manner that which is presented in the written text. Though the Beatus illustrations in general present horizontal bands of varied colours, these do not always correspond to changes in

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narrative space and do not automatically reflect vertical strata (Heaven and Earth, for example). Within illustrative space the artists may reproduce a single scene with characters in a position of stasis, or they may embody the passage of time through the repetition of characters and the depiction of various narrative spaces within the same illustration. In this fashion, the Gerona Apocalypse illustrations mirror the spatial organization of the various narremes of Saint John’s vision.

3.3.2 Speech Acts in the Gerona Apocalypse Illustrations

Though the previous section mainly treats the use of space within the narrative framework of the Gerona Apocalypse illustrations, I did make a few passing remarks regarding the theatricality of the scene; that is, the interaction that takes place among the various characters of the narreme depicted on the page. In the present section we will explore this interaction in a more detailed manner, focusing on the presentation of speech acts within the illustrations. As we saw in the narreme of Christ and the twenty-four elders, voice is an important element of the Apocalypse narration: in that particular illustration voice is represented in the written legends that encircle the throne of Christ, but in other illustrations the artists employ bodily gestures or other visual cues as a means of representing speech. To borrow the term of Mieke Bal, speech in the Gerona illustrations often finds its representation in “speaking hands.” The most obvious cases of “speaking hands” are to be found in the six illustrations of the angels and the Evangelists at the beginning of the manuscript (folios 4v, 5r, 5v, 6r, 6v, and 7r), in which

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159 Theatricality refers to the interaction of characters within a painted scene, whether it be through speech or through movement. Michael Fried coins this term in his book Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (Berkeley: U of California, 1980).

Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are given books and told to evangelise the world. As one will notice, there are no written legends within the pictorial frames of those illustrations: a seated figure hands a book to the four Evangelists with one hand while pointing toward the world with the other hand. The illustrations of the Apocalypse, as differentiated from those of the Evangelists, will for the most part exhibit this “speaking hands” gesture but will accompany that movement with a written legend in which the visual reader finds the words spoken by the gesticulator. This, of course, relates the illustrations to later (Gothic) paintings in which artists represented speech acts through gesture and text scrolls, as well as modern comic strips in which text scrolls have been replaced by speech bubbles. Let us begin our analysis of speech acts in the Gerona manuscript with the first of the actual Apocalypse illustrations, that of the delivery of the Book of Revelations to Saint John found on folio 31v.

3.3.2a The Delivery of the Book to Saint John (folio 31v, Revelations 1:1-6)

Revelation of Jesus Christ, to whom it was given by God in order that he reveal to his servants what must come to pass very soon. And he sent his angel to make it known to his servant John, who gives testimony of all that he saw: the Word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ. Happy are they who read and who listen to the words of this prophecy and who heed its message, because the time is near. John, to the Seven Churches of Asia: grace and peace to you from God, He who is, who was, and who is to come; and from the Seven Spirits that stand before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the Prince of the kings of earth. To Him who loves us, who has washed us from our sins with His blood, and who has made of us a kingdom of priests for His God and Father, be the glory forever and ever. Amen.\(^{161}\)

\(^{161}\) “Apocalypsis Iesu Christi, quam dedit illi Deus palam facere servis suis, quae oportet fieri cito. Et significavit mittens per angelum suum servo suo Ioanni, qui testimonium perhibuit verbo Dei, et testimonium Iesu Christi, quaecumque vidit. Beatus qui legit, et qui audit verba prophetiae huius, et servat ea quae in ea scripta sunt. Tempus enim prope est. Ioannes septem ecclesiis, quae sunt in Asia. Gratia vobis et pax a Deo, qui est, et qui erat, et qui venturus est: et a septem spiritibus qui in conspectu throni eius sunt, et a Iesu Christo, qui est testis fidelis, primogenitus mortuorum, et princeps regum terrae. Qui dilexit
The first six verses of the Book of Revelation present the reader with an opening prologue in which praise is given to God and to Jesus, the faithful are exhorted to heed to the message that they are about to read, and a brief history of how the book came about is given. It is, in its basic structural form, the narration of speech acts – one between Jesus and the angel, the other between the angel and Saint John. Emeterius and Ende recognized this and chose as the focus of their illustration these two verbal exchanges. The illustration is, consequently, divided into two horizontal fields, each representing the narrative space of the speech acts.

In the upper section of the illustration we find Jesus sitting upon his throne, with two cushions below his feet and an angel both before him and to his back. What is striking about the three characters is that each has assumed a posture in which their right hands are raised in a deictic manner (though the artist has painted Jesus’ right hand in the shape of the left). Jesus, from his throne, looks with tilted head toward the right of the illustration to the angel standing at that side of the scene, with all five fingers extended in what would seem to be a salutary gesture. Both angels face Jesus with their hands outstretched, one extending the index and little finger, while the other puts forth elongated index, middle, and little fingers. The text of this narreme provides for one angel, as Jesus must pass the revelatory message to him in order for John to receive it. But there are two angels present (which is the case in all extant examples of this illustration), which no one has sufficiently explained. John Williams claims that “[i]n the interest of dignity and symmetry, a second, unmentioned angel stands behind Christ’s

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thron" 162; and Antoni Cagigós Soro says that this second angel is “unnecessary” and that
some have even claimed him to be the “guardian of the throne of God.” 163 With all
respect to both Professor Williams and Father Cagigós, I disagree with the view that this
angel does nothing more than provide symmetrical unity and lacks necessity: before Jesus
can turn the revelatory message over to the angel, God must give it to him. Beatus
reminds us that the word angel means “messenger” 164, which in the illustration could
represent the original message given to Jesus by God. The angel has his hand raised in an
act of speech, just as Jesus and the other angel do, showing that he participates in the
narrative in the same manner as do the other two characters. The fact that he and Christ
do not exhibit theatrical interaction does not exclude this angel from participation in the
scene; it simply points out which of the two actions was the more important to the artists,
that of Jesus relating the revelation to his messenger.

With his head tilted toward the second angel, his face graven with seriousness,
and his “talking hand” extended before him, Jesus proclaims the revelation that God has
previously imparted upon him. That is, the entire book that will come alive in picture
form before the spectator is told through this one gesture to the angel, who must repeat it
to John on the island of Patmos. Because of this, we may interpret the same gesture as a
command in which Jesus sends forth the angel to make the revelation known to Saint
John. Thus Jesus’ extension of his hand serves a two-fold purpose: it signals both the
beginning of the speech act by inviting the angel to come close and to listen; yet it also
indicates the end of his discourse by pointing toward the path that the angel must take to

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162 Williams, Morgan, p. 171.
163 Cagigós Soro, La Seu d’Urgell, p. 74.
164 “Angelus enim latine nuncios dicitur.” Commentaries I, Obras Completas, p. 112.
fulfil his part of the revelatory responsibility. Likewise, the angel extends his hand in an act of acceptance, both of the invitation to listen and of the order to report what he has heard. The two figures’ gestures thus compliment and find their completion in one another: Jesus gives the revelation over to the angel through an act of “speaking hands”, and the angel in the same manner metaphorically accepts it into his hands in order to carry it to the visionary John. Interestingly, the other angel, standing behind the throne of Christ, witnesses the exchange.

In the lower half of the illustration, marked by the legend that states “Ubi primum Johannes cum angelo locutus est” (Here John first speaks with the angel), we once again see the “talking hands” gesture. In this part of the illustration the angel who previously received the revelation from Christ gives it to Saint John, as another mysterious figure looks on. Unlike in the first kernel in which the unmentioned figure extends his hand in deictic gesture, the unmentioned one of the second kernel simply stands with one hand to his side and the other holding the front of his robe, in an position of stasis. John Williams refers to this figure as an “unspecified retainer”\(^\text{165}\) while Cagigós (speaking of the Urgell manuscript in which the figure appears without a halo) claims that he is “one of John’s companions” or that he represents “the addressee of the Book of Revelations” – us.\(^\text{166}\) In the Gerona illustration, as differentiated from those of both the Urgell and the Magius manuscripts, this figure does carry a cruciform halo, which shows the belief of the artists that he must be of holy character. Neuss believes this figure to be Christ himself, the

\(^\text{165}\) Williams, *Morgan*, p. 171.
\(^\text{166}\) Cagigós Soro, *La Seu d’Urgell*, p. 74.
witness of John’s reception of the revelation\textsuperscript{167}, but no one has sufficiently explained why this figure is present. Regardless of why he appears, his only action within the picture frame is that of intently watching what takes place before his eyes.

In his right hand the angel carries a book that represents the Word of God, the revelation charged to him for deliverance to John. With his left hand the angel signals to John with the same gesture that he had used in the previous scene with Jesus: the index, middle, and small fingers extended, with the fourth finger and the thumb curved inward. Likewise, John extends his arm in a pointing fashion toward the angel. As in the first kernel of this narreme, these gestures may be interpreted in two ways: 1) the angel gains the attention of John through one speech act, to which the visionary responds with another speech act, represented in his gesture of recognition; 2) the angel’s commissioning of John to take the revelation contained in the book that he is about to receive out to the seven churches of Asia mentioned in the narreme, and John’s subsequent acceptance of this responsibility depicted in his extended hand ready to grasp the book. In both cases, the hand gestures represent speech acts in which a message is both given and received.

While hand gestures may seem common accompaniments to spoken language, a reading of this illustration alone does not convey the notion that the figures represented are actually in a theatrical state of parlance. The illustration must be accompanied by the written text for the spectator to understand this. Even more, the dialogue that takes place between the enthroned Christ and the angels in the first scene and between the angel and John in the second scene, though possibly understood as such at first glance, lacks

\textsuperscript{167} Neuss, \textit{Apokalypse}. (Missing pagination).
substance without the linguistic text to support it. The second scene presents a legend which states that John enters into conversation with the angel, but the first scene does not offer such information. Therefore, the unknowing spectator would remain dumbfounded as to the action that he witnesses in this illustration without the aid of the linguistic text.

3.3.2b The Message to the Seven Churches (folios 70v, 71r, 76r, 85r, 89v, 94r, 100v; Revelations 2-3)\(^\text{168}\)

Outside of the six illustrations of the Evangelists at the beginning of the manuscript, the best examples of “speaking hands” are to be found in the illustrations of the deliverance of John’s letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (though the depiction of the church at Pergamum has been lost). Each of these illustrations presents Saint John carrying a book in one hand, which is to be handed over to an angel that represents, as Beatus explains in his long exegesis of this narreme, one of the Seven Spirits that, taken en masse, embody the Holy Spirit. That is, John is ordered to deliver the book in which he has written the revelation he has experienced to each of the churches that, in his time, made up the entirety of Christendom. The delivery of this book takes place pictorially alongside elaborately designed churches that sit on top of mountains, have trees growing next to them, or birds resting atop them. Because of their abstract nature, the letters

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\(^{168}\) Because of the great length of this passage (two chapters from the Book of Revelations), it will not be written out here. These two chapters list the letters that Saint John is to write to each of the Seven Churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. As is pointed out in a footnote to this passage in the Catholic Bible (see footnote 1 above for bibliographical information), these letters take the following narrative structure: address, description of the exalted Christ, blame and/or praise for the church addressed, threat and/or admonition, final exhortation and promise to all Christians.
themselves, spelled out in the written text, do not take pictorial form in the illustrations, for their messages do not represent visual images but abstract ideas that would have presented great difficulty for the artists of such realistic depiction.\footnote{Williams, Morgan, p. 175.}

In two of the illustrations representing the Seven Churches the angels with whom Saint John speaks are in flight as he approaches them. In the other four, the angels assume either a standing posture or appear to be in walking motion toward the visionary. All of them present both John and the angels with uplifted hands in a pose representative of the speech acts that we have seen already in the bestowing of the message upon John. However, in these illustrations, this speech act gesture does not always take the same physical structure: though arms and hands may be raised to indicate dialogue, their positions and forms vary from one illustration to another. At the same time, the legend present in the first of this series of illustrations (\textit{Ubi Johannes loquisit cum angelo}) is reduced in the second (\textit{Johannes cum angelo}) and completely disappears in the following scenes. The narrative repetition of John’s discourse with the angels of the Seven Churches allows for the lack of necessity of the legends in all illustrations after the first of the series. Though the legend is repeated in shortened form in the second illustration, it is done so unnecessarily.

In each of the illustrations, John holds in one of his hands the book in which he has written the revelations given to him. In four of them he holds the book in his right hand, whereas the other two depict him with the book in his left hand (though the illustration of folio 94r is somewhat ambiguous as to whether his right hand should be considered a gesture of speech or if he uses it to support the book that he holds in his
other hand). Likewise, in each of the illustrations except for that of folio 94r the angel with whom Saint John speaks holds at least one, if not both, of his hands in a posture denoting speech (that of folio 94r depicts the angel holding an object in his left hand, while his right hand hangs to his side with the fingers curled inward). Interestingly, the angels of three of the illustrations also hold objects in one of their hands: that of the church of Ephesus (folio 76r) holds in his left hand a club, representative of the persecution and punishment that those of this church have endured in their first years, and about which Beatus speaks at great length in his commentary; sitting on the roof of the church at Sardis (folio 89v), the angel extends a lamp above the head of John, symbol of the light with which those of this church are to keep watch for the coming of Christ, who will come like a thief in the night for those who do not do so; and the angel of the church of Philadelphia (folio 94r) suspends a strangely-shaped Key of David with which he has been given to the power to open or close the doors of the spirit to anyone within his domain. We know these objects to be metaphorical representations of more abstract ideas, but as Meyer Schapiro points out, medieval artists submitted to the habit of “representing metaphors in the text as if they were simply descriptive terms.”

The combination of the objects held by the three angels, the book held by Saint John, and the actual text from which the illustrations were inspired lead the visual reader to an understanding of the speech act enacted by the visionary and the angels. As with the last illustration, a complete comprehension of the illustrations would be impossible without the parallel linguistic text to which they are linked. Each of the churches represents not only the Seven Spirits of the Church that have spread out across the land,

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but also the Seven Sins, and John’s handing over of the book as well as his physical
gesture of pointing either to the book or to the church in the background shows the
artists’ intent at visual verbalization of what John orders the angel to do with the written
revelation that the particular churches receive from him. John, as messenger of the
revelation, instructs through his “speaking hands” that which he is mandated at the
beginning of each kernel of the narreme: Angelo Pergami ecclesiae scribe, Angelo Sardis
ecclesiae scribe, etc. In like manner, the angels of each illustration, through their
upturned hands and pointing fingers, exhibit the acceptance of John’s message, both
verbally and physically. As messengers themselves, the angels’ manual gestures also
point to their deliverance of the letters to the churches that they represent, thus
embodying the formula used at the end of each scriptural segment that states that qui
habet aures, audiat quid spiritus dicat ecclesiis (“let he who has ears hear what the spirit
says to the church”).

3.3.3 Representations of Movement in the Gerona Apocalypse Illustrations

Suzanne Lewis tells us that the visualization of a text on an illustrated page is not
so much a “record of speech but the visual representation of the thought-through
argument.”171 That is, for the spectator of the illustrations, the images presented do not
always represent the actions in the chronological sequence of the written text, but often
follow a logic of their own in accordance with the artists’ understanding of the argument.
At the same time we must also remember that the artists of many illuminated texts (those
of the Beatus manuscripts, for example) were faced with limiting their works to the space

171 Lewis, Reading Images, p. 41.
provided for them by the copyists, meaning that the depiction of that thought-through argument often has its organization based on the restrictive qualities of the pictorial frame. Movement, then, must be portrayed in such a way as to make clear that a character is in a state of motion, not stasis, and that the action undertaken by that character is plainly understood. Mark Schapiro has studied this narrative quality of illustrations in manuscripts from other parts of non-Iberian Medieval Europe, and has come to following generalized conclusions regarding what he calls the “theme of state” and the “theme of action”:

1) The change from a frontal to a profile position may reflect a medieval preoccupation with movement and action in the illustration. The actors move in a common space of their own and are attentive to each other without confronting the viewer of the image as in a theme of state.\(^\text{172}\)

2) The face in profile represents the grammatical “he” or “she” in the midst of action. The face turned outward represents the grammatical “I” in speech, with the viewer as its complementary “you.” This figure grasps our gaze and holds it as we move our eyes from left to right on the page.\(^\text{173}\)

3) Profile is the theme of action, whereas full frontal view is the theme of state. Examples of each would be the Virgin Mary enthroned with Christ on her lap, looking out at the spectator (theme of state), and the Magi looking toward the two in profile (theme of action).\(^\text{174}\)

\(^\text{172}\) Schapiro, *Words and Pictures*, p. 29.
\(^\text{174}\) Ibid., p. 41.
Though each artist represents the specific details of actions in often very disparate manners, depending on the artistic tendencies of his time and geographic region, as well as his own perception of the linguistic text and abilities to depict it, we will find that these characteristics laid out by Schapiro hold true for the Beatus illustrations. Let us now turn to Emeterius and Ende’s work, focussing not only on the themes of state and action but also on those specific details that point to the types of actions undertaken by the various characters of the narrative of the Apocalypse.

3.3.3a The Opening of the Four Seals (folio 126r, Revelations 6:1-8)

And I was watching when I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven seals. I heard the first of the four creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come and look.’ There was a white horse, and he who rode it carried a bow. He was given a crown, and he went out as a conqueror in order to continue conquering. When he opened the second seal, I heard the second creature say, ‘Come and look.’ Then another horse, this one red, appeared. He who rode it was allowed to take all peace away from the earth in order that people would kill one another; and he was given a large sword. When the third seal was opened, I heard the third creature say, ‘Come and look.’ There was a black horse, and he who rode it carried a balance in his hand. And I heard a voice from among the four creatures say, ‘A litre of wheat for a coin, three litres of barley for a coin, but do not harm the oil and the wine.’ When the fourth seal was opened, I heard the voice of the third creature say, ‘Come and look.’ There was a pallid horse, and he who rode it was called Death; Hell followed him. He was given power over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, with hunger, with death, and with the beasts of the earth.\(^{175}\)

This narreme relates the opening of the first four seals, which the Apocalypse reader will recognize from the fifth chapter of *Revelations* as those that pretext the book of the secrets of God’s salvation. The chapter relates how each of the four seals is broken: with the first a warrior carrying an arrow and riding a white horse comes forth; the second seal brings forth a rose coloured horse whose rider carries a large sword and is given the task of taking peace away from the earth; with the breaking of the third seal there arrives a black horse whose rider carries a scale and who represents, for Beatus, social injustice; and the last horse, of pale colour, arrives with the opening of the fourth seal, its rider representing death and followed by a diabolical creature representative of Hell. Thus, this narreme consists of six main characters who act, though they do not interact, in a manner of allegorical importance for the rest of the apocalyptic narration: the lamb, the four horsemen, and the representation of Hell that follows the fourth horseman. Interestingly, in the Gerona illustration, Emeterius and Ende added an extra eight figures representing the four Evangelists and the four-fold repeated figure of Saint John.

At the top of the illustration, inside of the celestial circle symbolic of Heaven, is the Lamb mentioned at the beginning of the narreme. Shown in profile, the Lamb represents the state of action as described by Schapiro above, and, as the scripture states, he has the task of breaking the Seven Seals. In the illustration the Lamb carries with his front left hoof a cross, while with the right he grasps an object in the shape of a padlock that represents the seals to be broken. Saint John does not tell us more in the written text of this narreme than that the Lamb acts in any other manner except to open the seals. Because of this, the Lamb’s depiction in this illustration takes a very simple and straight-
forward form: the profile representation implies his movement, and the presence of the

cross and of the lock shows the type of action that he undertakes as symbol of Christ and

carer of the locked seals from which the horsemen emerge.

These latter are the main focus of the narreme, though in the Gerona illustration

ty share the central spaces with the Evangelists and Saint John. Though the horses and

tire riders are arranged from top to bottom and left to right in the order in which they are

introduced in the text, three of the four horses face the left side of the page as if in

movement that goes against the natural flow of the narrative; the third, black, horse faces

the right side of the page and seems to be walking toward the final, white, horse.

Logically, however, for the horses to follow one another off of the page in the order in

which they are presented by the text, they must face (and, therefore, trot toward) the left

side of the page. Following this line of reasoning, the black horse has taken the wrong

path and gallops in the opposite direction from the other horses. If the other three horses

were presented visually facing the right side of the page, the visual reader would be

forced to begin the narration on the opposite side from what is normal for Western

readers. It seems natural to believe that the horses should face, and walk in the direction

of, the line of narrative sequence; because they must “exit” the page so that the remaining

horses can enter and follow the same line, this cannot be the case. Or can it? If each of

the horsemen is to be seen as a separate element of the narrative that appears and

disappears as the narrative progresses, then it should not make a difference in which

direction they face. Spatially the artists did not separate the horsemen one from another

through the use of framed sections, but that must not hinder us from viewing each of the

horsemen as pertaining to his own kernel of the narreme. If we consider that the lack of
perspective in these works forces the spectator to face each of the events presented as a separate element of the much larger illustration, then there should be no problem understanding the narrative quality of each element and perceiving the narratological link that joins them. Thus, the actions of each horseman were conceived by the artists as individual happenings that, because of their narratological association within the same narreme, became elements of the same illustration.

The written text of this narreme does not describe the horsemen as actually performing any specific actions: they simply appear as the riders of the horses, carrying the objects symbolic of the roles they will play in the remainder of the apocalyptic narrative. However, the illustration of folio 126r presents them seated in profile and with upraised arms – they do not simply carry the objects that the text mentions, but they appear to make use of them in a theatrical manner. The first horseman, for example, has raised his bow high into the air in a posture that would indicate his readiness to shoot (though he lacks an arrow). He is the conqueror who has come to continue conquering, and his upraised bow exhibits this desire to maintain the act that he has been sent to perform. Likewise, the second horseman has raised his weapon, which the text presents as a sword but that the artists changed to a spear. As his horse gallops forward, he takes hold of the reins with one hand, leans back to give himself leverage, and takes aim at the target toward which he obviously plans to hurl his weapon. The third and fourth horsemen, unlike the first two, do not carry weapons: the third carries a set of scales upon which he weighs wheat and barley (a reference, according to Beatus, to the tyrannical economic measures of the Roman emperors who raised prices of food products and in doing so brought about famine); and the fourth arrives empty-handed but guiding a hairy
winged creature that Beatus refers to, in Book IV of his *Commentaries*, as the Antichrist that lives within the Church. Both figures, like the first two, sit atop their respective horses in a position of profile, the first holding his scales high for all to see, and the second looking backward at the beast while pointing forward in a manner suggestive of the speech acts that we have previously discussed. In all cases the horses exhibit a forward movement by the raising and lowering of their legs and heads, and in three cases the riders grasp the reins in an attempt to control the horses’ movements.

While the figures of the horsemen exhibit artistic eloquence in depiction of action, those of Saint John and the four Evangelists show an even more pronounced attempt at movement. Above the heads of each of the horsemen Emeterius and Ende present the four Evangelists, symbolized by the creatures that the second-century bishop Saint Ireneus of Lyon established in his writings against heretics, leading Saint John to the scene of the breaking of the seal and the emergence of the horsemen. Each of the evangelistic creatures takes hold of Saint John as they lift him and carry him off on the wind represented below their feet. Their upraised wings, the outstretched arms of two of them, and their tilted diagonal stance also suggest movement through space. On the same token, Saint John has been depicted with knees bent backward and upper body leaning toward the direction in which the evangelist pulls him, again suggesting flight. Though the text presents each of the evangelistic creatures as screaming with thunderous voices, we have no representation of that in this illustration. However, the presence of the

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176 In his tetramorph model, described in the *Adversus Haereses*, St. Ireneus links Saint Luke to the bull, Saint John to the eagle, Saint Mark to the lion, and Saint Matthew to the winged man. I refer the reader to Father Felix Just, S. J.’s website entitled *Electronic New Testament Educational Resources* (http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/) for a comprehensive discussion of this topic. These figures are obviously linked to the four creatures of the dream found in the Old Testament book of Daniel.
creatures and their firm grasp on Saint John as they take flight, along with the “speaking hands” gesture of Saints Matthew and Mark, give the impression that the reader of both the text and the image would find the implied vocal command within the actions undertaken by the represented figures. Their presence also creates a pictorial narrative divided into four main sections, not counting the celestial sphere at the top: I have already mentioned that each of the horsemen represents its own narratological unit within the depicted narreme, but to them we must now add the Evangelists and Saint John. The visionary’s fourfold presence divides the illustration into four sections that may now be separated one from another without regard to either the chronological presentation of the figures or the lack of a divisionary frame. Suzanne Lewis describes Saint John as the ever-present guide who takes us with him along the visionary path toward the Celestial Jerusalem¹⁷⁷, which implies that his presence as spectator to a particular scene implicates us as spectators of the same scene. This said, the Gerona illustration of the Four Seals must be considered as a narrative sequence of four separate scenes in which Saint John acts as a guide for the spectator who must distinguish one scene from the other while at the same time considering them as a narrative whole.

3.3.3b The Destruction of Jerusalem (folio 166r, Revelations 11:7-10)

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that will come from the abyss will make war on them, will conquer them and will kill them. Their bodies will be thrown to the plaza of the great city, which in a spiritual sense is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was also crucified. And people from the villages, tribes, languages and nations will contemplate their bodies for three and

¹⁷⁷ Lewis, Reading Images, p. 33.
a half days, which will not be buried. The people of the earth will rejoice because of them, hold great banquets, and exchange gifts because these two prophets had tormented them.\textsuperscript{178}

This narreme speaks of the two unnamed prophets, supposed by Beatus to be Elias and Enoch, who will be attacked by the Antichrist and killed, thus bringing about the feasts of those on earth who had been troubled by their preaching. As John Williams points out as characteristic of the Beatus of Magius, and which we see also in the Urgell manuscript and that of Gerona, the illustrators preferred to ignore the \textit{storia}, or the Biblical text, in favour of the \textit{explanatio} provided by Beatus.\textsuperscript{179} The legend above the upper portion of the illustration reads \textit{Antixps civitatem Hierusalem subertit} (“Antichrist knocks down the city of Jerusalem”), and that of the lower segment states that \textit{Eliam et Enoc occident} (“Elias and Enoch decapitated”). The first inscription refers not to the Antichrist himself, but to the forces of the Antichrist who destroy the city, as Jesus had already proclaimed in Luke 21:24 – \textit{Erit Ierusalem conculcata usquedam compleantur tempora gentium}.\textsuperscript{180} The reader of the illustration, then, must not depend on the literal text of the Apocalypse for an understanding of this illustration, but instead refer to the commentaries provided by Beatus. This does not necessarily mean that the illustration lacks the faithful depiction of the text as the artists aim to provide: the illustration in fact provides a true representation of the narreme as theologians would have understood it, in its allegorical form (Beatus explains that the city destroyed in the first scene represents


\textsuperscript{179} Williams, \textit{Morgan}, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{180} “And Jerusalem will be trampled upon until the time of the Gentiles comes to completion.”
the Church and that those inside are the true witnesses, which in Greek means martyr –
hoc sunt duo testes, id est, Ecclesia duobus Testamentis prophetans. Qui sunt enim testes
Domini, nisi christiani? Qui graece dicuntur martyres). The lower segment of the
illustration depicts the beheading of the two prophets by those same forces of Antichrist.
Like the other illustration of the four horsemen released after the breaking of the seals,
this illustration presents scenes that must be taken as individual kernels of the narreme.
In the first, the prophets preach to the people who have no desire to listen, thus suffering
humiliation and attacks on the Church that they wish to defend and build. In the second,
the prophets, again representative of the teaching spirit of the Church, suffer martyrdom
because of their actions. The two kernels link together to form a unified narreme that,
textually and theologically, cannot be separated one from the other.

Of the Gerona illustrations of the Apocalypse, this one contains some of the most
interesting examples of movement, for both scenes depict a “ferocious destructive attack
of very expressive violence”\(^{181}\) in which victims express through their postures actions of
supplication, and attackers prove aggressively hostile in their advances. The attackers in
both pictorial kernels carry protective shields at their sides and raise weapons of various
kinds that can be used either against the city walls or against the people depicted inside.
In the upper scene two men work diligently at removing stones from the outer walls of
the city, with bended knees to show the might of their thrusts as they dig their
instruments into the rock and mortar, causing multicoloured bricks to crumble to the
ground. The accompanying men look on, also with bent knees to show their possible
help in advancing on the city walls to get to those inside. Looking through the door to

\(^{181}\) Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 152.
the city, below the battlements we see five men crouched and looking in different
directions as the walls come down around them. They appear to be in a state of stasis,
but a close look will prove that their bodies are turned on the diagonal, and their heads
are turned in such a manner that they are looking either to the right or to the left of the
scene. Two have hands raised in an act of speech, which may also be interpreted as the
manual gesture of blessing. By the sombre expressions on their faces, one notes the
anxiety under which they hover as they wait for the intruders to enter and to take their
lives. The same attackers later reappear in the second kernel of the narreme, again with
weapons raised high and in a state of chaotic movement. One turns his body away from
the massacre that takes place in front of our eyes, but continues to look as it happens.
The other two spectators advance toward the victims, as is noted in their bent knees that
indicate their walking or running from one side of the scene to the other, while another
decapitates the second of the two prophets. The decapitated body of one has already been
flung to the ground, as noted in the text, and the second cries out with uplifted hand as he
takes his last breath.

This illustration gives us a very detailed idea as to how the medieval Iberian
illustrators perceived of movement within the text of the Apocalypse. We have seen in
this one illustration two kernels in which very antagonistic types of movement have been
depicted alongside acts of pious supplication. The combination of bent knees and
uplifted feet become the artistic act of walking or running, while weapons raised high
give the effect of attack, or in the least, hostility. Though more serene in their actions,
the victims show their acts of prayer through the common sign of uplifted hands. Both
the people of the city under attack and the prophet being executed raise their hands in
symbolic parlance with God: prayers are innately speech acts directed toward the heavens. As we have seen in this illustration and in the others presented so far, the artists of the Beatus illustrations show movement and action through bodily posture, gestures, and even in the use of space. Since illustrations depict “still shots” on the often textless page, movement must be expressed through devices specially designed for such a purpose. Gestures and “speaking hands”, for example, as well as the placement of a figure in relation to others on the page are such devices that do so.

3.3.4 Pictorial Apocalypse Narremes of More Than One Page

So far we have treated illustrations found on only one page and which, for the most part, follow a chronological sequence in presentation of their presentation of the narrative kernals of the particular narremes depicted. However, many of the illustrations of the Gerona Beatus span more than one page, covering half of the following page or even the entire next page in some cases. The very large illustrations normally depict very complex narremes comprised of several kernels of indispensable character that the artists wished to represent in graphic fashion. Because of their complexity these illustrations present narrative kernels in such a way as to most efficiently fill the space to which they have been relegated, meaning that narrative chronology as presented in the written text is poorly respected because of spatial constraints or because of artistic creativity. We must remember that the mission of the artist is to represent the sacred, in which appearance and realism often make no sense, for the artist must often de-materialize the images in order to reduce them to their semiotic states.⁸² Such is the case in several of the Gerona

⁸² Stierlin, Mozárabe, pp. 176-177.
Beatus illustrations, and, as we are about to see, perceiving these images as pictorial narrative requires a very different reading strategy than that employed with the reading of written narrative. The dislocation of the written text from the illustration can bring about very disparate readings from that intended by the combination of text and image as a symbiotic whole. Let us look at one of the most intricately designed illustrations of the Beatus Apocalypse series, that of the Woman in the Sun and the Dragon.

3.3.4a The Battle of Armaggedon (folios 171v & 172r, Revelations 12:1-18)

Like the text of the messages to the Seven Churches, this narreme is of extreme length and will not be written out here. A brief summary of it is as follows: a woman dressed in the sun, standing on the moon, and wearing a crown of twelve stars, appears in the sky, screaming with labour pains; likewise a dragon with seven heads and ten horns appears, dragging one-third of the stars from the sky to the earth, and stops in front of the woman, ready to eat her child when it is born; the woman bears a male child, who is destined to rule all nations and is carried to the presence of the throne of God; the woman flees to the desert where God has prepared a place for her; a battle ensues in the heavens between Saint Michael and his angels on one side and the dragon on the other; this dragon, known as Satan, is thrown to earth along with his angels, after which a thunderous voice proclaims that the salvation of the world is now at hand; on earth the dragon pursues the woman who had given birth, but she has previously been given wings with which to flee; because he cannot reach her, the dragon vomits a river of water with
which to catch her, but the earth aids her by opening its mouth to swallow the water; annoyed by this, the dragon turns to make war on those who had followed God’s commandments and leaves the woman alone in the desert.

In this narreme, Beatus tells us that the woman personifies the Church, that the dragon represents the persecutors of the Church (Herod), and that the entire scene is the great battle that will take place between the forces of good and those of evil. The use of space in this illustration is of great complexity, for the many kernels that make up the narreme must be present in order for the narrative structure to be maintained. Ingeniously, Emeterius and Ende divide the land below between the desert, split by the dragon’s vomited river, and the dark inferno to which Satan and his minions are cast. The long tail of the dragon divides the sky into two levels, that of the divine and that of the earth, with the battle between Satan and the heavenly angels taking place in the upper sector and the throwing of the forces of evil into Hell in the lower sector. There are, thus, six narrative spaces within this illustration:

1) that of the woman dressed in the sun (marked by a legend that is barely visible, but which must be similar to that of the Urgell manuscript, stating *Mulier amicta sole et luna sub pedibus eius, super caput eius stellarum duodecim*);

2) that of the woman fleeing to the desert (*Ubi date sunt mulieri ale aquile ut volaret in eremum*);

3) the space of the dragon (*Ubi draco traxit tertia pars stellarum*);

4) that of the battle in the heavens (*Michael arcangelus draconem pugnat*);

5) the circular Heaven in which the child is presented before the throne of God (*Ubi puer raptus est*);
6) the Hell below, to which Satan and his angels are cast by the heavenly angels

(*Quos draco traxit, angeli in infernum mittunt* and *Diabolus in inferno tenetur*).

In each of these spaces a kernel of the more extensive narremes appears, and each presents in great detail many of the narrative characteristics discussed in the above study. The illustration as a whole depicts all of the narrative characteristics discussed. In a generalized diagram form, the illustration would be divided spatially as follows:

![Figure 3.2 Spatial Organization of folios 171v and 172r](image-url)
The characterization of the woman dressed in the sun is one of profile, denoting her state of action. She is dressed in a purple robe covered partially by the bright Mozarabic sun. She carries a halo around her head, and in the background are ten stars, not the twelve described in the text. According to the text, she stands on the moon, represented here by the upturned quarter moon. Designating the moans of pain that the text describes her as suffering, the artists have painted her with one hand raised, as we have seen in other illustrations depicting speech acts. Her sombre face in one-fourth profile shows not only the pain that she must endure as she gives birth but also the fright with which she confronts the dragon of seven heads. In the second narrative kernel in which the woman appears, she wears the wings given to her in order to flee from the dragon. Her face has taken a more gentle appearance, as she witnesses the earth swallow the river that the dragon has sent to carry her away. With one of her wings turned toward the sky, she gives the impression of either landing or preparing to take flight with the intent of removing herself farther from the dragon and the river of water that he vomits forth toward her. Of the characters depicted in this illustration, the woman is by far the most static: she shows the signs of making little movement, either through speech acts or through action.

Regarding the dragon, symbol of the Antichrist, we must look to the entire middle section of the scene. Though I designate the dragon to his own space in the diagram above, he interacts in a theatrical manner with the spaces of the woman (both before and after childbirth), as well as those of the war in the heavens and the stars of the firmament. The dragon physically enters five separate spaces synchronically, though the written text can only present those entrances in a diachronic manner. Textually, the dragon appears
first in the skies, with his tail dragging the stars toward earth along with him; graphically his heads appear on the left side of the illustration while his tail, to the far right, engulfs eleven stars from the circular frame of Heaven. This largess gives the reader a graphic idea as to the horrendous nature of the beast, for it spans the entire length of the illustration, causing destruction on all sides. While three of his heads do attempt to attack the pregnant woman, another simultaneously shoots a river of water at her second representation in the bottom left of the illustration. Likewise, three other heads battle the angels of Heaven in the upper central region, while the great tale knocks the stars from the sky.

Interestingly, it is by way of the dragon’s body that we perceive the passage of time in this illustration, for he is present synchronically in five of the six narrative spaces that have their appearance in a diachronic order. Through his twisting and turning we perceive his arrival from the far right side of the illustration and travel across the two pages toward the far left side where the narration of the woman at the beginning of the narrreme takes place. His open mouths and sharp teeth reflect the lunging biting action that he takes as he attacks the victims of his violence, which is further complemented in the defensive actions of the angels in the fourth space of the illustration. With wings raised high and legs in positions of forward movement, the artists have created the effect of the angels’ advancement on the dragon with intents of killing it, as seen in the upraised weapons and shields that they carry. The close grouping of the angels and the placement of a weapon in each of their hands creates a visual game in which the spectator perceives a larger number of angels than are actually present. This supports the idea that the angels, en masse, attack as a large group and will defeat the beast.
The action continues into the lower right section of the illustration designated as Hell, where the dragon (now converted into the bound dark figure of Satan) and his minions have been cast. Two angelic beings, with wings upturned in flight and bodies in a horizontal or diagonal posture reflecting their travel through the air, deliver the lacerated bodies of the defeated forces of evil to the pit of Hell where they are dropped. One carries the body of a diabolic angel, while another, grasping two red ropes, lowers the cage into which Satan has been entrapped into the pit with his followers. The latter, assuming various contorted positions within the pit, display a lack of action and the inability to defend themselves because of the wounds that have been inflicted upon them (shown by the red markings that cover them), and seem to be nothing more than a pile of cadavers despite their wide open eyes. Some have arms and/or legs raised into the air, where others have assumed a seated position or one in which their heads rest upon their hands.

The last narrative space presented in the illustration is that of Heaven in the top right corner. The artists depicted three humanoid figures in this space, reflecting the textual statement that the newborn boy was taken immediately to the throne of God after the woman of space 1 had given birth to him. The angel who has delivered the boy, the boy himself, and God all take positions of profile and have uplifted hands signifying their discursive action. The text does not tell us that the three characters exchange words with one another, but later in the text a thunderous voice proclaims that salvation has arrived and that Satan has been defeated. We can assume this to be the voice of God or that of the angel who, as a messenger that he is, delivers the news to those below. Likewise, as we have seen in other illustrations, the uplifted hand may also be a sign of both giving
and receiving of a blessing (which is, of course, a verbal action): the child is described in
the text as the one who will reign over all nations, and the depiction of him before the
throne of God with his hand raised high shows his allegiance to the Almighty and
acceptance of the blessing that he receives in the same moment.

This illustration presents the spectator with a plethora of details that, taken
individually create separate narrative kernels that fuse to form a much larger narreme.
Each kernel, unique in its own right, particularizes for us the ways in which the artists
understood the text with which they worked. Their depictions of action, of speech, or
states of being, as well as the use of space within the illustration to combine the kernels in
narrative unity, allow modern viewers to understand the ways in which artistic expression
during the tenth century depicted their reality of movement and being. Emeterius and
Ende created in this illustration a complex work in which both space and the body of the
beast must be read as elements of time: the beast moves through the spaces temporally in
the text of the Apocalypse, but the illustration unifies the creature with the physical
spaces of other characters to create the allusion of multiple actions that take place
synchronously. The dragon is the central figure of the illustration, and his participation
in the events of each of the separate spatial kernels unifies them into one larger narreme
from which none of the kernels can be subtracted without interrupting the narrative
sequence of the narreme. This illustration exemplifies the characteristics outlined in the
smaller illustrations discussed above, and in doing so shows the narrative importance that
the artists gave it as well as epitomizes the narrative quality of the illustration as a whole.
3.4 Structure of the Extra-Apocalyptic Illustrations

The extra-apocalyptic illustrations, or those that depict scenes other than what we find in the Book of Revelations, are structurally of only slightly different character than those of the Apocalypse proper. One of the primary structural characteristics of the Gerona extra-apocalyptic illustrations is the varying use of frames. In our discussion of the Apocalypse, the reader will remember that the artists enclosed each of the illustrations within a decorative frame that served not only to add visual vibrancy to the image but also to give narrative unity to the narremes depicted, in much the same way that narrators created framed stories in the Middle Ages. With regards to the extra-apocalyptic illustrations of the Gerona manuscript, we find that those depicting scenes from the Old Testament or that represent abstract concepts are frameless, whereas narrative images from the New Testament are placed within frames. There are only two exceptions: the baptism of Jesus found on folio 189r is a free-standing frameless illustration placed between the graphs of the Names of the Antichrist and the illustration of the Adoration of the Lamb; and the illustration of Babylon on 236v-237r is framed by the body of a large dragon. I do not believe this variation simply to be the results of the artistic whims of Emeterius and Ende: in the case of Jesus’ baptism, just as with the other extra-apocalyptic illustrations placed among those of the Apocalypse, the lack of frame visually separates the illustration from those of the principal narrative (i.e., the Apocalypse) with the intent of confirming an intertextual relationship with the Apocalypse without including the illustration among those that depict the Apocalypse proper. The second of the two exceptions, Babylon enclosed within a dragon-shaped frame, makes a link between the sinful city of the Old Testament and the sin to which the
establishment of the Celestial Jerusalem will put to an end when the apocalyptic prophecies are fulfilled. Though the scene depicts an Old Testament city that may also be read symbolically by the monastic spectator, the frame visually links it to the narremes of the Apocalypse and includes it among the New Testament revelations.

The Gerona Beatus opens with both illuminations and illustrations, as defined previously. The first nineteen folios depict, either symbolically or in a narrative manner, some aspect of the early life of the Church and of the evangelisation that Jesus called the Apostles to undertake. Of these images, only those related to the four Evangelists (folios 4v-7r) and the life of Christ (folios 15r-18r) may be characterised as illustrations based on their narrative qualities. The others depict Christian symbols (such as the cross, the Greek letters alpha and omega, a static representation of the court of Heaven, or the extremely long genealogical tables linking Adam and Eve to the Old Testament prophets and to Jesus), but lack the vibrancy of movement or speech acts present in other images. With the exception of the Omega, the images that follow the Apocalypse in the Gerona manuscript are all of narrative nature, for they depict the prophetic story of the Old Testament book of Daniel. Likewise, those images interspersed among the Apocalypse illustrations tend toward a narrative function, the only exceptions being the map of the world (folios 54v-55r) and the depiction of the animals and the statue from the book of Daniel on folio 61r. Though we will not analyse each of the extra-apocalyptic images individually, it would suffice here to outline the major structural narrative characteristics found in those classified as narrative illustrations. In some cases, such as with the illustrations of the Evangelists, discussion will be limited to only a small number of images since the same narrative characteristics repeat themselves in most illustrations. In
other cases, the life of Christ or the Daniel narrative, for example, attention will be given to individual illustrations with the intent of demonstrating their diachronic narrative sequences.

3.4.1 The Evangelists

Folios 4v to 7r present the reader with a set of illustrations very similar in content and structure to those depicting the message to the Seven Churches discussed earlier in this chapter. Whereas in the latter, the Seven Churches of Asia receive their respective letters from Saint John, the former depict the Evangelists receiving the Word (represented by a scroll or a book) from Christ. The general spatial structure of each illustration takes the form of a horseshoe arch, below which the artists divide the scene into two segments. In the lower, and larger, of the spaces we find one of two scenes: either the seated Jesus passes the Word to one of the four Evangelists who stands alongside Him “in a pillar-like attitude”\textsuperscript{183}, or the angelic custodians of the book pass their treasure between the two of them. Interestingly, in these lower sections there are only two representations of the Evangelists – Matthew (shown in both 4v and 6v) and Luke (5v) – not four, since Mark and John having been omitted. However, in the upper sector of the arches we find representations of Saint Ireneus’s tetramorph symbols for the Evangelists: the human in the illustration of folio 4v and the angel of folio 6v represent Saint Matthew, the winged lion of folio 5r Saint Mark, the bull of folio 5v and the winged ox of folio 6r Saint Luke, and the eagle of folio 7r Saint John. Each of these upper-level figures stands or sits in a

\textsuperscript{183} Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 125.
position of stasis, evocative of their position within the symbolic space of the illustrations. The lower segment of the illustrations represents the theme of action, and the upper section corresponds to the theme of state (in this case, the symbolic state).

In each of the three illustrations in which Jesus hands the book of the Word to the Evangelists, we again see the motif of “speaking hands”, which is the only true movement that takes place in these images. The first illustration of Matthew shows Jesus seated on a throne before a set of opened curtains, looking in the direction of Matthew with tilted head and outstretched hand. Matthew, body pointed in the opposite direction and looking back at Jesus, grasps the scroll in one hand while he points with the other toward the direction in which he is walking. As we have already seen, this gesture serves as a visual speech act in which Jesus commands the Evangelist into the world with the Word that has been entrusted to him, and Matthew likewise signals his acceptance and desire to carry out the task. In like fashion, the first illustration of Luke exhibits the “speaking hands” discourse in which Christ again points toward the Evangelist with one hand while holding a mitre-shaped casket in the other hand. Luke reaches toward the Saviour with one hand while grasping a scroll in the other. As different from Matthew, Luke faces Christ with his entire body in a stationary position, as if standing at attention in acceptance of the role that the Lord is bestowing upon him. In both cases the reader is to understand by way of the bodily gesture that a verbal exchange is taking place between the two personages of the illustration.
3.4.2 The Life of Christ

At the end of the genealogical tables there appears in the Gerona Apocalypse a set of illustrations not found in any of the other Beatus manuscripts except for the Turin copy of the Gerona manuscript: seven pages (three and one-half folios) depicting the life of Christ. Camón Aznar remarks that in these illustrations we note a “descriptive sense that is less solemn and more intimate and popular than in paintings of the Apocalypse”\(^{184}\), an observation that, in my opinion, summarises well the spirit of these images. We find in both the faces and the postures of the characters expressions of emotional and psychological state not seen in the Apocalypse illustrations, and the artists come much closer to representing human realism here than in any other part of the manuscript. With the exception of the baptism of Jesus, found on folio 189r, the major events of Jesus’ life are portrayed here in chronological order: the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, the Nativity, arrival of the Magi, King Herod’s slaughter of the children, Peter’s denial of Christ, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, Triumph over Eternal Death, and Jesus’ Ascension to Heaven.

The use of space varies in each of these illustrations. Three of the seven illustrations depict a single scene, respectively, within the narrative space provided. In the others, the artists have either divided the space through the use of frames in which particular scenes are displayed, or have simply placed different scenes within the same physical space, thus leaving to the reader’s discernment the difference in time and space between them. The first illustration, that of the Annunciation and the Nativity, is such an example. In the left half of the narrative space the angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin

\(^{184}\) Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 127.
Mary that she will bring forth the Son of God, which has already taken place in the right half of the illustration, thus forming a left-to-right horizontal narrative of cause-and-effect sequence. All four of the major Biblical characters – the Archangel Gabriel, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus – are present: Mary and Gabriel occupy the Annunciation scene, whereas Joseph and the baby Jesus are to be found at the Nativity. In almost the same manner, the illustration of the Resurrection is divided into three scenes that, though separated physically on the page, have no frame or other such division to guide the reader visually through the narrative. In the upper half of the page appears Jesus speaking to Maria Magdalena et altera Maria before the open tomb upon which sits an angel; at the central left side of the illustration, bordering on the margin of the folio, is a tree from which Judas Iscariot hangs suspended by the neck, with a small black devil reaching for him; and at the bottom of the page Roman soldiers arrive to the empty tomb to find Joseph of Arimethaea sitting atop it. In the first illustration the use of space coincides perfectly with the chronological time of the story, the artists first presenting the Annunciation and then the Nativity. However, the second illustration presents the small chronological dilemma with the placement of Judas within the scene: visually, his suicide is the second of the three events that take place in the illustration, but we know from the Biblical narration that it happens before the Resurrection. This being the case, we see that Emeterius and Ende swayed slightly from the sequence of events as they take place in the Gospels, a topic that we will return to in a short time. With the remaining illustrations of the life of Christ, narrative space is divided clearly by the use of frames, and the actions presented conserve the chronological cohesiveness of the Biblical accounts.
As mentioned earlier, these illustrations of the life of Christ evoke a sense of intimacy between the reader and the characters depicted, through the artistic expression of emotional and psychological states, as well as through the theatricality of the scenes. We find the best examples of the former in the figure of Joseph seated before the baby Jesus at the Nativity scene (folio 15r), in that of the angel observing the arrival of the Magi in the upper portion of the illustration on folio 15v, and in the expression on Mary Magdalene’s face at the Resurrection (folio 17r). In the first two cases the artists have presented figures resting their faces within the palms of their hands in a pensive or observatory manner, but in the third illustration Mary Magdalene stands before Jesus with her mouth agape in an expression of suspended surprise. All four of the New Testament Gospels tell of Mary Magdalene going with Mary the mother of Simon to Jesus’ tomb on the third day of his burial, with the intent of anointing His body with spices and herbs. The Gospels of Saints Matthew, Luke and John tell us that the two women find the tomb open and that Jesus approaches them as they flee toward the town of Galilee. Each of these three Gospels describes Mary Magdalene as astounded and almost speechless at the sight of Jesus, an impression that Emeterius and Ende must have tried to convey through her open mouth and wide eyes as she notices the Saviour approaching her.

We do not see this same type of frightened surprise in the face of Joseph, though the first chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew describes Mary’s husband as somewhat alarmed and even angry at the fact that his wife was to bear a child that was not his. The illustration presents Joseph not as the angry husband who wishes to leave Mary behind, but as a preoccupied man who seems to observe the situation surrounding Jesus’ birth.
with wonderment. Almost the same can be said of the angel Gabriel who looks upon the arrival of the three Magi with a gaze of anxiety: this angel serves as God’s chosen messenger in all accounts of the Nativity, yet the one Gospel that relates the arrival of the Magi – Saint Matthew – says nothing of the angel’s presence at this point in the Nativity narrative. Emeterius and Ende, for reasons known only to them, decided to place this angelic being among the personages of the scene, in a posture that, like that of Joseph, expresses a feeling of mystery. These positions of stasis, whether a reflection of an inwardly meditative state or of an awe-struck trance, grab the attention of the reader and give a visual description of the psychological positioning of the characters in relation to the events surrounding them.

Theatricality also plays an important narrative role in the Gerona Beatus illustrations of the life of Christ. In each of the illustrations except for that of the Crucifixion speech acts comprise one of the primary forms of character interaction, and in all we find movement in some form. Moreover, we can say that the theme of action in these illustrations is the direct cause for the themes of state just mentioned, for the actions of others cause Joseph, Gabriel, and Mary Magdalene to enter that motionless condition of awe or wonderment in which they are depicted. Speech acts follow the same pattern in these illustrations as in the others already described, in which the extended fingers or hands of one character point toward another or in the direction of a particular scene that the reader or other characters should view. Gabriel, for example, signifying his announcement to the Virgin Mary in the Annunciation scene, tilts his head in the direction of the surprised woman while also pointing at her with extended right arm and elongated index and middle fingers. Likewise, in the illustration of Peter’s denial of
Christ, the “speaking hands” motif comes into play as, in the upper half of the image, the elders of the Sanhedrin question Jesus and accuse him of blasphemy, and in the lower image Peter denies knowing Jesus three times in speech acts between him and three other figures who point to him in an accusatory manner. Of course, the same holds true for the illustration of the risen Christ who meets Mary Magdalene on the road to Galilee: in response to her expression of astonishment, Jesus signals to her by his upraised right hand that she is not to fear and commands her to proclaim what she has seen to the disciples.

Movement in the form of spatial advancement comprises the principal form of narrative action in the illustrations of the life of Christ. In the illustration of the three Magi and of King Herod, for example, one recognizes this movement in the representation of the profiled figures (both men and horse) with legs and feet in an ambulatory position. The three Magi carry in their hands the gifts that they bring to the baby Jesus (gold, frankincense, and myrrh), advancing from the right side of the page to the left as they approach Mary and her son seated upon her lap. In the central band of the illustration we see King Herod atop a horse galloping toward the Virgin Mary, Joseph, and an angel who has taken hold of the child Jesus in protective custody. Herod holds the horse’s reins high with one hand as he grasps a spear with the other, and is positioned side-saddle on the horse that has been painted with its four legs in a position of forward motion. Interestingly, in both images, that of the Magi and that of King Herod, Emeterius and Ende depict movement not only in the position of the legs but also in garments worn by the figures: each of the Magi wears a cape over his back that seems to

185 The narrative of this sequence of events may be found in all four of the New Testament Gospels: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and John 18.
blow in the wind as he walks forward toward Christ, and Herod similarly has a kind of scarf attached to his helmet that flows backward as the wind blows against him while riding the horse. Thus, pictorially forward movement finds its representation in both the stance of the figures presented and spatial factors external to the figures themselves.

The illustration of the Crucifixion (folio 16v), described by Camón Aznar as having “mural grandeur and a hieratic quality of high dignity” in which “all is solemn, still, in timeless suspense”\(^\text{186}\), presents action and movement in a manner very similar to those of other illustrations that we have already seen, but in much more concentrated fashion. Representative of the “mural grandeur” of which Camón Aznar speaks, we see in this illustration depiction of forward advancement, upward movement of objects and instruments, aggressive hand and arm motion, as well as of pensive stasis. The illustration consists of eight human figures – the crucified Jesus, the crucified thieves Gestas and Limas, four Roman guards, as well as a representation of Adam in his tomb below the cross of Christ – and six celestial or symbolic figures – two angelic porters of books and censers above the cross of Christ, the personification of the sun and of the moon to either side of the cross (labelled as “sol observatus” and “luna non dedit lux suum”, respectively), an angel hovering to the left of the cross on which Gestas has been hung, and a small devil standing atop the cross of Limas (a mistaken iconographic representation since tradition holds that Limas repented before death and joined Christ in Heaven, whereas Gestas rebuked Christ and went to Hell). With their wings spread and their legs stretched behind them on the horizontal plane, the three angels represent forward movement, for each has turned in the direction of his destination and is presented

\(^{186}\) Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 129.
in profile instead of from a frontal stance. The three crucified figures of Christ and the thieves, shown in a fixed frontal position of stoic observation (maybe of us as spectators of their scene), characterize stasis, as do the personifications of the sun and the moon, which do nothing more than sit in quiet observation with their faces resting in the palms of their hands.

Paralleling the horror and humiliation of the event as described in the Gospel records, the principal action found in the crucifixion scene takes place at the hands of the Roman centurions. The Gospels tells us that, in the third hour of the crucifixion, in order that the prophecies might be fulfilled Jesus cried out that he thirst, to which one of the centurions (Stefaton in the illustration) responded by lifting a sponge soaked in vinegar to the mouth of Christ with a long pole. Shortly after, Jesus gives up his spirit and the second centurion (Longinus) thrusts his spear into the side of the dead Rex Iudeorum. Standing below the crosses of Gestas and Limas, two other centurions perform the acts of breaking the thieves’ legs in order to kill them and to dispose of the bodies before the Sabbath. The artists represent this undertaking by placing what seem to be cudgels in the hands of the centurions, raised high as if in preparation for bringing them down hard on the legs of the crucified. At the same time, the centurions untie the ropes wrapped around the ankles of the thieves in order to lower them from the crosses after their beatings and deaths have taken place. As a final representation of the horrific events of the

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187 The four Gospels do not relate the crucifixion events with the same detail, though the basic events of the story are the same in all of them. The Gerona illustration of the crucifixion combines elements from each of the Gospel accounts, found in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19.
crucifixion, Emeterius and Ende placed pitchforks in the hands of the devil standing atop Limas’s cross, instruments with which the diabolic figure tortures the criminal and furthers the iconographic ideology of Hell as a place of torment.

### 3.4.3 Illustrations from the Book of Daniel

Ending the Beatus *Commentaries on the Apocalypse* is a section dedicated to Saint Jerome’s commentary on the Book of Daniel, considered to be the most enigmatic of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. In many ways this book parallels the New Testament Book of Revelations, for it relates visions that reflect the end of the world and the establishment of a new kingdom that is to last eternally. As Camón Aznar points out, “[t]he designation of ‘Son of Man’, which Jesus Christ gives himself, comes from this book, as do the monsters, horned beasts and horses with the faces of men from the Apocalypse.”\(^{188}\) The Gerona illustrations of this prophetic text do not equal in either structural complexity or visual vibrancy those of the Apocalypse or of the life of Christ found in the same manuscript. The same holds true for the other Beatus manuscripts, though in that of Magius they reflect the desire of the artist to give them more importance than that given them in the Gerona manuscript. In general, the Daniel illustrations are not depicted within a framed structure and do not contain various coloured horizontal bands as part of the backdrop of the scenes that they represent – the figures are painted directly onto the parchment with little to no detail given for the development of time/space relations. We do, however, find the same themes of state and action in these illustrations that we have seen thus far in the images of both the Apocalypse and the life of Christ.

\(^{188}\) Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 171.
The theme of state presents itself on four occasions in the Gerona illustrations of Daniel: in the siege of Jerusalem (folio 242r, Daniel 1), in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (folio 244r, Daniel 2:1-34), in King Darius’s contemplation of Daniel in the lions’ den (folio 257r, Daniel 6), and in Daniel’s lying in sickness (folio 264r, Daniel 9:21-23).\textsuperscript{189}

In the first example, we see the prophet Jeremiah seated to the right of the city of Jerusalem, in a state of grief. Though the Book of Daniel does not mention Jeremiah, the painters of all Beatus manuscripts containing this illustration depict the prophet either contemplating the brutality that takes place before his eyes (as in the Gerona manuscript) or weeping with his head turned downward in a condition of utter sadness. The other three examples of stasis that we find in this group of illustrations all follow the same structural form: each depicts a man prostrate in bed with upturned head and eyes opened. Open eyes do not, however, indicate that the characters depicted are awake: Nebuchadnezzar’s open eyes, for example, coupled with the elements of his dream placed at the foot of his bed, suggest his separation from but observance of the actions that take place in the dream that he experiences while asleep. That is, though in a state of slumber, the artists depict him as the subject of his mind’s eye, the recipient of the dream vision.

In the other two illustrations the artists portray King Darius and the prophet Daniel in

\textsuperscript{189} Each of these narratives forms part of the apocalyptic prophecies found throughout the book of Daniel. Folio 242r depicts the opening verses of this book, in which “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came and laid siege on Jerusalem.” The result of this takeover is the Israelite Daniel’s forced admittance into the king’s service. In the illustration on page 244r we find a visualisation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the destruction of the statue that he had erected for worship, and his subsequent demand that Daniel provide an interpretation of the dream. The various metals that comprise the statue, according to Beatus, represent the various evil empires during the time in which the book of Daniel was written. Folio 257r shows Daniel in the upper portion, having been thrown to the lions for having prayed to God each morning instead of issuing his petitions directly to King Darius. The lower portion of the illustration depicts Darius lying in a contemplative state, thinking about what he has ordered done to Daniel. The prophet does not die, but is able to calm the lions because of his great virtue. Daniel later lies sick in the illustration of folio 264r, after having received a message from the angel Gabriel regarding the coming of Christ.
contemplative positions, the first tormented over the punishment that he has inflicted on Daniel by having him thrown to the lions, and the second physically ill but also mentally reflective of the vision of the Tower of Ulai and of the message from the archangel Gabriel that he has just experienced.

Unlike the other illustrations that we have discussed thus far, in those of the Commentary on Daniel we find few examples of forward movement. This may be due to the fact that many of the illustrations simply present images from the dreams or visions of the narrative’s characters, images of locative or symbolic fashion. Of those examples of forward movement presented, most are of angels with outstretched wings in flight toward a particular place or character. In the scene of Daniel in the lions’ den, an angel carries the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk to deliver food to Daniel, and in the depiction of Daniel’s vision of the Tower of Ulai the angel Gabriel carrying a staff approaches Daniel from the sky, announcing the coming of the Messiah and the end of time. Another example of forward movement may be found in a very minor character of the scene of the Feast of Balshazzar: in the lower section of the illustration the artists have painted the small figure of a servant approaching the banquet table with flasks of wine to be served to the guests. In both the Gerona and the Magius manuscripts this figure stands in an upright position with one foot before the other and the heels lifted from the ground as if in the act walking, but in the Urgell manuscript this same figure kneels before the table, holding the flasks high in the air for his master to receive. The only other example of forward motion that we find in these illustrations comes from folio 262r, in which a large ram (symbolic of the Medes and the Persians) has his horns knocked from his head by a
he-goat (representing Alexander the Great, king of Greece). The elongated bodies of the two animals, as well as the position of their legs and their lowered butting heads, indicate that they are charging one another at a very rapid pace.

Because of the relative simplicity of the Daniel illustrations and their symbolic nature as visualizations of short dreams experienced by and later explained by characters of the Book of Daniel,¹⁹⁰ the primary form of narrative action that we see in them comes in the form of dialogue. We have spoken much about the “speaking hands” motif of the Beatus illustrations in general, but in no other part of the manuscript do we find speech acts more prevalent than in those of the Daniel commentaries. The top half of the illustration of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (244r), for example, depicts three men – Nebuchadnezzar describing his dream of the toppled statue shown below to Daniel and another unmentioned man. Carrying books, symbols of wisdom, Daniel and the other man explain the dream told to them by the king, all pointing to one another with upraised hands, the pictorial representation of dialogue. The following illustration, that of the furnace of Babylon into which the three young Jews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have been thrown (248r), displays the same form of speech act in the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar and the two denouncers: with upraised fingers the accusers claim that the three boys worship a different god from that established by the king. At the same time Nebuchadnezzar, seated on his throne, announces his sentence upon them by means of the deictic gesture of his right index finger: *Nabuquodonosor jussit tres pueris mitere*

¹⁹⁰ Because of their prophetic nature, the narremes dealing with dreams and visions in the Book of Daniel take precedence over other parts of Daniel in the Beatus Commentaries. Thus, those narremes become the subject of the illustrations provided in this part of the manuscript. These chapters of Daniel are considered to foretell the coming of the Saviour and the triumph of Good over Evil, in parallel fashion to the Book of Revelations.
To give one more example, the very unadorned illustration of Daniel and the angel Gabriel at the Tower of Ulai (264r) presents the type of speech act that we have seen several times up to now: the angel approaches Daniel with very lengthy index and middle fingers extended toward him as a sign of his announcement of the end of the world; in response Daniel also extends his index finger toward the angel as a sign of his acceptance of the message. The legend that accompanies the illustration states that *ubi Daniel respiciens contra angelus Gabriel*, implying a purely visual exchange. The central focus of the image, however, is the linguistic exchange that takes place between the two.

Though the illustrations from the Commentary on Daniel exhibit the same narrative qualities that we have seen in those of the Apocalypse and the life of Christ, they present those characteristics in a much more simplified manner. Time and space have been virtually eliminated, placing the illustrations’ primary focus on the characters themselves and the raw elements of the dreams and visions that they experience. As has already been pointed out, time in the work of visual art finds its representation in the physical space of the scene depicted. Time, however, lacks representation in the Daniel illustrations: not only has setting been purged, but chronological sequencing also lacks in illustrations in which more than one narrative kernel has been presented. The illustration of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, for example, presents the dream at the bottom of the page and the subsequent conversation about its explanation at the top, contrary to Western norms of narrative. Likewise, the illustration of the ram and the he-goat (262r) presents the fight between the two animals before the description of the same ram that guards the

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191 “Nebuchadnezzar judges that the three boys will be put into the furnace.”
192 “Here Daniel looks up at the angel Gabriel.”
city, opposite from the narrative sequence of the written text. Because of this, the reader of the image necessarily depends on the text for understanding of its visualization, for the image alone does not sufficiently relate the narrative as presented in the text.

3.5 Conclusions

As we have seen in the discussions of this chapter, narrative illustrations, as nonverbal forms of communication, have their physical structure in the ways in which artists depict movement and dialogue. As a general rule, description, or state of being, is depicted through the use of stasis: characters have eyes turned forward, as if looking back at the reader of the image, and the intent of the picture is to draw the spectator into the physical setting by providing static visual representations. Action, on the other hand, finds its representation in faces turned away from the reader, looking toward another figure, and body positions representative of non-stationary acts. The use of “speaking hands”, for example, depicts speech, and other forms of action, such as movement, find their representation in uplifted feet, raised wings, and diagonally or horizontally positioned bodies. In many cases representations of action take on exaggerated features: speaking hands, for example, often consist of elongated fingers that draw in the eye of the spectator and point toward the speech act itself; another example may be found in the horizontally flowing robes of angels as a sign of swift travel through the air.

Of special importance to the Beatus illustrations is the use of narrative space. Saint John’s vision gives lengthy description of numerous spaces – battles taking place on earth, the opening of the heavens, angels and demons flying through the skies, the very Court of Heaven itself. In many of these descriptions, John speaks of objects sitting
in front of or encircling other objects, or of voices filling the air like thunder, both of which present for the artists a difficult task of representing due to foreground objects blocking from view those objects placed in the background, or to the intangible nature of certain aspects of the narration (i.e., voices). In such cases, the physical space of the illustration must represent as best as possible that which the textual narration describes without changing the visual effect intended by the author. Likewise, in such illustrations as the Annunciation and Nativity (15r) or the Battle of Armageddon (folios 171v-172r), in which several actions take place in a cause-and-effect manner, space becomes a product of time. Within the physical space of the illustration, various chronological points must be represented, thus giving the impression that diachronic events take place on the synchronic plane. In these cases, the use of space must guide the reader through the narrreme from beginning to end in such a way as to avoid confusion and to narrate the events taking place in the order in which they are represented by the written text. Thus, time and space within these illustrations form a symbiotic union in which one cannot be separated from the other but rather depend on one another for their very existence.

Structurally, the illustrations of the Gerona Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse represent in a very clear manner the narration of the written text of Revelations. Without knowledge of the written text, however, the narrative sequence of the illustrations would be lost. The images and the text form a unity that must be taken as a narrative whole in order for the reader to reach the level of understanding, or visio, intended of the lectio divina. Combined with the written text of both the Bible and the commentaries of Beatus, the illuminations of the Gerona manuscript form a
supernarrative of many narratives – textual and pictorial – that supersedes the structural formulation of commentary and illustrations, in order to create a spiritual narrative in which the reader is to find himself as a participant.
CHAPTER 4

THE GERONA BEATUS APOCALYPSE SUPERNARRATIVE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.\textsuperscript{193} I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.\textsuperscript{194}

In the third chapter we discussed some of the structural aspects of the illustrations of the Gerona Beatus \textit{Commentaries}, including the use of space, speech acts, and movement. This chapter will center on the intertextual relationship of the extra-apocalyptic illustrations with those of the Apocalypse proper, and their conjunctive formation of what I have termed a “supernarrative”. Though I have mentioned the term “supernarrative” in previous chapters, I have yet to define properly that term and its relation to the Gerona Beatus. The principal objective of this chapter will be to do just that: to show the extent to which the Gerona Beatus illustrations may be read as a spiritual narrative that visualises for the reader the idea that we have already proposed regarding the Book of Revelations as the key to understanding the rest of the Bible from the beginning to the end of time, and to explain how the conjoining of illustrations creates a narrative that supersedes the diachronic events of the Apocalypse, thus forming a

\textsuperscript{193} St. John 1: 1. \\
\textsuperscript{194} Revelations 22: 13.
synchronic narrative in which time and space are suspended and immediate spiritual enlightenment is sought. Taken individually, each illustration exemplifies some, if not all, of the narrative characteristics outlined in chapter 3. When we group the illustrations together, however, a new narrative structure comes into being: the illustrations visualise that which the text of Revelations reveals through words, but the additional extra-apocalyptic illustrations carry the reader to a second level of narration that, for the monastic reader, may only be discerned on a spiritual level. This “supernarrative”, then, includes those overarching narratological elements present in stories, epic poetry, and novel (i.e., time, space, characterisation, action, dialogue, etc.), but uses them within individual narremes as building blocks for a larger narrative of interrelated texts that takes as its goal that of inspiring the reader to perfection in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.¹⁹⁵

4.1 The Genotext and Spiritual Enlightenment

Beatus says in the opening dedication of *In Apocalypsin B. Ionnis Apostoli Commentaria* that the Book of Revelations, as the final book of the New Testament, is the key to understanding the rest of the Bible: “Consider this book as the key to the entire library.”¹⁹⁶ As we have discussed, the Book of Revelations has long been considered by

¹⁹⁵ A list of both the apocalyptic and extra-apocalyptic illuminations in the Gerona Beatus may be found in Appendix B, in the order in which they appear in the manuscript. The reader will notice that the illustrations of the Apocalypse make up the central portion of the text, with those pertaining to Jesus and the Evangelists preceding and those of the Old Testament book of Daniel following. Inserted among the illustrations of the Apocalypse are those from both the Old and the New Testaments that show a direct relation to the content of the apocalyptic message within which they appear. Of great interest is the image of the baptism of Jesus among the illustrations depicting Revelations 13 and 14. This topic will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁹⁶ “Omnium tamen librorum thecae hunc librum credas esse claviculam.” Beato de Liébana, *Obras Completas*, p. 32.
theologians and exegetes as the final great narrative in which all Biblical events and knowledge find their meaning and toward which humankind has journeyed since the beginning of time. Believing this, Beatus of Liébana produced an exegesis of Revelations that, in his own words, takes into account works written by the Church Fathers and in which he also refers to other books of the Bible and to historical events since the writing of those texts. He opens his Commentaries in the following manner:

I have thought of expounding upon some things explained in the brevity of the sentencia and announced at various times in the Old Testament, dealing with the birth of Our Lord and Saviour, in accordance to His divinity, corporality, as well as with His passion and death, His resurrection, His kingdom and judgment, taking from men of knowledge, from innumerable books and from the most notable Holy Fathers. Though this be known by those who handle the deep regions of Scripture, it may be remembered much more easily when read in brief form. These things, not explained by me, but by the Holy Fathers have been compiled in this book and supported by Jerome, Augustine, Fulgentius, Gregory, Tyconius, Irenaeus, Apringius, and Isidore.\(^{197}\)

Thus, Beatus states from the beginning of his work that his commentaries are an interweaving of previously stated teachings on the life of Christ and the Apocalypse, forming what we call in modern terms an “intertext.” In this opening paragraph, we see that Beatus outlines two distinct goals within his writing that combine to form a new text: he wishes to expound upon the life of Christ from His birth to the establishment of His kingdom, and he wishes to bring together teachings from various Church Fathers into an

\(^{197}\)”Ea quae diversis temporibus in Veteris Testamenti libris praenunciata sunt de Nativitate Domini et Salvatoris nostri secundum deitatem, vel de corporazione eius, de passione quoque et morte, sive de resurrectione, de regno, atque iudicio, pro viribus scientiae, ex innumerabilibus libris, et sanctorum patrum nobilissimorum, sententiali brevitate notata, paucà proferenda putavi. Quae quamvis omnibus nota sint qui per amplitudinem Scripturarum percurrunt; facilius tamen ad memoriam redeunt, dum brevi sermonem leguntur. Quae tamen non a me, sed a sanctis patribus explanata reperi, in hoc libello indita sunt, et firmata his auctoribus, id est, Hieronymo, Augustino, Ambrosio, Fulgentio, Gregorio, Tichonio, Irenaeo, Apringio, et Isidoro.” Beato de Liébana, Obras completas, p. 32.
easily-accessible volume. Beatus’s Commentaries, then, become not only an intertext in which various previously-written texts play an important role, but, as biblical exegesis, it also serves as a metatext, or commentary on another text.198

Though Beatus does not dedicate large tracts of his text to the life of Christ, but instead refers to Christ’s ministry, death, and resurrection throughout the commentaries in reference to their relation with the Apocalypse, the illustrations of the Gerona manuscript convey a somewhat different idea much more closely related to Beatus’s original intentions than the text of the Commentaries communicates. The inclusion of extra-apocalyptic illustrations before, among, and after those of the Apocalypse creates a bond between the apocalyptic message of Revelations and that of the other depicted parts of the Bible that supersedes the end-time narrative and carries the reader to a higher level of textual understanding that Julia Kristeva refers to as the genotext.199 That is, the intertextual relationship created by the interplay of texts in the Gerona Beatus depends not on the meaning that the reader extracts from the text, but on the manner in which the text “signif[ies] what representative and communicative speech does not say.”200 Beatus makes clear his desire to create a text of many texts, and the artists Emeterius and Ende display through the presence of the varied illustrations that they included in their

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198 For an analysis of the sources used by Beatus in the writing of his Commentaries, the reader is advised to consult Alberto del Campo’s “Introducción“, found in Obras Completas, pp. 5-27. He gives an excellent summary of the “borrowings” from the Church Fathers that Beatus incorporated into his work, as well as a lengthy bibliography for further consultation.

199 Following Kristeva’s narratological theories, the written text of the commentaries, along with the illustrations, comprise the phenotext, or that which is bound by the linguistic or the structural systems created by humans. Behind that structure, however, serving as the “unconscious energy” that guides the linguistic and artistic creation is the genotext, or that which “articulates the drives and desires of a pre-linguistic subjectivity.” The reader is referred to Kristeva, Revolution.

200 Kristeva, Desire, p. 18.
manuscript a wish to carry the reader beyond the strictly linguistic realm of the text. Our task here is to comprehend that spiritual genotext toward which the Gerona Beatus carries the reader.

If we consider the Gerona manuscript with regard to Kristeva’s ideas regarding the phenotext and the genotext, we will come closer to understanding the relationship of Saint Augustine’s tripartite theory of vision (visio corporealis – visio spiritualis – visio intellectualis) to the meditative reading of the Apocalypse. When Kristeva speaks of the phenotext, the text and illustrations presented before the eyes of the reader, she speaks of the “instruments” that Saint Thomas Aquinas had mentioned as necessary for spiritual edification. It is through meditation on the phenotext that the reader acquires access to visio spiritualis, for the phenotext provides the material by which the soul gains spiritual insight. For Augustine, as well as for many medieval thinkers (Saint Thomas Aquinas, for example) the acquisition of spiritual understanding came through the act of seeing, of reading the visual, be they words written on the page or figures that could be used in a didactic or contemplative manner. The driving force of that visual creation, the genotext that guides the reader toward visio spiritualis, is the fundamental belief that Christ is the beginning and the end and that the entirety of the Biblical text, as well as all of universal construction, was, is, and will be created in preparation for the Celestial Jerusalem.

\[201\] Kristeva’s phenotext and genotext are the elements (tangible and intangible, respectively) that the reader uses on the spiritual journey toward understanding of the divine. The visio theory of Saint Augustine is the act of seeing, either physically or spiritually. Thus, visio corporealis is the act of reading (seeing) and making use of the phenotext (the manuscript). Visio spiritualis, however, is the act of prayer and meditation undertaken during lectio divina, which allows one access to the genotext, or the intangible energy that both preceded and accompanies the human linguistic and pictorial creation.

\[202\] See note 108 above.
Beatus of Liébana repeats this last thought time and again in his *Commentaries*. Though I have no way of proving the intentions of the artists Emeterius and Ende, I believe that at least part of the reason for which they so elaborately decorated the Gerona manuscript with illustrations of the life of Christ was to further the readers’ consideration of Christ as the mediator between humankind and God. Other illustrations, such as those of the Book of Daniel, the mapae mundi, or of the Evangelists, for example, were certainly repetitions of the same types of images found in previous copies of the Beatus text. But the Gerona Beatus Apocalypse is the only copy of the commentaries to contain the series of illustrations dedicated to the life of Christ. As an original idea of the artists, these illustrations add an extra level of intertextuality to the Gerona manuscript, for they visualise for the reader narremes from the New Testament Gospels not present in the other manuscripts and, therefore, force the Gerona reader to approach the apocalyptic text in a psychologically altered state from the readers of the other copies of the same text. I believe the presence of these added illustrations to be a tool by which the artists, either of their own accord or under the direction of their supervisor, intended to hasten the reader’s arrival to the Augustinian state of *visio spiritualis*. Mireille Mentré tells us that “the preoccupations of the artist monks of the 10th and the 11th centuries, were not at all artistic but spiritual […] criteria for analysis should not be based on the idea of a figurative reconstruction of the objects in the ways they were perceived, nor on the idea of an exclusively decorative perception of painting.” With this spiritual intent in mind,

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203 I should remind the reader that the Turin manuscript also contains illustrations of the life of Christ, but that it is a faithful copy of the Gerona manuscript.

204 “[...]las preocupaciones de los monjes miniaturistas del siglo X y también del XI, no eran en modo alguno pictóricas sino espirituales [...] los criterios de análisis no deberán basarse en la idea de una”
we will now turn back to our analysis of the Gerona manuscript in order to explicate the intertextual relations that exist between the apocalyptic and the extra-apocalyptic illustrations, giving evidence from the level of the phenotext with the objective of reaching an understanding of the genotext that motivated the creation of the Gerona illustrations.

4.2 The Gerona Beatus Extra-Apocalyptic Illuminations

4.2.1 The Cross of Oviedo (folio 1v)

Before the text of the Apocalypse commentaries begins, the Gerona manuscript contains nineteen folios of illumination. These begin with the image of the Cross of Oviedo, a gold and red design from the arms of which hang the alpha and the omega of the Greek alphabet. At the bottom of the image is the lamb that represents Christ, from behind which extend upward the spear and the sponged staff used by the centurion at the crucifixion. On the blue background is inscribed *Hoc signum tuetur plus vincitur inimicus.*

Camón Aznar claims that it “either reproduces previous cruciform drawings or is inspired by the cross which Alfonso III (reigned 866-910) presented to the Asturian Cathedral of Oviedo.” As such, this cross carries great symbolic importance, not only as the sign of Christianity, but as the cross presented at the cathedral of the first Spanish kingdom to strike out against the Muslims at the beginning of the Reconquest. We also know Alfonso III to have been a great supporter of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and a ruler who was able to take the title of emperor (only with regard to the

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205 Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 123.
Christian lands in the Iberian Peninsula) after establishing control over territory south of Asturias, where he moved the Visigothic capital from Oviedo to León.\textsuperscript{207} It is of special significance that the manuscript opens with this cross, for in doing so the illustrators show on the one hand the extreme importance of the symbol of the cross in the history of Christianity, while on the other they symbolically manifest the desire of the Iberian Christians to overpower their enemies and proclaim victory in the Reconquest. As we have already seen in chapter 1, this symbol was used in the Central Middle Ages to lead the Christians into the Crusades, both in the Holy Lands and in Spain, with the belief that it would, as our illumination states, conquer the enemies and hasten the establishment of God’s kingdom. As I will comment later in this chapter, the opening image of the cross also acts as a symbol that transports the reader of the Gerona Beatus from the temporal everyday acts in which he participates to the realms of the divine through the ritual meditation of the \textit{lectio divina}.\textsuperscript{208}

\section*{4.2.2. Christ in Majesty and the Court of Heaven (folios 2r-4r)}

On the following folio we find a depiction of Christ seated in majesty. He holds in one hand a small circular object marked as \textit{mundus}, while in the other He grasps a book. Christ sits in the midst of a mandorla, a body-length halo in the shape of a figure-8 or of two overlapping circles\textsuperscript{209}, which likewise occupies the central region of a diamond

\textsuperscript{207} For a more detailed summary of this episode in Spanish history, see page Fletcher, “Early Middle Ages”, p. 75. One should also see Payne, \textit{History}, vol. 1, pp. 36-38.

\textsuperscript{208} “The cross has the sacrificial status of bridge between time and eternity and joins them to one another […] Sacrifice comes under the category of ritual, and it is as ritual, rather than doctrine, that its ambiguous mixing of mythical and historical time has most commonly been made public.” Drury, \textit{Painting the Word}, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{209} Though I have been unable to prove this, I believe this palaeo-Christian symbol to be related to the mathematical symbol for infinity ($\infty$). It can be found either in an upright or sideways position in artwork
frame. At each face of the diamond, in the interior space formed by the third frame, sit the authors of the four Gospels, holding their respective books: Matheus, Ioannes, Marcus, and Lucas. Above the outer frame we see two angels in flight, and at the bottom the two naked figures of Adam and Eve as well as a peculiar figure that Camón Aznar identifies as a serpent. Outside of the illustration of the crucifixion of Christ (folio 16v), this is one of the most brilliantly coloured illuminations in the Gerona Beatus.

This image reflects the various texts of the Bible in which Christ appears in such a majestic fashion: Revelations 4, 8, 11, 19 (which is almost a direct copy of the illumination under consideration), 22, and Daniel 7 (just to mention the ones found in the Beatus commentary collection). Following the image of the Cross of Oviedo, this image of the enthroned Christ reinforces and makes present for the reader the central Christian belief that because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, the enemies of Christianity will be put down and that the Lord will reign forever. This is, of course, the principal focus of the four Gospels, and their presence in this illumination underscores the importance of the book as instrument of pure knowledge in Carolingian and Mozarabic art. In his Rationale divinorum officiorum, Bishop Durandus of Mende (late 13th century) tells us that the patriarchs and prophets are painted with scrolls in their hands. Some of the apostles with books and some with scrolls: namely because before the advent of

from ancient to modern times in both the East and the West, with the general meaning of eternal unity. If my supposition is true, then the mandorla supports and even adds another symbolic dimension to Christ’s words in chapter 1 of the Book of Revelations – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” – and to the opening of the Gospel of Saint John, where the evangelists states that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Emeterius and Ende evidently borrowed this motif from earlier works of art, but we cannot dismiss the thought that they may have included this symbol precisely because of its connotation of everlasting unity, which is what Christ calls all to in the message of the Apocalypse.

210 Because of their position and style, Camón Aznar believes these last three figures to have been added at a later date. (“Art”, p. 124)
Christ the faith was set forth under figures, and many things were not made clear; to represent this, the patriarchs and prophets are painted with scrolls to signify that imperfect knowledge. But because the apostles were perfectly taught of Christ, therefore the books, which are emblems of this perfect knowledge, are open. But because some of them reduced their knowledge, in writing, to the instruction of others, therefore fittingly they are represented with books in their hands like doctors [...] The Divine majesty is also portrayed with a closed book in his hand which no man was found worthy to open.  

Speaking about the images of the *Bible Moralisée*, Michael Camille explains that the book in religious images, “like the Bible itself, emphasizes the role of the Word as spirit, as something which goes beyond the mere materiality of the written” and that “[m]aking it a dynamic open and shut thing without lines of script or ruling avoids the notion of the ‘flesh’ and the ‘letter’ and instead suggests the efficacy of divinity in the spiritual meaning of the Word transmitted directly by God’s revelation to man through Christ.”

The symbol of the cross, Christ seated in majesty holding the world in one hand and the book of life in the other, and the perfect knowledge of Christ as stated in the Gospels all reflect the Carolingian humanism that permeated the monasteries of Northern Spain at the time of the Gerona manuscript’s production. As Jean Leclercq tells us, the Carolingian reform (late 8th-early 9th centuries), focusing mainly on the education of the clerics but also on liturgical matters as well, is characterised as “a humanism wholly inspired by classical antiquity, but a humanism whose touchstone is Christ crucified, risen from the dead, who by His example and His grace makes us renounce evil in order to lead us to the heavenly city.”

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Folios 3v and 4r depict for the reader that heavenly city to which Leclercq refers. This impressive illustration, found only in the Gerona and Turin manuscripts, spreads over two pages, the five concentric circles of Heaven surrounding the central figure of God seated upon His throne with the sun and the moon to each side. In the five circles surrounding God’s throne we find varied figures representing a different level of Heaven: the outermost circle represents the space of the earthly in which angels come into contact with humans, and each successive circular band moving inward brings the reader closer to the throne of God. Circling God’s throne is a band of stars, after which we find the realm of legiones angelorum, a group of winged animals carrying books. Moving outward, we come to a circle occupied by angels carrying books and/or censers (volumina portantes et aromata odorants), followed by the circle of awkwardly depicted naked figures representing the souls of the elect: spiritus volant et Altissimo in trono magnificent et Altissimo adorant. This penultimate circle is broken in eight places (two of which have been almost virtually erased by the binding of the pages), where human figures representing the works of mercy stand. From each of these figures a path guides the reader by means of a legend through the inner circles back to the throne of God. As Camón Aznar states, this “neat symbol” depicts “mankind crossing the skies by the strength of his virtues”\textsuperscript{214}. The figures and the paths extending from them contain the following legends:

1) Justice (Mercedem justi accipiet) – no path legend

2) Alms (Danti erit ei pietati) – path legend: via de elemosina qui extinguit peccatum

\textsuperscript{214} Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 124.
3) Piety (Homo pietatis) – path legend: via sicut acqua qui extinguit igne

4) Fasting (non in solo pane vibit homo) – path legend: in omni verbo que procedit de ore Dei

5) Mercy (Esca et potus tribuit) – path legend: via gaudiam et pax semper invenit

6) Prudence (Propugnantis ad salvandum) – path legend: Pax et gaudiam habet in Spiritu Sancto.

Despite the worn areas at the page bindings and other areas where the paint seems to have been scraped away, this is a highly detailed painting that provides the reader with an extensive array of images and symbols that, at the same time, offers the modern scholar of medieval theology a very clear indication as to the beliefs of the time regarding the physical structure and composition of Heaven.

As one of the opening three illuminations to the Gerona Beatus, this representation of Heaven repeats both the book motif and the enthroned image of the Divine that we see in the depiction of Christ in Majesty. It is the culmination of these three illuminations: because of his death on the cross (represented by the Cross of Oviedo), Jesus conquers death (the ultimate enemy of life) and therefore opens the path to Heaven (as seen in the paths from the figures of mercy to the throne of God). This is, of course, the initial literal reading to which these images lend themselves. An anagogical, or apocalyptic, reading finds its meaning in the penultimate circle occupied by the elect and the works of mercy that divide that circle into eight segments. Only through the works of mercy can the souls of humankind aspire to the level of the elect and gain access to the visio intellectualis as described before. Thus, in preparation for the
apocalyptic judgment that all souls must endure, meditation on the cross, contemplation of the mercy of Christ, as well as good works must be performed in order for the soul to be counted among the blessed.

Applying a historical reading to the images brings us to yet another interpretation: the Cross of Oviedo, as the symbol of Iberian unity and of the strength of Christianity, because of the majesty and glory of Christ, will overcome the enemies (i.e., Islam and other forms of heresy) and bring the forces of good to favourable judgment before God. As discussed in the first chapter, Iberian Christians saw in Islam the arrival of the Antichrist, and only in his defeat could Christianity find its ultimate victory, which would bring the End of Days and the establishment of the Celestial Jerusalem. When Emeterius and Ende finished the Gerona manuscript in the year 975, the millennial year 1000 was close at hand, and many monastic calculations had determined that it would be the year in which Islam would fall at the hands of Christianity. For these reason I do not believe these first three illustrations to have been placed in the Gerona manuscript for strictly artistic reasons: Emeterius and Ende (or their artistic patron, if not them) believed humanity’s encounter with the enthroned Christ to be near, and these introductory illuminations served as a means by which the reader could prepare his mind and soul for the journey upon which he was about to embark in the commentaries on the Apocalypse.

4.2.3 The Four Evangelists (folios 4v-7r)

Having presented these very symbolic images of the cross, Christ in Glory, and of the map of Heaven the artists add six more folios depicting the Evangelists – Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – the messengers of the Word sent into the world by
Christ and the foundation upon which the rest of the New Testament is built. In some of these illustrations, the Evangelist receives the Word from Christ, whereas in others the Gospel message is passed from one angel to another. Only the first illustration, that of Saint Matthew, contains a legend written in the upper portion of the horseshoe arch: Hoc Matheus agens and ominem generaliter implet. One should also note that the background of the angelic illustrations contains nothing more than the typical coloured horizontal bands of the Beatus manuscripts, but that the images of Christ and the Evangelists appear before open curtains. This imagery reflects the revelatory nature of the Apocalypse: indicative of Christ’s revelation of the Word to the Evangelists, of the Evangelists’ revelation of the Word to the world, and of God’s apocalyptic revelation to Saint John, the open curtains point to the fact that something once hidden has been made manifest.

In his commentary on Revelations 1:10-20, Beatus tells us that the Law (the books of the Old Testament) announce the arrival of the Word (Jesus), but that the Word does not become flesh until the time of the Gospels: “in the law it was announced, in the Evangelist it was demonstrated.” Later, in part 3 of Book 2 (in which Beatus explains the meanings of various ecclesiastic terms, as well as the relationships formed among such supernatural beings as angels and spirits), Beatus explains that the word apostles in Greek translates as “messengers”, and are thus called because Christ sent them to evangelise the world: “The Greek word ‘apostles’ means ‘envoys’ in Latin. Just as ‘angels’ stand for ‘messengers’ in Greek, the same is true for apostles in Greek, which

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means ‘envoys’ in Latin. Christ sent them to preach the Gospel in the entire world”.\(^{216}\) It is in preparation for the Final Judgment that the evangelists carry the message commissioned to them by Christ throughout the world, for they are charged with preaching the truth regarding the Saviour and with guiding the souls of their followers to the Eternal Kingdom by way of faith in the Word. As evidenced in this section of his commentaries, Beatus believed the written testimony of Christ’s life on earth to have passed historically from generation to generation and to have spread extensively from one geographic region to another as a result of the initial workings of the evangelists. Like most preachers of the time, Beatus shows a desire throughout the second book of his commentaries to prepare those under his care not only for their own death and final judgment, but also to imitate the evangelists in the commission of converting those who do not believe. We will find a repetition of this evangelical theme in the illustrations following the commentaries on the first verses of the Apocalypse: whereas the initial pages of the manuscript contain these illustrations of the evangelists mentioned here, they will be seen once again directly following Beatus’s commentaries on the first twenty verses of the Book of Revelations. There, the Apostles precede a map of the world. We will return to this evangelical theme when we reach that point of the discussion.

These illustrations, grouped with the preceding ones of the cross, Christ, and Heaven form an introductory narrative of what Scholes and Kellogg call “ethical and metaphysical truths” in which “illustrative characters are concepts in anthropoid shapes.” In order to understand them as characters, we must first “understand the principles they

\(^{216}\) “Apostoli graece, latine missi interpretantur. Nam sicut graece angeli, latine nuntii vocantur, ita et graece apostolic, latine missi appellantur. Ipsos enim misit Christus evangelizare per universum mundum.” Ibid., p. 132.
illustrate through their actions in narrative framework.”

Jesus as historical man has become, through the cross, the majestic judge who sits at the centre of the heavenly court and who calls all, through the evangelists, to join the ranks of the elect in that fourth circular realm that we see in the depiction of Heaven. Jesus and the evangelists lived in historical temporality, but as characters depicted in the Gerona illustrations they join with the symbol of the cross and of the heavenly court to manifest the universal principle of Christianity, which is the Eucharist. Both medieval and modern exegetes agree that the Eucharist “is the summit, the résumé, the recapitulation of what had taken place on all the altars men have raised since their creation, of all that God has done for them and continues to do…it is the centre and core of history.”

Thus these illuminations reflect symbolically the sacrifice made by Christ and its significance to humankind, the very reason for which the ritual narrative of the Eucharist takes place. The monastic reader of the tenth century, possessor of scriptural knowledge and in constant preparation for the arrival of Christ, would have interpreted these images in such a manner.

4.2.4 The Genealogical Tables (folios 8v-14v)

Jean Leclercq explains that we cannot understand the Eucharistic celebration without reference to the Old Testament: referring to the medieval compendium of ideas related to the Eucharist entitled De sacramento altaris by Baldwin of Ford (12th century), Leclercq says that

Biblical teaching is given us according to the historical method, and dogma is revealed progressively in the course of time and through events. Baldwin’s treatise follows the same procedure. Its form resembles, as it were, two sloping

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218 Jean Leclercq, *Love*, p. 82.
lines: the first rises from the Creation to the Last Supper of Holy Thursday; the second descends to the figures in the Old Testament and sheds on them the light of Christ. From the Supper, which is the peak, the exegete can cast his glance downward on the entire past of the Hebrew people, on the whole ancient history of the Church. But the Old Testament takes on still another value. In it is seen, not only the past of the Church, but also its future. The people of God are still, in relation to the Parousia, in a stage of imperfection and incompleteness, like the stage they were in, in relation to the Incarnation, before the coming of the Messiah. The two phases of sacred history already completed are preparatory to a third. Several trilogies are used to express this gradation: praeparatio-reparatio-consummatio; figura-gratia-gloria […] For the very reason that the Old Testament is prophetic in nature, desire is perhaps the sentiment most frequently found in it: desire for the Promised Land or desire for the Messiah interpreted spontaneously by the medieval monks as a desire for Heaven and for Jesus contemplated in His glory. Thus, we are always brought back to eschatology.219

In religious exegetical terms, we know this type of interpretation by the term typology, which William Diebold defines as “a way of reading scripture in which relations are made between texts from the New Testament and those of the Old Testament”, thus creating “a peculiarly Christian notion of time.”220 In modern narratological terms, we would refer to the Old Testament as the hypotext – Text A to which Text B is related – and the New Testament as the hypertext – Text B, which is united to Text A in some way other than commentary.221 As we see in Leclercq’s observations, both approaches apply equally to the study of the Book of Revelations and to the opening illuminations of the Gerona manuscript. The artists present the symbol of the Eucharist (the cross) along with the Christ in Glory that Leclercq claims that medieval monks constantly contemplated, as well as the life granted after the Parousia to those who follow the teachings of Christ. These illuminations represent Text B (the New Testament promise of salvation) for

219 Leclercq, Love, pp. 82-83.
220 Diebold, Word and Image, p. 75. We will return to this “peculiarly Christian notion of time” later in the chapter.
221 See Allen, Intertextuality, pp. 107-108, referring to Gérard Gennette’s structural narratological terminology.
which the Old Testament history (Text A) prepares humanity. After presenting Text B in symbolic fashion, the Gerona artists present it in historical (i.e., literal) graphic form through the images of the life of Christ, passing first through Text A in a genealogical format.

The genealogical tables are not particular to the Gerona manuscript, but they do serve as a much more cohesive narrative link in this manuscript than in the others of the illuminated Beatus tradition. Whereas in other manuscripts the genealogical tables directly precede the opening illustrations of the Apocalypse, in the Gerona manuscript they link the introductory symbolic illuminations to the life of Christ, which in turn precede the apocalyptic images. Within these thirteen pages we find small depictions of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and David, some shown in the frontal theme of stasis while others take the theme of action manifest in their extended “speaking hands” posture. Following a very schematized pattern, the tables place names of numerous Old Testament characters within series of various coloured circles attached to one another by lines, each colour representing a different family.\footnote{This pattern seems similar to that presented by Pliny in his \textit{Naturalis Historia}: “Indolence has destroyed the arts, and since our minds cannot be portrayed, our bodily features are also neglected. In the halls of our ancestors it was otherwise: portraits were the object displayed to be looked at […] The pedigrees too were traced in a spread of lines (\textit{stemmata}) running near the several painted portraits.” (H. Rackham, trans. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1938, IX, p. 265.)}

Alongside the circles, either written in the blank space of the page or placed within larger circles or under Mozarabic arches, we find legends referring to historical events told of in the Old Testament. Although the tables display in graphic form the historical familial interrelations of the major characters of the Old Testament, their objective is to link the Virgin Mary to the First Parents, Adam and Eve. In the opinion of Father Cagigós Soro,
the genealogical tables “tell us that Jesus Christ is a historical figure, with deep human roots and that his coming into the world was prepared and prefigured by the former generation of the chosen people of Israel.”

This is important since the tables outline for the reader of the Beatus text the genealogical relationship that Jesus shared with the key figures of the Old Testament, as told in the first chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew and the third of the Gospel of Saint Luke, thus not only linking the Old and the New Testaments in intertextual dependence but also preparing the reader for the next set of illustrations in which the sacrificial events mentioned before will take place.

4.2.5 The Life of Christ (folios 15r-18, 189r)

Seen from a slightly different angle, the combination of the three sets of images (those preceding the genealogical tables, the tables themselves, and the subsequent illustrations of the life of Christ) summarize for the monastic reader the reason for his existence and the perfection for which he is to strive. Metaphorically, Christianity, and especially the monastic life, is a continuation of this genealogical table: through it the Church Fathers and those who follow as Christian disciples find their historical identification. In their discussion of meaning in narrative, Scholes and Kellogg tell us that it has been a long-standing tradition for Christian exegetes to see the Old Testament characters as symbols of Christ (typology) and that the entire history of humankind is to

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223 Cagigós Soro, La Seu d’Urgell, pp. 67-68.
224 “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham […] Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah. Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah, fourteen generations.” Saint Matthew 1:1-17.
225 Saint Luke presents the genealogy in reverse chronological order, beginning with Jesus and following his ancestry back to Adam.
be interpreted as a spiritual evolution from that beginning in the Garden of Eden to the end in which man will reach his perfection, or the \textit{visio intellectualis}, after the Final Judgment.\textsuperscript{226} Surely it was partly for this reason that Emeterius and Ende included the illustrations of the life of Christ in their manuscript. They finished their work just a very short time before the millennium, a time in which, as we have seen in the first chapter, a great part of Europe looked toward Christian supremacy over Islam, the arrival of Christ and the establishment of the Celestial Jerusalem. At no other time were reminders of Christ, both typological and historical, of greater importance to the evangelical mission of the Church and the preparation for the End.

As we have seen, the metaphorical sacrifice made at the Last Supper and the physical sacrifice of Christ the following day is considered by many exegetes as the turning point in the history of humankind. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, the \textit{praeparatio-reparatio} and the \textit{figura-gratia} that Leclercq speaks of has come to pass, and only the \textit{consummatio} and \textit{gloria} have still to occur. In order for humankind to reach that state of perfection in glory, the sacrifice of Jesus as man was made necessary because of the fall of Adam. Henry Osborn Taylor summarises medieval theology regarding Adam, the Devil in the form of a serpent, and the redemptive nature of Christ when he says that

\begin{quote}
[s]ince the devil’s case against man was unjust, man might defeat his lordship; but he needed an advocate (\textit{patronus}), which could be only God. God, angry at man’s sin, did not wish to undertake man’s cause. He must be placated; and man had no equivalent to offer for the injury he had done Him; for he had deserted God when rational and innocent, and could deliver himself back to God only as an irrational and sinful creature. Therefore, in order that man might have wherewithal to placate God, God through mercy gave man a man whom man might give in place of him who had sinned. God became man for man and as man gave himself for man. Thus He who had been man’s Creator became also his Redeemer. God might have redeemed man in some other way, but he took the
\end{quote}

way of human nature as best suited to man’s weakness. After our first parent had
been exiled from Paradise for his sin, the devil possessed him violently. But
God’s providence tempered justice with mercy, and from the penalty itself
prepared a remedy.  

The entire framework of the genealogical tables as presented before the illustrations of
the life of Christ outline the Old Testament history for which Jesus’ first coming was
necessary. Had God not allowed for Jesus’ death and resurrection, the *reparatio* and the
*gratia* would not have been possible, and humankind would have suffered eternally from
a *consummatio* that ended not in *gloria* but in punishment. This is part of the evangelical
message that Christ sends his Apostles into the world to preach in the illustrations of
folios 4v-7r and 52v-53r, and the *veritas* that all are to know intimately before facing the
Saviour’s second coming.

For the monastic reader of the late tenth century, that second coming was
imminent and preparing oneself was of utmost importance. The illustrations of the life of
Christ served such a purpose. On the one hand, they remind the reader of the life of
Christ as told in the Gospels by portraying His birth, the tribulations that He faced as both
a child and an adult, His death, and His resurrection. On the other, they fill the narrative
void found in other Beatus manuscripts by linking the genealogical tables to the events of
the Apocalypse, creating a more cohesive narration in which background information is
made manifest and the reader is carried visually from the beginning of time to the end
without narrative interruptions. By providing these illustrations, Emeterius and Ende
enable the reader to bring to mind that act of redemption provided by God for the
salvation of mankind: they provide the instrument by which the reader contemplates his
own sinful nature as originated in Adam, meditates upon the grace provided by God

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through Jesus Christ, and examines his own preparation for the Judgement before entering the text of the Apocalypse. That is, the illustrations of the life of Christ, as the hypertext related to the hypotext of the Apocalypse, guide the reader toward *visio spiritualis* with the intent of opening the reader’s *agens intellectus* to receive and to understand the mystery of Saint John’s Revelation.

The last two illustrations of the life of Christ, the Harrowing of Hell (folio 17v) and the Just Ones (folio 18r) summarise for the reader the end toward which the artists, as well as Beatus, plan to carry the reader. At the top of the first illustration a legend reads “Ero morsus tuus inferne; O inferne ero mors tua”\(^{228}\), below which Jesus raises the Just out of limbo after having broken its doors open. In the lower portion of the illustration Satan has taken hold of many, disallowing their escape from the inferno. Camón Aznar remarks that this illustration “is a very simple, but graphic and lively, eschatology” of “Michelangelesque grandeur.”\(^{229}\) This is, in my opinion, an accurate description of this illustration, for it does present in a very detailed and grandiose manner the breaking open of Hell and the defeat of God over death, that final end that all wish to enjoy. The following illustration portrays the Just Ones in three horizontal rows, delighting in the *visio intellectualis* to which they have been admitted: “Post resurrectionem Dni isti sunt fulgentes in Gloria” states the legend above the seated figures in the upper horizontal band.\(^{230}\) In the second we find eight men looking upward toward Christ, carrying books, chalices, and musical instruments in hand, and described as “gaudentes de resurrectione

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\(^{228}\) “I will be your sting, Hell; oh Hell, I will be your death.” In the parallel style of a mirror image, the two phrases begin in the centre of the arch and are read in downward direction: “ero morsus tuus inferne” is written backwards and must be read from right to left, whereas “O inferne ero mors tua” is read from left to right.

\(^{229}\) Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 130.

\(^{230}\) “After the resurrection of the Lord they here shine in glory.”
Domini.” The third band contains five men standing in the “talking hands” posture under African horseshoe arches, covered by another only partially legible legend that contains the words “de visionis Domini” and “et vidit ex virtute Eva.” With these illustrations the visual narrative of the life of Christ comes to an end, only to be repeated once again allegorically in the following illustration of the bird and the serpent.

4.2.6 The Bird and the Serpent (folio 18v)

This illumination, directly following the depiction of the Just Ones and preceding the Great Alpha, presents a bird much like a peacock standing with a serpent snared within its pointy beak. According to Cagigós Soro, there is no exact text to which this image refers, and, in fact, it appears in very few of the Beatus manuscripts. However, those who have studied it agree that, because of the frequency with which the two animals appear in the Bible, the bird represents Christ (or the forces of Good) and the serpent stands for Satan (or the forces of Evil). This interpretation fits perfectly within the parameters of the narrative sequence that we have seen thus far within the introductory illuminations: following the illustrations of the harrowing of Hell and of the Just before the throne of Christ, and preceding the image of the Great Alpha, this

231 “Rejoicing in the resurrection of the Lord.”
232 “Of (in) the vision of the Lord” and “and saw from (out of) the virtue of Eve.”
233 There is a passage in the Gerona manuscript that accompanies this illumination, which John Williams translates as the following: “There is said to be in the East a bird with a large and very hard beak who with a challenging hiss dares the serpent to do battle. He then deceptively covers with dirt the colorful gems with which nature has so lavishly adorned him. His surprising and humble appearance leads the serpent to be careless and overconfident. Then the bird, with his tail held before his face as a shield, attacks the head of the startled beast and pierces his brain with sharp blows. So Christ in his incarnation clothed himself in the impurity of our flesh that through a pious trick he might fool the evil deceiver. He concealed his Godhead behind the tail of his manhood, so to speak, and with the word of his mouth slew the venemous killer, the devil. As the Apostle says, ‘Through the word of his mouth he will kill the wicked.’” Williams, Early, p. 95.
illumination summarises in symbolic mode what we have just seen and what we are about to embark on. The bird, as representation of Christ, has taken hold of the serpent, that evil creature that caused the initial fall from grace in the Garden of Eden (represented here as the lush tree to the left side of the illumination) and has vanquished it forever.

Paralleling the symbolic opening of the introductory illuminations, with the Cross of Oviedo as the destructor of enemies, Emeterius and Ende close this segment of their manuscript with this elaborate symbol of Good overtaking Evil. In the span of folios between the Cross of Oviedo and the Bird, the artistic narrators carry the reader from the celestial paradise of Heaven down to earth and through the lineage and life of Jesus, to the depths of Hell and back to Heaven to again. In this short expanse of only eighteen folios, Emeterius and Ende outline for the monastic reader the history of the Church – his own spiritual evolution – in preparation for the apocalyptic events that he is about to witness in the following pages. The focus of the commentaries is the Apocalypse, and, as such, it naturally comprises the majority of the manuscript. But, as has been stated earlier, a true comprehension of the apocalyptic narrative of the Book of Revelations cannot exist without first understanding why the Apocalypse will take place. The tenth- and eleventh-century monks of Spain recognized the intertextual relationship between the Apocalypse and the rest of the Bible, just as they believed to have perceived in their own surroundings the fulfilment of those evangelical teachings pointing toward the Second Coming of Christ.
4.2.7 The Alpha and Omega (folios 19r, 284r)

With the Great Alpha of folio 19r we begin the second, and largest, narrative segment of the Gerona commentaries – the Apocalypse. In Revelations 1:8, God proclaims “Ego sum alpha et omega, principium, et finis, qui est et qui erat, et qui venturus est omnipotens,” thus uniting the beginning with Adam and Eve to the end in which the world as it is known will be consumed. In the centre of the illumination God sits in majesty, in the way that we see Jesus on folio 2r, holding the world in one hand and a book in the other, and below him are two swans or phoenixes, both representations of immortality. In the upper level of the illumination appear the former Apocalypse commentators Saints Leander, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Fulgentius, Gregory, Apringius, and Isidore. At the end of the manuscript, in union with the opening Alpha to form the narrative frame within which the Apocalypse narrative is told, an elaborately designed Omega closes the Beatus commentaries. Unlike the Alpha of folio 19r, the Omega of 284r stands alone, devoid of human or animal depictions. In an attempt to link the physical shapes of the letters Alpha (A) and Omega (ω), as well as their position within the Greek alphabet, to the divinity of Christ and the perfection of the divine plan in the Apocalypse, Beatus tells us that

The very shape of the letter A, the same in Greek as in Latin, is composed of three features of the same size for which, and not without reason, our elders said that it represented the unity of the divinity. The ω is written in Greek with three equal rods that depend on one another. However, in Latin the O closes with the roundness of the circle. The divinity also manifests itself in this closed form, as protecting and containing everything. Even more, with reference to the theme of the elements and the letters, these elements are the origins of science and the art of guiding the ignorant to knowledge. As such, the alpha, beginning of wisdom, teaches that Christ, the Son of God, is that wisdom; the omega, which is the end

234 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”
(in Greek A and ω) and O among us, which occupies an intermediate position, means that the beginning of wisdom, the end and that which is between the two are the same Lord Jesus Christ, mediator between God and man. That added, beginning and end not only refers to the first elements of the letters, that is, to A and ω, but it teaches the power of His greatness, because He is the beginning of all things and in Him resides the fate of all.235

Beatus’s commentaries here illustrate the belief that all of creation, even that which was created by humans, must reflect the omnipotence of God. Applying his own form of logic to God’s proclamation at the beginning of the Apocalypse and to the symbolic structure of the two languages used in Christian writings, Latin and Greek, Beatus repeats what we have already seen in the illustrations up to now: God created the world, placed humankind in the world, allowed for Christ’s intercessory redemption, and is the end in which the human spirit reaches eternal perfection. God proclaims His eternal supremacy symbolically by way of the Greek alphabet in which He states that He is both the beginning and the end of all creation; but Beatus extends God’s proclamation to include the Latin letter O, the equivalent of the Greek omega, though it sits between the first and last letters of the Roman alphabet. In so doing, Beatus affirms that God, through the divinity of Jesus, is not only the beginning and the end but also everything in the middle

235 “Nam figura ipsa litterae A tam in graecis litteris, quam in latinibus, tribus dicitur rivulis, pari aequalitate porrrectis, unde non sine causa divinitatis unitatem dixerunt esse maiores nostri, ω, tribus aequalibus in graeco subiacentibus ex parte sub rectis, scribitur. In latino autem O quadam circuli rotunditate concluditor. Nam et in hac conclusione continens omnia, et protegens, divinitas declaratur. Porro quod ad elementorum ac litterarum pertinet rationem, elementa haec scientiae sunt initia, et quaedam ars stultos ad sapientiam ducens. Ergo alpha initium sapientiae, ipsamque sapientiam Christum Dei filium manifestat: Omega quod est complementum (graece A et ω) et apud nos O, medietas quaedam habetur; significat et initium sapientiae, et complementum, et medietatem, ipsum esse Dominum Iessum Christum, mediatorem Dei et hominum. Quod adiecit, princiwpium et finis, non tantum priora elementa litterarum, id est A et ω narravit, sed in magnitudinis suae docuit potestatem, quia ipse est omnium principium, et in illo omnium exitus constat.” Obras Completas, p. 78.
as well. Likewise, through the symbol of the O, a closed letter, Beatus proclaims that God contains and protects everything within His power. That is, God created humanity, God became human, and God will end humanity: the $A$, the $O$, and the $\Omega$.

4.2.8 The Apostles and the Map of the World (folios 52v-53r, 54v-55r)

As has been pointed out, Beatus dedicates part of the second book of his Commentaries to a wide discussion of the Church and of all the elements that at his time comprised it. He begins by saying that

$Ecclesia$ is a Greek word that in Latin means ‘assembly’ since it calls together all who pertain to it. $Catholic$ means universal, from the Greek ‘kata’ and ‘olos’, which stands for ‘according to the totality.’ It is not limited to specific regions, like the little groupings of heretics, but extends throughout the entire world.²³⁶

This commentary directly follows that of the opening verses of the Book of Revelations, in which Saint John sees seven stars and seven lamp stands, representative of the seven angels of the Church and the seven churches to whom John is to send his message, respectively. Five apocalyptic illustrations accompany those verses before we reach the images of the Apostles and the Mapae Mundi on folios 52-55, and, though the map of the world is included in other Beatus manuscripts, the images of the Apostles are not. Neither, however, refers directly to the apocalyptic narrative of the Book of Revelations, but are additional illuminations that accompany the text of Beatus’s commentaries. That is, here the artists present a depiction of some aspect of the commentaries themselves, not...

²³⁶ “$Ecclesia$ graecum est, quod in latinum vertitur $convocatio$, propter quod omnes ad se vocet. $Catholic$ id est universalis, ex $χατά$, et $όλος$, id est secundum totum. Non enim sicut conventicula haereticorum, in aliquibus, regionum partibus coercetur sed per totum terrarum orbem dilatata diffunditur.” Beatus of Liébana, $Obras Completas$, p. 122.
a visualization of the Apocalypse, thus forming an additional visual text comprised of two separate illuminations that must be read together as a narrative unit inserted within the visual text of the Apocalypse as additional visual commentary.

In Book II, section 3 of the Commentaries, Beatus outlines the geographic locations entrusted to each of the Apostles in their evangelical mission: Petrus, Romam; Andraeas, Acaiam; Thomas, Indiam; Jacobus, Hispaniam; Ioannes, Asiam; Mathaeus, Macedoniam; Philipus, Gallias; Bartholomaeus, Licaoniam; Simon Zelotes, Aegyptum; Mathias, Iudaem; and Iacobus frater Domini, Ierusalem.\textsuperscript{237} Beatus interprets the angels and the lamp stands that Saint John describes as the evangelization of the world\textsuperscript{238}, and, as we have already seen, the word \textit{apostle} in Greek translates as ‘messenger’. Beatus places a very large emphasis on the act of preaching and of converting the entirety of humanity to Christianity, and so it is of no surprise that the artists would choose to depict this importance in graphic form. Spreading across folios 52v-53r the illustrations portray twelve men, eleven of whom wear cruciform halos. Beatus lists eleven Apostles, all of whom are depicted in the graphic lineup (though Mathias, as differentiated from the others, does not carry the legend stating who he is), and the twelfth, a bald figure without a halo, is labeled as “Paulus cum ceteris apostolis.”\textsuperscript{239} In the space above the Apostles another legend reads “Omnes apostoli simul in unum et patria sortiti sunt”\textsuperscript{240}, reflecting apostolic unity both as a group and in mission, as well as their dispersal throughout the

\textsuperscript{237} \textit{Obras Completas}, p. 134. Historians of Spain are quick to point out that this is the first documented mention of Saint James in Iberia and, as such, became one of the textual basis upon which the cult to Santiago in Compostela began to grown in the years preceding the millennium.

\textsuperscript{238} “Haec est proprius angelus, et candelabra, id est, adnuntiatio praedicationis, et homo cui adnuntiatur.” (“This is precisely the angel and the lamp stand, that is, the announcement of the evangelization and the man to whom it is announced.”) \textit{Obras Completas}, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{239} “Paul with other apostles.”

\textsuperscript{240} “All the apostles are at one time as one and from their land they are sent forth.” Though the legend in the illustration reads “et patria sortiti sunt”, the correct reading should be “ex patria sortiti sunt.”
known world. The Apostles stand in a line, some holding books while others hold either a chalice or nothing at all, in semi-profile postures looking at one another in dialogue. Thomas is the only one of the twelve who stands in a frontal position, looking, as it were, at the reader of the image.

The Gerona map divides the world into three sectors, each surrounded by water: Asia in the upper region, at the centre of which is Jerusalem and a depiction of Adam and Eve; to the lower left of the map is Europe; and to the lower right is Africa. This map is not an invention of Emeterius and Ende, for it appears in other Beatus manuscripts as well, and seems to be an appropriation from Saint Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*.241 Despite its unoriginality to the Beatus artists, the map plays an important narratological role within these opening Apocalypse illuminations: it graphically displays for the visual reader the historical spread of Christianity through the works of the Apostles, but it also visualizes the metaphor of the angels and the lamp stands that Beatus creates in his earlier commentary. In like manner, it visualizes for the medieval monastic reader one of the cosmological principles around which his belief system circled: Jerusalem as the centre of the universe. Mircea Eliade points out that, for the medieval Christian mind, the holy city of Jerusalem, as the site of the former Garden of Eden redeemed through Jesus’ crucifixion, was considered the *umbilicus terrae*.242 We see this clearly in the Gerona

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241 I refer the reader to the following studies for detailed information regarding the form and use of maps in the Beatus manuscripts, as well as in other medieval manuscripts of around the same time period: section 3.7 of García-Arráez Ferrer, *Miniatura*; Vázquez de Parga, “Mapa”; and Menéndez Pidal, *Mozárabes y Asturianos*.

map, in which the evangelists depart from the centre of creation and salvation in order to spread the Word of God throughout the world in order to prepare humankind for the Second Coming of Christ.

One should note that the map of the Gerona manuscript (as well as that of its copy in Turin) places special emphasis on the region designated as Spain: the artists are careful to point out the Pyrenees Mountains, Asturias, Galicia, Baetica, the Tagus and Guadalquivir Rivers, as well as the city of Zaragoza. At the edge of the map has been written the legend “Sancti Jacobi Apostoli” to point out the evangelist’s arrival to the Iberian Peninsula. Though there is no textual evidence to support this claim, I believe the importance placed on Iberia in this map to be a reflection of the Christian preoccupation with the presence of Islam in Spain at the time. In chapter 1, I describe the antagonism between Christianity and Islam during this period of Spanish history, as well as the belief that a Reconquest of the former Christian lands would bring the Church closer to its defeat of the Antichrist. Spain had once been evangelized by Saint James, and contemporary Christian belief was that it stood in need such teaching again: Alvarus of Córdoba was outraged at the lack of initiative on the part of the Christians to change their situation under the Muslims, and others outside of the peninsula (Charlemagne, for example) saw Spain as a land in great need of Christian military intervention. By the late 900s when Emeterius and Ende took the charge of decorating what would later be the Gerona manuscript, the Christian apocalyptic desire to defeat the perceived antagonisms of Islam was strong, both in Jerusalem and in Spain, each having become centres of pilgrimage and prayer.
4.2.9 The Animals and the Statue, and the Woman on the Beast (folios 61r, 63r)

As Beatus continues his introductory notes to Book II, speaking mainly about the Church and the evil that it must face, he brings the reader to a section entitled De bestia, to which the illumination on folio 61r pertains. The images found here are not particular to the Gerona manuscript, though they do show an evolution of artistic design not seen in previous manuscripts. The illumination consists of four beasts that represent those of the prophetic dreams in the Book of Daniel (chapter 7). Below the beasts stands a metallic statue upon whose left foot a large stone has fallen from the mountain painted next to it, which we saw earlier in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of Daniel 2. Biblical scholars consider the Book of Daniel as the Old Testament antecedent to the Book of Revelations, for the images that Daniel sees in his dreams parallel many of those seen by Saint John in his vision of the Apocalypse. Beatus explains that these four beasts represent the world, “which is divided into four parts: East, West, North, and South.”\(^{243}\): the lion represents Babylon; the bear is the Medes and the Persians; the leopard stands for Macedonia; and the most horrible of the beasts, with teeth of iron and twelve long sharp horns, symbolises Rome since “throughout that kingdom all the martyrdoms took place.”\(^{244}\) Though divided, the four kingdoms together composed the one world, which Beatus compares to the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

\(^{243}\) “qui in quatuor partibus dividitur, Oriente, Occidente, Septentrione, et Meridie.” Obras Completas, p. 156.
\(^{244}\) “per ipsorum regnum facta sunt omnia martyria” Ibid.
As we see in the illumination, the artists have depicted these four metals through the use of different colours: a gold head, a chest and arms of silver, the abdomen and upper legs of bronze, and the feet of iron (upon one of which a stone rests). In a very threateningly eschatological manner, Beatus warns the forces of evil that God’s law will prevail and their vile ways will be put to an end:

You should clearly know that the end of the world is represented in these feet, because they are at the extreme part of the body. The stone that falls from the mountain is the Son of God, born of the Virgin, that strikes the statue on the feet, that is, that comes at the end of the world, and brings the peace of the world with the angels, and He is the King of the Church for the entire world, that is, that the stone fills the world.”

Although we see the images of these beasts again in the narrative of the Apocalypse and in that of the Book of Daniel, it is structurally important that they appear at this particular point in the Beatus commentaries. The first three chapters of the Book of Revelations introduce the apocalyptic message through Saint John’s letters to the seven churches of Asia, letters in which he points out the sin of the world but encourages them to persevere in their evangelical mission. The reader of the commentaries will naturally associate the evils described in this section to the perceived evils of his own time, which, for the Spanish Christians, would have been either the Adoptionists in the time of Beatus or the Muslims (and the christiani muti) in the period directly following. The apocalyptic text, coupled with the image of Jesus as the stone that would topple the evil empire, provided

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245 Beatus tells us the statue is comprised of a gold head, a chest and arms of silver, abdomen and upper legs of bronze, and the lower legs and feet of iron and clay: “sed in quatuor partibus discoloribis membris conspicit, id est, caput aureum, quod est prima pars mundi; pectus et brachia de argento, quod est secunda: tertia ex aere, quod est tertia pars, id est venter et femora: quarta vero pedes ferreos et ex parte fictiles.” Obras Completas, p. 156.

246 “In his pedibus aperte cognosce finem istius saeculi esse; quia pedes extrema pars corporis est. Unde et lapis de monte veniens, id est, Dei filius de Virgine, hanc statuam in pedibus percutere dicitur id est, in finem mundi venire, et mundi pacem cum angelis sociare, et ipse Rex in universum mundum suae Ecclesiae esse, hoc est lapidem mundum implere.” Ibid.
both textual and visual support to the idea that Christianity, as the forces of Good, would prevail over those of Evil. As a means of visualising Beatus’s commentaries on these passages, the artists borrow imagery from previously illustrated Bibles (the Book of Daniel, specifically) in order to foreshadow for the reader the ghastly images that he is soon to take in.

Even more descriptive of the forces of evil is the following section entitled *De muliere super bestiam*, in which Beatus, in quite possibly one of the most striking uses of rhetoric in the entire *Commentaries*, compares all of the evil in the world with the woman seated atop the beast. In a very docile tone compared to the rest of the passage, Beatus begins this section by stating that “The woman atop the beast is vice, the works of evil, pleasures, fornication, impurity, greed, jealousy, theft, envy, vanity, pride, gluttony.”

Despite her appalling character, the image given by Emeterius and Ende is anything but horrible, and Camón Aznar believes her to be “[o]ne of the most beautiful miniature paintings in the *Beato de Gerona*.“ The textual model for this image comes directly from Revelations 17, in which the woman is described as dressed in purple and scarlet, drunk off the blood of the martyrs, and covered in fine jewellery. In this guise, she represents all the kings of Babylon and Rome who, throughout the Old and the New Testaments, persecuted the people of God and brought them to death. Whereas the

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248 Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 137.

249 “And I saw a woman seated atop a beast of scarlet colour, covered with blasphemous titles; the beast had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, glowed of gold, precious stones and pearls. She carried in her hand a golden cup filled with abominations and of the impurities of prostitution. And on her forehead a name was written: Mystery: Babylon, the great mother of whores and of the abominations of the world. And I saw that the woman was filling herself with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” (“Et vidi mulierem sedentem super bestiam coccineam, plenam nomine blasphemiae, habentem capita septem, et cornua decem. Et mulier erat circumdata purpura, et
medieval reader would have associated the statue of the previous illustration with the spread of Islam, the woman of the second illustration would have embodied all evil, both within and outside of the Church. She represents the seven deadly sins, the vices of the world, which are to be found in all places and in all ranks of society. Beatus explains at length that there exist evildoers within the Church, but that it must at all times remain faithful to God in the hopes that He will root out the malevolence in favour of the upright: “No one can claim for himself the victory of Christ. No one before the judgment can judge things related to men. If the Church were already purified, what would we reserve for the Lord?”

It is with this message that Beatus continues his commentaries, entering now completely into the vision of Saint John.

4.2.10 Noah’s Ark (folios 102v-103r)

Before ending the introductory notes to Book II of his Commentaries, Beatus inserts a brief excerpt from a treatise on Noah’s ark by the Spanish bishop Gregory of Elvira (ca. 320-ca. 392). The excerpt repeats an idea that Beatus has already mentioned in Book I, which states that “uta arca Noe, ita et Ecclesia.” The illustration that accompanies the passage from Book II shows an ark of five floors, the lower four of which pertain to the animals, and the upper to Noah and his companions. As Noah accepts the fig branch from the dove that is entering the opening at the top of the ark, a raven attacks the body of a dead human lying among the many floating in the waters.

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251 “Just as Noah’s Ark, so the Church.” Ibid., p. 90.
below. As Cagigós Soro points out, the ark takes the shape of a church, not of an actual boat, thus symbolizing the relation between the ark and the Church, between Noah and Christ, and between the Old and the New Testaments. Though García-Arráez Ferrer believes Beatus’s inclusion of the commentary on Noah’s ark to be somewhat out of place, I believe it to reflect Beatus’s intention of giving as much textual support from the Bible as possible to the divinity of Christ and the Church, the argument that his Commentaries endeavour to make in order to prepare the reader for the judgment to come. Even more, the inclusion of Noah’s ark here brings to a cohesive end the section related to the Church, thus connecting the Old and the New Testaments in the typological manner customary of medieval exegetes.

Gregory of Elvira’s comments compliment the letters sent to the seven churches by Saint John, for in them the bishop recognizes that the Church faces tribulations, even from within (remember Beatus’s comments against Bishop Elipandus of Toledo), but that it must continue with its mission in order to live in the grace of God. Borrowing his words, Beatus says of the Ark that “in it there was every class of animal, just as there is in the Church people from all lands and customs”, and that

[t]he Ark faces danger in the flood; the Church faces danger in the world. Noah left [the ark], planted a vineyard, and, drinking from it, became drunk. Born also of the flesh, Christ planted a church, and he suffered. The elder son laughed at his naked father, yet the younger covered him. Likewise, the Jews laughed at God

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252 Cagigós Soro, La Seu d’Urgell, pp. 97-99.
253 “La conexión de este texto con los comentarios a las siete cartas es bastante ligera, y choca su presencia aquí puesto que en este tratado solo se cita al Apocalipsis una vez.” (“This text’s connection with the commentaries on the seven letters is rather weak, and its presence here is odd since in this treatise the Apocalypse is only mentioned one time.”) García-Arráez Ferrer, Miniatura, p. 92.
254 “[...] ut in illa omnium generum animalia, ita et in hac Ecclesia universarum et gentium et morum homines sunt.” Obras Completas, p. 176.
crucified, and the Gentiles honored him. I lack the time necessary to explain through comparisons all of the symbols of the Church found in the ark.\textsuperscript{255} For Beatus the anagogical meaning of Noah’s ark was clear: it prefigured the Church in both physical and spiritual form as the vessel through which those who dwelled within would find their salvation. Nonetheless, just as a boat in rough waters stands the risk of toppling over and sinking, the Church suffers attacks on all sides and must remain firm in its path in order to reach the victory toward which it carries its followers. That is, of course, the Celestial Jerusalem promised to the faithful after the Last Judgment. Beatus reminds us that the name \textit{Noah} in Hebrew translates to \textit{respite}, and that Jesus will grant eternal respite to the Just after the Final Judgment has taken place:

So it will be when the Lord comes to judge the world with the flame of fire. He will put an end to all that is bad, to the rebellious angels, and to all the crimes of the world. Only to the saints will he give respite in the kingdom of the world to come. This ark, which was constructed of incorruptible wood, indicates, as I have said before, the venerable wood of the Church, which will endure forever with Christ.\textsuperscript{256}

For the monastic readers of the tenth century, especially those in lands occupied by Muslims or forms of Christian heretics, no long explanations of this metaphor would have been necessary: Beatus, and those in the immediate centuries following, lived a time of theological formation for the Church in which differing views of Jesus brought about war and bloodshed, as well as the edification of the Church by those strong enough to persist in their orthodox beliefs. It was a time in which both the laity and the clerics


\textsuperscript{256} “Sic et cum venerit Dominus iudicare saeculum in flamma ignis, tunc malis omnibus ac refugarum angelorum, cunctisque mundi sceleribus daturas est finem: sanctis vero solis requiem in regno futuri aevi praebiturus. Nam arca haec, quae de lignis imputribilibus constructa est, venerandae, ut dixi, fabricam Ecclesiae indicabat, quae semper est cum Christo mansura.” Ibid., pp. 270, 272.
looked to the skies for the coming of Christ, and in which eschatological symbolism was attached to nearly everything. Approached from this angle, the Old Testament narration of Noah and the ark and the New Testament narration of the Apocalypse complement one another in such a way that the former, a very literal account of the great flood and of those who survived it, becomes the means by which one may more easily interpret and understand the very symbolic nature of the latter. The Old Testament narration here serves not only as the typological hypertext but also the interpretative epitext.

4.2.11 The Palm Tree (folio 147v)

Later in the Commentaries, in Book IV, Beatus introduces another symbol for which the artists provide a visualisation: the Just and the palm tree. This discussion directly follows the commentaries on Revelations 7:4-11, in which the 144,000 Just Ones appear before the throne of the Lamb singing praises and waving palm branches on high. Just as he had done with the allegory of Noah and the ark, Beatus borrows this one from an earlier text: the sixth-century Moralia in Job by Pope Gregory the Great. The illustration, marked by the legend “Here this man who desires to be filled with the palm tree and this other who helps him by holding the rope.”\footnote{“u[bi] hic omo cupiens crapulare palme et his alter iubamine porrigit p[er] fune” (I wish to thank Professor Wayne Redenbarger for his assistance in deciphering this legend.)}, depicts a tall lush palm tree up one side of which a man climbs, hatchet in hand, as another man below holds the rope taught to prevent the first from falling.
As has been the case with the extra-Apocalyptic illustrations up to this point, the image of the palm tree is another symbolic representation of the Church that has, in the words of Camón Aznar, “more of a doctrinal than an apocalyptic significance.” In this case we see a clear reference not only to the preceding illustration of the Apocalypse verse that states, “they stood facing the throne and facing the Lamb, dressed in white vestments, and with palms in their hands,” but also to the ritual action of the Church on Palm Sunday, during which the faithful wave palm branches at the celebrants as they proceed toward the altar at the beginning of the Mass. The Church, we must remember, is the community of the faithful that, in different places at different times, has come under the attacks of governments or of other religious institutions. Beatus reminds the reader of this, referring to the persecution of the Christian martyrs in Rome and also to the doctrinal attacks brought on by heretical groups, when he says that the life of the faithful resembles the form of a palm tree:

That describes nothing other than the Church. And where it says “with palm branches in their hands”: not without reason is the life of the just compared with the palm tree since it is rough to the touch and covered with dry bark at the bottom, but is beautiful at the top because of its fruits; at the bottom it is thin with the wrappings of its bark, but above it extends outward with ample greenness. The life of the elect is the same: despised below but beautiful above.

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258 Camón Aznar, “Art”, p. 146.
259 “[…] stantes in conspectu throni, et in conspectu Agni, amici stolis albis, et palmae in manibus eorum.” (Revelations 7:9)
260 This has been a tradition in the Church since as early as the fourth century, and possibly even earlier: “Peter, Bishop of Edessa, about 397 ordered the benediction of the palms for all the churches of Mesopotamia. The ceremonies had their origin most probably in Jerusalem. In the ‘Peregritio Sylviae’, undertaken between 378 and 394 […] all went back to the city, repeating ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.’ All the children bore branches of palm or olive. The faithful passed through the city to the Anastasia, and there recited Vespers.” (“Palm Sunday”. In the 1914 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia on CD-Rom. Remy Lafont and Arthur Scanlan, Nihil Obstat, John Cardinal Farley and Patrick Hayes, Archbishops of New York and Imprimaturs. Copyright, 2003 by Kevin Knight.)
261 “Nihil est enim quod praeter Ecclesiam describat. Quod autem ait, palmae in manibus eorum, non immerito iustorum vita palmae comparatur: quia scilicet palma inferius tactu aspera est, et quasi aridus corticibus obvoluta; superius vero et visu et fructibus pulchra: inferius corticum suarum involutionibus
Through this description of the Christian life Beatus continues with the persuasive rhetoric that he has used throughout the Commentaries as a means of guiding the reader toward a spiritual understanding of the Church’s role in the events of the Apocalypse. As a textual tool used for individual contemplation and spiritual enlightenment, the image of the palm tree provides a focal point upon which the eye may rest during the meditation of the commented passage. However, we must also remember that some of those who had access to this manuscript would have been preachers: this passage provided material upon which a sermon could be built in such a way that the uneducated masses could comprehend the message of the Apocalypse. By calling to mind the image of the palm tree in the manuscript, the preacher used an image with which they would have been familiar and, thus, could more easily persuade them of the message that he wished to convey: the faithful must endure trials along the path to righteousness, just as the man climbing the palm in the illustration scrapes and cuts his hands in his ascent, but the journey ends in the paradise of the Lord. The palm tree, then, as Camón Aznar points out, does have a doctrinal significance, but we must also see it as yet another of the many symbols of the Apocalypse: its rough vertical shaft points the reader towards Heaven, the final goal of the faithful after passing through the Final Judgment.

angustatur; sed superius amplitudine pulchrae viriditatis expanditur. Sic quippe est electorum vita, despecta inferius, superius pulchra." Obras Completas, p. 408.
4.2.12 The Baptism of Jesus (folio 189r)

To reach that Paradise, Church doctrine states that one must first be baptized. Among the illustrations of the Apocalypse, in the commentaries of the thirteenth chapter, Emeterius and Ende placed a painting of Jesus’ baptism in the River Jordan. This is a simple illustration in which the River Jordan, full of fish, branches into two smaller streams at the top of the page, carrying the labels Fons Jor and Fons Dan. John the Baptist has taken hold of Jesus, who stands in the midst of a large font in the middle of the river as a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, descends over His head. To the right of the illustration a legend reads “Ubi Xpi et Joannes in Jordane flumine tinctus fuerunt.” Just as with the other depiction of the life of Christ, no other manuscript except for the Turin copy of the Gerona Apocalypse contains this image. To those who have studied it, this image seems out of place: the preceding apocalyptic text relates the narremes of the beasts of the sea and of the earth, and those following the image tell of the 144,000 who praise the Lamb on high. Directly before this image are the charts of the Antichrist customary to the Beatus tradition, in which the author outlines the names of the Antichrist following the rubric of the alphabet. So, the question that remains

262 The dove has traditionally represented the Holy Spirit in Christian iconography because of the manner in which the Gospels describe the baptism of Jesus. Saint Matthew, for example says that “after Jesus was baptised, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the spirit of God descend like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 3:16-17)
263 “Here are Christ and John in the Jordan River where they were dipped.”
264 Among the Beatus commentaries we find in many of the manuscripts tables on which the various names of the Antichrist are outlined. Beatus gives a lengthy description of these names and tells the reader how he is to use the charts provided. Due to the length of the passage, I will not copy it here, but refer the reader to Appendix C for the text, in which Beatus explains the significance of the number 666 that has traditionally been known as the “mark of the beast.”
unanswered with regard to this illustration is precisely that of its existence: why did the artists place it here instead of among the other illustrations of the life of Christ at the beginning of the manuscript?

One suggested explanation could be that the artists did not place the folio here and that it was simply misplaced at some point in the history of the manuscript, but this explanation does not suffice since the opposite face of the folio continues the commentary where it last left off. Another possible explanation, though unlikely, is that, for whatever reason, the page was simply left blank after the copyist finished the text, and the artists were faced with providing an image that suited their liking. Camón Aznar questions whether the illustration could be linked in some way to Revelations 14:2 where Saint John states that “And I heard voices from the heavens like rushing water and like heavy thunder.” Though I do not wish to disregard this possibility, it seems dubious considering that illustrations referring to particular passages of the Commentaries typically follow those passages instead of precede them. I believe that the artists had other ideas in mind and that the placement of the this illustration in this particular part of the manuscript follows a line of reasoning that does include the fourteenth chapter of Revelations, but only insofar as it serves as a conjunction between the thirteenth and the fourteenth. The fourteenth chapter stands out as a turning point in the narration of the Apocalypse, for it is at this point that the reader of the text and the observer of the illustrations realize that the forces of evil have reached the height of their power and are

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265 “Et audivi vocem de caelo, sicut vocem aquarum multarum, et sicut tonitrui magni.”
at the point of being destroyed forever. The Beast of the Earth and the Beast of the Sea have been unleashed, and the Lamb of God is about to appear on high to lead His armies against them.

Throughout the Commentaries, Beatus makes constant allusions to the Church and to the necessity of baptism and penance in order to attain entrance into the Eternal Paradise. Thus, the extra-apocalyptic illustrations that we have seen up to this point have all related to the institution of the Church in some way: it beginnings with the Old Testament prophets, its establishment with the life of Christ, its proliferation through the works of the Apostles, and the life that it offers through its teachings. This illustration of the baptism of Jesus continues that commentary on the Church by focusing on the institutional sacrament of baptism as the means by which the faithful are granted access to Heaven. For Beatus, as well as for the exegetes before him and the monastic brothers that copied and illustrated his Commentaries after him, Church doctrine unlocked the mysteries of Holy Scripture, which could only be understood by the faithful in full union with and under the guidance of the Church. Outlining the process through which one journeys on his way to union with the Church and, consequently, with God, Beatus says:

He who listens to the doctrine of the faith but who has yet to receive baptism is called a catechumen. The Greek word ‘catechumen’ means ‘listener’ in Latin. He is also called competent since he asks for the grace of Christ after receiving instruction in the faith. This is because ‘competent’ comes from ‘solicit’ or ‘ask for’. When someone who is still pagan comes to the faith, while he is instructed in order that he believe, he is called a catechumen. When he has believed correctly and has asked for baptism, he is then called competent. When he is bathed in the waters of baptism, he is known as faithful. When he is anointed with chrism, that is, with the unction, he is called a Christian.”

266 “Catechumenus dictus pro eo quod adhuc doctrinam fidei audit, necdum tamen baptismum recepit. Nam catechumenus graece, latine auditor interpretatur. Competens vocatus, quia post instructionem fidei competit gratiam Christi. Inde ab appetendo competens vocatur. Cum aliquis iam paganus ad fidem venit, cum instruitur ut credit, catechumenus dicitur: cum recte crediderit, et baptizari se postulat, competens
The prologue to Book II of the Commentaries functions within the text as a glossary in which the author lays out for the reader definitions of the terms that he will use throughout the text, the majority of which have to do with the Church (ecclesiastic titles of those who comprise the Church, definitions of words related to heresies and other “enemies of the Church”, etc.). Beatus highlights the importance of the Church from the beginning of Book II, for not only is the first word of the text ecclesia but the very title of the prologue clues the reader in to the subject matter: *Incipit prologus libri secundi de ecclesia et synagoga, quid cuius propriè dicantur, et quis in qua habitator esse dignoscatur, plenissime lector agnoscas.* From the structural perspective, this simply reflects the nature of the first verses of the Book of Revelations, in which Saint John sends letters to the Seven Churches of Asia. Beatus, however, will take this as a narrative motif throughout his commentaries, making the Church the centre of importance.

As part of his commentary on the characteristics of the Church, Beatus includes the Apostolic Creed in which part of the list of beliefs that the Christian is to profess includes “The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and we hope to gain through it the remission of our sins, by way of the only baptism of the Trinity.” Though he includes baptism under the heading of “Symbolum”, Beatus refers to it as a necessary symbol without which salvation is impossible: he has already stated that one is not Christian (i.e., a follower of Christ) unless he has passed through the waters of baptism and been

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Obras Completas, p. 142.
267 “Here begins the prologue to Book II, about the Church and the Synagogue, so that you, reader, know completely about their individual characteristics, and who forms each one.” Ibid., p. 122.
268 “Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam et Apostolicam, et speramus nos per eam habere remissionem peccatorum per Trinitatis unum baptisma.” Ibid., p. 172.
269 This section may be found on pages 170-179 of the Obras Completas.
anointed by the representative of Christ on earth, or the priest. Likewise, it is only through baptism that the Holy Spirit enters the believer and allows him to be counted among the elect at the Last Judgment. In his commentary on Noah’s ark, Beatus compares the physical dimensions of the boat with the cross on which Jesus died and to the number of days between Easter and Pentecost, ending his commentary with a repetition of the significance of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the baptised:

This means that at Pentecost, that is, at the fiftieth day of the passion on the cross of the Lord, the Holy Spirit would descend, through which we may obtain the hope of salvation and the glory of the celestial kingdom.270

With the intent of reinforcing this idea for the reader at the beginning of Book III, Beatus repeats what he has already said in Books I and II of his Commentaries. The prologue to Book III states that “Incipit liber tertius, recapitulata Christi nativitate, eadem aliter dictur.”271 In this section, however, Beatus once again introduces the use of symbolism, representing the Holy Spirit as a rainbow that shines upon those who accept baptism and union with the Church:

Also, by another form, the rainbow, through fire and water, is a sign of the Holy Spirit and of baptism, since after the coming of Christ the force of the Holy Spirit shined over the human race, because it washed God’s elect with the water of baptism and enflamed them with the fire of divine love. As the Truth says: ‘he who is not reborn in the water of the Holy Spirit cannot enter the Kingdom of God.’ This rainbow is in the clouds on rainy days. The clouds are the flesh of Christ; its rain, the words of preaching. This is because in the incarnation of the Lord the mist of preaching is made manifest so that by the grace of the Lord the hearts of the believers will be reconciled.272

270 “Hoc significabat, quod Pentecoste, id est, quinquagesima die post passionem dominicae crucis Spiritus Sanctus descensus esset, per quem et spem salutis, et caelestis regni gloriam consequi et obtinere possumus.” Obras Completas, p. 278.
271 “Here begins Book III, the birth of Christ recapitulated, the same truths will be stated in another way.” Ibid., p. 280. (My emphasis.)
272 “Aliter quippe per ignem et aquam Spiritum Sanctum significat et baptismum, quia post Christi adventum et virtus Sancti Spiritus humano generi claruit, quod electos Dei et aqua baptismatis lavit, et igne divini amoris accendit. Sicut veritas ait: Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto, non potest videre regnum Dei. Qui arcus in nube est in die pluviae. Nubes caro Christi est: pluvia eius verba 205
That is, because of the death and resurrection of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit, those who undergo the baptism administered by the Church gain the opportunity to be counted among the blessed. We see this in the illustration of folio 107r, the depiction of Saint John’s vision of the enthroned Christ surrounded by the twenty-four elders and the transparent pool. Beatus states that the water of that pool is the water of baptism, and that the presence of the oil lamps above the water proves the Spirit’s presence in the ritual act.\(^{273}\)

As the reader approaches the illustration of the baptism of Jesus, he has already been fully reminded time and again of the importance of His baptism since that sacrament has proven to be a priority of Beatus from the beginning of the Commentaries. In the pages preceding this illustration, Beatus has given a lengthy commentary on the Beast of the Earth and the Beast of the Sea, as well as the Antichrist and the signs by which one may recognise him. At the very end of this section of commentary, our author once again appeals to the reader’s spiritual condition, this time promoting not just baptism but also the monastic life as the key to overcoming the deceits of the Antichrist and gaining eternal bliss:

No one can avoid these precepts of the Antichrist, except he who believes in the Holy Trinity, one sole God, and who finds himself part of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church, and who happy with the poverty of the apostolic life loves nothing of this world, but only Christ; and who finds more happiness of the world’s tribulations than its prosperity; and who avoids with all the force of his soul both the princes of this world and those who love this world; and who meditates on the law of the Lord both day and night, and who delights in the praedicationis. Quia in dominica incarnatione infusion praedicationis ostenditur, ut ad veniam corda credentium Domino parcente revocentur.” Obras Completas, p. 284.

\(^{273}\) Ibid., p. 290.
contemplative and solitary life. But all the others that he [the Antichrist] encounters, who are carnal and lovers of the world, with no fight will submit to the burden of his power.²⁷⁴

Reflective of the desert hermits of the first centuries of Christian monasticism, the proposal that Beatus puts forward here is that of the eremitic life of such figures as Saint Origen (184-254), Saint Antony of Egypt (251-356), or Saint Athanasius (296-373). Only by avoiding the ways of the world (i.e., removing oneself from society and taking a life of solitary contemplation of the divine) could one resist the wiles of Satan and, in so doing, assure himself of eternal life.

Saint John the Baptist, the solitary “voice crying out in the desert” that called all to repentance before the final days of the Apocalypse embodies that eremitical life in the image of Jesus’ baptism. We know John the Baptist from the New Testament accounts of the baptisms that he performed in the Jordan River²⁷⁵, his imprisonment because of his devout faith and preaching²⁷⁶, and his ultimate beheading at the whims of Herodias.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ “Haec praecepta Antichristi nullus evadere poterit, nisi qui Sanctam Trinitatem unum Deum crediderit, et in una catholica atque apostolica Ecclesia inventus fuerit, et paupertate apostolica contentus nihil in hoc mundo praeter Christum amaverit, et plus de tribulatione huius saeculi quam de prosperitate gavisus fuerit, et tam principes huius saeculi, quam etiam amatores mundi tota mentis intentione evitaverit, et die noctuque in lege Domini meditatus fuerit, et in vita contemplativa et solitudine delectatus; ceteros vero, quos carnales et amatores huius saeculi invenerit, absque ulla reluctatione sub iugum suae ditionis rapiet.” Obras Completas, p. 514.

²⁷⁵ The Gospel of Saint Matthew (3:1-6) refers to John the Baptist in the following way: “In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!’ It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said, ‘A voice of one crying in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.’ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptised by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.” The same account is found in the Gospels of Saint Mark 1:1-8, Saint Luke 3:1-18, and Saint John 1:19-28.

²⁷⁶ Matthew 5:12 and 11:2, Mark 1:14-15, John 3:24 all give testimony to the Baptist’s imprisonment.

²⁷⁷ Saint Matthew 14:3-12 tells of this account as follows: “Now Herod had arrested John, bound him, and had him put in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, for John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her’ […] At a birthday celebration for Herod, the daughter of Herodias performed a dance before the guests and delighted Herod so much that he swore to give her whatever she might ask for. Prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.’
The tenth-century readers of the Gerona manuscript would have seen in John the Baptist the perseverance and faith that the preceding Beatus commentary asks of them. Like Jesus, he suffered under the mighty pagan rule of Rome and the Jewish kingdom of Herod, both historical figures related to the beasts of the Apocalypse commented on and visualised in the previous pages. John the Baptist’s persecution and death preceded and even foreshadowed that of Jesus, who is depicted in the illustration as having childlike features (despite his already having reached the age of thirty in the Biblical narrative of his baptism).

The artists depicted Jesus as both very young and unclothed, a striking feature of this illustration not without symbolic interpretation. Beatus and other commentators of the early Christian era tell us that baptism symbolically washes one clean of sin, rendering him as on the day of his birth. Jesus’ infantile appearance and nudity visualise for the reader this doctrinal idea of new beginnings, a washing away of original sin and rebirth into the numbers of the elect. Symbolic also of the Holy Spirit, as Beatus has pointed out and which the New Testament narrative places above the head of Jesus, is the descending dove. We also see in this illustration that John the Baptist seems to lift Jesus out of a font, though the Biblical narration of the baptism contains no such vessel. As this vessel had become a standard Christian symbol by the days of Emeterius and Ende, the reader of the Gerona Beatus would have easily associated it with both the baptismal font found in most churches but also, because of its form, with the chalice used during Eucharist. Though we cannot know the artists’ intention behind its placement in the illustration, we can very clearly relate it to both aspects of Jesus’ life: it represents not

The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests who were present, he ordered that it be given, and he had John beheaded in prison […]” The same account is found in Mark 6:17-29.
only the baptism that he underwent as the example for all Christian faithful to follow, but it also indicates the “blood of the new and everlasting covenant”\textsuperscript{278} proclaimed by Jesus at the Last Supper and repeated by the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer, the covenant made possible to the Christian faithful by both His baptism and His death. Thus, in this iconic fashioning, Emeterius and Ende represent birth and death, the latter leads back to the former in spiritual form.

Directly following the illustration of Jesus’ baptism, Beatus comments on Saint John’s vision of the Lamb of God and the 144,000 Elect found in Revelations 14:1-5,\textsuperscript{279} and the illustrators provided a wonderfully detailed two-page image of that vision. As the narrative continues, the Kingdom of God is established and the forces of evil come to a fiery crumbling end as the city of Babylon falls to pieces and the angels of Heaven overtake earthly rulers. As I have already pointed out, the illustration of Jesus’ baptism divides the text into two separate yet unified narratives – the events that lead to the arrival of the Beasts of the Apocalypse, and the Heavenly war against and victory of evil. While the first set of Apocalypse illustrations evokes terror in the reader, the second brings about peace because the victorious events of their depictions are allowed to occur because of the “new and everlasting covenant” provided by Jesus through the baptism and resurrection depicted in this conjunctive illustration. The illustration also provides visual support to the argument that Beatus makes throughout his Commentaries regarding

\textsuperscript{278} These are the words of Christ as he hands the chalice of wine to the Apostles during the Last Supper. They are repeated during the Roman Catholic Mass as the priest consecrates the bread and wine. In this part of the Mass, the priest says, “When supper was ended, he took the cup, Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples, and said: ‘Take this all of you, and drink from it. This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.’”

\textsuperscript{279} Beatus’s commentary on this part of the Apocalypse may be found on pages 514-519 of the Obras Completas.
baptism: the reader first encounters the incredible ferocity of the apocalyptic beasts, and is then reminded that he is united to the Church through his baptism, placing him on the side of Good and counted among the Elect of the following commentaries and illustrations. The image of the baptism of Jesus does not appear arbitrarily in this part of the manuscript, as some would have it, for it serves a purpose within the supernarrative structure of the Gerona Apocalypse. It provides ideological cohesion for the illustrations at a critical point in the apocalyptic narrative, as well as reminds the reader of the spiritual purpose for which the Apocalypse will take place, namely to provide the faithful a means with which to open the doors of Paradise.

4.3 Narrative Time in the Gerona Beatus Apocalypse Supernarrative

As we have seen in the preceding section, the extra-apocalyptic illuminations of the Gerona Beatus manuscript exhibit a desire to link the events and characters of the Apocalypse with the holiness and ultimate eternal victory of Christianity. Beatus took examples from the Bible and from other exegetical commentaries written by the Church Fathers, and created a work in which the sacrament of baptism stands out above all others as the way to salvation. The illustrations added by Emeterius and Ende further that suggestion by presenting the person of Christ as the one through whom humankind gains access to the Holy Spirit and, consequently, to Paradise. The illuminations of the Gerona Beatus manuscript take the reader into the realm of the symbolic with the opening images, through the chronological pre-history of the Church with the genealogical tables, the life of Christ, and the presentation of the Evangelists, to the realm of the strictly visionary in both the Apocalypse illustrations and those of the book of Daniel. In this
manner, and partially reflective of the textual structure as laid out by Beatus himself, the illustrations combine the Time of the Law (The Old Testament), the Time of the Evangelists (The Gospels), and the Time of Judgment (Revelations) in a chronologically confusing but strictly theologically based manner. The combination of these three periods into one overarching “present” that violates the historical sense of time while also demanding the reader to contemplate its images in regards to his own personal situation is the “unconscious energy” that this text conceals within its framework. It is, as I have pointed out, a text of many texts, a supernarrative, in which the main character, the reader, must identify in some way with each of the characters in each of the narremes, individually and simultaneously, in order to achieve the visio spiritualis that the text seeks to achieve in the reader.

Narrative time, then, will not and cannot function as a product of the literal chronological sequences in space within the Gerona Beatus illustrations. They present, rather, a series of anachronistic images that operate in much the way a “flashforward” or a “flashback” does in written literature and cinema, thus adding a “symbolic function to the narrative by lifting it out of chronological coherence and placing it into a meta-chronological frame of reference.” For this reason the illustrations of Noah’s ark and of the baptism of Jesus are presented outside of their Biblical chronological spacing within the Gerona supernarrative: though the ark should logically be found among the smaller images of the Old Testament characters in the genealogical tables, and the baptism of Christ would sequentially fit within the section dedicated to Jesus’ life, the chronological disordering responds more appropriately to the didactic function of the text.

than to the strict historical presentation of the history of the Church from the beginning to
the end. Mireille Mentré supports this interpretation of the Gerona text when she states
that

the motifs (images) are not connected by way of an explicit visual verisimilitude,
but through their exegetical and spiritual intertwining. One must read the figures
in the order of the thought and not in the order of sensitive reality included in
unique and synthesised place, time, and space.281

Rather than attempting a chronologically sequential reading of the Gerona
images, the reader must conjoin the Old and the New Testaments symbolically to form a
typological narrative that connects “man’s body and environment with his spirit, and link
the life of this world with that of the world to come.”282 This second allegorical level of
interpretation, above the literal description of the text and images found on the page,
leads the reader to an understanding of the symbolic order “inherent in the organization
and building up of Christ’s holy Church”283, thus carrying the reader from the textual
visio corporealis of the flesh to the visio spiritualis of the soul. As the Beatus
manuscripts, and especially that of Gerona, point out, the Old Testament cannot be
separated from the New: the former envisages the coming of the latter, thus preparing
humanity during the Old Testament Time of Law (tempus legis) for the salvation granted
through the sacramental directives instituted by Christ during the Time of Grace (tempus
gratiae), which is believed to have begun with his resurrection and continues to the
fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecies. Sacred history becomes one period of time, the
here-and-now of the reader for which and in which human history has existed and

281 “Los motivos no se hallan vinculados por una verosimilitud visual explícita, sino por su lazo exegético y
espiritual. Las figuras hay que leerlas en el orden del pensamiento y no en el orden de la realidad sensible
incluida en un lugar, tiempo y espacio únicos y sintetizados.” Mentré, Estilo, p. 148.
283 Ibid.
continues to exist. Though marked by temporal, human, standards, time in the religious sense of the word does not exist: God states that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the End, transcending measurable time and thus relating the absence of time in the spiritual plane. For the reader of the Gerona Beatus, contemplation of and meditation on the commentaries and the illuminations implies an interruption in historical time in order to enter the realm of sacred time: the reader, as a figure in the historical evolution of the Church, has before him the entire history of humankind upon which to gaze, from the earthly beginnings to the Omega in which humanity will be judged, and even the celestial eternity. The Lost Eden, that Celestial Paradise promised to the faithful, the genotextual energy of the reader’s contemplations carry him to the domain of the sacred ritual of the mystical search for God, which he knows will culminate in the visio intellectualis, the divine knowledge of God, when historical time has come to an end and eternity is granted.
CONCLUSION

As I hope to have made clear in this study, the Gerona Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse is more than just an illuminated exegetical commentary from the Spanish Middle Ages. As the author, Beatus of Liébana, tells us, it is a book that embodies the culmination of Biblical wisdom and prophecy, and as such is a tool by which the monastic reader could reach a heightened level of spiritual visuality. On the surface, it is a manuscript in which words are written and pictures are painted, a phenotext that contains a plethora of magnificently designed images. However, for Senior, the tenth-century copyist who wrote the script of the Gerona Beatus, as well as for Emeterius and Ende, the miniaturists, this manuscript meant much more: it contained the key to understanding the mysteries of the Bible and provided an apocalyptic explanation for the evils that they perceived taking place in their society.

The Gerona Beatus was created in an environment in which heresies were considered a major threat to the stability of the Church, and in which Christians regarded Islam as the forces of the Antichrist that must be defeated in order for the Biblical prophecies to be fulfilled and God’s kingdom established. Many Medieval Iberians, especially those of the period approaching the millennial year 1000, at the time when the Gerona manuscript was being finished (975), believed that the Final Judgment would take place within their lifetimes. Beatus of Liébana and others who had proclaimed the
year 800 as the fateful year had been incorrect in their calculations, and all signs pointed
toward the year 1000. Hispania had nearly been completely taken over by a foreign
people who professed a religion, Islam, in which Christ was not considered the Divine
Son of God, and the religious writings of many both in and out of the Iberian Peninsula
designated that religion as the manifestation of Antichrist. It was the task of the Church
to prepare her followers for the impending Second Coming of Christ, and it was with this
intent that the mass copying of the Beatus Apocalypse took place. The culmination of the
eschatological prophecies from both the Old and the New Testaments was at hand, and,
as the early Church Fathers had warned, all must be prepare themselves.

Of the extant Beatus manuscripts, that of the Cathedral of Gerona is by far the
most elaborately illuminated. I believe that the artistic makeup of this manuscript
corresponds to the intensely apocalyptic atmosphere in which it was produced. As the
years came closer to the millennium, the desire for spiritual purification became more
prevalent, and, among the religious, it found its completion in the daily exercise of lectio
divina. As we have seen, this monastic practice of meditational reading, which includes
not only and understanding of the written word but also contemplation of visual images,
was considered vital to the spiritual development of the monk: by meditating on the text
and the images through the use of the physical senses, Saint Augustine believed that
readers were be able to access what Kristeva centuries later referred to as the genotextual
essence that had guided the creators of the text and which, likewise, carried readers to an
elevated understanding of the nature of God known as visio spiritualis. That is, by
employing the bodily sense of sight (visio corporealis), readers opened the doors to the
spirit and allowed the mysteries of God’s truths to reveals themselves to the spiritual
intellect, resulting in an understanding of not only Holy Scripture but also the reason for
which the scriptures had been written (*visio spiritualis*). The perfect understanding of
God, or *visio intellectualis*, came only when one had reached a state of ecstasy in which
the mind and spirit no longer depended on images, which are linked to the corporeal, but
directly on the presence of God Himself. The Gerona Beatus artists must have had this in
mind when preparing their manuscript, for it is there that the monastic practice of *lectio
divina* and the preparation for the imminent Final Judgment come together in symbiosis.

Structurally, the illustrations of the Gerona Beatus Apocalypse show a great
desire on the part of the artists to depict action and setting in a graphically stimulating
way in which colours and ornamentation not only make the written text more tangible for
the reader, but also clarify many of the difficulties presented in the sometimes complex
nature of the grammar or textual content. Illustrations consist of both themes of stasis
(frontal gazes that engage the reader/spectator in a eye-catching contemplative stare) and
of action (often shown in depictions of profile and of movement). Whereas depictions of
stasis call for reader participation, in which the characters on the page look out and seem
to bring the reader into the scene, those of action graphically narrate the text of the
Apocalypse as found in Beatus’s commentaries. Of interest in the scenes of action are
the ways in which the artists Emeterius and Ende portrayed movement and speech, the
two main forms of action in the Book of Revelations. In each case, characters’ bodies
must conform to the actions depicted: arms and legs are bent to show physical combat,
feet are raised to depict forward movement, or bodies are painted horizontally to show
flight through the air. Speech, likewise, finds its depiction in the use of the body:
outstretched arms and fingers take the “speaking hands” position in scenes of dialogue,
acting as visual recipients of messages or, reversely, as the transmitters of information. All of this takes place within the physical narrative frame of the illustration that unifies the various kernels of the narrreme depicted and suspends time, thus making chronological narrative sequencing a function of the space of the painting.

The inclusion of a thematically-varied sequence of illuminations, many of which do not depict scenes from the Apocalypse but other aspects of the Bible or of the history of the Church, makes of the Gerona Beatus what I refer to as a “supernarrative.” The first twenty folios of introductory images prepare the reader psychologically and spiritually for the apocalyptic journey that he will embark upon later in the manuscript. They outline for the reader the raison d’être of the Church: it is the result of the sins of Adam and Eve for which a redeemer, Christ, was made necessary, and through which the soul finds its salvation and entrance into the Eternal Paradise. Throughout his commentaries, Beatus reminds the reader of the necessity of baptism and of the desire to reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, and the illustrations of the Gerona manuscript focus on those two ideas. They remind the monastic reader of the parallelism between his chosen life and that of Heaven while also calling for the conversion of non-believers in order that they achieve the visio intellectualis of Paradise. By depicting scenes from the Old Testament, outlining the lineage and life of Christ, and portraying the works of the Apostles after Jesus’ ascension to Heaven, the Gerona illustrations unify the past and present of Christianity with the future judgment. It thus creates a narrative not only of the final battle between Good and Evil but also of the history of God, which has no beginning and no end. It becomes a narrative in which, according to Beatus, all wisdom is brought together with the intention of bring the reader to the perfect knowledge of God.
The combination of the Apocalypse illuminations and those of the life of Christ link the human nature of Jesus as God-in-man to His divine nature as the one who puts an end to evil and passes spiritual judgment on all. With the added images depicting the Old Testament genealogy and the visions of the Book of Daniel, the artists created a bond between the temporal history of the world and the atemporal divinity of Christ that would have reminded the monastic reader of the Middle Ages of the supremacy of God and the need for repentance before the Final Judgment. The Gerona Beatus Commentaries on the Apocalypse was a treasure of art that the monastic community guarded with utmost care. Even more valuable for the religious, however, was its capacity to visualise in a very tangible way the enigmatic message of the Apocalypse and, in doing so, affect the minds and souls of its readers.
APPENDIX A

EXTANT ILLUMINATED BEATUS APOCALYPSE MANUSCRIPTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript name (location)</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Date of Production</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Silos Fragment (Silos)</td>
<td>Asturias (?)</td>
<td>Late 9th century</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Morgan (New York)</td>
<td>Tábara (?)</td>
<td>ca. 940</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Vitrina 14-1 (Madrid)</td>
<td>Castile (?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Valladolid (Valladolid)</td>
<td>León</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tábara (Madrid)</td>
<td>Tábara</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gerona (Gerona)</td>
<td>Tábara</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Vitrina 14-2 Fragment (Madrid)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Urgell (Urgell)</td>
<td>León</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. San Millán (Madrid)</td>
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<td>Partly ca. 980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Escorial (Escorial)</td>
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<td>11. Facundus (Madrid)</td>
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<td>12. Fanlo (New York)</td>
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<td>13. Saint-Sever (Paris)</td>
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<td>14. Osma (Burgo de Osma)</td>
<td>Sahagún</td>
<td>1086</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Turin (Turin)</td>
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<td>16. Silos (London)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1109 (illumination)</td>
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<td>17. Corsini (Rome)</td>
<td>Sahagún</td>
<td>ca. 1110</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. The León Fragment (León)</td>
<td>Astorga (?)</td>
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<td>19. Berlin (Berlin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Rylands (Manchester)</td>
<td>Burgos</td>
<td>1175</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Cardeña (Madrid 167ff.)</td>
<td>Cardeña</td>
<td>1180</td>
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<td>22. Lorvão (Lisbon)</td>
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<td>23. Navarre (Paris)</td>
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<td>24. Las Huelgas (New York)</td>
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<td>25. Arroyo (Paris 167ff.)</td>
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<td>26. The Rioseco Fragment (Mexico, D.F.)</td>
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284 The Cardeña manuscript is divided among four locations: The Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid has 165 folios; the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has fifteen folios; the Colección Francisco de Zabaiburu y Basabe in Madrid has two folios; and the Museu d’Art in Gerona has one folio.

285 The Arroyo manuscript is divided between the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, which has 167 folios, and the B.H. Breslauer Collection, which has one folio.
APPENDIX B

ILLUMINATIONS OF THE GERONA BEATUS MANUSCRIPT

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Folio</th>
<th>Biblical Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Cross of Oviedo</td>
<td>1v</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ in Majesty</td>
<td>2r</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Court of Heaven</td>
<td>3v-4r</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Four Evangelists</td>
<td>4v-7r</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogical Tables of Jesus</td>
<td>8v-14v</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annunciation and Nativity</td>
<td>15r</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Epiphany and King Herod</td>
<td>15v</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter’s Denial of Jesus</td>
<td>16r</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Crucifixion</td>
<td>16v</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Resurrection</td>
<td>17r</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Harrowing of Hell</td>
<td>17v</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Just Ones</td>
<td>18r</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bird and the Serpent</td>
<td>18v</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Alpha</td>
<td>19r</td>
<td>Revelations 1:8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>31v-37r</td>
<td>Revelations 1:1-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Apostles</td>
<td>52v-53r</td>
<td>Acts of the Apostles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Map of the World</td>
<td>54v-55r</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Animals and the Statue</td>
<td>61r</td>
<td>Daniel 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Woman on the Beast</td>
<td>63r</td>
<td>Revelations 17:1-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angels and the Seven Churches</td>
<td>70v-100v</td>
<td>Revelations 2-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noah’s Ark</td>
<td>102v-103r</td>
<td>Genesis 6-9</td>
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<td>Christ on the Throne</td>
<td>107r</td>
<td>Revelations 4:2-5</td>
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<td>The Opening of the Seals</td>
<td>126r-131v</td>
<td>Revelations 6:1-9, 12-15</td>
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<td>The Horseman and the Serpent</td>
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<td>The 144,000 Just Ones</td>
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<td>The Seven Trumpets</td>
<td>148r</td>
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<td>The Seven Plagues</td>
<td>149r-158r</td>
<td>Revelations 8:7-12</td>
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<td>159v</td>
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<td>The Two Witnesses</td>
<td>164r</td>
<td>Revelations 11:3-8</td>
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<td>Destruction of Jerusalem</td>
<td>166r</td>
<td>Revelations 11:7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation of the Two Witnesses</td>
<td>167v</td>
<td>Revelations 11:11-12</td>
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<td>The Seventh Angel and the Temple</td>
<td>169r-170r</td>
<td>Revelations 11:14-16, 19</td>
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<td>The Woman and the Dragon</td>
<td>171v-172r</td>
<td>Revelations 12:1-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Two Beasts</td>
<td>176v</td>
<td>Revelations 13:1-8</td>
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<td>The Beast of the Earth</td>
<td>179v</td>
<td>Revelations 13:11</td>
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<td>Names of the Antichrist</td>
<td>185v-186r</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baptism of Christ</td>
<td>189r</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoration of the Lamb</td>
<td>189v-190r</td>
<td>Revelations 14:1-15</td>
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286 Specific Biblical references are given except for the illuminations of a symbolic nature or those to which various passages from the Gospels could refer (i.e., those depicting the life of Christ).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Angels of the Gospel</td>
<td>192r</td>
<td>Revelations 14:6-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Reaping and the Harvest</td>
<td>193v-194r</td>
<td>Revelations 14:14-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Angels and the Singers</td>
<td>196v</td>
<td>Revelations 15:1-4</td>
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<td>Preparation of the Plagues</td>
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<td>Revelations 15:5-8</td>
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<td>Command of the Angels</td>
<td>199r</td>
<td>Revelations 16:1</td>
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<td>The Plagues</td>
<td>200v-206v</td>
<td>Revelations 16:2-12, 17-21</td>
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<td>208r-209r</td>
<td>Revelations 17:1-4</td>
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<td>Victory of the Lamb</td>
<td>213v</td>
<td>Revelations 17:13-14</td>
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<td>Destruction of Babylon</td>
<td>215v-216r</td>
<td>Revelations 18:1-20</td>
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<td>The Millstone in the Sea</td>
<td>218v</td>
<td>Revelations 18:21-23</td>
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<td>219v</td>
<td>Revelations 19:1-10</td>
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<td>The Angel of the Sun</td>
<td>222r</td>
<td>Revelations 19:17-21</td>
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<td>Defeat of the Beast</td>
<td>223v</td>
<td>Revelations 19:20-21</td>
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<td>Binding of the Dragon</td>
<td>224v</td>
<td>Revelations 20:1-3</td>
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<td>The Judges and the Blessed</td>
<td>225r</td>
<td>Revelations 20:4-6</td>
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<td>The Lake of Fire</td>
<td>228r</td>
<td>Revelations 20:9-10</td>
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<td>St. John and the Angel</td>
<td>234v</td>
<td>Revelations 22:6-21</td>
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<td>Babylon</td>
<td>236v-237r</td>
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<td>Siege of Jerusalem</td>
<td>242r</td>
<td>Daniel 1</td>
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<td>Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream</td>
<td>244r</td>
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<td>Statue and Furnace of Babylon</td>
<td>248r</td>
<td>Daniel 2-3</td>
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<td>Belshazzar’s Feast</td>
<td>253v</td>
<td>Daniel 5</td>
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<td>Daniel in the Lions’ Den</td>
<td>257r</td>
<td>Daniel 6</td>
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<td>Daniel’s Vision of the Messiah</td>
<td>258v-259r</td>
<td>Daniel 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle of the Ram and the Goat</td>
<td>262r</td>
<td>Daniel 8:1-15</td>
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<td>Explanation of Daniel’s Vision</td>
<td>264r</td>
<td>Daniel 8:2-27, 9:21-23</td>
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<td>The Angel of the Tigris</td>
<td>270v</td>
<td>Daniel 10-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Great Omega</td>
<td>284r</td>
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APPENDIX C

EXPLANATION OF THE TABLES OF THE ANTICHRIST

Hic est sapientia. Qui habet intellectum, computet numerum bestiae. Numerus enim hominis est; id est, Christi, cuius nomen sibi facit bestia. Quantum enim adtinet per singulas litteras hunc numerum nomenque explevit, interpretatumque sic: DCLXVI.

Si scire vis numerum, si latinus es, per litteras latinas ingredere primum, et collige rationem, quantas vel quales litteras latinas facit in numerum qui per latinam supputationem in cuncto volvuntur calculo, et in ipsas reperies nomina antichristi.

Quod sunt numero sex, id es, Diclux, quod derivato vocabulo dicitur Diclux, quia per septem regna septem nuncupabitur nomina, et suum nomen interpretantur sancti per numerum litterarum, unusquisque per suam linguam, ut sicut latinus per latinas, graecus per graecas, ita cuncti per singulas, et dum tu latinus numerum per latinas cognoveris, sic per singulas recognoscas et in cuncta nomina in alfabeto sedecim reperies litteras, id est, A C D E G H I K L M N R S T U X, quia in sexto decimo anno legimus decepisse in paradiso Evam. Reliquas septem litteras in sua non invenimus nomina, id est, B F O P Q Y Z, quia et privatum eum cognoscimus esse a septiforme gratia, quas litteras, ut promisimus, caritati vestrae explanemus, et has abecedarias in septe partibus faciemus esse distinctas. In quas partes septem nomina bestiae recognoscas, excepto Acxime in
quo facturus est notam et scripturas ad Asiam, et ubi in has abecedarias era, quam duplices reppereris litteras, ibi nomen et numerum esse intellegas, quae nomina singillatim ita denuntiamus.

(THE MASTER OF THIS REGISTRY AND THE MEANING OF THE LETTERS)

He comes up from the inferno, he that in the first beast we said that had come out of the abyss with the word of anger: water will feed him and the abyss aided him. And those he comes with the false name and with a different habit, the Spirit says that he is a number of a man, and his number is 666. In many Greek letters we find the digits 666; and he, because of the seven heads, that is, the seven kingdoms that are submitted to him, will be called by seven names, and he will have an eighth name, which we said above was Acxyme: with this name will he make the mark on the hand and on the forehead. We place here for your charity the seven names: Evantas, which means serpent in Latin since he first deceived Eve. His second name is Damnatus, since he brought about great damnation to the world. His third name is Antemus, or abstinence, from temeto, that is, wine, because he does not drink wine. His fourth name in the Gothic language is Gensericus. His fifth name in all languages is Antichrist. The sixth name in Greek is Teitan, and the seventh in Latin is Diclux. We understand that this name is expressed by way of antiphrasis: since he was denied eternal light and tossed away from it, he nonetheless costumes himself as an angel of light and presumes his name that of light.

On these names:
I. Evantas = 666
II. Damnatus = 666
III. Antemus = 666
IV. Gensericus = 666
V. Antichristus = 666
VI. Teitan = 666
VII. Diclux = 666
VIII. Acxyme = 666

Here wisdom is required. May the intelligent calculate the number of the beast, for it corresponds to the number of the man, that is, of Christ, whose name the beast takes for himself. With what resulted from each one of these letters this number was formed and this name, and it has been interpreted in this way: 666.

If you try to know the number and you are Latin, begin first with the Latin letters and look for the meaning, how many and which Latin letters enter into the number, which according to the Latin numeric value is developed in all of the panel, and in them you will find the names of the Antichrist.

And the reason for the number 6, that is, Diclux: he is called Diclux by using an inadequate name, since he will have seven names because of the seven kingdoms; and the saints will explain his name by the number of letters, each one according to his language, the Latin using Latin, the Greek using Greek letters, and in this way all using their own letters. And when you, Latin, know the number because of the Latin letters, in this way you will know it by each one of them; and in all the names you will find sixteen letters of
the alphabet, which are A C D E G H I K L M N R S T U X, and that is because we know that it was in the year 16 that Eve was deceived in paradise. The other seven letters you will not find in his names, which are B F O P Q Y Z, because we know that he was denied the sevenfold grace. Let us explain, as we promised, these letters to your charity, and we will distribute these letters of the alphabet in seven parts. In these parts you will know the seven names of the beast, except for Acxyme, with which he will make the mark and writings in Asia; and where you see in this alphabet the Era, which you will find in double letters, there you should understand the presence of the name and number, whose names we lay out separately in this way.)


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