

# *Newsletter*

of the

## **American Academy of Research Historians of Medieval Spain**

April 2000

**Executive Board:** James Brodman, President  
Jill Webster, Immediate Past-President  
Clifford Backman, Secretary-Treasurer  
James Powers, Book-Review Editor  
Larry Simon, Program Chair

### **Editor's Message**

After a technical apocalypse six weeks ago, I have traded in my much-loved old Mac for a new PC. Switching platforms has proved to be a bigger bother than I had gambled for, but I'm hoping that in the long run it will be worthwhile. About a dozen members reported problems with opening the electronic version of the last Newsletter. Since nearly all of these people are PC users, it seems likely that the change will at least mitigate some of the glitches in the system. Unfortunately, the policy here at BU forbids the posting of material on the university server for anyone outside the BU network, so that option is closed. I will try again by sending out the Newsletter as an email attachment for those with computer addresses. So here's hoping. I apologize for these repeated troubles, but am starting to feel hopeful that I've at last got things right.

I'm happy to announce another innovation to the Newsletter. I have formed an agreement with the Hispanic Society of America [www.hispanicsociety.org], whereby we have the right to reproduce their serial "Hispanic Art Bibliography." I will select from the Bibliography the items that are of interest to AARHMS, and will reprint them here under the new heading: "New Books." I hope to form similar agreements with other organizations.

Our members continue to be busy people indeed. Keeping abreast of publications, ongoing projects, and conference appearances can be difficult, but is rewarding. I encourage all members to keep volunteering this information. And as ever I urge those of you who have not paid their annual dues - now \$10 per year - to do so as soon as possible. Make your checks payable to AARHMS, and please send them to me at:

Clifford Backman  
Department of History  
Boston University  
226 Bay State Road  
Boston, MA 02215

I'd like to repeat Jim Powers' earlier call that anyone interested in writing book reviews for the Newsletter should contact him. He is available at: [jpowers@holycross.edu](mailto:jpowers@holycross.edu) or the old-fashioned way at:

James Powers  
Department of History  
College of the Holy Cross

\* \* \* Featured Book Review \* \* \*

John Williams, The Illustrated Beatus: A Corpus of Illustrations of the "Commentary on the Apocalypse," vol. 3: The Tenth and Eleventh Centuries (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1998).

This is the third, and largest yet (387 pages), of John Williams' exhaustive five-volume catalog of illustrations embellishing the twenty-six known decorated manuscripts of St. Beatus' commentary In Apocalypsim. Compiled between 776 and 786 in the Spanish monastery of San Martín in the kingdom of Asturias - now Santo Toribio de Liébana - In Apocalypsim so extensively incorporated texts of previous commentators that it was widely copied as a reference work. The attractive miniatures in ninth through thirteenth century copies have had such an impact that when one says "a Beatus" it is generally understood to mean one of these illustrated codices, or the miniatures themselves.

The manuscripts, so essential to the study of Church and art history, are widely dispersed, from Spain throughout Europe, the U.S. and Mexico. Examination of the total corpus of illustrations was long difficult or impossible. The few facsimiles are impossibly costly. While the need for an illustrated catalog was evident, none existed before 1978, when Williams began his monumental compilation. The first three volumes have now appeared.

The introductory volume, which includes some full-color illustrations, contains essays about Beatus himself, his contemporary setting, the evolution and uses of the illustrated Commentary, and the postulated relationship of its decorative elements to Islamic art. An indispensable part of the catalog, it incorporates much that is useful and original in Williams' thought.

The four remaining volumes describe all illustrations in each codex, grouping them in approximate chronological order though inevitably with some temporal overlap. Each apparently follows the same plan, starting with a list of all illustrated codices, a brief overview of the specific manuscripts to be examined, and a graphic exposition of the family trees of the commentaries as differently constructed by Neuss, Klein, and Williams himself. (Specialists assign the codices stylistically and iconographically to two quite distinct branches, though a few crosscut these distinctions.) There follows a more detailed evaluation of each codex in the volume, discussing its style, affinities, and aspects of its iconography, describing its material production, listing quires and folios, identifying missing subjects, and presenting a short bibliography for each. Here Williams weighs and often modifies other scholars' interpretations, impressive testimony to his extensive experience and erudition. The inscriptions accompanying each miniature are listed, concluding with an extensive bibliography. The next section is the largest: over three-quarters of volume III consists of black-and-white photographs. A list of depicted subjects from the Apocalypse, the Commentary, and Jerome's Commentary on Daniel (often appended to the Beatus codices) follows, with a comparative table of illustrations in each codex, a list of manuscripts in libraries, and a volume index. Endpapers map important continental localities (mostly Spanish) associated with the codices. Tabular material is repeated in each of the five volumes, making them more useful individually. However, specialists will eventually need access to all five volumes.

Volume Three describes six codices: the Seu d'Urgell, San Millán, Escorial, "Facundus" Fanlo, and Saint-Sever "Beatus." (Williams uses its scribe's name, Facundus, for the codex others refer to as that of Fernando and Sancha, the rulers of Castile and León who commissioned it.) The abundance of illustrations in the volume is so great that I can do no more here than admire the monumental work involved in their acquisition. What follows is a selected resume of Williams' observations.

The Escorial Beatus (ca. 1000) is a Branch I codex on Mozarabic style. On paleographic and stylistic grounds, Williams decides that it was probably produced at San Millán de la Cogolla, rather than Valeránica or San Martín de Albelda. Crucial to this decision are parallels between rendering the faces in the Escorial codex and the Codex Emilianensis. Curiously, many of the miniatures are surrounded by a wide frame, unusual for an early codex in this branch, but the figures often overlap the frame and invade the surrounding text. The Fanlo fragment (mid-11<sup>th</sup> century) is known only from later watercolor copies of just seven of its pages. They show that Fanlo must have been related to the Escorial Beatus, and is also in Mozarabic style.

The late tenth-century Seu d'Urgell codex and the Facundus Beatus (1047) belong to Branch II-b, which usually organizes its miniatures, backgrounds banded horizontally in different colors, within pre-established frames. The Facundus MS, produced

by at least two artistic "hands," is one of the best-preserved and "elegant" codices. The less-complete Urgell MS was illustrated by a less-talented illuminator. Williams observes that while these Leonese codices are stylistically Mozarabic, in its use of consistent ground planes, its treatment of drapery folds and anatomical details, the Facundus manifests an evolved, more "organically conceived" style marking a prelude to the Spanish Romanesque.

The mid-11<sup>th</sup> century French Beatus from Saint-Sever, though far from complete, contains a superb collection of Romanesque miniatures, produced by masters unafraid to innovate to bring their content closer to the texts they illustrate. (Its striking "extra" miniature of the Sealing of the Elect exemplifies this.) Copied either from an unknown and indifferentiated original or inspired by a diversity of earlier codices, it shares characteristics of both branches. This and the "naturalistic" character of the depictions led Neuss to consider it representative of the archetypal codex, an opinion Williams refutes. The San Millán manuscript is anomalous in another way: its text was written and its illustrations begun in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Mozarabic style, following conventions of Branch I; decoration was however abandoned shortly after it began, to resume again, in a more elegant Romanesque style, following Branch II conventions, only in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Through no fault of Williams, Volume III has some minor shortcomings: he himself notes that the photograph of Urgell's folio 1-recto is missing. The illustrations, though excellent, are often considerably reduced. The publisher probably had no alternative, given the size and number of decorated folios. Reduced and rendered in shades of gray, details of some miniatures that are readily appreciated in full-color slides can be hard to read. But to proceed otherwise would raise the already high price of these books prohibitively.

Williams' catalog accomplishes all he set out to do. Studying symbolism in the Beatus codices, I found the available volumes of Williams' catalog indispensable for inventorying subject-matter and counting pictorial elements in the miniatures. Any interested scholar will certainly consider the work valuable. It is the only comprehensive, conveniently accessible source that exists for the study of the corpus of imagery in all Beatus codices. We all impatiently await the publication of the last two volumes.

L.G. Freeman

\* \* \* \* \*

## Recent Publications

**Backman, Clifford R.** "Arnau de Vilanova and the Body at the End of the World," in Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Univ. Pennsylvania, 2000), pp. 140-155.

**Burns, Robert I., S.J.** El papel de Játiva (Játiva, 1999).

----- "Interactive Slave Operations: Muslim-Christian-Jewish Contracts in Thirteenth-Century Barcelona," Medieval Encounters 5 (1999), 135-155.

----- "Sharq al-Andalus: estudios mudéjares y moriscos," Medieval Encounters 5 (1999), 21-223.

**Burns, Robert I., S.J. and Paul Chevedden.** "The Finest Castle in the World," History Today 49 (Nov. 1999), 10-17.

----- "A Unique Bilingual Surrender Treaty from Muslim-Crusader Spain," The Historian, Spring 2000.

**Crouch, Jace.** "Isidore of Seville and the Evolution of Kingship in Visigothic Spain," Mediterranean Studies 4 (1999), 9-26.

**Davidson, Linda Kay and David M. Gitlitz.** A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

----- The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago: The Complete Cultural Handbook (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

**Ferreiro, Alberto.** "The Fall of Simon Magus and the Church Fathers," Anuario de historia de la iglesia (in press).

----- "Veneration of Martin of Tours and Martin of Braga in Northern Portugal," Festschrift Manuel Riu Riu (in press).

----- "Simon Magus and Simon Peter in a Baroque Altar Relief in the Cathedral of Oviedo, Spain," Hagiographica 5 (1998), 141-158.

**Izbicki, Thomas M. and Christopher M. Belitto**, ed., Reform and Renewal in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Studies in Honor of Louis Pascoe, S.J. (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

**Izbicki, Thomas M. and Gerald Christianson**, ed., F. Edwards Cranz, Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance (Aldershot: Variorum, 2000).

**Nader, Helen**. "The Spain That Encountered Mexico," chapter 1 in The Oxford History of Mexico (Oxford Univ., 2000).

**Webster, Jill R.** Els Franciscans catalans a l'edat mitjana (Lleida: Pagès Editors, forthcoming).

## Current Research Projects

**Backman, Clifford R.** Biography of James II (1291-1327) of the Crown of Aragon.

**Crouch, Jace.** Decalvatio in Isidore and the Forum Judicum.

**Ferreiro, Alberto.** "Elisha (2 Kings 13:14-21) and the Veneration of Relics." "Barabbas in the Church Fathers."

**Nader, Helen.** A collection of essays entitled Gender and Power in the Spanish Renaissance: The Women of the Mendoza Family, 1450-1650.

## Grants, Fellowships, and Awards Recently Won

**Davidson, Linda Kay and David M. Gitlitz.** Their book A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews was awarded the Jewish Book Council's National Book Award for Sephardic and Ashkenazi Cultural Studies in March, 2000.

## Conference Papers Recently Delivered

**Backman, Clifford R.** "Navies and Naval Forces in the Crown of Aragon ca. 1300." At conference "Power and Domination: Europe and the Sea in the Middle Ages and Renaissance," Arrabida, Portugal. Feb. 2000.

-----, "Arnau de Vilanova and the End of the World." The Michael Freedman Annual Lecture, Roger Williams University, Bristol RI. May 2000.

**Ferreiro, Alberto.** "The Fall of Simon Magus in the Thought of the Church Fathers." 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Patristic Studies, Aug. 1999. Oxford University.

## New Books

**Benito Doménech, Fernando.** Cinco siglos de pintura valenciana: Obras del Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia (Valencia: Fundación Central Hispano and Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia, 1996). ISBN 84.920722.6.1

**Bennassar, Bartholomé and Bernard Vincent.** Le temps de l'Espagne: XVI-XVII siècles - Les siècles d'or (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1999). ISBN 20.123.528.39

**Bouza, Fernando** (ed.). Cartas de Felipe II a sus hijas (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, S.A., 1998). ISBN 84.460.0991.9

**Bouza, Fernando**. Imagen y propaganda: Capítulos de historia cultural del Reinado de Felipe II (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, S.A., 1998). ISBN 84.460.0993.5

**Cruz Valdovinos, José Manuel**. Platería europea en España, 1300-1700 (Madrid: Fundación Central Hispano, 1997). ISBN 84.89913.03.X

**Webster, Susan Verdi**. Art and Ritual in Golden Age Spain: Sevillian Confraternities and the Processional Sculpture of Holy Week (Princeton Univ., 1998). ISBN 0.691.04819.3