THE ILLUSTRATED BEATUS

A CORPUS OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE COMMENTARY ON THE APOCALYPSE
IN FIVE VOLUMES

Volume I: Introduction
Volume II: The 9th and 10th Centuries
Volume III: The 10th and 11th Centuries
Volume IV: The 11th and 12th Centuries
Volume V: The 12th and 13th Centuries

This Corpus is published
with the assistance of the J. Paul Getty Trust

JOHN WILLIAMS

THE ILLUSTRATED BEATUS

A CORPUS OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE COMMENTARY ON
THE APOCALYPSE

Introduction

HARVEY MILLER PUBLISHERS
mandorla of figure-8 shape, details peculiar to the *Majestas* frontispiece for the New Testament of the Vivian Bible from Tours (Paris, BN, MS lat. 1; fig. 38). Either of these frontispieces would have been appropriate for an independent Gospel Book, but they are found in Bibles, and the *Majestas* is in a Bible whose illustrated pages offer the most striking counterparts for the striated grounds of the Beatus Commentaries. If the banded grounds of the Beatus Commentaries are to be attributed to a medieval reworking of the original format of frameless illustrations without painted grounds, then a ninth-century Touronian Bible, or a descendant of one, like the Bible of San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome (fig. 40), seems their most likely inspiration.

The colours employed in the Beatus Commentaries tend to correspond, after the tenth century, to palettes and ranges reasonably consistent with those employed elsewhere in Europe, a fact confirmed by the French identity mistakenly attributed to the detached page of the Armory Beatus (no. 25) by Georg Swarzenski. An Hispanic identity would never be in doubt for manuscripts of the tenth century, with the polychromatic intensity that came to be taken, along with Islamic features such as the horseshoe arch, as hallmarks of the Spanish school. The banded grounds had a central role in this identification. In the Silos Fragment (col. pl. 1) both the colours — ocher, minium red, green — and their thinness are consistent with those of the few illuminated manuscripts we have from the Asturias at the end of the ninth century. In contrast, Morgan 644 employs a much greater range of hues that are opaque and frequently mixed with white, and also overlaid with articulating lines of white and sometimes other colours (see col. pls. 4-5, 20). This change may owe something to Carolingian influence. Just as Carolingian types of initials appeared in manuscripts other than Beatus Commentaries, so did the new handling
