The Manchester (a.k.a. Rylands) Beatus mappa mundi, ca. 1175, John Rylands Library, MS. Lat. 8, fols. 43v-44r, Manchester, England, 45.4 x 32.6 cm

The Manchester Beatus.
The manuscript of Beatus’ Commentary of the Apocalypse of St. John now in Manchester, England was made around the year 1175 and it is ascribed to the Spanish Burgos region, specifically to the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña and to the region of Toledo. As a reference, this map falls into Peter Klein’s “Fourth Recension” and Wilhelm Neuss’ Family IIb stemma which consists of the following maps:

• Manuscript of Tabara (970). Although its mappa mundi has not survived, as we said in reference to the manuscripts of the Commentary on the Apocalypse which contain the mappa mundi, it must have been very similar to the maps of Las Huelgas and Girona.
• Mappa mundi of Girona. (975) #207.6.
• Mappa mundi of Turin (first quarter of the 12th century) #207.15.
• Mappa mundi of Manchester (ca. 1175) #207.20.
• Mappa mundi of Las Huelgas (1220) #207.24.
• Mappa mundi of San Andrés de Arroyo (ca. 200 - ca. 1248?) #207.25.
Sandra Sáenz-López Pérez has identified the following common features of this Family of Beatus mappae mundi:

- The toponyms are virtually identical. Gonzalo Menendez-Pidal recognized the following as being inherent traits of these maps: the inclusion of Cappadocia and Mesopotamia, as well as the addition of the names of Gallia Belgica and Gallia Lugdunensis (instead of just the basic Gallias as shown in the maps of Family Ila). These maps do not contain all the references pertaining to the apostolic geography.
- The captions are the same, repeating the reference to the Amazons, to the River Nile and the fourth part of the world (except in the Manchester and San Andrés de Arroyo maps, which lack them). Also, in all of them there are texts relating to Dacia, and to the frontiers between Europe and Asia.
- The elements of physical geography are the same and are shown in a similar way. The ones that stand out are the following:
  1. The Red Sea does not connect the west and the east (except in the Turin map), but rather, its course is interrupted before reaching the Far East and penetrates inland, thus forming the Gulf of Arabia. Parallel to it is the Persian Gulf, so that both of them form the Arabian Peninsula. An inland sea, and not the Red Sea, separates off the fourth part of the world. Among the hydrographic elements, the River Nile stands out, as it has a double branching—western and eastern—the latter branch approaching close to the East African lake. The River Danube branches into four, combined in a two plus two format, which finally join up into a single river: the most southerly branch is the one with the name flumen Danubius. None of them disgorge into the encircling ocean, and one of them, possibly the Rhine (named Ren) emanates from an orographic feature which we can identify as the Rhyphian Mountains (illustrated further to the west than in the maps of the Family Ila), or more probably as the Alps, due to their geographical position. The flumen Eusis appears to be duplicated in Asia and Europe. In the Iberian Peninsula we find the Tajo and another river, the Guadalquivir or the Guadiana. A North African river rises among some mountains next to an area occupied by the Garamantes, Baggi and Getuli and flows towards the interior of the continent. In Mesopotamia there is a river that could be the Tigris or the Euphrates. The River Jordan is divided into two branches where it crosses the Lebanese Mountains (except in the San Andrés de Arroyo map).
  2. Regarding the mountains and mountain chains, the one we might identify due to its location as the mons Aquilo in the maps of Family Ila, has been modified into two mountain chains at the far north-east of the world (except in the San Andrés de Arroyo map which excludes this item). These mountain chains are shown merging in a similar way to the Pillars of Hercules, except in the Las Huelgas map, where they appear parallel. The Caucasus Mountains are the source of the Asiatic flumen Eusis. In Armenia there is another mountain. In Asia we also find the Lebanese Mountains; Mount Carmel; Mount Sinai; a mountain in Arabia; as well as others in the vicinity of Antioch and...
India. In the northeast of Europe we see the *Rhyпhean Mountains*, which, in comparison with the maps of *Family IIa*, seem to have been displaced towards the west, although they might be the Alps. The French Alps and the Pyrenees are shown as being parallel. A mountain in the centre of Europe, which is not named, becomes the source of the European *flumen Eusis*. In North Africa there are three mountain chains arranged in a parallel form and perpendicular to the Mediterranean Sea. There is also a mountain in the region settled by the *Garamantes, Baggi and Getuli*, which is the source of a river that flows out into the Mediterranean Sea. In West Africa are the *Pillars of Hercules*. To the south of them, are the *montes at luni*. Parallel to the Red Sea is a mountain chain which is unidentified.

3. The islands have a rectangular shape, except in the *Las Huelgas* map, where one also finds similar irregular shapes and orographic elements in the encircling ocean, and in the *San Andrés de Arroyo* map, where they are oval with wavy outlines. The number of islands increases in the maps of *Family IIb*, and curiously more of them are unidentified, compared with only one island lacking a name in the far southeast of the world in the maps of the *Family IIa*. Perhaps, in addition to modifying the islands into decorative features, the reason for the absence of names could stem from the unreadable nature of the island toponyms in the reference map. This explanation could be valid especially for many of the islands in the Mediterranean Sea, where we run into extreme cases, such as the Manchester map, in which none of the islands has a name. One supposes that, due to the manipulation of the codices, the central zone of the reference map suffered from much wear and tear, and the reading of the place-names was rendered complicated or even impossible. In the maps in this group, the islands are also shown both in the encircling ocean and in the Mediterranean Sea, except in the map of *San Andrés de Arroyo*, which shrinks the Mediterranean into a narrow channel of water, as if it were a river, and hence, its islands are transferred into the ocean. Thus we find in the encircling ocean of this map the following islands, starting from the east, clockwise: *Cecilia; Sardinia; Bitinia insula; Tile insula; Maiorga; Lino de Suez; Anglia; Irlanda; Scocia; and [...]archia*. In the remaining maps, the islands of the ocean are as follows: *Taprobane; Chryse and Argyre*; an unidentified island to the far southeast; *Scaria insula* (now lacking a name); the Fortunate Isles; Ireland; Great Britain; *Thanatos; Thule*; and an unidentified island in the *Manchester* map. Many of the numerous islands of the Mediterranean Sea lack any identification or are now unreadable. The following can be recognized in some maps, from west to east: *Corsica; Crete; Sicily; Samos; Tarsus; and Cos.*

4. The northeastern zone of the world is described as desert and a sandy area. Also, the maps of *Girona, Las Huelgas* and *Turin* allude to Ethiopia and India being likewise.
5. The *Earthly Paradise* is illustrated by means of original sin, and the River Jordan seems to rise there (except in the *San Andrés de Arroyo* map).

6. There is no homogeneity in the depiction of cities within the maps of this group, and this ranges from their total absence to a truly profuse decoration: the maps of Girona and Turin do not include any image; that of Manchester shows only the city of Jerusalem; that of Las Huelgas enhances the decorative interest by including, besides Jerusalem, the images of Ascalon and Babylon; and lastly, the *San Andrés de Arroyo* map shows all the cities, and also illustrates with symbols of cities certain elements of the physical or human geography.

7. Except for the Turin map, there are drawings of fish, marine animals and ships in the encircling ocean. By contrast with Family IIa, those of Family IIb display a certain tendency towards introducing sea monsters, especially the maps of Girona, Manchester and San Andrés de Arroyo.

In the *Manchester mappa mundi* the continents of Europe and Asia are labeled, but not Africa. However, the legend *Hic caput Garope* [here begins Europe] and *Hic Finis Asye* [here ends Asia], between Europe and Asia, is marked. The name *Garupe* that appears in the maps of the Family IIb must be interpreted as an orthographic error for Europe.

The *Manchester* map was designed using an oval shape (instead of the round or rectangular shape used on the other Beatus mappae mundi). Included in this design is the *Earthly Paradise* with a depiction of Adam and Eve and the serpent, a building representing Jerusalem, numerous other cities named, the *Antipodes* and numerous rivers in both blue and green. Mountains are represented in multiple colors and appear as floral-like designs. The vertical blue line in the center of the map, populated with 14 unidentified islands, is the Mediterranean Sea. Most of the rivers on the *Manchester* map are colored blue and originate from oval-shaped lakes, except the river in North Africa, which is colored orange, and the Jordan River which is colored yellow, ends in the shape of an arrow (possibly the Dead Sea) and originate in the mountains. The horizontal lines at the top are the *River Tanais* [the Don] on the left and the River Nile on the right. Note that the source of Nile is shown somewhere in West Africa. East is at the top of the map shown with the vignette of *Paradise*, inhabited by Adam and Eve accompanied by the serpent. And in the *Earthly Paradise* the background is colored green to allude to a luxuriant paradisiacal garden and the serpent is no longer coiling about a tree but around a support structure. The depiction of Eve as a distinct body type from Adam is lacking. In most of the Beatus maps Adam is portrayed on the left side, but on the *Manchester* map the order is inverted. Adam and Eve cover their groin areas with their hands indicative of the fact that the “original sin” has already been committed as explained in *Genesis*. To the left of Eve, between the green and orange mountains, legend reads *Mons Caucasus* [Caucasian Mountains]. It refers to the orange mountain and below it we can see *Armenia* and below that *Cappadocia*. The green mountain mass must indicate the *Taurus Mountains*. Further down and left the legends state *Calcedonia, Pampilia* and *Frigia*, with *Asia Minor* located further down. An unnamed river is shown flowing from the Caucasus Mountains to the surrounding ocean.

Europe contains a large river, *flumen Danubius*, flowing into the Aegean/Black Sea and is covered with many toponyms. Another green colored shape (possibly the
Carpathian mountains) is connected to the Mediterranean by a river and the city of Constantinopolis is situated near its shore. This is probably the Sea of Marmara (Propontis). Other European toponyms include Tessalonica, Macedonia, Alania, Sarmatia, Germania, Francia, Gallia, Belgica, Dalmatia, Roma, Galicia and many more.

In Africa and southwest Asia some of the toponyms are grossly misplaced. For example Babilonia appears downstream of the Nile and Mesopotamia is south of Mons Sine. Mons Liban is shown with two rivers and mare Rubrum [the Red Sea] appears in red/orange, along with the sinus Arauicus [Arabian Gulf], extending from the Arabian Mountains (Mons Arabia) to the southern ocean and turning west, running the whole length of Africa, parallel to the ocean dividing Africa from the fourth continent (which is unlabeled and without a caption or legend).

As in the Girona Beatus mappa mundi, the northern part of the circumfluent ocean on the Manchester map has both ships and sea creatures, the presence of the ships reflecting the fact that the northern part of the world was better known and more readily navigable. The southeastern part of the circumfluent ocean, that is, the part most distant from Europe, has no ships but a remarkable group of sea monsters. There is a stupendously long siren who is grabbing a sea serpent with her hand, while a fish nibbles at her tail, and a long sea serpent with a feline head bites the fish which is nibbling on the siren. This group of monsters occupies much of the southern ocean. Chains of animals biting each other are not uncommon in Romanesque art, but there is no similar group in any other Beatus mappae mundi. The group thus shows the artist’s freedom to innovate; it also clearly demonstrates the savagery of the distant parts of the circumfluent ocean and its monsters. The seas surrounding the world are brimming with serpents, fish and boats. The boats are very symmetrically drawn with poopdecks and bow with side rudders. The fish are drawn with natural fish-scaled bodies and appear to be chasing each other. While it is hard to see in the encircling ocean given the dark blue color, but there is a drawing near the Earthly Paradise of a siren with short hair and a torso that appears masculine. Perhaps the illustrator had difficulty with a nude female form as also evidenced by his depiction of Eve.

The islands at the lower left part of the oceans include Scotia, Britania and Tile [Scotland, Britain and Iceland]. It is also interesting to note the existence of a large and uninhabited island at the top-right side of the map, which has no inscriptions of any kind. In most other Beatus mappae mundi this area is described as Terra incognita [Unknown Lands] the fourth unknown continent. The islands of Chryse and Argyre are shown on the Manchester map just west of the African continent, but without their names. Isidore, in his Etymologiae states “Chryse and Argyre are islands situated in the Indian Ocean, so rich in metal that many people maintain that these islands have a surface of gold and silver, whence their names are derived”.

Of all of the Beatus mappae mundi, only the Manchester map omits the mention/display of St. Thomas or the subcontinent of India.

**Location:** John Rylands University Library, MS Lat. 8, ff.43v-44 Manchester, UK. [Ilb]

**Size:** 454 x 326 mm

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*illustrated
Detail of the Beatus Manchester map showing the Earthly Paradise (Garden of Eden), the labodan Insula [Trapobana?], an unidentified island, the siren, the River Jordan, the Mare rubrum [Red Sea] and the city of Jerusalem.