



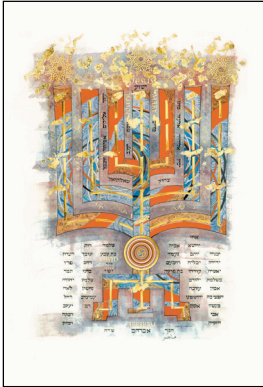
THE SAINT JOHN'S BIBLE

Poster Notes for *The Saint John's Bible*

The Genealogy of Christ

Matthew 1

Artist and Scribe: Donald Jackson



Personae:

The genealogy of Christ is the beginning section of the first of the four gospels, Matthew. As such, it reaches back into the Hebrew Scriptures to Abraham from whom the Hebrew nation and peoples originated. The Biblical text of Matthew recites the names of generations of Christ's ancestors, culminating in the birth of Jesus, the Christ. At center, bottom, Abraham's name is inscribed, in Hebrew and English, with his wife Sarah (left) from whom these generations rose. Hagar, Sarah's handmaid with whom Abraham fathered Ishmael, the ancestor of Mohammed who began the religion of Islam, is named at the right in Hebrew, English and Arabic. The names of David, Mary, Joseph and Jesus are written

in the same size and script as that of Abraham emphasizing their prominence. In keeping with the intent of honoring women throughout the Bible, Tamar, Bathsheba and Ruth are among those named.

Imagery:

The structural image of the genealogy is a double one – that of a tree of life and that of the Jewish seven-branched candlestick, the menorah. A “family tree” is appropriate for the presentation of a listing of ancestors. The menorah, used in Jewish worship, is a familiar symbol of the Jewish faith. The base and seven branches of the candelabra are highlighted with gold leaf, suggesting the brilliance of spiritual life, and as the illustration ascends dynamic touches of gold intensify thus increasing the visual spiritual dynamism. Adding to the suggestion of cosmic power the stems of the menorah reveal patterns of swirling movements superimposed on turbulent churning water. The ancestral names flank the base of the menorah/tree and march up between the innermost branches; between the outer branches are patterns of DNA double helices imposing a 21st century recognition that this genealogy continues to be significant now and to all humanity. At the very top is the name of Jesus, flanked by Mary and Joseph. A stable tri-pod base anchors this powerful concept.

Decorative Symbolism:

A recognition of the elements of truth in faiths other than the Judeo/Christian is incorporated through the use of decorative ornamentation. The central staff of the menorah/tree rises from its base through a series of concentric circles surrounding a swirling inner core, a reference to a mandala-type cosmic image common to several



THE SAINT JOHN'S BIBLE

religions. Rising above are a series of gilded intricate stamps inspired from illuminations of the Koran.

History of this Page:

This is the first full-page frontispiece in the volume of the New Testament of The Saint John's Bible, actually volume six of the complete Bible. It was the first one completed by Donald Jackson and was the centerpiece of a formal public presentation of the work at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the New York Public Library.