

DIVINE AND HUMAN GENEALOGY



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Visualizing the human nature of Christ, inextricably linked to his divine filiation, has been one of the premises of Christian iconography since the patristic and dogmatic definitions of the 4th century. Nowadays, the motif of his genealogy, ancestors, and relatives—which trace back to the roots and origin of Jesus—



remains little known. Through his genealogy, art recovers its most ancient biblical tradition, as announced by the prophets of Israel, especially Isaiah, regarding the coming of the Messiah, the savior of the world. These promises become true with the incarnation of Christ in the Virgin Mary and his birth, which was poor and humble, despite his descent from the royal lineage of David. They are ultimately revealed through his acknowledgment as the Son of God and, as such, the King of Kings. The Gospels, particularly those of Saint Matthew and Saint Luke, explicitly refer to the genealogy of Jesus, serving as the source of this topic in visual arts from the Middle Ages to the American Baroque. Jesus' ancestors in the South-Andean colonial art represent a medieval legacy, updated to the mestizo-Baroque style, employing motifs such as the genealogical tree and sprouts, which are ancestrally linked to the idea of family.

DIVINE AND HUMAN GENEALOGY: The Virgin Mary metaphorically “springs up” from her parents, Saint Joachim and Saint Anne



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In its artistic evolution, the paternal lineage of Jesus, inherited from Saint Joseph, his adoptive father, became a representation of the genealogy of his mother, thus adding the female branch. This predominant motif in colonial art depicts the Virgin Mary as she metaphorically “springs up” from her parents, Saint Anne and Saint Joachim, two elderly people who, by divine intervention, conceive her as “immaculate.” From her, the divine fruit—Jesus—will be born. The history and iconography of the Virgin’s parents do not originate from the canonical gospels but from apocryphal texts (whose authenticity has not been proven), which received legendary interpretations during the Middle Ages. Pious stories, tinged with fantasy, highlight Saint Anne, the grandmother of Jesus, as a model of motherhood and wisdom, the patron saint of marriage, fertility, and birth; as well as a figure for grandmothers and mothers in the family. Saint Joachim, the grandfather of Jesus, is portrayed as the patron saint of parents, grandparents, and married couples.

DIVINE AND HUMAN GENEALOGY: Jesus Christ: a royal lineage not from this world and its legacy of salvation



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European and colonial artists from the Baroque period could foresee the mysterious kingdom revealed through the birth and life of Jesus. The Adoration of the Shepherds reflects the fidelity of the humble, while the Adoration of the Magi—popularly known as the Adoration of the Kings—testifies not only to his hidden human, Davidic royalty but mainly to the divine royalty of Christ, which is more secret and indecipherable in the eyes of the world. In the sacred gospels, the only crown that Jesus wore was the crown of thorns placed upon him at the moment of his Passion, when, sacrificed as the Lamb of God, he offered his body enclosed in the host and poured out his blood, collected in the chalice, for the salvation of humanity.



DIVINE AND HUMAN GENEALOGY: The Sacred Family and the emphasis on the paternal role of Saint Joseph



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Other forms of representation of the maternal family of Christ were developed in relation to Saint Anne, following the apocryphal texts, even though they contradicted orthodoxy—meaning the doctrine of the Church. These texts unfoundedly attributed three marriages to the mother of the Virgin Mary. Despite opposition from the religious hierarchy and orders, the concept of the “sacred kin” emerged in medieval art. Based on supposed relationships, this idea established an extensive family, which even included some of Jesus’ disciples, although the canonical gospels explicitly mention only John the Baptist and his parents, Elizabeth of Bethlehem and Zechariah, as relatives of Jesus. With its twelve characters and female predominance (the grandmother and the mother are crowned alongside Jesus), this painting represents an iconographic exception in Spanish and colonial painting.

DIVINE AND HUMAN GENEALOGY: The apocryphal maternal kin of Jesus



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Other forms of representation of the maternal family of Christ were made in relation to Saint Anne, following the apocryphal texts, even though they contradicted the orthodoxy, that is, the doctrine of the Church. These texts unfoundedly attributed three marriages to the mother of the Virgin Mary. The opposition of the religious hierarchy and orders was overcome, and the so-called “sacred kin” appeared in medieval art. Based on supposed relationships, this idea established a profuse family, which would even include some of his disciples, although the canonical gospels only explicitly mention John the Baptist and his parents, Elizabeth of Bethlehem and Zechariah, as relatives of Jesus. With its 12 characters and its female predominance (the grandmother and the mother are crowned along with Jesus), this painting is an iconographic exception in Spanish and colonial painting.

DIVINE AND HUMAN GENEALOGY: The tree as a genealogic image



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The tree is one of the most symbolically rich motifs in medieval Christian culture, representing the cyclic nature of cosmic evolution, its levels, and the four elements of the world. Thus, new associations emerged between the concept of family and the image of the tree, particularly as it relates to the genealogy of Jesus. This tree is known as the “Tree of Jesse.” Although in the Western world the genealogy has often aimed to portray aristocratic lineage or economic power, in the Semitic world, it referred to the idea of community and held key relevance. Belonging to the trunk of one family was a means of expressing an identity of condition or destiny.