



The design and creation of a communion set
by David William Martin

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF Applied Art
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Abstract:

This paper was written as partial requirement for a Master's Degree in Applied Art.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not have an art tradition. This precipitated a decision to design a communion act for the purpose of illustrating what art can do for the church.

The communion set was decided upon on the basis of its utilitarian value and the frequency of use. This may allow the idea of art within the church to be more readily accepted.

Sculpture was rejected at this time because of the prejudice of many people within the church towards sculpture as related to religion.

The background of Christian art is examined from the standpoint of sculpture, ritual objects, and iconography.

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Date July 31, 1969



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Thesis 10

THE DESIGN AND CREATION OF A COMMUNION SET

by

DAVID WILLIAM MARTIN

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial
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of

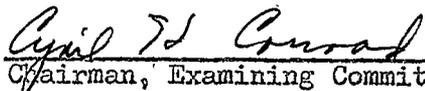
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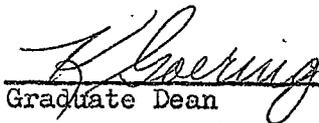
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Approved:


Head, Major Department


Chairman, Examining Committee


Graduate Dean

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

This paper was written as partial requirement for a Master's Degree in Applied Art.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not have an art tradition. This precipitated a decision to design a communion set for the purpose of illustrating what art can do for the church.

The communion set was decided upon on the basis of its utilitarian value and the frequency of use. This may allow the idea of art within the church to be more readily accepted.

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The background of Christian art is examined from the standpoint of sculpture, ritual objects, and iconography.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Art can express the ideas, theology, and doctrine that are peculiar to a faith, and those that are common to various faiths. Art can bring about greater understanding of the elements of a religion by expressing them visually. Art can make man aware of God.

Sculpture was not readily accepted as a means of expression by the early Christians and did not become common until the eleventh century on Romanesque churches. It rose to a high point of expression during the Renaissance. Sculpture was rejected by the Protestants, forcing the artist to express himself outside of the church. Sculpture continued as a Roman Catholic means of expression, and some Protestant groups are now commissioning artists to do sculptural pieces.

The use of ritual objects by Christians expanded from the chalice and paten of the early church with very few design limitations to crosses, croziers, reliquaries, and others with strict specifications for materials and use (varying according to the times and wealth of the churches). The Roman Catholic Church has recently removed many of these restrictions.

Symbols have been part of the Christian arts since the persecution of the early church. Symbols are used to express ideas and thoughts beyond themselves. As Christian thought expands and is reinterpreted, the number of symbols continues to grow.

In the edifices of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a person is struck by a lack of visual enrichment. This lack in the Reorganized Church is born of a prejudice that is deeply rooted in the background of the membership. Since the Reorganized Church is a relatively recent organization, it had to draw its membership from extant organizations and continues to do so. These converts brought with them, and continue to bring with them, ideas pertaining to the use of art and the rebellion against Roman Catholicism that are part of their background. This prejudice is keeping them from enjoying an aspect of religion that could enrich the worship experience.

A demonstration of what art can do for a worship experience could go far towards eliminating this prejudice. Therefore, a work of art that will be incorporated in the services, and that will express the faith and beliefs of this people is being created to help bring a deeper meaning to the service, and to demonstrate that art can serve man in his worship of God.

After surveying various possible areas in which art could be incorporated into the worship experience, a decision was made to concentrate on the communion service and the design of its ritual objects in a contemporary style.

The communion set developed from the idea of silver trays to walnut trays resting on stainless steel feet. The wine tray involves a glass rack of pierced silver design. The handle for the lid of the wine tray was designed to be a symbolic fish cast from silver while the

uncovered bread tray is enhanced with seven inlaid symbols on the inside surface.

CHAPTER II

SCULPTURE

The Judaic background of Christianity has influenced the use of sculpture in the churches, as indeed it should. Too much emphasis, however, has been placed upon the second commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."¹ This over-emphasis has limited the use of large scale sculpture in the Protestant Christian Church during much of its history.

An examination of the Old Testament reveals that God commanded Moses to construct and adorn the Mercy Seat with its sculptured figures of two cherubim. He was also commanded to sculpt a fiery serpent to be placed on a pole for healing the Israelites.²

Solomon put sculpture to use for the enrichment of the temple. The doors of the temple were carved with figures of cherubim. The walls of the Holy of Holies was enhanced with cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers inside and out. Within the Holy of Holies stood two cherubim approximately fifteen feet in height. The Molten Sea, used for washing the priest's hands and the utensils of sacrifice, was enriched by the use of twelve sculptured oxen.³

¹Exodus 20:4

²Numbers 21:8,9

³I Kings 6:17ff

Sculpture was not to be confined to Moses and Solomon's time. Ezekiel, who lived approximately 400 years after Solomon, saw a temple in a vision that involved sculpture throughout. This was the dwelling place of God.⁴ Whether this vision was of the temple rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, or the temple in the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation, is not known for sure. The idea presented here indicates that sculpture is meant to be an important factor in the glorification of God. After this time, no mention is made of Judaic sculpture in the Bible.

As Christianity unfolded, it was too involved with the formulation and establishment of its beliefs to concern itself with the arts as a means of expressing this newfound faith. While still in the beginning stage, Christianity was forced underground. The followers used symbols to express their faith, for the purpose of hiding the real meaning from the uninitiated. As Christianity emerged from the catacombs and found itself an established religion, it began expressing its beliefs visually on the walls of the basilicas in the form of mosaics. Nearly all Christians agreed that sculpture was not to be used in the houses of worship because of its resemblance to the pagan idols condemned by God.⁵

⁴Ezekiel 41:18ff

⁵E. H. Gombrich, The Story of Art (New York: The Phaidon Press, 1953), p. 92

Christian thematic sculpture then found expression outside the walls, in the art of the ivory carvers and funerary objects. The artists used a Graeco-Roman style with the oriental tracery, stylization, and formal patterning called Byzantine. This style, combined with Christian themes, was used in forming diptychs, triptychs, and other objects for private use. The sculptured sarcophagi tended more toward a realistic Graeco-Roman style.⁶

Sculpture found its greatest expression in the ivory carver's art from about the fourth century to the eleventh century with the coming of the Romanesque (Norman) style.⁷ Sculpture emerged from France during the Romanesque period as a part of the church building.⁸ The figures were carved in a manner that related them to their function as pillars for structure, yet expressed the other-worldliness of each saint or prophet they were meant to portray. The church was not so much concerned with how a body might appear beneath the garments, as they were with the main idea or theme that the figure should express. They sacrificed anything that seemed unessential to expressing the emotion and character of the idea they wished to communicate to the viewers. The Romanesque style began to merge with, and be replaced

⁶O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1961), p. 111

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 117

⁸Gombrich, p. 123

by, the Gothic style during the twelfth century. It is not possible to find a distinct dividing line between the Romanesque and Gothic styles of sculpture, for one overlaps the other. The Romanesque is involved with stylized or abstracted figures, while the Gothic sought to portray the figure closer to its actual appearance in nature.

As the Gothic style developed, the sculptors became interested in a study of nature and realism for the purpose of telling the stories more convincingly. The artist no longer was so concerned with the figures being an integral part of the structure in the same sense that the Romanesque sculptor had been; and, rather than serving a dual purpose, they began to take on a single purpose, telling a story. The sculptor, however, composed his groups in relationship to the area where the work was to be placed. For instance, he considered the shape of the tympanum; whether the piece was to decorate the roof line, or cap a flying buttress. Sculpture freed itself more from the background, reaching out from the building, bidding for attention.

The portals became important to declare the glory of God to the faithful, as they entered the ever higher-reaching cathedrals. Themes for these entrances centered around the symbolic orientation of the portals as related to the points of the compass. The central doorway, facing the west and the setting sun, generally dealt with the Last Judgment. The north porch, relating to the cold, centered on the

Old Testament. The warm southern portal was related to the New Testament and the coming of Christ.⁹

With renewed interest in science and knowledge at the beginning of the Renaissance, the artists took a greater interest in realism. This helped implement the Gothic movement toward the realistic. Nicola Pisano was perhaps the first sculptor to use rediscovered Roman realism in his works. His carved panels relate to the Roman sarcophagi, which he had opportunity to study along with other recovered sculpture from the past. Nicola's pulpit in the baptistry of Pisa, carved in marble, shows evidence of the Roman influence on his work. In one panel the Angel of the Annunciation is wearing a Roman toga, while the Madonna of the Nativity resembles the reclining figures of the Roman-Etruscan type. This master work at Pisa and the pulpit at Sienna indicate a definite break from the Romanesque and Gothic conventions.¹⁰

Donatello moved sculpture further toward portraiture and realism, as evident in his David and St. George.¹¹ He takes the other-worldly aspect out of the Gothic, and plants his figures resolutely on the earth.¹² No longer is the statement and the message

⁹Sheldon Cheney, A World History of Art (New York: Dryden Press, 1956), p. 305

¹⁰Ibid., p. 338

¹¹Ibid., p. 334

¹²Gombrich, p. 166

the important factor, but rather the appearance of the man. According to the praises of the realists, he makes the stone appear to be a living being.

Jacopo della Quercia, another sculptor during the period of humanism, ran counter to the march of the realists. He stood as a figure that could still produce monumental pieces. On the basis of photos of his work available for study, he composed his figures in panels quite simply. He interpreted the spirit of the sacred and the essence of the message, without getting lost in perspective or crowds of figures, yet maintaining the human qualities prevalent at the time.

Michelangelo caught the same monumental spirit as Jacopo della Quercia, but to a greater degree. Over the span of his life and works, he wrought from the stone monumental interpretations of Christianity. Michelangelo's figures were anatomically detailed, even to the veins on the backs of hands, yet he raised his figures above portraiture and illustrationalism, to a level that interpreted the spirit of God dwelling in man and working with man. His figures reach out with emotional impact, lifting the viewer closer to God.¹³

As the Reformation appeared in rebellion against Roman Catholicism under the leadership of men such as Zwingli and Calvin, it reverted to the iconoclasm of early Christianity. Zwingli, during

¹³Cheney, p. 323-38

the 1520's, influenced the Zurich town council to "ban images and relics."¹⁴ Calvin stated, "Man should not paint or carve anything except what he can see around him, so that God's majesty may not be corrupted by fantasies."¹⁵

This thought was not confined just to the early part of the Reformation, but remained down through the ages. In the early 1800's Hicks stated that, "If the Christian world was in the real spirit of Christ...I do not believe there would be such a thing as a fine painter in Christendom. It appears clearly to me to be one of those trifling insignificant arts, which has never been of any substantial advantage to mankind. But as the inseparable companion of voluptuousness and pride, it has presaged the downfall of empires and kingdoms...."¹⁶

Consequently church sculpture for many years was limited to the Roman Catholic churches. The Christian artist that found himself in a Protestant dominated country had to find a means outside the church

¹⁴Earle E. Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. 329

¹⁵Eleanor C. Munro, The Encyclopedia of Art (New York: Golden Press, 1961), p. 196

¹⁶Alexander Eliot, 300 Years of American Painting (New York: Time, Incorporated, 1957), p. 62

to express his beliefs visually. The Puritans used the headstones in their cemeteries for this purpose.¹⁷

Some of the same Protestant groups that considered all sculpture idolatrous are now looking at sculpture with a fresh view and can see the value of the artists' interpretations. They are becoming patrons of the arts. No tremendous strides have been made to restore sculpture to its former place in Christendom, but there appears to be a chance for a resurgence of sculpture to interpret God's dealings with contemporary man as well as with men of the past.

¹⁷Allen I. Ludwig, Graven Images (Middletown Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 1966)

CHAPTER III
RITUAL OBJECTS

Objects for sacred rites have been used by all religions in one form or another throughout the history of man. Primitive man had his sacred stones and rattles, the Jew had his basins and ewers, his tongs, altars, circumcision and sacrificial knives. Christianity has its reliquaries, crossiers, crucifixes, and holy vessels. Each object takes some basic form that relates it to the specific rite in which it is to be used.

Within Christianity there has been an expansion and transition of ritual objects from those first used in the rite of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At the institution of this rite it is assumed that there were two basic objects, a plate or paten for the bread and a cup or chalice for the wine. As theology and doctrine have been amplified and changed over the years, needs have arisen for more ritual objects.

The material or design of the chalice and paten used by the Lord is unknown, but as Christians continued to celebrate the feast of our Lord they used vessels of various materials ranging from wood to precious metal.¹

¹The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), vol. II, p. 443

The earliest chalices were low with a broad cup and a low foot. They were of two types, one used two handles, the other was hemispherical or cylindrical in shape without handles and set directly on a small conical foot. They were made from glass or metal and were used by the Byzantine church side by side into the eleventh century. A two handled chalice was still in use late in the fourteenth century. In the Western Church the two handled chalice disappeared during the tenth century.²

The chalice changed form over the centuries, from the stemless cups with a low foot to very elaborate high stemmed chalices that were beautiful but not practical. In the ninth century many local laws decreed that the chalice should be made of silver or gold or a combination of the two.³ In the thirteenth century the cup became longer and was set on a stem, the knop became more prominent and moved further away from the foot.⁴ In the fifteenth century the form of the cup became secondary

²Encyclopedia of World Art (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958), vol. IX, Col. 297

³Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home, II, p. 443

⁴Encyclopedia of World Art, IX, 297

to the decoration, and ornamentation was pushed to extremes.⁵ During the Renaissance the conventional form of the chalice was established with..."a bell-shaped cup set into a bulb, a tall smooth stem with a knob in a variety of forms, and a flared lobed foot...sculptured motifs replaced other forms of decoration."⁶ Previous to this the chalices had been decorated with enamels, precious gems, and filigree work.

The Roman Catholic Church established laws pertaining to the material for making the chalice as well as the parts it should consist of. The chalice must be made from silver or gold or a combination of the two. It must have the cup, a firm base for safety, and a knob on the stem for safety during the elevation and drinking of the Species. Another requirement, started in the thirteenth century, calls for a small cross engraved on the base to enable the celebrant to drink the ablutions and the precious blood over the same spot on the lip of the cup.⁷ The church has recently removed many of these restrictions.

Freedom is allowed in shaping and ornamenting the chalice, yet it is the local bishop's responsibility to see "that the chalices do

⁵Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home, II, p. 444

⁶Encyclopedia of World Art, IX, 298

⁷Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home, II, p. 444

not differ from the traditional forms, because of the danger of spilling the sacred Species, and of arousing astonishment."⁸

The paten in the early church was quite large to hold the loaves of bread and the offering of the congregation. In the eleventh century, with the introduction of the small host, the paten became smaller until today it is small enough to sit comfortably on top of the chalice.⁹

The Eastern Church developed a special type of paten which was set on a high foot or pedestal. The shapes varied, from the usual round plate to hexagonal and rectangular. The usual round form was used in the west...."with a lobed central section that was frequently decorated...."¹⁰ Generally the ornamentation was quite closely related to that of the chalice but in some cases varied.

The paten today is designed as a companion piece to the chalice with any ornamentation being confined to the convex side. The concave side is free from ornamentation for ease of purification and must be gold or gilt. The material requirement is the same as the chalice.¹¹

Many Protestant groups in their opposition to Roman Catholicism eliminated the communion from their services as well as the other rites practiced by the church of Rome, thus eliminating the need for ritual objects. Those groups that retained the communion service also retained

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 445

¹⁰Encyclopedia of World Art, IX, 294

¹¹Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home, II, p. 445

the chalice and paten following closely the requirements set down by Roman Catholicism. The Episcopal church has about the same restrictions on the materials to be used in making the chalice and paten as the Roman Catholics, except in cases where the people cannot afford the more precious metals. Then they may be made from pewter.

The Church of England in the sixteenth century replaced the chalice with the communion cup at the same time restoring the use of the cup to the laity. This necessitated a cup with a much larger bowl. The first communion cups were modeled after domestic cups. "The....bowl was mounted on a substantial stem and in the majority of examples the ornament was limited to an engraved band around the bowl." By the time of Elizabeth I's reign provision had been made for a paten that served as a cover for the cup.¹²

There was some elaborate medieval decoration of the vessels around the middle of the seventeenth century and with the revival of the Gothic style in the nineteenth century the medieval style became prevalent for ornamentation of the cups and plates.¹³

¹²Boger, Louise Ade; Boger, H. Batterson. The Dictionary of Antiquities and the Decorative Arts. New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1957), p. 122

¹³Ibid.

For health reasons some Protestant organizations have gone to small individual glasses for serving the wine, which then requires a tray with a rack to hold the glasses. Most of the trays are very plain with no ornamentation except for a simple cross which serves as the handle for the lid. They are made from various types of metal depending upon how much a group is willing to pay for the vessels.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY

In a discussion centered around experiences with deity and concepts and ideas that arise from these experiences, a question was raised about how these concepts and ideas might be expressed to people who have not had these experiences. Man needs to conceptualize ideas about those things around him which are not visible or readily accessible by some means that will signify something beyond itself.

Man, in an attempt to express such ideas, has developed sets of symbols which bring to mind or point toward intangible ideas. A symbol cannot replace the thing it was invented to signify, but rather it is an aid for conveying meanings beyond itself.

Since religion is based upon so much that is intangible and not readily accessible, symbolism is helpful for better understanding of religious thought.

As Christianity began to grow, its followers quite naturally sought symbols with which to express their beliefs. The Christian did not invent new symbols at first, but borrowed pagan designs that could be given a Christian interpretation. For instance: the vine, the shepherd, and the putti from Roman art. The vine was interpreted as Christ with the branches as the people, the shepherd became Christ the good shepherd, and the putti stood for cherubs. During the periods of persecution there was a need to invent new symbols in which the

true meaning could be hidden from the uninitiated. The anchor which was "a way to hide the crucifix"¹ and the fish which stood for Christ since the five Greek letters for fish were the same as the initial letters for the five words: 'Jesus Christ God's Son Savior', were used as well as others.

Since its inception Christianity has developed a great number of symbols, some of which have the same meaning; for instance the stag, the lamb and the fish all symbolize Christ while others have dual meanings in direct opposition to each other such as the bear, which stands for cruelty and evil as well as Christianity; or the owl which symbolizes both Christ and Satan. As new concepts and ideas continue to evolve more symbols will be invented and added to the multitude already in existence.

¹Father Flynn, Lecture "Early Christian Art", Religious Emphasis Week speaker, Montana State University, 1964

