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Rochester Institute of Technology

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Fine and Applied Arts  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITURGICAL METAL CRAFT

By

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April 13, 1979

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To  
my family  
who has given me  
love, support and encouragement  
.

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## INTRODUCTION

The essential purpose of this paper is to trace the history of ecclesiastical metal objects, beginning with the earliest Christian forms through those of the present day.

Religion has contributed greatly to the making of ecclesiastical art forms, such as chalices, patens, flagons, ewers, candlesticks, pyxes, mazers, and other objects related to religious ceremonies. The word "smith," a worker in metals, is derived from Saxon origin, meaning "he that smitheth."<sup>1</sup> References to metal-smiths are found in the Bible. In the Book of Isaiah one finds the passage, " . . . he that smootheth with the hammer."<sup>2</sup> And again, in the Book of Exodus reference is made to work on a candlestick:

And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.<sup>3</sup>

So from Biblical times allusions are made to metal work being performed for religious use.

There were really no distinct or new liturgical objects developed by the Christian religion. Any new developments were of a symbolic, not instrumental, nature. Many objects were given more

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<sup>1</sup>Julia de Wolf Addison, Arts and Crafts in the Middle Ages (Boston: The Page Company, 1908), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Isaiah 41:7.

<sup>3</sup>Exodus 25:31.

significant and distinct forms as rituals became more elaborate. As a result, purely functional forms were outweighed by those acquiring a symbolic value. Metal liturgical objects, since their introduction into the Christian liturgy, have remained unchanged, regardless of modification of size and/or form. This is especially true of sacramental vessels.<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to tell if early vessels were made for secular or liturgical use, for the earliest vessels were nothing more than everyday utensils. The form, type or decoration of a vessel produced in the early Christian period does not, for the most part, indicate if a vessel was made for the church or everyday use. Those sacramental vessels resembling secular pieces are closely bound by tradition. Since many vessels have been preserved by tradition, the church has served as the main source in the conservation of the most significant and largest group of metal work done in silver and gold.<sup>5</sup> It is unfortunate that during several periods in history, liturgical vessels fell victim to destruction. Silver pieces failed to survive war, greedy kings, and several revolutions. For example, Louis XIV melted down silver to pay off debts.<sup>6</sup> Churches also melted down chalices and patens rather than have them confiscated by political leaders.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Encyclopedia of World Art, Vol. 9 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1964), p. 290.

<sup>5</sup>Martha Gandy Fales, Early American Silver (U.S.A.: Excalibur Books, 1970), p. 151.

<sup>6</sup>Lucinda Fletcher, Silver (London: Orbis Publishing, 1973), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur Hayden, Chats on Old Silver (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), p. 56.

As a result of all these hardships, it is rare to find ecclesiastical plate in the period prior to the Reformation.

Changes in church history affected liturgical forms. For example, when private masses were held, smaller chalices and patens became necessary. During the eleventh century patens were made to fit over chalices to allow safe transportation of the sacred elements by one person, usually the priest. Another example would be the cruet. In the twelfth century the need arose for small amounts of the holy wine and water at the priests' communion, and the flagon was too large. Thus the forms of many ecclesiastical objects were determined by need.

This paper will deal with individual ecclesiastical vessels whose various forms represent their progression through the ages. Post-Reformation examples are most plentiful, but other forms characteristic to their periods have also been chosen.

## CHAPTER I

### CHALICES

The most important of the various liturgical objects is the chalice, for it represents the sacrificial cup of the Last Supper, when Christ established the new covenant with His blood. The receptacle itself becomes an equivalent of the sacrificial blood as stated in the Gospel of St. Luke: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."<sup>8</sup>

The earliest chalices were made from numerous materials, such as glass, wood, horn, ivory, and various metals. All these materials presented several complications. For instance, glass chalices were easily broken and yet were popular in the Roman Empire of the second century. Wine corroded chalices made of brass and copper, and those made of wood absorbed the wine. The use of horn was forbidden because it contained the blood of oxen. The need arose for a durable metal. Eventually the church prescribed the fabrication of chalices out of gold and silver because of the vessel's importance in the communion service.<sup>9</sup> Silver was frequently used for its beauty, value and malleability which is desirable in making large vessels.

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<sup>8</sup>St. Luke 22:20.

<sup>9</sup>President and Fellows of Harvard College, Eucharistic Vessels of the Middle Ages (Washington, D.C.: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1975). p. 14.

With silver there is no danger of poisoning as there is with copper and brass.

There are normally four distinct parts of a chalice: the bowl, the node, the stem and the base. The bowl contains the Communal wine and therefore must follow certain requirements of form. The shape should be such that the celebrant can drink the wine without any difficulty. For example, a cup whose greatest diameter is below the lip would need to be tipped at a greater angle to drain the contents. For this and other such reasons, the bowl should remain simple and functional in shape (Figure 1).

The node is located on the stem near the bottom of the bowl, a point at which the thumb and forefinger can grasp the chalice securely. The primary function of the node is the assurance of safe handling. The node varies slightly in size and shape according to the design of the chalice, but it generally takes under consideration the acceptance of the hand.

The stem is a vertical element connecting the bowl to the node and the node to the base. The stem, as will be seen, varies in height and mass and carries the responsibility of giving the chalice physical, as well as visual, strength.

And finally, the base, or foot of a chalice, employs such design so as to insure stability. The base also provides a good location for the placement of ornamentation or symbols of the church.

With a clear understanding of the materials used and definition of form, we will now explore several aspects in the evolution of chalices.

The development begins with the well-known early Christian

chalice of Antioch (Figure 2), dated about 79 A.D. It exemplifies the relationship between pictorial content and the function of the vessel, a harmony of form and function which constituted the entire development of the chalice. The chalice has a crude egg-shaped cup and stands  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches high. It has a narrow circular foot. The node, placed right under the bowl, is on a very short stem. The chalice of Antioch is identical in type with known chalices of the first century from the Roman Empire. The proportions were figured out by a geometric system which governed exactly the outline as well as height and width.<sup>10</sup>

There are very few chalices in existence that date from before the eighth century, primarily because of the type of materials used and the political implications mentioned earlier. For the first seven centuries of Christianity, chalices had no specific form. General information of this era, however, has been collected by studying the few known examples, old paintings and etchings. It is known that these primitive chalices were large and had deep ovoid cups. Some had two handles, some only one, and occasionally some without any.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 3, the Ardagh Chalice, is an example of a two-handled cup.

Chalices preserved from the Romanesque period illustrate the change from earlier form. A major change in the twelfth century was the giving of separate definition to the component parts of the chalice (bowl, node, stem and base) into a form that was accepted throughout

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<sup>10</sup>Gustavus A. Eisen, The Great Chalice of Antioch (New York: Madison Square Press, 1933), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>Peter S. Anson, Churches, Their Plan and Furnishings (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1948), p. 178.

Europe. It was made wider in proportion to the height, and the handles were eliminated. The bowl became smaller as the large size was no longer needed to communicate the laity, resulting from a decree of a church council. The shape was wide and more shallow, almost hemispherical, and sometimes with an everted rim.<sup>12</sup> There was no mentionable stem, only a fillet above and below the node (Figure 4). The chalice shown in Figure 4 is the earliest example from the Gothic period. Gothic chalices are radically different from Romanesque. They reflect the architectural characteristics of their period, which include elongation of form, window tracery and pointed arches. In fact, the architectural membering becomes the chief element of design.<sup>13</sup>

Chalices of the thirteenth century had broad, shallow bowls with pronounced lips. This lip, however, was discarded a short time later due to its discomfort. A short cylindrical stem emerged between the bowl and base; it was divided midway by a rounded, lobed, polygonal or spiral node. The base was flat and circular, separate from the stem and approximately equal to the cup in diameter (Figures 5 and 6). Towards the end of the thirteenth century individuality became evident with an elaborately decorated node and foot. The node was lobed, writhen (spiraling) or embellished with a chevron (inverted V) ornament. The round base was embossed with radiating plain or cusped lobes, or even with pointed leaves.<sup>14</sup> (Figures 7 and 8)

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<sup>12</sup>Patricia Dirsztay, Church Furnishings, A Nadfas Guide (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), p. 89.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Oman, English Church Plate 597-1830 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 29.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

About this time professional craftsmen were forming guilds, and as a result, gold and silver work began to pass out of the hands of monks into the goldsmiths'. This explains to some extent the great variance in style of work. When a monk, for example, made a chalice, it was a labor of love; but when it changed over to the goldsmiths, the work became a means of livelihood to its producer.<sup>15</sup>

All chalices can be separated into two main groups: (1) those with a circular foot and (2) those with a hexagonal or sexfoil foot (six lobes).<sup>16</sup> A round-footed chalice has the tendency to roll when laid on its side to drain on the paten at the conclusion of mass. So there was a clear advantage in adopting forms with a hexagonal or lobed base in that it avoided such inconvenience. Round-footed chalices were still in use until the Reformation, as there was no official ruling for new patterns.<sup>17</sup> Changes in form were gradual, some being made for convenience and greater stability, and others for artistic reasons.

It is at the start of the fourteenth century that the chalice begins to adopt other forms for the base; the rounded, however, is still predominant (Figures 9 and 10). The bowl is replaced by a deeper, straight-sided or, in other words, more conical shape. The laying down of the chalice accounts for the conical form of the bowl because it drained more easily. No other important developments of

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<sup>15</sup>Nelson Dawson, Goldsmiths' and Silversmiths' Work (London: Methuen and Co., 1907), p. 138.

<sup>16</sup>Charles James Jackson, An Illustrated History of English Plate, Ecclesiastical and Secular, Vol. I (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), p. 332.

<sup>17</sup>Oman, p. 43.



form appear until about 1360. At this time a hexagonal stem occurs (Figure 11).

The bowl of the fifteenth century becomes deeper and less conical, almost hemispherical. The hexagonal stem is now longer<sup>18</sup> and carries a more decorative node. This node is usually six-lobed with decorated bosses (projections) of various motifs. Once again the foot is hexagonal with incurved sides, referred to as mullet-shaped (Figures 12 and 13). At the close of the fifteenth century it became customary to embellish the point of the mullet foot with a cast ornament called a knop or toe. These varied in shape from crescent to leaf<sup>19</sup> and were an attempt to blunt the sharp points of the foot.

Beginning with the sixteenth century, the cup presents itself as more shallow and broader at the base. The stem and node are basically unchanged. The main difference of this period is revealed in a sexfoil foot (Figure 14) which slopes up to the stem. About 1525 the sexfoil foot is replaced by a foot that is still related to the hexagon but with wavy sides. It is thought that the wavy hexagonal foot was perhaps borrowed from Gothic Spanish chalices in which such a feature is common. The stem was decorated with buttresses or ornaments of cable pattern on the edges. The junction of the stem and foot had an open crown<sup>20</sup> (Figure 15). This type evolved only a few years before the period of spoliation began. Almost all Gothic

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<sup>18</sup>Jackson, p. 337.

<sup>19</sup>Oman, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup>Jackson, p. 333.

feeling is lost in the details of the Wylve Chalice shown in Figure 15. Additionally, the hemispherical bowl is a departure from the extreme simplicity of the Gothic period.<sup>21</sup>

The term "chalice" is used for Communion vessels until the Reformation (approximately 1525), from which time it is replaced with "Communion Cup." Communion was restored to the laity which, in turn, necessitated the provision of a larger vessel. A general order was mandated to churches for all "chalices to be altered to decent Communion Cups"<sup>22</sup> and to be of sufficient size. The design was greatly modified at this point, appearing more secular. Figure 16, the Boleyn Cup, is of Renaissance influence and is a good example of a secular cup given to ecclesiastical use some years after its manufacture. The bowl is an inverted cone with convex repousse flutes. It has a disc-shaped node and a spreading ogee base. One of the earliest vessels made for use as a Communion cup is shown in Figure 17. It is a plain, simply formed, capacious cup on a trumpet-shaped stem without a node.

In regard to the design of the Communion cup, there were no special requirements designated by the church, and as a result, a variety of styles are found.<sup>23</sup> However, one note of interest is that the cups were specifically designed so as not to resemble the medieval chalice.<sup>24</sup> Many of those made for the church were modeled from the

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<sup>21</sup>Wilfred Joseph Cripps, Old English Plate (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1899), p. 205.

<sup>22</sup>Addison, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup>Jackson, p. 393.

<sup>24</sup>Oman, p. 191.

simplest types of domestic cups.

The change in form of the sixteenth century Communion cup provokes a whole new vocabulary in this thesis. The cup in Figure 18 has a deep, bucket-shaped bowl resting on a compressed node. The location of this node is of little or no use with respect to safe handling. The foot and base are trumpet-shaped.

The Communion cup of the early seventeenth century has a tall cylindrical bowl with an everted rim. In the middle of the stem is a large node. The upper section of the stem is concave, and the lower part is pear-shaped with a flat base (Figure 19). The bowl of this type is also alluded to as a deep beaker shape, which may have evolved from early Scottish mazers.<sup>25</sup> In Scotland throughout the seventeenth century these plain and upright beakers were very common. The cup was usually shaped like the letter V, sometimes with a baluster stem. Later in the seventeenth century Communion cups that were made expressly for the church seemed to have somewhat similar forms. A cup of 1683 (Figure 20), is simple in form, consisting of a bell-shaped bowl on a trumpet-shaped stem without a node. This example illustrates the cup covered by a paten referred to as "paten-lid" which is a common feature of this period. The Baroque influence is evident as exhibited by the highly ornate sculptural elements. The bowl became smaller and deeper as the stem and foot became elongated.<sup>26</sup>

General trends at the launch of the eighteenth century included a more narrow and upright communion cup with extremely

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<sup>25</sup>Dawson, p. 152.

<sup>26</sup>President and Fellows of Harvard College, p. 30.

light ornamentation.<sup>27</sup> In the middle of the century the bowl became goblet-shaped.

Moving into the nineteenth century, we find that the term "chalice" is used once again synonymously with Communion cups. Chalices of this period were inspired by the Norman style. They had a plain, conical bowl; a circular stem; a high, circular, flaring foot; and were heavily decorated. A little later the bowl became hemispherical; and the stem, circular.<sup>28</sup>

The form of many contemporary chalices is plain and free-flowing with little or no ornamentation. There is little regard to function; instead forms are based on aesthetic quality. As a result, a wide range of shapes exist to fit the aesthetic need. The entire design is decided by the creativity of the craftsman.

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<sup>27</sup>Encyclopedia of World Art, Vol. 9, p. 298.

<sup>28</sup>Dirsztay, p. 91.

## CHAPTER II

### PATENS

Patens went hand in hand with the chalice, forming a pair of liturgical vessels, each holding a sacred element of the Communion Sacrament. The paten was a circular, shallow dish or plate with a broad rim large enough to cover a chalice and hold the Communion bread. The paten used at the Last Supper was the prototype for all patens to follow. Initially patens were not identified with their sacred elements because the bread could be handled without a container, whereas the wine could not. As more people began to receive Communion, larger quantities of bread needed to be carried to the altar, thus the paten came into existence for practical purposes;<sup>29</sup> in this way it acquired a new significance as Communion became a complex celebration. Size of the early paten was determined by the number of communicants and whether a loaf of bread or the wafer was used.

The early patens were manufactured from wood, brass, bronze, copper, horn, glass, agate, gold and silver. Precious metals were used as a token of power.

The earliest form of the paten was like a modern tea tray. A typical form of an early paten could be described as follows: It was shaped like a plate with a central depression and rim, frequently

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<sup>29</sup>President and Fellows of Harvard College, p. 4.

standing on a low, ring-shaped stand.<sup>30</sup>

Patens may be grouped into seven distinct types with distinguishing marks and two different forms: (1) Form I, being the most common, was circular with an inner depression, being either quatrefoil or multifoil in outline; and (2) Form II had a single depression which was multifoil or circular.

With the exception of a very few, the patens had a sacred ornamentation engraved on them.<sup>31</sup>

During the tenth century the diameter of a paten was congruent with the diameter of a chalice.<sup>32</sup> This was necessary since the paten rested on top of the chalice and was carried to the altar.

In patens of the eleventh century the total diameter approximately equaled the height of the chalice. They were usually round and made of crystal, alabaster and other materials, whereas precious metals were used for the rim and binding it together. They were sometimes ornamented with depressions and designs deeply incised. Patens became plainer as time went on, but they were still decorated with emblems such as the Manus Dei and the Vernicle.

Patens of the Middle Ages were small, simple, flat plates. During this time the paten had a shallow dish-shaped depression in the center which, in turn, fit on top of the chalice. The depression was circular and generally quite plain, being without a foot<sup>33</sup> (Figure 21).

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<sup>30</sup>President and Fellows of Harvard College, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup>Jackson, p. 344.

<sup>32</sup>President and Fellows of Harvard College, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup>Dawson, p. 156.

For the most part patens virtually remained unchanged, with the exception of the number of depressions. During the Middle Ages two basic forms prevailed. The first form consisted of a single, sunken depression which was circular or multifoiled. In the second form there were two depressions: the first, circular; and the second, multifoil.<sup>34</sup>

The diameter of the paten became smaller during the Middle Ages as a result of the narrowing of the chalice cup. It was redesigned to accomodate changes in the church liturgy. The number of communicants decreased, and a small, individual Communion host was introduced to replace the breaking of the bread. Consequently, large patens were no longer needed.<sup>35</sup> Patens grew in number and variety later in the Middle Ages to meet their new functions as liturgical vessels. Their new functions were of greater importance due to the reverence of the Communion elements. Each crumb of bread and drop of wine were carefully protected.

In the thirteenth century the paten had a quatrefoil depression (Figure 22), which changed to two depressions in the latter part of the century; the first was circular, and the second, octofoil (Figure 23). In some patens the lower depression was sexfoil with plain cusps. A more settled form and fashion is also displayed during the Gothic period. In place of the plain plate, a six-lobed depression became popular. This hexagonal shape corresponded to the same shape of the chalice foot. Patens were made to

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<sup>34</sup>Oman, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup>President and Fellows of Harvard College, p. 38.

match their chalices with the depression fitting into the top of the chalice. An example is the Paten at Nettlecombe, which is  $4 \frac{7}{8}$  inches in diameter (Figure 24). The rim is like that of an ordinary plate with a sunken, six-lobed depression. The spandrels between the lobes are decorated as most spandrels of patens were. The form of the paten was uncertain during the latter part of the Gothic period. The popular six-lobed depression was replaced by a plain plate with a single, circular depression.<sup>36</sup>

With the alteration of chalices to Communion\* cups, it also became necessary to change the form of the paten. The depression in the plate became much deeper along with a narrowing brim. It had a double use--that is, to fit the chalice cup as a cover and when inverted, to serve as a paten. A foot was added to the bottom of the paten, which served as a handle when the paten was used as a cover (Figure 25). Patens of this type were known as standing patens. The foot was usually conical and not fitted to the stand. The patens of this time were generally low and squat in shape.<sup>37</sup>

Since the introduction of wafer bread to the Western World, the present forms of patens have evolved. In contemporary times, patens have become smaller and usually are unadorned.

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<sup>36</sup>Jackson, p. 345.

<sup>37</sup>Dawson, p. 157.



## CHAPTER III

### FLAGONS

Another Communion vessel that was used is the flagon.

Flagons were large vessels which were used to fill Communion cups. They contained the wine for Communion. In 1547 the laity of the church was once again allowed to partake in the Communion service, thus a larger vessel was necessary for the conveyance of the sacramental wine. Previous to this time, the priest was the only one who celebrated Communion at the altar, using much smaller vessels known as cruets. Cruets were usually found in pairs, one for holding the Communion wine and one for the water. These vessels were smaller than flagons and preceded them historically.

Flagons have also been referred to as "tankards-gone-to-church."<sup>38</sup> This is because flagons follow the general design of domestic tankards; the difference being that the flagons have elongated handles and bodies with much wider base moldings. An important distinction was that the flagon was used to fill the Communion cup. Up until the close of the seventeenth century, it is extremely difficult to trace the forms of Communion flagons because secular and Communion flagons were of the same design.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Fales, p. 155.

<sup>39</sup>Oman, p. 219.

Flagons belong particularly to the sixteenth century, and their forms remained virtually unchanged through the eighteenth century. Bulbous-bodied flagons competed with cylindrical ones until the nineteenth century. Beginning in 1619, flagons were of a general shape, usually of great size, with a spreading foot or base, and very plain.<sup>40</sup> Several examples of flagons will now be discussed in order to better show the progression of form.

Earliest flagons were made from stone. In 1204 carved stones shaped as flagons were brought out of Constantinople\* after the city was captured by Venetians. Crystal flagons have also been found.<sup>41</sup> Later flagons were made of pewter and silver.

Flagons which were made towards the end of the sixteenth century were known as the Jacobean Type and continued to be produced for nearly forty years. The cylindrical tankard developed in form, becoming taller than those of the Elizabethan period. The ornamental foot was a distinctive feature of these flagons. A flagon from circa 1572 illustrates the cylindrical body and spreading, molded foot. There is a plain handle and convex cover. On top of the lid is a rayed button and knob, which reassured easy opening and handling of the flagon.

In Figure 26 a flagon made exclusively for ecclesiastical use is represented. The cover is hinged and the handle recurving. The body is in the form of a large globe set on a trumpet-shaped foot.

We now move on to the early seventeenth century, when flagons

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<sup>40</sup>Cripps, p. 227.

<sup>41</sup>Addison, p. 84

of a cylindrical shape were the most appealing ever made. During this period flagons varied little; the most common being cylindrical in shape with little or no ornamentation (Figure 27). Some flagons did contain spouts.<sup>42</sup>

Globular flagons had bodies in a globe-shaped form. Some characteristics of this form are the short, curved neck and spout, a cover that is dome-like, and a body resting on a short stem (Figure 28). A tall, cylindrical flagon made in the late seventeenth century represents about the same form of cover, handle and body as flagons before it; but the base is molded with a deep, concave member resting on it. Once again it is very high and wide in spread.<sup>43</sup>

In the eighteenth century a jug-shaped flagon is found. Many forms used for flagons during this period were fashioned after secular coffee pots (Figure 29). A distinguishing feature was the short, jug-spout, which was everted at the lips, instead of a long spout.<sup>44</sup> Some fresh bulbous forms of flagons also emerged in the period of the early eighteenth century. At this point in time, bulbous and cylindrical forms started merging.

The last form is a flagon known as the York Flagon. This type of Communion flagon was very practical because it was free of the ornamental knot where the handle was gripped.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Oman, p. 222.

<sup>43</sup>Jackson, p. 450.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>45</sup>Oman, p. 223.

The ewer, another liturgical vessel, will be mentioned briefly. A ewer is a religious water pitcher, similar to a flagon in that both of their functions are to hold a liquid. The flagon holds the wine, and the ewer contains holy water used for baptismal purposes. Many ewers were made for secular use and later donated to churches for ecclesiastical use. Ewers were sometimes used with basins in which the minister washed his hands before touching the Communion vessels. Ecclesiastical ewers today are mainly used for baptismal liturgy.

## CHAPTER IV

### CANDLESTICKS

Candlesticks are another interesting liturgical object. Their origin is actually very simple. Since candlesticks were, and still are, significant features in religious ceremonies, it was necessary to devise some type of receptacle to contain the candles. References to candlesticks are alluded to in the Bible. The Bible mentions solid gold objects called lamps. The earliest candlesticks were made of wood in which a wick was floated on top of oil. This type of candle became popular in religious circles because services were held in the evenings with vigils lasting through the night. Christ was, and is, considered the light of the world, which accounts for the symbolic meaning of the candles. Oil was used because it was a symbol of the Holy Spirit. This symbolism helps to account for the recognition of lamps as sacred vessels of the church. As other sacred vessels of the church, candlesticks came to be made from precious metals, such as gold and silver. Candlesticks were usually placed on the altar in pairs, one on either side of the cross since the cross had to be in the center.<sup>46</sup>

Pricket was the name given to the earliest candlesticks. The form is a main shaft with a sharp point on the top which held

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<sup>46</sup>Ratha Doyle McGee, Symbols, Signposts of Devotion (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1956), p. 34.

the candle (Figure 30). A saucer, to catch the wax, surrounded the candlestick. Candlesticks during the Middle Ages were destroyed because of superstition. There were only a few pricket types preserved. In 1816 the socket type candlestick replaced the pricket.<sup>47</sup>

An example of medieval candlesticks are those of St. Berward. They were magnificently wrought with three metals--namely, gold, silver and iron--and are covered with floral decoration and animal forms.<sup>48</sup> There is a feeling of energy and strength displayed in the pair.

Candlesticks of the Gothic period tended to imitate the architectural forms of the period much in the same way as the chalice did. Most were richly sculptured with decorations on the foot or knop.

In the twelfth and through the fourteenth centuries, candlesticks became more abundant. The shapes tended to have definite characteristics such as the three supports on the base, which were sometimes lobed and broad or circular. These candlesticks were much taller than those of today. The stem was high and interrupted by a heavy node and round disc beneath the pricket.<sup>49</sup> An excellent example is the Gloucester Candlestick (Figure 31). The top, base and stem are clearly the three distinct parts. The base is supported on three feet and there is a node in the middle of the stem. An intertwining pattern of leaves, stems, human figures, birds,

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<sup>47</sup>Seymour B. Wyler, The Book of Old Silver (New York: Crown Publishers, 1937), p. 87.

<sup>48</sup>Addison, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup>Encyclopedia of World Art, Vol. 9, p. 294.

animals and monsters covers the whole candlestick. The three feet are comprised of grotesque, open-mouthed animal heads. Large candlesticks of this type stood on the floor of the church and were usually made of bronze, whereas those kept on the altar were of silver and gold.<sup>50</sup>

Until the Reformation silver candlesticks were difficult to find. The basic form was a molded stem with some sort of knot, a round or polygonal grease-pan with pricket and matching base.<sup>51</sup>

There were several different styles of candlesticks during the seventeenth century. Some were bell-shaped and made of pewter, whereas others were made of brass. A candle ejector was set in a vertical slot of the cylindrical stem and a drip-pan was in the center of the stem. The base was wide-spreading. The late seventeenth century saw the silver Baroque style candlestick. The stem was ornamented and baluster in form. The pricket and drip-pan were decorated with several inverted flutings. The feet were of a scrolled tripod shape (Figure 32). Another form of candlestick is a classical style of the Restoration. The stem resembles a doric column and is surrounded by a broad platform. The foot is stepped and rather large.<sup>52</sup> The last forty years of the seventeenth century saw very little output of silver candlesticks; yet those that were made then consisted of a wide range of designs.

The number of candlesticks allowed on the altar increased in number during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Six

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<sup>50</sup>Dawson, p. 162.

<sup>51</sup>Oman, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup>Dirsztay, p. 97.

was the amount finally established. Decorative motifs tended to outweigh sculptural forms which were characteristic of the sixteenth century. The Baroque period was noted for its elegant forms and ornamentation. Candlesticks of the early eighteenth century were fabricated in silver and brass. In the base was a steel rod ejector, and the stem was baluster in form with knops resting on a polygonal foot (Figure 33). The Neo-Classical forms dominated the late eighteenth century with fluted stems that were tapered, stems set on a high trumpet foot, and a bell-shaped socket.<sup>53</sup> Few candlesticks were produced in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. A triangular base was once again fashionable in true altar candlesticks. The stem was adopted from a form of a classical column.

There is little information on altar candlesticks in the nineteenth century. Two pairs of candlesticks of major importance during this time are one of Gothic style and one with a triangular and baluster stem.<sup>54</sup> Candlesticks were very functional in form.

Today candlesticks are mainly symbolic but serve a decorative purpose on the altar as well. In many churches the balance of the cross between two candlesticks can still be found.

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<sup>53</sup>Dirsztay, p. 97.

<sup>54</sup>Oman, p. 245.



## CHAPTER V

### A DISCUSSION OF PIECES CRAFTED

BY WILLIAM PAUL BARBA

There is no basic style or form that has not been wrought in some manner. An infinite number of variations in design exist because of attention to detail while the limits of basic form are still attainable. Many contemporary designs are merely extreme simplifications of the past. These simplifications reveal flowing or complimentary lines, clean surfaces, hard edges and sometimes an acquaintance with the machine age. Awareness of the past and knowledge of present-day technology formulate a sensitivity to a personal aesthetic.

The design of my chalice (Figure 34), as with my other three pieces discussed later, originated by studying the basic forms of historical examples. There was a concern for function as well as the aesthetic quality. The bowl of the chalice is conical for easy drainage and cleaning. It is large in order to serve a good number of communicants. The node is centrally placed between the bowl and base, the size of which is directly related to the acceptance of the hand. The concave ringlets of the stem are short to allow the majority of height to be in the bowl and base. The base is hemispherical in form--purely an aesthetic decision. However,

the diameter of the base, along with the vertical footing, is to add stability.

The flagon (Figure 35) reflects the straight-sided tankards of the seventeenth century but incorporates the sharp, angular structure of today. The general shape of the body is an offset cone with a handle equalizing the vertical rectangle. The spout is cut at an angle for convenience in pouring. Once again the angled slice of the base is purely aesthetic.

The candlesticks are obviously of socket type (Figure 36). The design involves an inverted cone seated on a larger upright cone. A dish which catches the melted wax is a functional piece of the upper cone. The broad diameter of the base of the bottom cone is utilized for stability. This is necessary because of the towering height of the candles. The space between each cone is to define clearly each function.

The paten is of a simple dish shape (Figure 37). Its foot fits the inner rim of the chalice and also serves as a place to grasp while serving Communion.

Silver, along with the contrasting black delrin, was used on all pieces. The black delrin constitutes one of the non-functional elements of design; it better defines the individual form and visual movement of each piece.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Historically metal craft has played an aesthetic and functional role in traditional liturgy. Liturgical metal objects have adorned places of worship for many centuries. Originally many objects were developed to serve a genuine need--for example, larger Communion chalices for the laity. Contemporary pieces also play an important role but in a more traditional and symbolic sense.

For the most part early church plate was made of precious metals such as gold and silver. Today a majority of the plate is still made of silver, especially the sacramental pieces, but other metals such as brass, bronze and pewter are used to enhance the silver.

In earlier times the crafts were affected more radically by the church, and the craftsmen catered to the clergy. Craftsmen made one-of-a-kind pieces that carried a price usually only the churches could afford. Today however, if a church wants a silver chalice, the standard method of obtaining it is ordering it from a catalog, where there are numerous duplicates, thus lowering the market price.

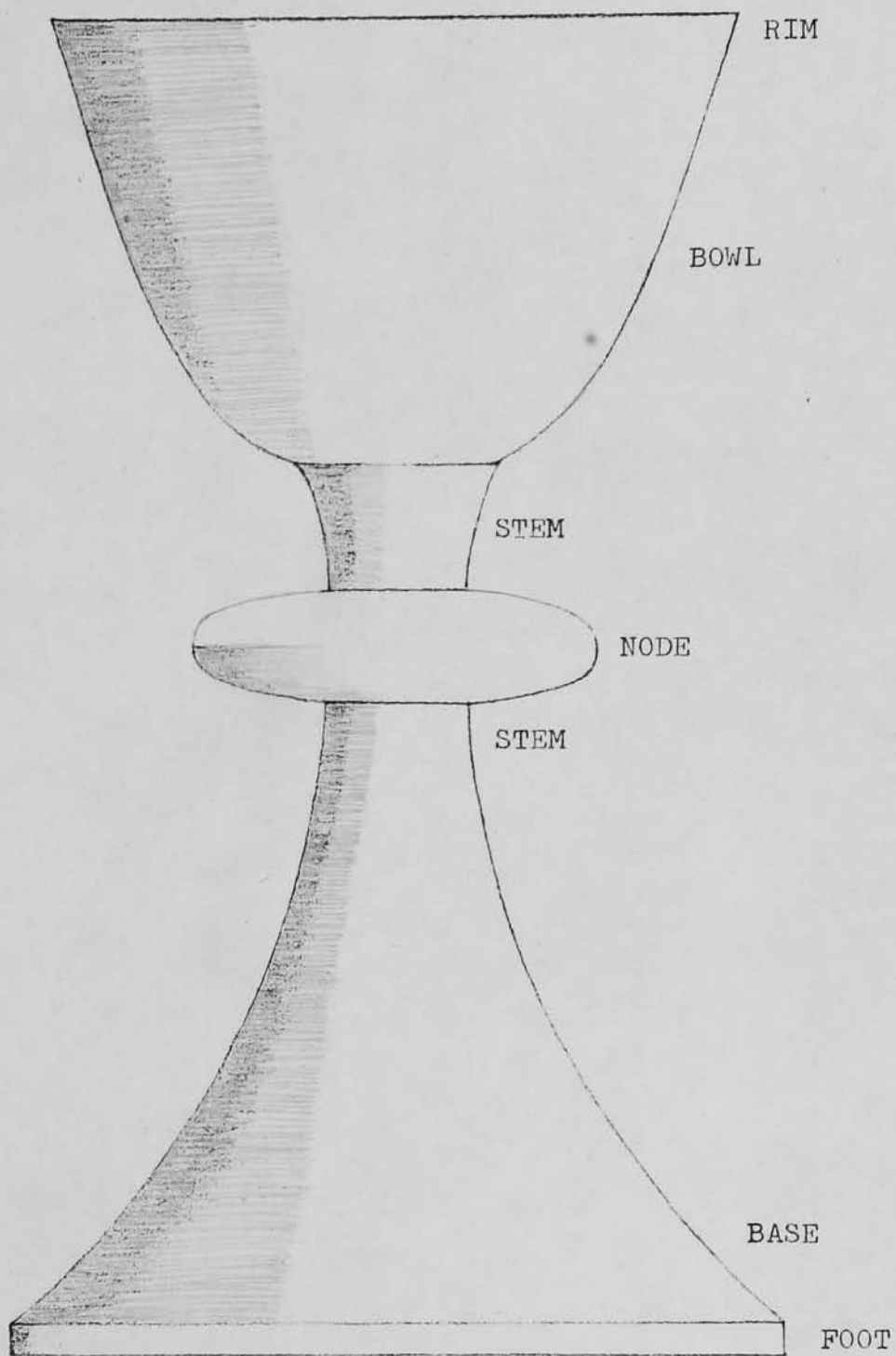
It is hoped that this paper has established the importance

of liturgical metal craft, which through the ages has evolved from  
"a labor of love" to something more impersonal.

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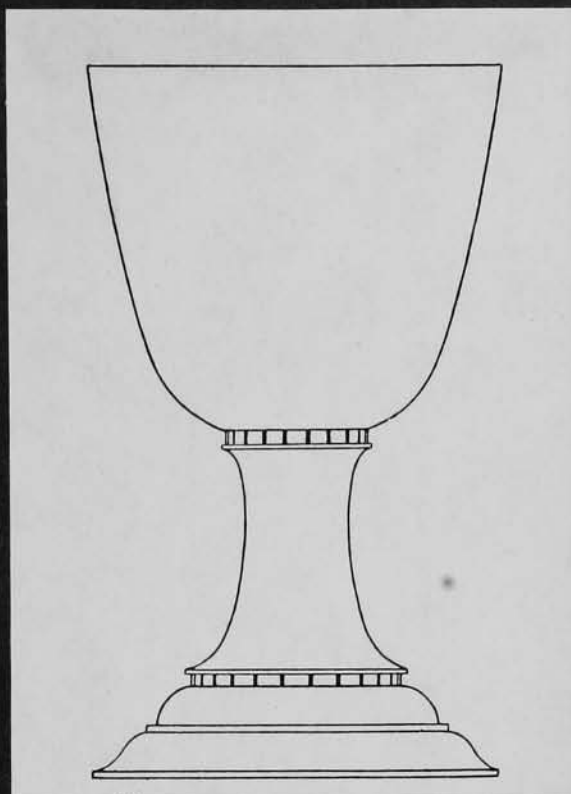






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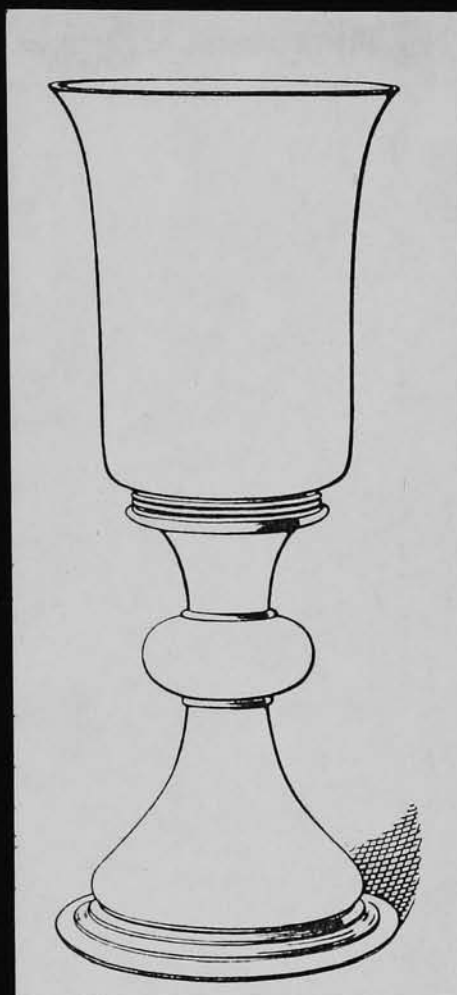
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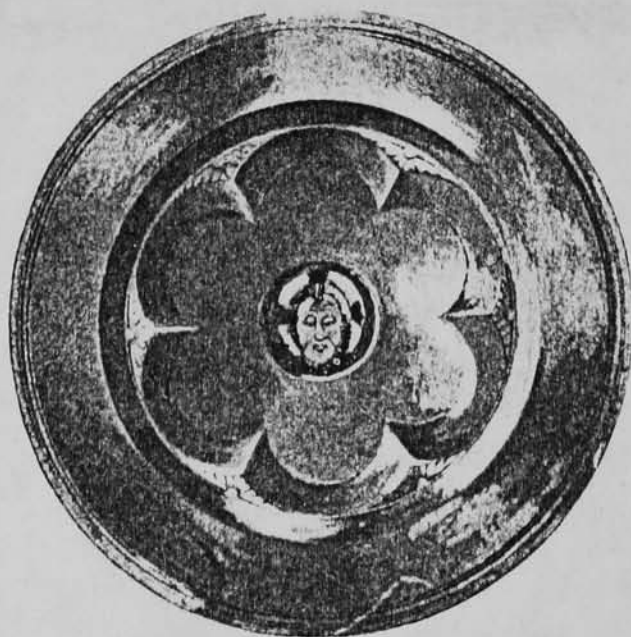


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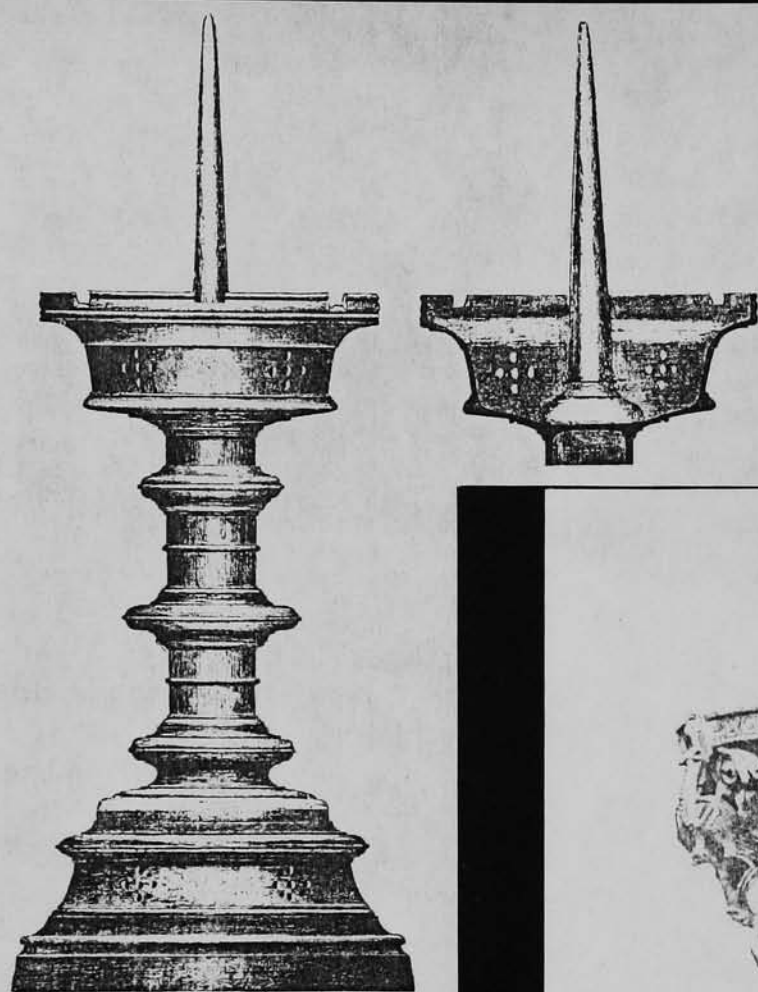




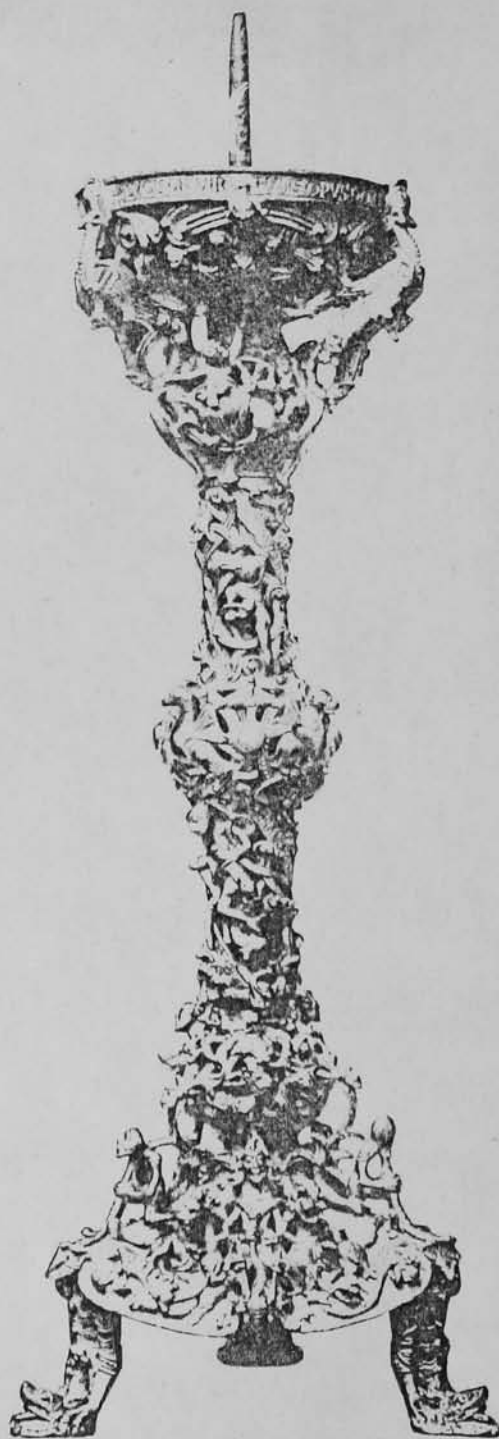
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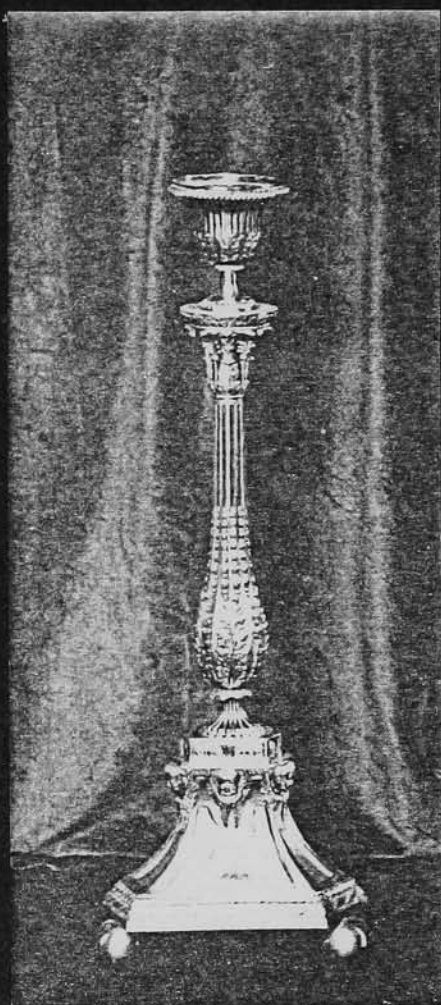
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