

Ronald Neill Dixon

Artist's Statement

As an ecclesiastical artist, it is not my role to make statements about my art or its subject matter; I simply visualize statements made by the prophets, the disciples, and the saints. I only hope that my talent, training, and discipline will produce work that can speak for itself, and perhaps speak for those who were much wiser and holier, presenting their truths in a way that is beautiful and relevant to another generation of seekers.

As an artist, I certainly have opinions about art in general, and about religious art specifically, such as...

The arts elevate us above animals, as humanity has a unique need not only to explain but also to interpret the world. The arts are more significant than tools in distinguishing the nature of our existence. The opposable thumb on a knife or a spade is still concerned only with survival, no matter how intellectually driven; wrapped around a brush or a flute or a pen however, the thumb affects the environment not in an effort to subdue it but to celebrate it, to beautify and glorify it. Thus, the arts are an appropriate expression for the glorification of our Creator who gave us the needs and the talents to affect our surroundings and our souls.

Christianity is specific. Christ lived among us as a man, not a feeling or an impression. His experiences were real, as were his mother, his friends, his anxiety, his blood. He was a man who drank wine, ate bread, wore sandals, and went fishing. And he was the Son of God whose miracles broke the laws of physics and biology. His life, death, and resurrection form the foundation of our faith.

Contemporary abstract works gained popularity and acceptance as we have gained an understanding of our world, right down to its atoms and DNA. It is tempting to portray God as the all-knowing and unknowable, the essence of the Big Bang, in an effort to comprehend the incomprehensible, both on a scientific and on a spiritual level. But these modern attempts to capture an indefinable intensity will necessarily fall short of depicting the greatness that is God. Knowing we were incapable of approaching his level, he came down to ours. By living among us, Christ exalted our humanity; by portraying him as a man, we exalt the greatness of his humility.

Contemporary abstract art has its place, even in the church, and can be used successfully to create a worshipful atmosphere, but it cannot replace traditional representative art as an introduction to and reminder of the literal accounts of the Gospels.