

Dannecker and Thorvaldsen

Three statues of the Evangelists Luke, Matthew and Mark, in the Rotenberg Chapel outside Stuttgart in the German land Württemberg, are strongly related to Bertel Thorvaldsen, but forgotten in the Danish literature on the sculptor.

The commission for statues of the four Evangelists, the three mentioned and John, for the Rotenberg Chapel, both a Greek Orthodox church and a mausoleum for the royal Württemberg family, came from King Wilhelm I in 1822-23. The country's leading sculptor, Johann Heinrich Dannecker was, however, only commissioned to execute the statue of John, while his pupil Theodor Wagner was to make the Luke statue. For the two remaining statues Thorvaldsen was asked to execute *bozzetti* and to supervise the actual modelling of the two statues in full size by two young pupils, Johann Leeb for Matthew and Johann Nepomuk Zwerger for Mark. Thorvaldsen also supervised the modelling and sculpting of Wagner's Luke, the *bozzetto* for which Dannecker had approved. These three statues

were executed in Rome in 1823-25, while Dannecker's John, which was modelled in Stuttgart, was finished only in 1828.

Three of the statues include the symbol of the Evangelist in question, while Dannecker's John stands alone without the usual eagle. That the younger sculptors included the symbols is due to Thorvaldsen's recommendation – he himself was using symbols for his Apostles for the Copenhagen Church of Our Lady in execution at the same time as the Evangelists.

Thorvaldsen, usually critical of older colleagues and helpful to younger artists, was on friendly terms with Dannecker, whom he visited in Stuttgart on his trip to Denmark in 1819. Because of Dannecker's failing health and mental decline the city of Stuttgart did not order the monument for the poet Schiller from its own sculptor but asked Thorvaldsen instead. After the statue was erected in 1839, Thorvaldsen visited the town in 1841 on his way to Rome. He was feasted and serenaded and witnessed an illumination of his Schiller statue. He also visited the Rotenberg Chapel, but appears not to have mentioned his involvement in three of the statues to his travelling companions, the Stampe family.

Perhaps he wished to forget his share in the creation of these statues. Be that as it may, he succeeded in excluding them from his oeuvre in the Danish literature. In the German, on the other hand, they were treated as his works as can be seen in Adolf Speemann: *Dannecker, Berling & Stuttgart* 1909, and in Christian von Holst: *Dannecker-Der Bildhauer*, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart 1987.

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