



New cast copy 1:1 (armed alabaster, height 35 cm.) of biscuit-miniature by Chr. Christensen, 1840

Church of Our Lady The Cathedral of Copenhagen

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Front cover photos:

Top: The Christus Statue by Bertel Thorvaldsen, Our Lady's Church, Copenhagen (marble, mounted 1839, modelled 1821 in Rome).

Photo reproduced by permission from architect-photographer Jens Frederiksen ©.

Bottom: Bertel Thorvaldsen's selfportrait statue, standing with the Goddess of Hope (1839).
Photo reproduced by permission from Thorvaldsens Museum ©.



Jesus Christ by Thorvaldsen



Bertel Thorvaldsen's Christus statue

Quotations from: *Do you believe in Angels?* by Inga Boisen Schmidt

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NEW LIGHT ON THORVALDSENS VIEW ON CHRISTIANITY

Thorvaldsen was by nature reserved ... and it was not easy for him to be open opposite one another. But one man did gain the trust of Thorvaldsen in matters of relations to God.

This man was called J.B. Dalhoff, artist, craftsman, bronze moulder and goldsmith supplier to the Royal Danish Court.

In 1838 he was member of Thorvaldsens staff and this way attained a confident relation to the ageing Thorvaldsen.

Not until his old days Dalhoff felt obliged through some records to let the posterity know, what Thorvaldsen about half a century earlier had entrusted him regarding Thorvaldsens view on Christianity. These papers were published 25-26 years after Dalhoffs dead.

They showed to be so essential, getting the right understanding of Thorvaldsen, that Dalhoffs name had become everlasting among those, that inseparable will be connected with the name of Thorvaldsen.

THORVALDSENS DEEP BELIEF, THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST

The first evening, when Thorvaldsen were confidential with Dalhoff, showed not to express anything passing, it was no emotional outbreak.

Thorvaldsen had the rich emotional life and sensuality of the artist, and though he was not intellectually trained, he was gifted with a cold-blooded understand, even some times a cool evaluating and critical attitude.

His view on Christianity was deeply grounded.

He had, free of dogmatic boundaries, a childish confident relation to God, which did not hide its deep mystique, but maybe accurately through this attitude carried him across the depth.

His resistance against protestant church habits, which to him seemed familiar with the catholic church habits, was not due to any wish to deny the mystique, but rather a resistance against an unnecessary escalation of the mystique.

Incredible in thinking, yet tangible in reality through effect and experience this lifetime relation to Christ became essential to Thorvaldsen, who by himself combined the child and the genius, and who in his life evening disclosed in words, what he through his life so abundantly had spoken in act: that for him the significant and actuating power had ever been "the great, great love in Christo".

Although this book is about angels, it is yet natural also to mention the statue of Jesus Christ by Thorvaldsen, because this and The Baptist Angel through their location in The Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen seems to have been created as a whole.

After a visit in Denmark from July 1819 to December 1820, Thorvaldsen returned to Rome. Here he in 1821 modelled the statue of Jesus Christ intended for The Church of Our Lady Cathedral in Copenhagen.

THORVALDSENS THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS STATUE OF JESUS CHRIST

Thorvaldsen expressed his aim to create "Christ over Millennia".

For a long time, he hesitated, groping towards this major task.

Should he create the statue as the suffering Christ, the anxious, the humiliated or the crucified?

Or should "Christ over Millennia" express the shape of the victorious, the ascended or the resurrected Christ?

He made many draft sketches including positions, showing Christ blessing, praying and warning.

One day he stood with his friend, Hermann Freund, in front of a sketch, showing Christ, praying with upraised arms. He shaped the arms downwards and outwards, as he exclaimed:

"Now I got it – this is the way, it is going to be!"

