



PRZEMYSŁAW WASZAK*
Katedra Historii Sztuki i Kultury
Wydział Sztuk Pięknych
Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu
ul. Sienkiewicza 30/32
PL-87100 Toruń
Poland
pwaszak@umk.pl

SAINT BRIDGET OF SWEDEN
AND THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS.
HER REVELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE GOTHIC CRUCIFIX FROM
THE HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL IN KULMSEE (CHEŁMŹA)
AND THE LEGACY OF OTHER MYSTICS**

KEYWORDS

art history; the Middle Ages; military orders; Teutonic Knights; Saint Bridget of Sweden; Revelations; crucifix; Kulmsee (Chełmża)

ABSTRACT

The article presents an analysis of the early fifteenth-century wood-carved crucifix from the Holy Trinity cathedral in Kulmsee (Chełmża) in the context of the fourteenth-century Brigidian *Revelations*. The crucifix was created in a unique in the Teutonic Order State four-nails type. It differs from other, more distant, and older, crucifixes of the four-nails type. In my opinion, the crucifix, because of its inspirations which come from the *Revelations* of Saint Bridget of Sweden, is another

* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3235-9793>.

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type of a mystical work of art; however, it does not belong to the fourteenth-century widespread type of mystical, extremely suffering crucifixes. My intention is to show that the reception of ideas and motifs in the Gothic times could also be apolitical, although it might be considered a paradox since we have in mind some critical remarks of Saint Bridget towards the Teutonic Order. Furthermore, I emphasise that in the fourteenth century, which was a period distinguished by flourishing mysticism, were present certain similarities in writings of various mystics, which can be compared to a style of the particular time – in German, “Zeitstil”. The discussed crucifix is another evidence that in Christian art the sculptors and their instructors had tremendous artistic licence, and the sacred image along with its visual language was of significant importance for the piety of that period.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The aim of this paper is to discuss a larger than life-size, wood-carved crucifix that is unanimously dated to the beginning or the first decades of the fifteenth century. I intend to present the issues of meaning, iconography and relations of the type, modes of artistic expression, and the form of the crucifix in Kulmsee (Chełmża, illus. 1–3) to the *Revelations* of the fourteenth-century mystic of the North, Saint Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373). I will also examine some related issues concerning art, mysticism, symbolism in the context of the Teutonic Knights and Saint Bridget’s severe criticism of the Order. There are three reasons for presenting the choice of new problems which have not been taken up yet. Firstly, the problems which can be associated with the crucifix are numerous. Secondly, other issues were comprehensively analysed in my article in *Grudziądz Yearbook*, where they were presented from the art historian’s perspective. Thirdly, the new subject complies better with the central theme of the twenty-first *Ordines Militares* conference.

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ARCHITECTURAL SURROUNDINGS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

The rectangular chancel of the Chełmża cathedral was built before 1260. It is the oldest part of the church. The three-nave hall main body of the today's church was built and vaulted up to around the middle of the fourteenth century (illus. 4–7). There were two major fires, the first of which occurred in 1422. The crucifix had been, because of its dimensions and proportions, probably placed high on the rood screen and as a result, it survived the fire. After 1454 and especially after 1466, according to the Second Peace of Thorn, Chełmża ceased to belong to the Teutonic Order State. Between 1470–1485 there was a serious rebuilding after the choir and crossing had been damaged by another fire. In my opinion the crucifix at that time might be already placed out of the rood screen. Soon a new, late-Gothic, wood-carved rood was sculpted in the early sixteenth century and is placed nowadays on a simple rood beam. Still in 1940 it was placed on a decorative Baroque trefoil rood arch¹. Today the discussed Gothic crucifix is placed on the floor in the northern aisle, next to the lateral wall, near the western structure. It is accompanied by two Gothic, contemporary, although stylistically somewhat different and smaller, wood-carved figures representing Our Lady of Sorrows and Saint John the Evangelist. Thus, the proportions of the three sculptures are hierarchical while the composition is pyramidal.

PERCEPTION OF THE CRUCIFIXES AND DESCRIPTION
OF THE DISCUSSED WORK OF ART

Crucifixes are still art objects difficult to comprehend and perceive by those viewers who are not familiar with the oeuvre of Christian art and culture. It refers mainly to the members of the audience who come from outside the Christian-European-Mediterranean cultures.² Similarly, the Europeans who applied their own categories to apprehend the art coming from outside Europe failed to un-

¹ Christofer Herrmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur im Preussenland: Untersuchungen zur Frage der Kunstlandschaft und -geographie* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag / Olsztyn: Artes, 2007), 167, 168, 259, 260, 535, 536, illus. 640, 644; Karl Heinz Clasen, *Die mittelalterliche Bildhauerkunst im Deutschordensland Preussen. Die Bildwerke bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1939), 174.

² Dana Arnold, *Art History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 62, 63.

derstand the complexity of the said works of art.³ The discussed Chełmża crucifix only partly resembles some expressive features relating to emphasized depiction of Passion, which can be found in the sculpted representatives from the group of fourteenth-century mystical, suffering *crucifigi horribili*. Mystical crucifixes are not easy to interpret or to look at even for many Christians. An example of the suffering crucifix dated to ca. 1350 can be found in the nearby church of Hohenlinden (Żmijewo) in the Chełmno Land (illus. 8).⁴ Despite this, it is the Chełmża crucifix that is the most mysterious phenomenon among other crucifixions in the whole former territory of the Teutonic Order State. Its main distinctive features are its display of the so-called four nails type crucifixion, the muscular body, and the use of scissors motif – an intersection of shins deriving from Romanesque sculpture. The last quality leads to a dynamic, diagonal composition of legs.

The figure of the crucified Christ in Chełmża is a little bigger than life-size and slightly elongated, even slender, and at the same time mildly asymmetrical. The chest with highlighted ribs is strongly inflated and elevated whereas the abdomen is distinctly sunken. The muscles and tendons are visibly strained and swollen. The tormented anatomy and the suffering physiognomy of a dying person are depicted in a moving, mournful, realistic, expressive way, even using deepened *verismo* characteristic for the early fifteenth-century art. The head is lowered, the mouth is already deeply parted while the eyes are still half-open. The above-mentioned features accentuate the Passion. The legs and knees are strong and massive. The ears, as well as the large, decoratively fluted hair and beard, were sculpted in detail and stand out three-dimensionally while the eyes are only shallowly carved. The folds of the loincloth are numerous, multidirectional, and fine. The crucifix was painted. Its short, hanging low loincloth, as well as the thick crown of thorns, are currently gilded and glittering. Flesh tints are natural, a bit darkened. Today's cross is a simple Latin one, but the shape of the hands, which are raised high, could allow attachment of the figure to a forked cross. The shape of the figure is nearly straight, and its lower part is devoid of signs of merciless torture, which denies impact of gravitation and presence of extreme weakness which should have been caused by dying in agony. The juxtaposition of the vastly different characteristics can be called a kind of visual oxymoron. Ornamentation (drapery and fluting) as well as Gothic artistic convention were applied, too.

³ Christopher S. Wood, *A History of Art History* (Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 71–73.

⁴ Przemysław Waszak, "Gotycki krucyfiks ze Żmijewa i jego powiązania artystyczne oraz ideowe," *Rocznik Grudziądzki* 28 (2020): 55–71.

Johann Gottfried Herder recognised that sculpture is far from poetry, whereas painting is quite close to poems.⁵ There are a few subjects of Gothic sculpture which are called the mystical ones. Examples of such a type of art can be seen in a two-figure group of Saint John the Evangelist resting on the bosom of Christ, Pietà, mystical crucifix, or the crucifixion on a tree of life according to the vision of Saint Bonaventure. These types derived from, or are at least parallel to, their counterparts in literature, poetry, theology, mystical writings, the Holy Scripture, or hagiography.⁶ Sculptures allow making vision concrete, palpably depicting the mystical visions translated earlier into words and writings. At least the carvings show one of the crucial components of visionary things which are out of this world. Likewise, the Chełmża crucifix comprises a translation of one element, which is extraordinary in Western culture. It is a part of the mystical vision that took on three-dimensional, natural forms of woodcarving, which can be seen from all sides. Completing the mystical inspiration in the Chełmża sculpture came down to an easily perceivable symbolic and unusual variant of the iconographical motif of crossed shins and two nails piercing the feet. The artist did not interpret the mystical writings or oral tradition literally. Undoubtedly, he was instructed by a learned clergyman who was the author of the concept of this work of art. Similarly to the listed types of the fourteenth-century mystical sculptures, the early fifteenth-century crucifix from Chełmża is a mystical work of art because its first cause is to be sought in the contemplation of mystical vision. This was the vision available only to the inspired *homo religiosus*, a woman who continually perfected herself in her deep faith, whose piety was sensitive and emotional, abounding in metaphors and descriptions of visual objects and occurrences out of this world. Unlike numerous examples of several better-known types of Gothic mystical sculptures, the Chełmża crucifix might be considered one of a kind in the times when it was sculpted. It fulfils the earlier words of a Dominican, Doctor of the Church, Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274), who said: *to contemplate in order to share with others what one has contemplated*.⁷ In this case, the conveyed fruits of contemplation became a visual, authentic, mimetic work of art. It must be emphasised that

⁵ Joanna Godlewicz-Adamiec, *Plastyczne i językowe środki wyrazu w dziełach mistyków niemieckich epoki średniowiecza* (Warszawa: Instytut Germanistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego / author's own publication, 2005), 33.

⁶ Cf. Ludmila Kvapilová, *Vesperbilder in Bayern: von 1380 bis 1430 zwischen Import und einheimischer Produktion* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2017), 33, 36–43, 337.

⁷ *Contemplare, et contemplata aliis tradere*, see Jan Andrzej Spież, “Podstawowe cechy duchowości dominikańskiej,” in *Duchowość zakonna: szkice*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski (Kraków: Znak, 1994), 57; English translation: Benedict M. Ashley, “Laicization of Spirituality: Christian Perspectives.”

the crucifix is characterised by plastic and distinct forms. Moreover, in the past it facilitated the spiritual contact with the unseen God the Father via the picture of the crucified God the Son. It therefore constitutes crossing the biblical sources and makes perceptible the mystical interpretation of the Holy Scripture, tradition, and visions. In this way, the discussed example from Chełmża expands the manners of depicting the crucified Christ. In addition, it forms a new iconographical variant. An essential fact is that the original vision of a mystic had been at first reserved only for Saint Bridget of Sweden. However, it soon became real in a three-dimensional work of art.

The crucifix and meanings conveyed by its shapes have been available to everyone due to a universal, accessible language of its artistic forms. However, it is not astonishing that the analysed sculpture does not fully comply with the content of the mystical vision. It must be said that the artists of the Middle Ages had great artistic licence. They were given freedom concerning their interpretation of sacred, theological subjects, and they widely used it while creating art. Therefore, they often bent shapes, changed the number of figures present in texts and sources and implemented other artistic ideas of their own. The reason for these omissions and free interpretations were of paramount, artistic importance. We can name, among others, such issues as composition requirements, aesthetic, and formal causes. Equally significant when diverging from the literal interpretation of religious writings is making the visual message as straightforward as possible. Furthermore, both media (i.e., word and image) are dissimilar, or even there can be found some variances between them. The image pictured using only words in one's imagination is far from identical with the one materialized in a work of art. It is worth noting that in the history of art, the ways of developing works of art and the contents of mystical writings have often been intertwined. Very often, the sculpture makes the visionary contents accessible for every faithful or a random viewer. Both the above-mentioned creative media mutually intensify their impact on the recipient.

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN, MYSTICAL SOURCES CONCERNING
THE TYPE OF THE CRUCIFIX

The creative solutions of the structure of the crucifix from Chelmsza diverge from other crucifixes of the four-nails type. Such crucifixes were made in Byzantine, Ottonian, Romanesque and early Gothic times. It must be noted, however, that not only their shape is different. They were created in distant regions. Therefore, it is well-founded to quote and analyse a few exceptionally meaningful statements of Saint Bridget⁸:

*Then they crucified his right foot with the left on top of it using two nails so that all his sinews and veins became overstrained and burst (1340s).*⁹

Another chief excerpt is as follows:

*After his body had been stretched out beyond measure on the cross, they placed one of his shins on top of the other and so fastened his feet together to the cross with two nails. They stretched out his glorious limbs so violently on the cross that almost all his veins and sinews were rupturing. (14 May 1372)*¹⁰

⁸ This possibility in reference to the Chelmsza crucifix was shortly suggested by Gertrude Oldemeyer, *Die Darstellung des gekreuzigten Christus in der Kunst des "Weichen Stils"* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Univ. Diss., 1965), 336 note 831 and with reference to a later crucifix from Sevilla by Émile Mâle, *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente: étude sur l'iconographie de la fin du XVIe siècle, du XVIIe, du XVIIIe siècle: Italie, France, Espagne, Flandres* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1951), 272–273.

⁹ *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 1, *Liber Caelestis, Books I–III*, trans. Denis Searby, ed. Bridget Morris (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 68, Book I, Chapter 10, *On Mary's Childhood, the Annunciation, and Her Son's Birth and Passion; Deinde dexterum pedem crucifixerunt et super hunc sinistrum duobus clavis ita, ut omnes nerui et vene extenderentur et rumperentur*, see Heliga Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Book I, with Magister Mathias' Prologue*, ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen (Uppsala: Almqvist&Wiksell, 1978), 268, *Libri primi*, cap. 10, 23.

¹⁰ *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 3, *Liber Caelestis, Books VI–VII*, trans. Denis Searby, ed. Bridget Morris (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 235, Book VII, Chapter 15, *A Vision of the Crucifixion; Deinde extento corpore vitra modum in cruce posita fuit vna tibia eius super aliam et sic iunctos pedes affixerunt in cruce duobus clavis, et in tantum extenderunt illa gloriosa membra in cruce vehementer, quod quasi omnes vene et nerui eius rumpebantur*. Heliga Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Lib. VII*, ed. Birger Bergh (Uppsala: Almqvist&Wiksell Boktryckeri AB, 1967), 165, *Libri septimi*, cap. 15, 9.

And also:

*Once he arrived at the place for crucifixion, a hammer and four sharp nails were ready for him there. [...] His **feet were similarly stretched out to reach the slots for the nails and placed crosswise**, and, as if they had been loosened from the shinbones, were fastened to the wood of the cross by two nails driven through solid bone, as had been done with his hands. (1350s)¹¹*

The above fragment is different from the previous two quotations and is distinguished by the clearest resemblance of the vision to the unusual position (cross-wise) of the shins in the Chełmża crucifix. Regarding the well-built figure of the crucified Christ in Chełmża, it is worth quoting another passage:

There he stood, bruised and livid, and only his heart was still fresh, since it was of the best and strongest constitution. From my flesh he had received a most pure and well-wrought body. [...] Precisely because he had the very best constitution, life contended with death in his wounded body. (1340s)¹²

A VISION RELATING TO THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS, SYMBOLISM AND SIMILARITIES IN THE WRITINGS OF OTHER MYSTICS

It should be added that numerous statements of Saint Bridget were prophetic, critical, and often political:

Then the Son spoke to me, saying: "Above, regarding the bees, I showed you that they receive three benefits from their queen. I tell you now that those

¹¹ *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, vol. 2, *Liber caelestis, books IV–V*, trans. Denis Searby, ed. Bridget Morris, (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 126, Book IV, Chapter 70, 8, 11, *A Vision of the Crucifixion. Peruento igitur ad locum crucifixionis ecce mallens et quatuor clavi acuti in promptu sunt [...] Et pedes similiter ad foramina sua distenduntur cancellatique et quasi infra a tibiis distincti duobus clavis ad crucis stipitem per solidum os, sicut et manus erant, configuntur*; Sancta Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Lib. IV*, ed. Hans Aili (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992), 209, 210, *Libri quarti*, cap. 70, 8, 11, [my emphasis].

¹² *The Revelations*, ed. Morris, 1: 69, Book I, Chapter 10, *On Mary's Childhood, the Annunciation, and Her Son's Birth and Passion*; *Itaque cum filius meus sic laceratus et liuidus staret, solum cor recens erat, quia optime et fortissime nature erat. De mea enim carne corpus mundissimum et optime complexionatum sumpsit [...] Et quia optime nature erat, vita cum morte in corpore eius perforato certabat*. Heliga Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Book I*, 269, *Libri primi*, cap. 10, 27–28.

crusaders whom I have placed at the borders of Christian lands should be bees like that. But now they are fighting against me, for they do not care about souls and have no compassion on the bodies of those who have been converted from error to the Catholic faith and to me. They oppress them with hardships and deprive them of their liberties. They do not instruct them in the faith, but deprive them of the sacraments and send them to hell with a greater punishment than if they had stayed in their traditional paganism. Furthermore, they fight only in order to increase their own pride and augment their greed. Therefore, the time is coming for them when their teeth will be ground, their right hand mutilated, their right foot severed, in order that they may live and know themselves.” (1340s)¹³

In a similar vein are the statements of another German mystic contemporary of Saint Bridget of Sweden. They are equally moralizing, metaphorical, eschatological, and they refer to the world of living nature. In this case, Henry Suso (1295–1366) reviles the spirituality of other brothers of his order: the Dominicans. The criticism is present in his literary work *Clock of Wisdom*, written in the Latin language. It must be noted that Henry Suso is an exponent of the Rhineland mysticism, the mystic of masters, and mystical works kept in this tone are sometimes highly speculative. Suso died in 1366, barely seven years before the death of Saint Bridget. Among the four exponents of the Rhineland mysticism, there was also a priest from the Teutonic Order from Sachsenhausen near Frankfurt am Main. His deliberations are highly speculative, similarly to the writings of the Dominican, Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–1329), the teacher of Henry Suso. Significantly enough, the target readers of *Horologium Sapientiae* were the Dominicans. It was more elaborate than “the book of practical mysticism,” as the *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* is called, written in German.¹⁴ The reading of Henry Suso’s mystical writ-

¹³ *The Revelations*, ed. Morris, 1: 226, Book II, Chapter 19, *A Parable about a Beekeeper and His Bees*; Sancta Birgitta, *Revelaciones*, Book II, ed. Carl-Gustaf Undhagen and Birger Bergh (Stockholm–Västervik: AB C O Ekblad & Co, 2001), 92, *Libri Secundi*, Cap. XIX, 98–101: *Deinde Filius michi loquebatur dicens: Ostendi tibi supra de apibus, quod habent triplex bonum de apiastro suo. Dico tibi nunc, quod tales apes deberent esse illi cruciferi, quos in illis finibus terrarum Christianorum posui. Sed iam ipsi pugnant contra me. Nam de animabus non curant, non compaciuntur corporibus conuersorum ad fidem catholicam et ad me de errore. Opprimunt enim eos laboribus, privant libertatibus, in fide non instruunt eos, sacramentis priuant et cum maiori dolore mittunt eos ad infernum quam si starent in suo assueto paganismo. Nec etiam pugnant nisi ut dilatent superbiam suam et augeant cupiditatem suam. Ideo veniet eis tempus, quo confringentur dentes eorum, manus dextera mutilabitur, et subneruabitur dexter pes eorum, ut vivant et se ipsos cognoscant.*

¹⁴ Frederick Copleston, *Historia filozofii*, vol. 3, *Od Ockhama do Suáreza*, trans. Sylwester Zalewski and Henryk Bednarek (Warszawa: Pax, 2004, 2nd edition), 171, 172, 176.

ings naturally contributes to an in-depth perception of Gothic crucifixes depicting severe suffering, in addition to the mystical crucifixes on the Tree of Life. Consequently, the writings help explain their form and the modes of artistic expression showing the Passion. Similar advantages for the art viewer have the *Revelations* of Saint Bridget. They can be read as an explanation of the shape of the Chełmża crucifix. It should be noted here that Saint Bridget herself was an influential person and outstanding exponent of female mysticism whose characteristic features were determination, courage, and charisma. Her mystical oeuvre is abundant.

The legacy of the above-mentioned individuals who had experienced mystical visions and then described them belongs to the golden age of mysticism of the late Latin Middle Ages. In the context of the works of Saint Bridget, the name of Richard Rolle must be mentioned. He was an English mystic living in the first half of the fourteenth century. His writings were compared to Henry Suso's *Clock of Wisdom*,¹⁵ which can lead to the conclusion that the fourteenth-century continental, insular and Scandinavian mysticism had some common traits. These mysticisms might be compared to their artistic counterpart, a style common and widely spread in a particular epoch, for instance, to the first universal style of the Latin Middle Ages – Romanesque architecture. The reason for this statement is that the mystics raised similar problems and expressed their mystical views in an analogous way. Moreover, there was a sort of literary universality reserved to the chosen by God. This is clearly illustrated by similarities found in textual analysis and the fact that the Teutonic Order was mentioned in the quoted passage from Saint Bridget's writings. On the other hand, due to the anonymous author of *Theologia Germanica*,¹⁶ dated to the second half of the fourteenth century, the Teutonic Order occupies a key position in developing fourteenth-century theology.

The Chełmża crucifix is an example of reception and, at the same time, practical use in the work of art, which included chosen fragments of emotional, visionary thoughts of Saint Bridget. The Chełmża crucifix is a reference point for the portrayal of the fourteenth-century mysticism. Thanks to the vivid, symbolic, frequently specific, original, and even unique interpretations of spiritual experiences, the mystical writings constitute a remarkable inspiration for the works of art. This statement is well-grounded and justified due to the principle that Christianity

¹⁵ Maciej Górnicki, *Antropologia czternastowiecznych mistyków angielskich* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018), 75.

¹⁶ *Teologia niemiecka / Frankfurtczyk*, trans. Piotr Augustyniak (Warszawa: Fundacja Augusta hrabiego Cieszkowskiego, 2013), *passim*.

is the religion of the Holy Scripture and since the Early Christian art the religion of the divine image.

It is worth quoting a fragment from Henry Suso's *Clock of Wisdom*. The author often referred to the world of living nature, and his words are comparable to the ones of Saint Bridget:

*What else have you seen in the vision: abundance of animals, which appeared as sea monsters in human shapes, which are the worldly hearts, which hide themselves beneath the spiritual external appearance. Outside they show a praiseworthy figure, but inside they are completely lacking grace and prayer. While they are so different inside and outside of course they are not dissimilar to animal monsters.*¹⁷

According to Saint Bridget, the role ascribed to the Teutonic Knights by Jesus Christ was very commendable because the symbolism of bees usually has positive meanings and refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary. However, the rest of the quoted passage about the members of the Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem was explicitly critical. In another fragment of her *Revelations* (6, 12), Saint Bridget compares the Virgin Mary to a medieval version of a beehive.¹⁸

It is worth noting that these beneficial insects have been related to royalty since ancient Egypt. In 1683, the tomb of Childeric I, the last polytheistic ruler of the Merovingian dynasty, was excavated. There were found three hundred schematic and stylised models of insects similar to bees, made of gold and garnet. Thus, their colours were royal. Moreover, bees symbolised matriarchy,¹⁹ and in the Old Testament, the Wisdom of Sirach (11, 3) contains a praise of bees. Additionally, the *Physiologus* dated to the fourth or fifth century comments the biblical verse in the following way: *So the God's works in people are incomprehensible, too.*²⁰ Unambigu-

¹⁷ Heinrich Seuse, *Stundenbuch der Weisheit = Das „Horologium sapientiae“*, trans. Sandra Fenten (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 43 (my translation).

¹⁸ Heliga Birgitta, *Revelaciones. Book VI*, ed. Birger Bergh, (Stockholm: Berlings, Arlöv, Sweden, 1991), 77, *Libri sexti*, cap. 12, 1–9; Liselotte Wehrhahn-Stauch, “Biene, Bienenkorb”, in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 1, *Allgemeine Ikonographie. A bis Ezechiel*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, (Rom–Freiburg–Basel–Wien: Herder, 1994), 300.

¹⁹ Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *Słownik symboli*, trans. Ireneusz Kania (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012, 3rd edition), 338, 339 (entry *Pszczola*); Cf. Lawrence Nees, *Early medieval art* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11, 82–83.

²⁰ *Fizjologi i Aviarium: średniowieczne traktaty o symbolice zwierząt*, trans. and ed. Stanisław Kobieliński (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2005), 11, 26, XXI, *De ape / O pszczole; Haud alter divina opera incomprehensibilia sunt in hominibus...*

ously negative meanings of other insects can be found in Henry Suso's writings: *when these beautiful vineyards begin to be in bloom, then they are attacked by horse-flies and unpleasant beetles.*²¹ Besides, the bee symbolises "a well organised state" whereas the swarm of bees stands for the Church.²² Nevertheless, according to Psalm 117 (118), 12: *They surrounded me like bees, they blazed like a fire of thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them off!*²³ The bees in this excerpt signify heathens who harry Israel or can indicate sinners. Therefore, the symbolism of bees can be perceived as mutually antagonistic. On the contrary, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) compares Jesus Christ to a bee, while the swarm of bees relates to the monastic community.²⁴ To conclude, as the entire world of constantly changing living nature, bees were of particular interest to other mystics like Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179).²⁵

SUMMARY

The analysed fragments of visions serve to explain the unique form of the Chełmża crucifix. Another essential conclusion is classifying the discussed crucifix as a mystical work of art. Importantly enough, the sources of its shape and iconography lie neither in the Bible nor in other currently known Gothic sculptures – they are hidden in the mystical visions of Saint Bridget, whose *Revelations* are an outstanding inspiration for the discussed work of art located in the territory of the Teutonic Order State.

²¹ Heinrich Seuse, *Des Mystikers Heinrich Seuse O. Pr. deutsche Schriften: Vollst. Ausg. auf Grund d. Handschriften*, ed. and trans. Nikolaus Heller (Regensburg: Verlagsanstalt vorm. G. J. Manz, 1926), 383, Letter 6 (my translation).

²² Władysław Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2017), 341, 342.

²³ *The Oxford annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: revised standard version: with an introductory article: The number, order, and names of the Books of the Bible*, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 748. Vulgate: *circumdederunt me quasi apes extinctae sunt quasi ignis spinarum in nomine Domini quia ultus sum eas* (Ps 117, 12); *Biblia sacra: iuxta vulgatam versionem*, adiuvantibus Bonifatio Fischer, Iohanne Gribomont, H. F. D. Sparks and W. Thiele, rec. et brevi apparatu instruxit Robertus Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983, 3rd edition), 919.

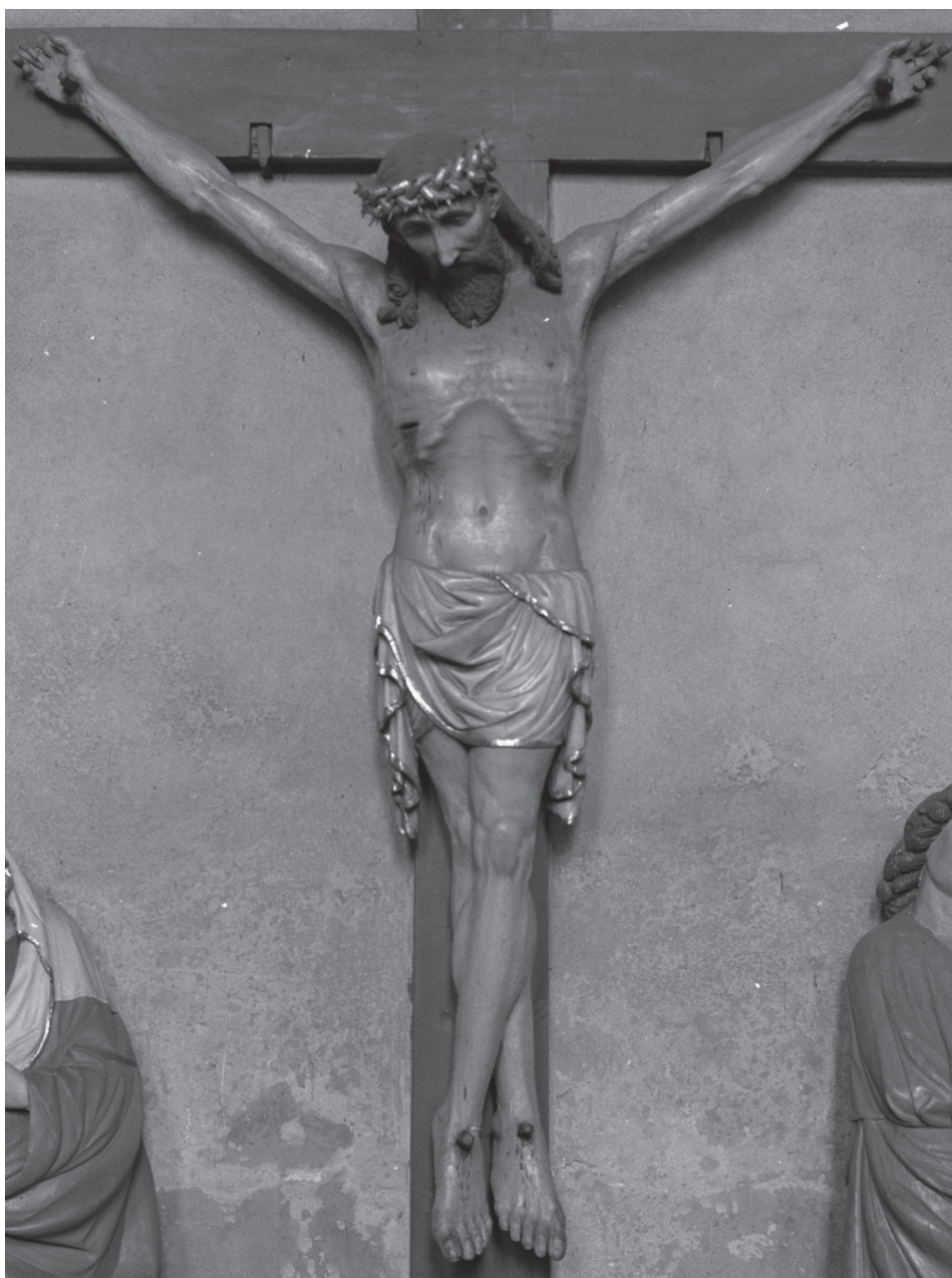
²⁴ Stanisław Kobieliński, *Bestiariusz chrześcijański: zwierzęta w symbolice i interpretacji: starożytność i średniowiecze* (Warszawa: Pax, 2002), 266–268.

²⁵ Godlewicz-Adamiec, *Plastyczne i językowe środki*, 220, 221.

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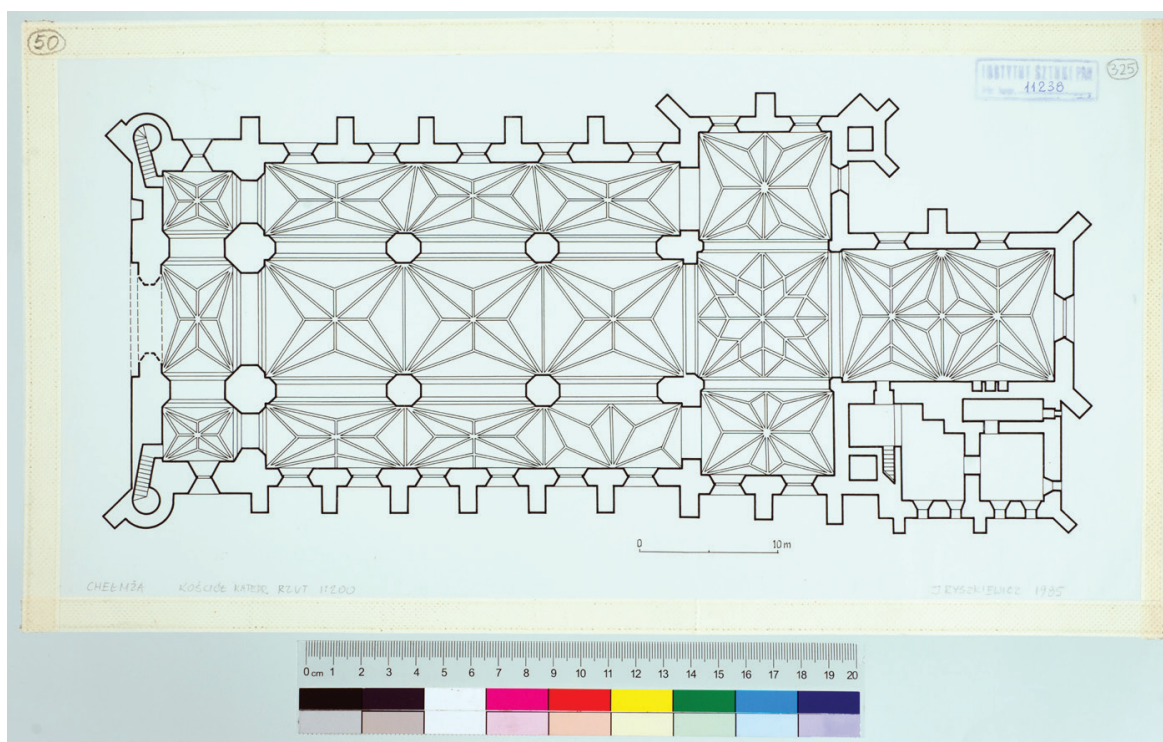
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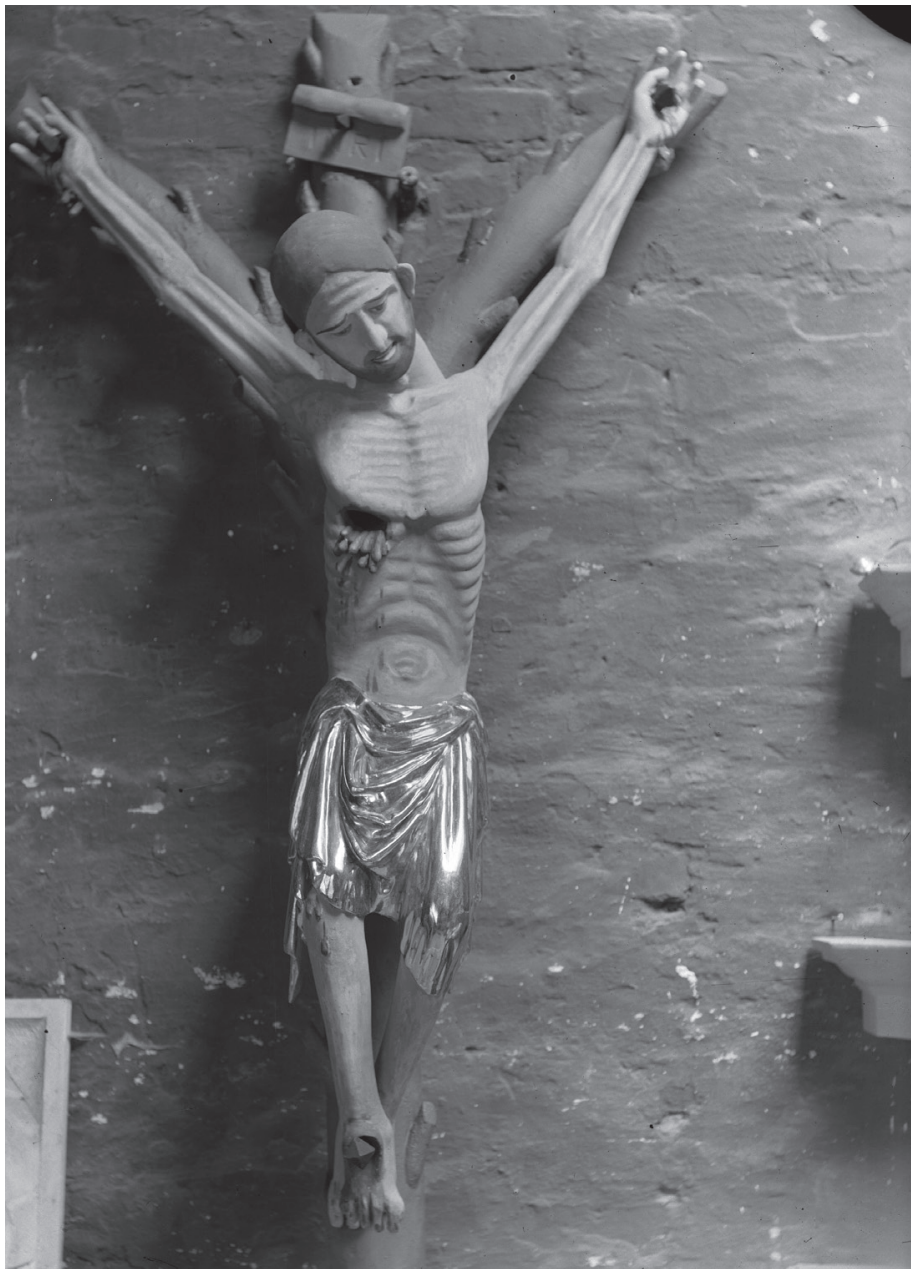
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