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0521856736 - Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era

Magda Teter

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JEWS AND HERETICS IN CATHOLIC POLAND

Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland takes issue with historians' common contention that the Catholic Church triumphed in Counter-Reformation Poland. In fact, the Church's own sources show that the story is far more complex. From the rise of the Reformation and the rapid dissemination of these new ideas through printing, the Catholic Church was overcome with a strong sense of insecurity. The "infidel Jews, enemies of Christianity," became symbols of the Church's weakness and, simultaneously, instruments of its defense against all of its other adversaries. The beleaguered Church sought to separate Catholics from non-Catholics: Jews and heretics. This process helped form a Polish identity that led, in the case of Jews, to racial anti-Semitism and to the exclusion even of most assimilated Jews from the category of Poles. *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland* will be considered controversial in some circles not only because it challenges the historians' claim of the Church's triumph by emphasizing the latter's sense of insecurity, but also because it portrays Jews not only as victims of Church persecution but also as active participants in Polish society who, as allies of the nobles and placed in positions of power, had more influence than has been recognized.

Magda Teter is Assistant Professor of History at Wesleyan University. She is the recipient of the Koret Foundation Publication Prize and has been published in English, Polish, and Hebrew in such journals as *Jewish History*, *AJS Review*, and *Gal-Ed*.

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Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland

A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era

MAGDA TETER

Wesleyan University



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*For my parents –
dla moich rodziców z wyrazami wdzięczności*



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In the Church of Christ, there is, and has to be, only one highest and visible Shepherd. . . . And just as there is only one shepherd, there is and has to be only one fold of Christ, outside of which no one will achieve redemption.

Adam Abramowicz, *Kazania Niedzielne* (Sunday Sermons), 1753

Q: And whom does the Catholic Church reject, condemn and curse?

A: The Catholic Church rejects, condemns and curses all pagan errors . . . heresies and all schisms. It condemns and excludes from the community of the faithful all pagans, Jews, heretics, schismatics, and bad and disobedient Catholics.

Bishop Krzysztof Szembek, *Krótkie zebranie nauki chrześcijańskiej* (A short collection of Christian teachings), 1714

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book had begun long before I formally embarked on it. During my summer break of 1994, after my first year of graduate studies in Jewish history at Columbia University, I returned to Poland to visit my parents and my relatives in my father's hometown of Sandomierz. There, I had an encounter and a heated debate with a local priest about a painting in the local cathedral church depicting Jews in the act of murdering a Christian child. The discussion left me with many questions about Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish-Church relations, and the attitudes of the Catholic Church toward Jews in premodern Poland.

The following fall, it happened that Michael Stanislawski taught a graduate colloquium at Columbia University on the history of Jews in Poland before 1772. In researching Polish and Polish Church historiography on Jews and the Catholic Church in Poland, I found mostly silence about anything that dealt directly with Jewish-Church relations. This silence surprised me because, in my conversations with people in the United States, in Europe, and in Israel, I had found that most people had strong opinions about Polish Jews and the Catholic Church, opinions generally either accusatory or defensive. And thus began my journey that has led to this book.

Searching for answers to my questions on the Church's attitudes toward Jews in Poland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I found some answers. Yet, I also am acutely aware that there is more to be learned. More questions, in fact, emerged. The topic is rich and the materials abound. This book focuses on the Church's use of anti-Jewish rhetoric and imagery in post-Reformation Poland; it seeks to understand the mind-set of those who created them, and seeks to explore how the attitudes toward Jews harbored by the Catholic clergy and imparted to lay Catholics in Poland were shaped. The picture that emerged turned out to be more complex and fascinating than I had anticipated, a picture of a besieged Church, fearful of anyone opposing it.

My research took me to many archives and libraries, mostly in Poland and in Rome, but other libraries such as the Widener Library at Harvard, the Butler Library at Columbia University, and the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem were also crucial in this work. I am grateful to all those who enabled me to gain access to these collections. In many archives I received the warmest welcome. The Jesuit archives in Cracow and Rome were a pleasure to work in,

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as were the archives of the Dominicans and the Reformed Franciscan Friars in Cracow, the Metropolitan Archive of the Archdiocese in Cracow (Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie), and the Archive of the Collegium de Propaganda Fide in Rome. And, despite some bureaucratic stumbling blocks at the Vatican Archives (Archivio Segreto Vaticano), I was granted access to their collections.

Sometimes access was less easy, especially access to Church archives in Poland, where some Church officials are still distrustful of scholars, especially those coming from the outside, whether geographically or culturally. I tried to minimize the impact of that status. Sometimes it took several attempts, and at times I rephrased the topic to be less provocative to the archivists guarding the documents, while making sure that it was not deceptive or misleading to those responsible for granting me archival access and that it remained truthful to my intentions.

In my first try during the summer of 1996, for example, after I failed to gain access to one Church archive, which has since become open to all and very pleasant to work with, I realized that I should avoid the term “Counter-Reformation” in Poland because it had negative connotations grounded in Polish historiography. That particular archivist told me that there had been no Counter-Reformation in Poland. Sometimes, both in libraries and archives, I referred broadly to study of “religious minorities,” or simply “religious history,” rather than to “Jews” or “heresy.” Some archives still remain locked, among them – most crucial for my own work – the archive of the cathedral chapter in Sandomierz. Some Polish clergy find scholarship threatening. One can only hope that now-closed archives will eventually be opened to allow scholars to peruse the important sources so that the history they write will be based on all available primary sources, thus leading toward greater understanding of the social dynamics of the past and helping to address the causes of today’s continuing religious and ethnic prejudice to create a more open society.

The Jesuit archive in Cracow, which I used, possesses some copies of the materials collected in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI – the Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus) in Rome. The original sources were destroyed during a fire in Cracow. The ARSI, a true treasure trove of sources pertaining to the work of Jesuits in Poland, has collections of annual reports sent from Poland to the headquarters in Rome, chronicles, and correspondence. These materials are a wonderful, yet virtually untapped, source for investigating both the ideals and methods by which individual Jesuits worked toward their goals. There are chronicles of particular houses, reports on the numbers of converts, sermons delivered, confessions heard, marriages consecrated, and much more, many of which I used for this book.

The Metropolitan Archive of the Archdiocese in Cracow (Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie) and the Archives of the Cathedral Chapter at Cracow’s Wawel Castle (Archiwum Kapituły) hold exceptionally rich sources, including records of trials in the episcopal courts, correspondence between the

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cathedral chapter and various Church and lay officials that elucidate the working of the Church bureaucracy of the time, and the social and political dynamic that the Church faced.

Archives of religious orders hold a vast number of unpublished sermons and collections of homiletic material used by preachers, allowing the researcher a glimpse into sermons preached in small churches – sermons that never made it into print. There is a difference worth noting in topics addressed in published and unpublished homiletic literature: published materials tended to be devotional or to address broader political issues, including the sins of the nobles, whereas the unpublished works, though also generally devotional, addressed more the “earthly sins” committed by lower-class people, in which drinking, sex, and violence predominate.

Facing the actual historical sources forces a historian to confront his or her own expectations, presuppositions, and biases. Most projects start with an idea, perhaps even with a thesis, and thus sometimes with expectations of what may be found. The heated debate I had with a priest in Sandomierz, the painting in the cathedral church, and the strong opinions about the subject held by most of my interlocutors along the way led me to expect to find in the archives abundant material filled with anti-Jewish sentiments and tales filled with hate. I expected to find countless sermons that disseminated these sentiments. But when I confronted the sources, or perhaps when the sources confronted me, I had to reassess my ideas. I did not find large quantities of anti-Jewish works; in fact, my first reaction was that I was reading large quantities of “boring” devotional works and sermons that “had nothing to do with Jews,” most of which never found their way even to footnotes or the bibliography in this book. Jews were not even mentioned in the majority of the works I examined. I needed to switch gears. These works showed me the larger cultural context in which the post-Reformation Catholic attitudes toward Jews were shaped. The Jews were one of multiple concerns of the Church. Based on all my presuppositions and those of my opinionated interlocutors, I expected to find Jews as a central focus of the Church’s thought and actions.

I faced a number of paradoxes that the reader will face as well. The Catholic clergy’s attitudes toward Jews are central to the book, though not as central to the body of material as a whole produced by the Catholic clergy from that period of time. Jews had long been an important theological concern for the Church and Christianity; even though they did not dominate the literature of the period, they were a focus of the clergy’s expressed fears and insecurities, one of the foes that had, for centuries, threatened the Church’s ideal of being “one Church.” In that long history of dealing with Jews as theological threats, the Church developed a wide range of measures, both legal and polemical, that were, in turn, used to combat other challengers to the Church’s ideal. Thus, Jews became both central and peripheral to the Church’s concerns. These paradoxes complicate a story that would have been much simpler if, as I had expected, I had found bins and boxes of

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materials filled with anti-Jewish texts, but they also make it more interesting than a simple tale of the Church's anti-Jewish sentiments.



ALONG THE WAY I HAVE ENCOUNTERED PEOPLE WITHOUT WHOM THIS WORK would have been impossible. I want first to thank those with whom my life began and to whom this work is dedicated – my parents, Alina and Zdzisław Teter. It was they who indulged my curiosity, encouraged reading and learning, and who have always supported my interests and the steps I have taken in life – even when they may have thought what I was doing was not practical. It was my father who, when I was six, gave me my first book about Jews in Poland, and it was he who showed me what was left of the *Kierkut*, a Jewish cemetery, in his hometown, Sandomierz. With my parents I explored whatever was left of Jewish life in Małopolska, the Little Poland, a region in southeastern Poland, when we drove from the town where we lived to Sandomierz. All of this undoubtedly sparked my interest in the life of Jews in Poland. My parents supported me when I wanted to study Hebrew at the University of Warsaw, and continued their support when, because of the political situation in the late 1980s in Poland, I could not formally study Hebrew there, and studied Mongolian instead. They supported me too when, after the end of the Cold War, I began to venture to the West to study Jewish languages and history, first to Amsterdam, then to Jerusalem, Oxford, and, finally, to New York. I thank them for their love and for letting me go far away from them to fulfill my dreams.

To continue on a personal note, I want to thank my partner and friend – my husband, Shawn Hill, who has given me endless encouragement and support in moments of despair, and shared the joy in moments of happiness. He has always encouraged me to be assertive and strong, to express my values, and to strive to achieve my goals. I thank him for spending long hours reading through my papers and early drafts. I thank him for his patience, and for enduring long stretches of loneliness, when I would go on research trips to Poland, Italy, or Israel. I thank him for his love.

Sometimes, it is difficult to separate the professional from the personal, and many of my colleagues became friends who provided constant words of wisdom and support, encouragement, and, as good friends do, also critiques. I thank my colleague and dear friend Jeremy Zwelling at Wesleyan University, who, along with his wife Vicky, made Wesleyan such a hospitable and welcoming place. Without them, being at Wesleyan would not have been the same. Jeremy's warmth, care, and personal and professional honesty have been a necessary nourishment. Deep-felt thanks belong to Edward Fram, of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, who walked me through the complexities of rabbinic sources, and who sparked my interest in the history of printing. I thank him for spending long hours reading and commenting on my work at its various stages, for providing most pointed and necessary critiques, and for being an amazing mentor for more than ten years now.

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I also thank him for forcing me to pay attention to the beauty of spring in New England when we spent a semester together at Harvard as Harry Starr Fellows. I thank him, too, for being a wonderful friend.

I thank Elisheva Carlebach of Queens College, CUNY, who has supported and mentored me ever since I asked her to be a member of my dissertation committee. Both Elisheva Carlebach and Edward Fram have been models of academic mentors; it is they who taught me to be open to constructive criticisms.

Very special thanks go to Michael Stanislawski and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi of Columbia University for their confidence in my ability to succeed at Columbia. They taught me how to be a historian, and I am grateful for the privilege of having been their student; without them this work would not have been possible. They planted in me the idea of working on the Catholic Church and the Jews in early modern Poland. I thank them for their encouragement from the very early stages of my career as a historian of the Jews, and for their continuing support.

I want also to thank several people without whom I may have never come to the United States. Michał Friedman, who was my teacher of Hebrew and Yiddish in Warsaw, deserves special thanks. It was he who encouraged me to go to Amsterdam Summer University for a program in Eastern European Jewish History. There I met people who, in turn, persuaded me to apply to graduate schools in the United States and then supported me in my pursuits: Zvi Gitelman of the University of Michigan, Edward van Voolen of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, and Molly and Nathan Deen of Utrecht. Without their encouragement I would not have had the confidence to try to reach across the Atlantic Ocean.

Many of my colleagues read this book or its parts. I thank Moshe Rosman of Bar Ilan University in Israel for taking the time and spending the energy, much needed in the midst of his illness, to read my manuscript. His persistent comments on certain points made this book better. I thank Gershon D. Hundert of McGill University for reading a few versions of this work, and Kenneth Stow of Haifa University for his invaluable comments, and for sharing his work with me.

I also want to thank my colleagues at Wesleyan University, both in my department and beyond. My colleagues from the history department were instrumental in my first steps in moving from a doctoral dissertation to a book. Special thanks go to Laurie Nussdorfer, David Morgan, Richard Elphick, Bruce Masters, Gary Shaw, and Michael Printy, all of whom read and commented on the book in its various stages. I am grateful to them for their criticisms, and to other colleagues for their support and confidence. I also want to thank the department of special collections at Wesleyan's Olin Memorial Library, especially Suzy Taraba and Jefferey Makala for their help and for giving me permission to publish a map of eighteenth-century Poland from a 1723 atlas in the University's collection. The staff at the Interlibrary Loan office have seen me much too often since my arrival at Wesleyan, and without them completing this book would have been much more difficult. Kathy Stefanowicz, Kate Wolf, and Lisa Pinette have all patiently filled my requests. Allynn Wilkinson and

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Manolis Kaparakis of the Information Technology department helped me prepare images.

My students at Wesleyan University also deserve thanks. My thanks go especially to Ilana Cohn and Tal Beery for their thoughtful critique of my work. Two groups of students in my seminar “Eastern European Jewish Experience: History and Historiography” (HIST 156) read drafts of chapters from my book; their comments and responses have been invaluable.

Several institutions were crucial in the process of writing this book. I am grateful to Columbia University both for a generous fellowship enabling me to study the history of Jews and for the prestigious Salo and Jeanette Baron Prize for “the best dissertation in Jewish studies at Columbia University between 1996 and 2001.” It has been an honor and a privilege to study at Columbia. I would like to express my appreciation also to the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the only foundation that provides generous support for non-U.S. citizens in predoctoral and postdoctoral stages, and to the Koret Foundation for support of the publication of this book.

My deep thanks go to Jay Harris and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University for an unforgettable opportunity of working with other scholars of early modern Jewish history by the award of a Harry Starr fellowship in 2002. The fellowship allowed me to explore genres of sources I had not previously used, such as criminal court records, without which this book would have been weaker. I was privileged to learn from and to share my work with other Starr Fellows: Edward Fram, Elliott Horowitz, Boaz Huss, Anat Lapidot-Firilla, Elchanan Reiner, Michael Silber, and the faculty and students of the center. My long hours in the Phillips reading room at the Widener library will be long remembered. The last months of writing this book I spent in Israel as a Yad Ha-Nadiv Fellow. I want to thank the Yad Ha-Nadiv Foundation for affording me this opportunity.

Numerous libraries and archives allowed me to use their rich collections. My warmest thanks go to the rare book division of the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow whose rare book room was my home during waking hours for many months. The staff made my work there a true pleasure; they shared their knowledge with me and allowed extensive use of their collection, patiently filling out my numerous requests, and sometimes answering email questions after my return to the United States. Maria Dytko, Małgorzata Gołuszka, Jolanta Jakubiak, Marian Malicki, Romana Piech, Wanda Ptak-Korbel, Grażyna Stepień, and Zofia Wawrykiewicz were invaluable. I also thank the staff at the rare book division of the National Library in Warsaw, especially Maria Zychowiczowa and Bożena Cieplowska, who on numerous occasions responded to email queries, and sometimes made sure that books would be waiting for me when I arrived. I thank the staff of the Czartoryski Library in Cracow, and the staff of the manuscript collection of the University of Warsaw, who gave me permission to see manuscripts when using the microfilmed versions was difficult.

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Elżbieta Knapiek of the Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej, and Idalia Rusnaczyk of the Archiwum Kapituły na Wawelu, both in Cracow, are a wonderful resource of archival knowledge from which I continue to draw. Archivists of Polish religious orders deserve my heartfelt thanks for granting access to their wonderful collections. I thank Cracow's Archiwum OO. Franciszkanów Reformatów, Archiwum Prowincji Polskiej OO. Dominikanów, Archiwum OO. Karmelitów, Biblioteka i Archiwum OO. Bernardynów, Biblioteka i Archiwum OO. Jezuitów – especially Stanisław Obirek, SJ, Ludwik Grzebień, SJ, and Sister Leonia, who graciously shared her office with me in the winter of 1996–7. In Rome I was granted access to the collections of the Archive of the Collegium de Propaganda Fide and the Roman Jesuit Archive (Archiwum Romanum Societatis Jesu), where Marek Inglot, SJ, was especially helpful. I also thank the staff at the state archives in Cracow, Przemyśl, Poznań, and the Archiwum Akt Dawnych in Warsaw for giving me access to their collections.

I am grateful to Roman Chyła of Sandomierz for helping me obtain archival materials and for helping me to photograph the series *Martyrologium Romanum* in the cathedral church there.

Very special thanks go to Jeannette Hopkins, whose sharp mind and wit forced me to hone my argument and to fill the gaping holes in my research. Her acutely pointed comments have been invaluable in writing this book. I appreciated her being my “academic therapist” in helping me to identify the problems and then forcing me to find a solution, a process sometimes painful but tremendously rewarding. Without her the book would also, no doubt, have been duller. She taught me a great deal about book writing and academic publishing; I feel tremendously privileged to have worked with her.

I thank Cambridge University Press, and especially Andrew Beck, for publishing this book.

All of these people, and many more, have made the book only better; any weaknesses and errors are solely my own.

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Note on Terms, Spelling, and Translations

During the premodern period covered by this book, the Polish state was transformed from the independent states of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The actual unification took place in 1569. During the early modern period the Commonwealth was often referred to as the Polish Crown and the ruling elite identified as the Polish nation. “Poland,” therefore, is sometimes used to denote the whole Commonwealth. In cases where the eastern territories alone are referred to, they are so described.

Towns and cities are identified throughout according to the terminology of the period, unless an English equivalent exists. So, for example, present-day Vilnius in Lithuania appears as Wilno and current-day Lviv in Ukraine as Lwów. But, for Kraków or Warszawa, for which English names exist, Cracow and Warsaw are used. In the bibliography the place names correspond to the place names on the publication itself, but current names are placed in brackets.

All translations within the text are mine unless otherwise noted.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in notes:

AEp	Acta Episcopalia
AIVAK	<i>Akty Izdavaemye Vilenskoiu Arkheograficheskoiu Kommiseiu</i>
AKM	Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej in Cracow
AKW	Archiwum Kapituły na Wawelu in Cracow
ARSI	Archivium Romanus Societatis Iesu (The Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus)
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
BT	<i>The Babylonian Talmud</i>
Tur	<i>Arba'ah Turim ha-Shalem</i>

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1. Carol de Prevot, *Martyrologium Romanum* series in the cathedral church in Sandomierz. The series of sixteen paintings depicts the martyrdom of Catholics in Sandomierz (four paintings) and in the history of the Church (twelve paintings). Detail from a side panel in the northern nave.

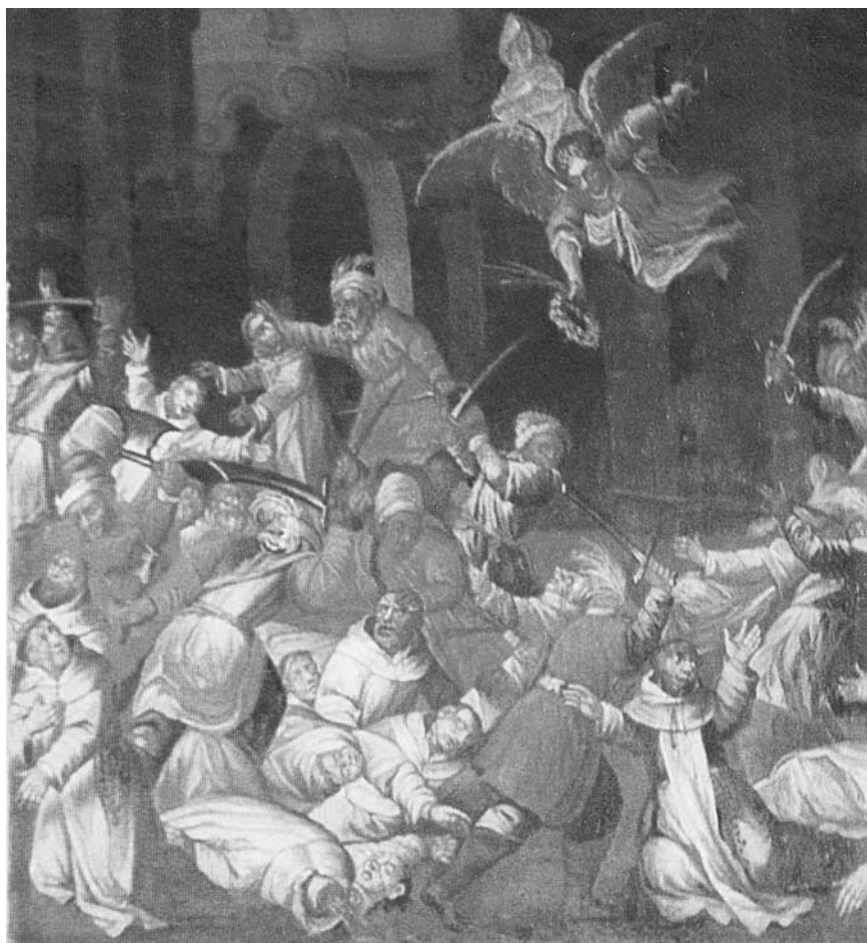
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2. Carol de Prevot, *Martyrologium Romanum* series. Martyrdom of forty-nine Dominicans from the Church of St. Jacob in Sandomierz at the hands of Tatars in 1260 (detail). One of the four paintings in the series from the history of Sandomierz.

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3. Carol de Prevot, *Martyrologium Romanum* series. Detail from a panel in the northern nave.

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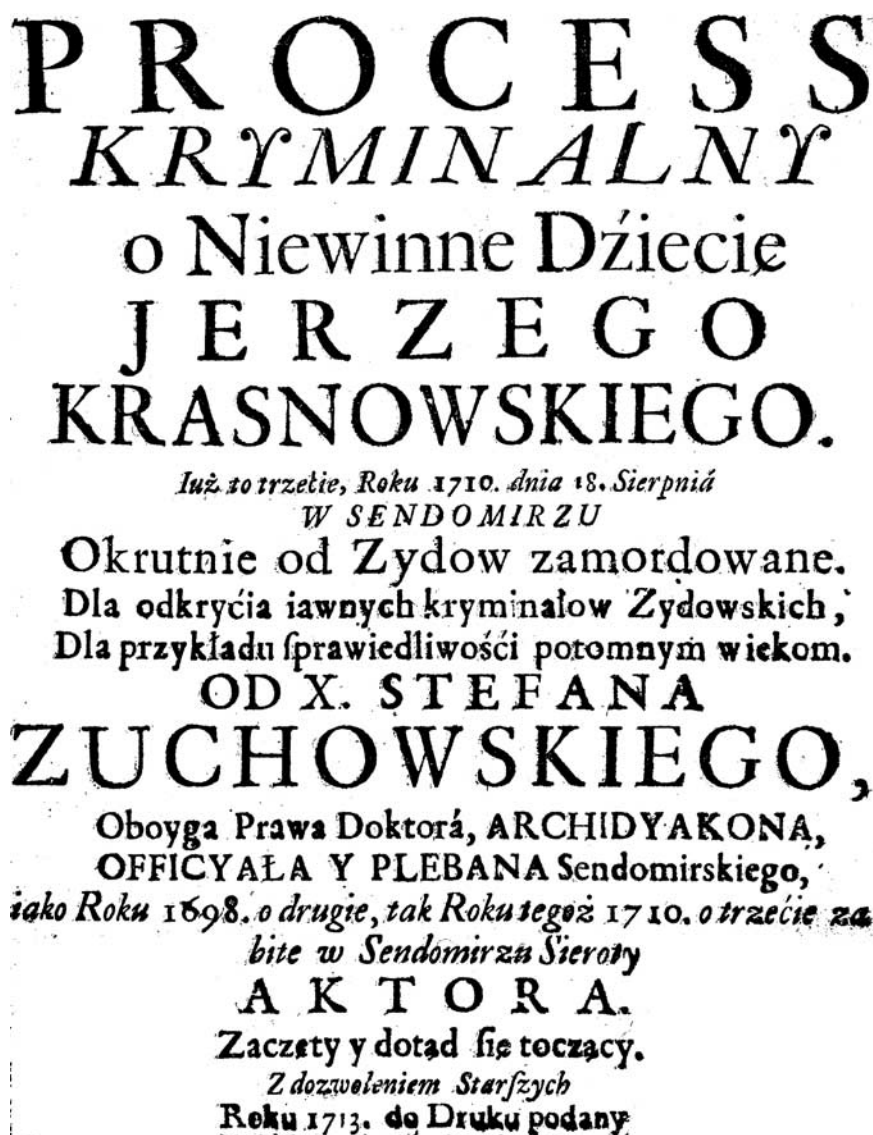
4. Carol de Prevot, *Martyrologium Romanum* series. Detail.



5. Carol de Prevot, *Martyrologium Romanum* series. The painting depicts the ritual murder of Christian children, which Jews of Sandomierz were accused of in 1710. Inspired by a trial of Jews that started in 1710. One of four paintings in the series from the history of Sandomierz.



6. Carol de Prevot, *Martyrologium Romanum* series. Detail from a panel depicting the destruction of the Sandomierz castle at the hands of Swedes in 1656. One of the four paintings from the history of Sandomierz.



7. Title page from Stefan Żuchowski's *Process Kryminalny*, a book written in response to the trial of Jews in Sandomierz accused of murdering a boy, Jerzy Krasnowski, in 1710. The book's date on the title page is 1713, but the final pages deal with the material from 1718.

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8. Detail from the last page of Stefan Żuchowski's *Process Kryminalny*. A papal tiara with a skull and bones, a symbol usually placed under a crucifix to signify the first man, Adam.



9. Portrait of King Sigismund I from Piotr Hyacynth Pruszczy's *Forteca Duchowna* (1737). The text discusses the execution of Katarzyna Malcherowa for conversion to Judaism in Cracow in 1539.



10. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A detail from “Map of Moscovy, Poland, Little Tartary, and ye Black Sea, &c.” (plate 13) in Herman Moll, *The World Described, or, A New and Correct Sett of maps: Shewing the Several Empires, Kingdoms, Republics . . . in All the Known Parts of the Earth* (London: J. Bowles, 1709–1720). Courtesy of the Olin Library at Wesleyan University.

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