During the sixteenth century Krakow was one of the most important centres of urban life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was the capital city of a multinational state, the seat of secular and church authorities, and, since 1364, a university town. Printing presses started to operate here in 1473, and a dense system of trade routes and intellectual connections linked Krakow’s citizens with other European regions. Therefore, it is not surprising that the new cultural and religious movements that were emanating from western and southern Europe soon started to become familiar to the city’s inhabitants.\(^1\) People of various backgrounds and occupations (merchants and diplomats, scholars and students, lay people and clergymen) were travelling to Wittenberg, Geneva and Zurich, bringing back new ideas and new books with them. Difficult as it is to sum up the complex history of the Polish Reformation and Krakow’s role in its development, one may say that the Reformation message found the most favourable conditions to spread after 1540. This was particularly true after the death of King Sigismund I in 1548 as his successor, Sigismund Augustus, was known for his tolerance. The Reformed tradition gained a stronger influence in Krakow and the surrounding region than Lutheranism and other confessional approaches.

Circles of booksellers, printers and publishers in Krakow significantly contributed to the promotion of ‘religious novelties’. Initially, Krakow booksellers imported books which discussed the need of reforms in the Church. But in the second half of the sixteenth century the town’s printers and publishers eagerly produced vernacular Bibles,

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collections of sermons and psalm books, theological *disputationes* and catechisms. It is beyond the scope of the article to present the history of ‘the book and the Reformation in Krakow’. Instead, we shall concentrate on some of the printer’s devices used by Krakow publishers who either contributed to the reform or were themselves Protestants. In particular, we shall discuss the devices’ iconographical and iconological sources and symbolic meaning of the graphic compositions, in order to investigate how these marks could have been understood by readers of sixteenth and seventeenth century books. Special attention will also be given to the relations of selected images in the printers’ devices with the heritage of European visual culture and Protestant iconography.

Chronologically, the first device to be discussed here is that of Hieronim Wietor, a printer active in Krakow from 1518 to 1547, who – as far as we know – was not openly a Protestant, but definitely promoted new religious ideas. Wietor imported and sold ‘heretical’ books containing pictures ‘offensive to the Church’ and was even arrested for this in 1536. He made friends with Polish intellectuals who were known to be enthusiasts of Calvin’s teaching and published some of their works. Interestingly, he was the first printer in Krakow to publish hymn sheets in octavo editions; the striving for promotion of religious songs was one of the characteristic features of the Reformation. Tellingly, the Lutheran prince Albrecht von Hohenzollern consulted Wietor when trying to establish a Protestant printing house in Königsberg in Ducal Prussia.

As a printer, Hieronim Wietor was not only a businessman, but also someone with intellectual ambitions whose interest in reforming the Church was probably connected with his humanistic views and lifelong enthusiasm for Erasmus of Rotterdam. The most important sign of Wietor’s passionate approach towards the works of the Dutch humanist is the fact that his publishing house in Krakow printed most of the Erasmian titles. However, it seems equally interesting that the Krakow printer did not hesitate to use Erasmus’ personal symbol, Terminus, as his printer’s device (see: Figure 1). He did this for the first

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