AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE CALLED TO SEEK THE UNITY OF THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST.

But when it comes to the sacraments, the church has often been—and remains—divided. What are we to do? Can we still gather together at the same table?

Based on the lectures from the 2017 Wheaton Theology Conference, this volume brings together the reflections of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox theologians who jointly consider what it means to proclaim the unity of the body of Christ in light of the sacraments. Without avoiding or downplaying the genuine theological and sacramental differences that exist between Christian traditions, what emerges is a thoughtful consideration of what it means to live with the difficult, elusive command to be one as the Father and the Son are one.

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SACRAMENTS AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

COME, LET US EAT TOGETHER

EDITED BY
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TO

Jill Peláez Baumgaertner

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We dedicate this volume to Jill Peláez Baumgaertner, the indefatigable dean of humanities and theological studies at Wheaton College, whose witness to the faithfulness of God and legacy of inclusion and ecumenism will continue to guide us for many years to come.

8

VISUAL ECUMENISM

The Coy Communion of Art

MATTHEW J. MILLINER

The first Protestants split from the Latin church that had, of course, already been in schism with the Orthodox church for almost five hundred years. In light of this reality, all Christians must be considered schismatics; no Christian church is immune from this accusation, including Catholics and the Orthodox.

RONALD RITTGERS

As long as and to the extent that the maximum solution must be regarded as a requirement of truth itself, just so long and to just that extent will there be no other recourse than simply to strive to convert one's partner in the debate.

POPE BENEDICT XVI

The Law is the Word in which God teaches and tells us what we are to do and not to do, as in the Ten Commandments. Now wherever human nature is alone, without the grace of God, the Law cannot be kept, because since Adam's fall in Paradise man is corrupt and has nothing but a wicked desire to sin. . . . The other Word of God is not Law or commandment, nor does it require anything of us; but after the first Word, that of the Law, has done this work and distressful misery and poverty have been produced in the heart, God comes and offers His lovely, living Word, and promises, pledges, and obligates Himself to give grace and help, that we may get out of this misery and that all sins not only be forgiven but also blotted out. . . . See, this divine promise of His grace and of the forgiveness of sin is properly called Gospel.

MARTIN LUTHER

ON THE LEFT OF LUCAS CRANACH the Elder's 1529 *Law and Gospel* panel, threatening expectations steer a helpless streaker to his unwelcome end (fig. 8.1).[1] The demands made upon him are legitimate, but his future skeleton's promise of inevitable death and a ram-headed devil—whose stomach is a second mouth—makes fulfilling his obligations impossible. God is there, of course, but only in the distance—present via unfulfillable demands. Moses spells them out, pointing to the letter of the law. His prophetic companions evince shock and concern at the sinner's shortcomings—not unlike our twenty-first century social media outrage at every moral failing. Indeed, there are modern versions of the Mosaic tablets as well: Thou shalt succeed professionally, display unimpeachable sensitivity to every subset of human culture, exhibit an ideal body fat percentage, and be the very picture of work-life balance.[2] These too are a species of what Martin Luther called the law.

[1]The law-gospel images referenced throughout this essay (the Gotha, Prague, and Weimar versions in particular) are readily available online, especially through the extraordinary Lucas Cranach Project. The Gotha (named for its present location) described at the outset can be viewed here: www.lucascranach.org/DE_SMG_SG676. Images can also be viewed in the video that was the first version of this chapter: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yMrGXZdulk.

[2]For a similar application of Luther's insights, see William McDavid, Ethan Richardson, and David Zahl, *Law and Gospel: A Theology for Sinners (and Saints)* (Charlottesville, VA: Mockingbird Ministries, 2015).

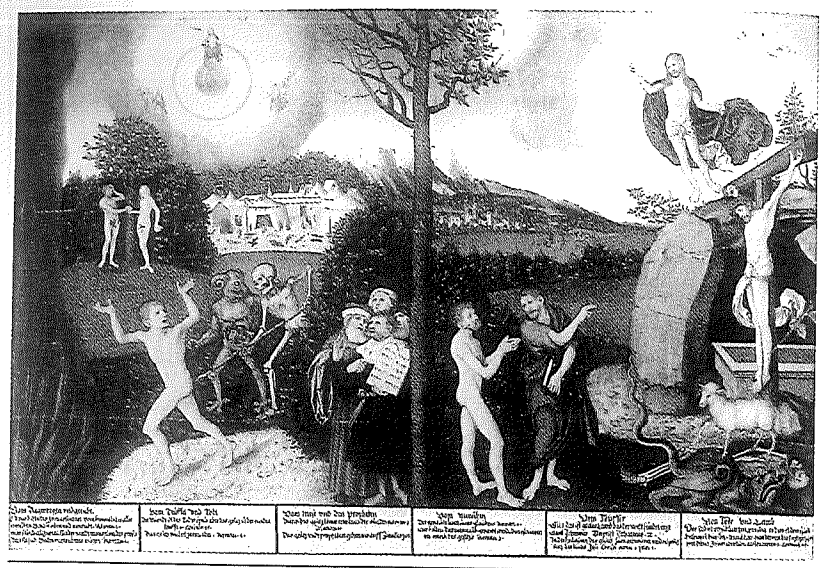

Figure 8.1. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Law and Gospel*, Gotha, 1529

On the right side of Cranach's panel, however, expectation is met by fulfillment. Demands are replaced by declaration. The tree of death that divides the panel blossoms into the tree of life as the law is fulfilled to the jot and tittle on behalf of the sinner. At the very moment of realization that it was done *for him*, a Super Soaker of imputing blood jet streams from Christ's side-wound to seal the transaction, splashing on the sinner's head. The devil and death are detained by the deputized Lamb of God, who neutralizes their power. As Luther put it in the Heidelberg disputation, "The Law says, 'do this' and it is never done; the Gospel says 'believe this' and everything is already done."[3] But, arguably, the paintings and prints of Lucas Cranach the Elder have been as effective at disseminating this message as has the discursive theology of Luther.

The distinction between law and gospel, called the "most important pictorial subject conceived to illustrate Lutheran doctrine,"[4] is the visual center of the evangelical tradition, which has recently enjoyed much positive reassessment.[5] Distinguishing

[3]Timothy F. Lull, ed., *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 47.

[4]Timo Trümper, "Art in the Service of Politics: Cranach and the Reformation," in *Martin Luther and the Reformation* (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2016), 236.

[5]Steven Ozment's *The Serpent and the Lamb* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) rescues Cranach from contextual reductionists and from those who have dismissed his images as "laborious allegories" (esp. 6-24); Bonnie Noble's *Lucas Cranach the Elder* (New York: University Press of America, 2009) shows how Cranach's imagery "does not replicate the precise meaning of its textual sources; rather it appropriates meanings of its own based on the properties of its own meaning" (28). An equally original approach is taken by Matthew David Rosebrock, "The Highest Art: Martin Luther's Visual Theology in *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2017).

law from gospel is—according to Luther—"the highest art in Christendom,"[6] and Lucas Cranach the Elder put the *art* in this highest art in Christendom. It could have been otherwise. When Martin Luther was summoned to Worms, his fellow reformer Andreas Karlstadt began to tear down the images in Wittenberg. Cranach, who had settled in Wittenberg before Luther, was horrified.[7] Luther's Reformation was about to cause Cranach to lose his livelihood. Fortunately, however, Luther returned to Wittenberg—against the counsel of his protector Frederick the Wise—to refute Karlstadt and partner with Cranach.[8] The theologian and the artist, the religious and political "swashbucklers" required of the age,[9] became co-conspirers in the propagation of Luther's message. And not just Luther's, one might say, but Paul's.[10]

Tragically though, as inter-Christian warfare accelerated, the law-gospel tradition quickly calcified into a polemic.[11] In the hands of Lucas Cranach the Younger, this visual template, intended as a mnemonic image (*Merkbild*) to propagate the gospel,[12] was weaponized to attack the Pope and his minions.[13] In one

[6]Martin Luther, "The Distinction Between the Law and the Gospel: A Sermon Preached on January 1, 1532," trans. Willard L. Bruce, *Concordia Journal* 18, no. 2 (1992): 153.

[7]Cranach arrived in 1505, Luther in 1512. Trümper, "Art in the Service of Politics," 231.

[8]Ozment, *Serpent and the Lamb*, 137.

[9]Ibid., 24. "Cranach was quick to recognize in Luther the perfect ally for the coming confrontation with Protestant iconoclasm, while Luther was no less prescient in picking Cranach as his secular guide and worldly mentor on the political fronts of Saxony, Rome, and Vienna" (133).

[10]The question as to whether Luther's distillation of Paul is sufficiently Pauline is admittedly enormous, calling to mind a massive rift between the forensic (Protestant) and ontological (Catholic) readings of Paul. Rather than wading into the new versus old perspective debates, Peter Leithart's suggestion of "deliverdict," which combines forensic and ontological aspects, is instructive (Peter Leithart, *Delivered from the Elements of the World* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016], 180-83). Also of interest is Kevin Vanhoozer's suggestion that "*sola gratia* has ontological and not merely soteriological significance" (Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016], 50). I aim to show here that a similar conciliating reading of Luther can be found through the lens of art history.

[11]Cranach the Elder's first attempt at such polemics, interestingly, was with Karlstadt himself! (Ozment, *Serpent and the Lamb*, 123-24). Carlos Eire's description of such propaganda is instructive. Luther "was not responsible for all that was printed, or even a fraction of it, but he was inextricably connected to it, and he benefited from it" (Carlos Eire, *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450–1650* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016], 184).

[12]Trümper, "Art in the Service of Politics," 237.

[13]I am in debt to Jonathan Anderson, during a conversation in front of Lutheran prints at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, for the apt word "weaponize."

particularly outrageous woodcut from the mid-sixteenth century, the gospel side is replaced with Martin Luther's pure preaching, and the law side with the papacy roasting in hell.[14] That the law and gospel tradition has been used in this way cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, perhaps these images can be read backward instead of simply forward in time. Lucas Cranach the Elder was deeply shaped by the Catholic visual culture that preceded him and to which he continued to contribute alongside his involvement with Luther. Cranach himself, supplying "both Rome and Wittenberg with their preferred religious artworks," has been described as "ecumenical in an age that was not."[15] Not surprisingly, therefore, echoes of the law and gospel tradition can be found in Catholic and Orthodox visual culture as well. Pursuing this evangelical visual heritage in non-Lutheran contexts, I contend, is one way of seeking church unity where sacramental communion has failed.

Evangelicals who are proud of the law-gospel visual tradition might be surprised to learn that "present[ing] the dry Tree of Death and the green Tree of Life within an integrated image . . . would have a direct application to the spiritual life of the individual soul" was a formula that dates back at least to the early twelfth century.[16] To choose just one place where it appeared well before Cranach, consider the famous missal presented by Berthold Furtmeyr to the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1481.[17] Here the same law-gospel distinction is laid out sacramentally, an appropriately feminine distillation of Cranach's formula. On the right, Eve has been given the first law ("thou shalt not eat"), and yet she eats. As with Cranach, this is no distant event but a present reality, as contemporary persons—fifteenth-century folk—take up Eve's suggestion. Death, almost straddling his victims, holds them hostage as a result.

But on the left side is gospel. The tree is the no longer the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but the tree of the cross, as made clear by the crucifix nestled in

[14]Lucas Cranach the Younger's "The False Church and the True Church" (ca. 1549) can be found in *Renaissance and Reformation: German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen, 2016), 91, or in high resolution at Google Arts and Culture: www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/the-false-and-the-true-church/3gHrD-YpBcBEug.

[15]Ozment, *Serpent and the Lamb*, 1.

[16]Jennifer O'Reilly, "The Trees of Eden in Mediaeval Iconography," in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, ed. Paul Morris (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 186.

[17]Ibid., 195. The image can be found in the following database: daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00045166/images/index.html?fip=193.174.98.30&seite=127&pdfseitex. See also Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 377.

its host-bearing branches. The dispenser of the good news in this case, however, is not John the Baptist but Mary, who distributes the sacrament in an undeniably priestly fashion. Or perhaps she is the personified *ekklēsia*. Either way, not only did Luther have a career-long love of the Virgin Mary,[18] she has a clear place in many of Cranach's law-gospel panels as well.[19] It should be evident from such pre-Reformation imagery that "studied allusion to themes in Romans 5–8 does not represent an exclusively Lutheran interest, of course, but arises from the late medieval concern with the program of justification."[20] Moreover, if the "cross and the Last Supper are the alpha and the omega of . . . Lutheran theology as a whole,"[21] then Furtmeyr's Salzburg miniature—a law-gospel missal we might call it—is perhaps equally "Protestant."

Should this be the case, then Cranach's law-gospel distinction may have been less branding Lutheranism than it was catechizing people into a transconfessional grammar of the gospel. As Cranach's law-gospel panels spread in so many versions, including frontispieces to new translations of the Bible and theological treatises, countless prints, and even domestic wooden chests,[22] the best of pre-existing Catholic theology was being disseminated as well. Which is to say, while verbal systems increasingly polarized the confessions, art may have been surreptitiously uniting them.[23] As art historians have been pointing out for some time, "The terms 'Anabaptist,' 'Lutheran,' 'Calvinist' and 'Catholic' do not entirely hold water because the religious doctrine, as it emerges in the rhetoricians' poems and plays [and paintings], is never entirely pure."[24] Or, to borrow the words of Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, "profound Christian art will not stay obediently within the boundaries we impose upon it."[25]

[18]Susanne Kimmig-Völkner, "Luther, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints: Catholic Images as a Key to Understanding the Lutheran Concept of Salvation," in *Martin Luther and the Reformation: Essays* (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2016), 261-69.

[19]In the Prague version (discussed below), Mary is nearly as prominent as Christ.

[20]O'Reilly, "Trees of Eden," 198. O'Reilly claims the same Augustinian tones are reflected in late fifteenth-century manuscripts of Augustine's *City of God*.

[21]Noble, *Lucas Cranach the Elder*, 84.

[22]The range of such variations is well illustrated in Ernst Grohne, *Die bremischen Truhen mit reformatorischen Darstellungen und der Ursprung ihre Motive* (Bremen: Geist, 1936), 65-87.

[23]Not all art, of course. As mentioned above, images were undeniably weaponized as well.

[24]Koenraad Jonckheere, *Antwerp Art After Iconoclasm: Experiments in Decorum, 1566–1585* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 47.

[25]Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, "Death and Ecumenism in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction," paper delivered at the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research, August 2015. www.strasbourginstitute.org/en/summer-seminar-2015-ecumenism-in-the-arts/shw-flannery-oconnor/.

VISUAL ECUMENISM

This is not to suggest that art is any kind of substitute sacrament. Baptism and Eucharist are the church's chief symbols of unity. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). And yet—to state the obvious—Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal Christians in the twenty-first century, even when they acknowledge the legitimacy of baptisms beyond their confessional boundaries, cannot share the Eucharist.[26] On the eve of his conversion to Catholicism, John Henry Newman claimed that if St. Athanasius or St. Ambrose were to "come suddenly to life, it cannot be doubted what communion he would take to be his own."[27] But if one takes into consideration the competing claims of the Orthodox Church, it can very much be doubted.[28] Attempts to save appearances by claiming the church "as such" to still be unified are unconvincing when two churches make the same such pronouncement.[29] The Reformation historian Ron Rittgers is right to see here an "impossible choice between two mothers."[30] With due respect to Newman, it is a far safer bet to say that if *Paul* were to come suddenly to life, whose pleas for unity pervade his epistles, it cannot be doubted that he would be horrified by our divisions.

[26]See for example, John Paul II's 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, where "communion with [the Roman Pontiff] is intrinsically required for the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice." This clearly rules out non-Catholic Christians, even should they believe in the real presence (www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html).

[27]John Henry Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1960), 113.

[28]I am in debt to George Hunsinger for this observation.

[29]For a book-length attack on the idea of the church "as such" to be united, see Ephraim Radner, *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012). "The sole Church of Christ [is that] which our Savior, after his Resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it. . . . This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [New York: Doubleday, 1995], §816). "The Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ established by our Lord and Savior, the Church confirmed and sustained by the Holy Spirit, the Church of which the Savior himself said, 'I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mt 16:18)" ("Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox," Russian Orthodox Church Department for External Church Relations, https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-orthodox, 1.1). Even with the famous "softenings" of *Lumen Gentium*'s subsistence language or Philaret of Moscow's (d. 1867) "purely true" versus "impurely true" Christianity (Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity*, vol. 2 [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012], 408), convergences are, of course, insufficient to permit communion.

[30]Ronald Rittgers, epilogue to *Protestantism After 500 Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 336.

In the wake of this failure, however, art may have fostered a coy communion where the sacraments have faltered. If, as the Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity laments, "Great divisions remain, and few see a way forward," images may offer one of those directions.[31] To suggest art has brought churches together in the way that the law-gospel panels propagated the best of late medieval Catholic theology is not to say that art affords adequate communion. We are rightly warned against "generic endorsement of the arts as inherently sacramental activities."[32] When this is done, "their essential connection to the work of Jesus Christ easily fade into the background or disappear entirely."[33] But like a motorcycle weaving between lanes of a traffic jam, art may have a nimbleness to outmaneuver sacramental and verbal theological gridlock.

And indeed, verbal theology—frequently holding the sacraments hostage within conceptual frameworks—remains a primary obstacle to unity. This accounts for the exhaustion that has marked many ecumenical discussions. Formal documents are produced but seem to have little effect. William Abraham bluntly declares, "Ecumenism is now braindead. . . . The best and brightest in the younger leadership of the church have abandoned the ecumenical seas and gone sailing in other waters."[34] As Brian Daley puts it, there is "a kind of spiritual and mental exhaustion in the face of the difficulties that prevent real communion among the churches, and a willingness to settle simply for practical cooperation in external programs."[35] R. R. Reno even concedes that "any progress toward Christian unity will undermine and diminish the sophisticated theological systems born in the polemical centuries that followed the Reformation."[36]

But the same essay collection intimates other strategies less encumbered by the verbal traditions. Brian Daley explains that the chief way the patristic era spoke of

[31]Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *In One Body Through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 7.

[32]Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands, and Roger Lundin, *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 10.

[33]Ibid. Timothy Verdon is much more sanguine in this respect but carefully ensconces sacramental art in a liturgical matrix: "Images made in [the liturgy's] service thus automatically become part of a *proclamation* that is also an *encounter*, in direct analogy with the sacraments, the signs of salvation and new life instituted by Christ. It is in fact from the sacramental liturgy that sacred images draw their 'power,' their 'presence,' their 'reality'" ("Art and the Liturgy," in *The Ecumenism of Beauty*, ed. Timothy Verdon [Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2017], 90).

[34]William J. Abraham, "Ecumenism and the Rocky Road to Renewal," in *The Ecumenical Future*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 178.

[35]Brian E. Daley, SJ, "Rebuilding the Structure of Love: The Quest for Visible Unity Among the Churches," in *Ecumenical Future*, ed. Braaten and Jenson, 102.

[36]R. R. Reno, "The Debilitation of the Churches," in *Ecumenical Future*, ed. Braaten and Jenson, 69.

the church is through images, because the mystery of the church "cannot be exhaustively plumbed by a single idea or expressed in a single term, but that it must be teased out in an almost inexhaustible stream of images and analogies, which release to us new aspects of the one mystery."[37] "The fathers," he continues, "think and write about the church almost exclusively in the language of *symbol*."[38] Daley would not be the first to see need for a degree of responsible demurral from verbal precision. A theologian as skilled as Pavel Florensky argued for "pneumatic incoherence," including a "deliberate dismantling of logical articulation[s]."[39] And Aquinas himself acknowledged the limits of verbal constructions when he complained, "If we take careful note of the statements of the Greeks we shall find they differ from us more in words than in meaning."[40]

To interrogate, without abandoning, logocentric systems is often to see that divided Christians can share, and have been sharing, visual traditions in ways that most theologians have ignored.[41] Any degree of reading in ecumenical documents will quickly encounter the plea for "visible unity."[42] What the authors intend is a sacramental unity that can be seen by the world. But until we reach that goal, we may have achieved visible unity in a different way, if we will permit art history to do serious theological work. There are countless places one could go to point to this dynamic, whether the *Simultankirche* in Germany, where Charles V gave Catholics the right to worship in the same church with Lutherans;[43] the double-nave

[37]Daley, "Rebuilding the Structure of Love," 96-97.

[38]Ibid., 95.

[39]Ephraim Radner, *Spirit and Nature: The Saint Médard Miracles in Eighteenth-Century Jansenism* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 371-72. Radner is elaborating on Florensky's essay "On the Holy Spirit" in *Ultimate Questions: An Anthology of Modern Russian Thought*, ed. Alexander Schmemann (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1965). Fascinating as it is that Florensky beat Derrida to the logocentric punch, when Florensky went to art history, he fell into the old confessional grooves, dismissing print culture as irreducibly Protestant and sculpture as necessarily Catholic, a facile dichotomy disrupted by recent developments in the history of art. See Pavel Florensky, Donald Sheehan, and Olga Andrejev, *Iconostasis* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 113.

[40]*De Potentia,* cited in Marcus Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25.

[41]One exciting, recent exception is Verdon, *Ecumenism of Beauty*.

[42]The New Delhi World Council of Churches 1961 assembly put it, "The unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ confess him as Lord and Saviour" (www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/1961-new-delhi/new-delhi-statement-on-unity).

[43]Interestingly, this offers a rare bright spot in Radner's mostly dark book, *A Brutal Unity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012). There are many churches in the Rhineland that function in the same way today. Even the villain of Radner's narrative, Ephipanius of Salamis, has been subject to a sort of visual ecumenism, showing up in frescoes in both the Catholic and Orthodox churches in Famagusta, Cyprus. Maria Paschali, "Blurring the Lines: Devotional Imagery and Cultural Identity in Late Medieval Famagusta," paper presented at the Byzantine Studies Conference, Fordham University, 2015.

churches of Crete where Orthodox and Catholic Christians worshiped together;[44] the paintings on Mt. Athos inspired by Protestant prints;[45] the works of Polish sculptor Paul Landowski, who carved both the Catholic Jesus that overlooks Rio's Guanabara Bay *and* the famous depiction of the Reformers in Geneva;[46] or the ecumenical responses to the beheading of non-Chalcedonian Coptic Christians on the beach of Libya.[47] But to provide focus to this proliferation, my aim in this chapter, as we've seen, is to isolate a particularly cherished evangelical visual tradition, the law-gospel panel, revealing its non-Protestant appearances. We might call such convergences an appetizer enjoyed in anticipation of a time when Protestant, Pentecostal, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians can finally dine as one.

CAMOUFLAGE CRANACH CONTINUED

As the church history charts given to visitors of Orthodox monasteries or polemical websites will tell you, the Orthodox stand aloof from Western rational conflicts centering on law and gospel.[48] But if the law-gospel distinction is indeed fundamental to Pauline thought, perhaps it can be found in the Orthodox visual tradition as well. Consider, for example, the quintessential Orthodox icon found at the foot of Mt. Sinai in St. Catherine's monastery, the Sinai Pantocrator (fig. 8.2). It was rediscovered in the mid-twentieth century at the Princeton/Michigan Sinai expedition where it was recognized as a masterpiece of late antique realism that would soon be eclipsed by increasingly spiritualized abstraction. It has since emerged in popular visual culture as a deeply authentic Christ image—strangely consistent with other depictions, including the shroud of Turin. Perhaps the law-gospel distinction can be seen here as well, though—in a move that will please any Barthian—the distinction is grounded in the person of Christ.[49]

[44]Olga Gratziou, "Cretan Architecture and Sculpture in the Venetian Period," in Anastasia Drandaki, *The Origins of El Greco: Icon Painting in Venetian Crete* (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Foundation, 2009), 22-23.

[45]Exhaustively analyzed and illustrated in Paul Huber, *Apokalypse: Bilderzyklen zur Johannes-Offenbarung in Trier, auf dem Athos und von Caillaud d'Angers* (Patmos: Aufl, 1989).

[46]Matthew J. Milliner, "Towards a Visual Ecumenism," paper presented at Duke University, 2015.

[47]Matthew J. Milliner, "Towards 2017," paper presented at George Fox College, 2016.

[48]See, for example, the timeline at the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese's website: www.antiochian.org/orthodox-church-history.

[49]For a helpful overview of Barth's demurral from traditionally Lutheran takes on law and gospel, see I. John Hesselink, "Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law?—Karl Barth, Martin Luther, and John Calvin," *Reformation and Revival Journal* 14 (2005): 139-71.

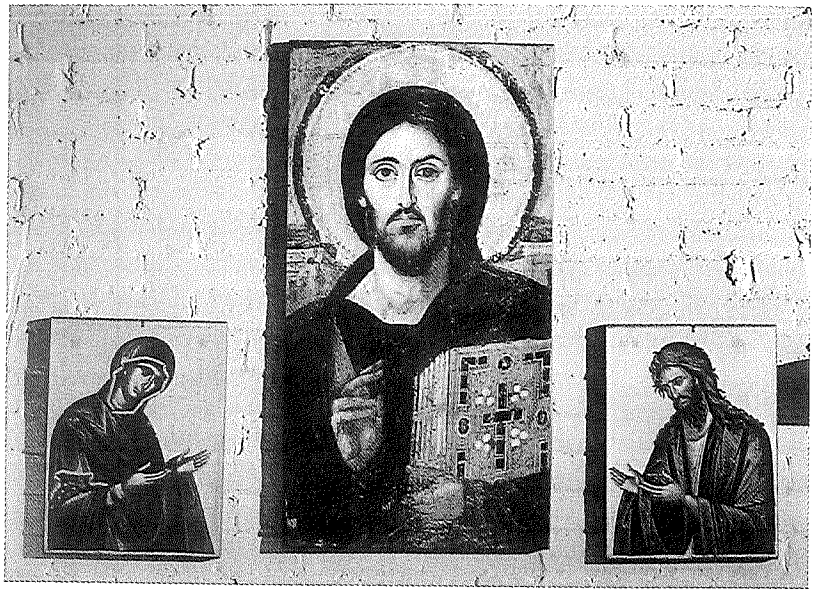

Figure 8.2. Replica of the Sinai Pantocrator flanked by traditional Deësis imagery from Stavronikita monastary on Mt. Athos

On Christ's left side (our right) looms the book and the severe gaze. Faced with Christ's standards for holiness in the Sermon on the Mount, who can stand? But of course, his demands are never meant to drive us away from Christ but toward him. On Christ's right (our left), we see the merciful gaze, the hand that was pierced for us raised in blessing. In this face, not just in the psalm, "righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps 85:10). Indeed, as one recent evangelical points out, a frequently employed Hebrew term for grace (*ḥēn*) "connotes the favor that an inferior finds in the eyes of a superior," and the facial and ocular aspects of grace in Scripture (Num 6:25; Ps 80; 2 Cor 4:6) are abundant.[50] As Luther puts it, "Before receiving the comfort of forgiveness, sin must be recognized and the fear of God's wrath must be experienced through the preaching or apprehension of the Law, that man may be driven to sigh for grace and may be prepared to receive the comfort of the Gospel."[51] All of this happens in the Sinai Pantocrator, but with a single look.

[50]Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, 56.

[51]Ewald M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 2:738. Compare the words of the Byzantine writer Nicholas Mesarites regarding the face of Christ: "These eyes to those who have achieved a clean understanding, are gentle and friendly and instill the joy of contrition in the souls of the pure in heart. . . . To those who are condemned by their own judgment, [the eyes] are scornful and hostile and boding of ill." "Nicholas Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople," XVI, 3-5, ed. and trans. Glanville Downey, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 47 (1957): 872-73.

Interestingly, later Pantocrators—in the domes at Lagoudera in Cyprus or Daphne in Greece for example—seem to lose this dynamic, instead choosing between severity and mercy. But the Sinai law-gospel dynamic does endure, however, in Byzantine mosaics and iconostases wherever the Deësis theme appears (see fig. 8.2), which shows Christ flanked by Mary on his right and John the Baptist on his left. In the famous Hagia Sophia Deësis, for example, John the Baptist is on the law side (Mt 11:11), near the book, and Mary, representing the incarnation, is on the side of the gospel. The traditional interpretation of such imagery is that they are meant to urge supplication to John the Baptist and Mary at the last judgment.[52] But perhaps a simpler and more straightforward reading of the motif is that the classic Byzantine Deësis communicates the law-gospel dynamic so pervasive in the epistles of Paul.

Reformed theologian Michael Horton's disagreement with Orthodox theology centers on precisely this point: "Discerning in [the] New Testament lines of thought a clear distinction between law and gospel—that which commands without promise or assistance and that which gives without command or judgment—Reformation theology observes in Orthodox theology a serious confusion on this point."[53] But without denying that this confusion can emerge in Orthodoxy (and in Reformed theology as well!), the Orthodox Deësis may show that the law-gospel distinction has been hiding in plain sight.[54] As Johann Huizinga puts it, "What matters is not primarily the dispute among keen-minded theologians, but the ideas that completely dominate the life of fantasy and thought as it is expressed in art."[55]

[52]Perhaps this is why in one of Cranach's law-gospel prints at the British Museum (1530), Cranach actually includes the Deësis on the law side of the panel where it symbolizes the inaccessible God. Fortunately, however, this is not the version that endured (www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1421368&partId=1&people=128204&peoA=128204-2-60&page=3).

[53]Michael Horton, ed., *Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 136.

[54]To be sure, this dynamic can work in reverse. Despite suggestions that John Climacus's *Heavenly Ladder* is not Pelagian (see the introduction to John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent* [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1982], 16), the *illustrations* of the ladder, which show Christ at the top as monks work out their own salvation without him, are very Pelagian indeed!

[55]Johann Huizinga, Rodney J. Payton, and Ulrich Mammitzsch, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 237. Or for a more recent expression of the same notion: "The theological view needs to be combined with visual studies in order to address the problem of how a visual image can intuit a theological dogma, analyzable in conceptual terms" (Clemena

Even where Orthodox formal theology may seem at complete odds with Reformed dogmatics, the dynamic of Christ's severe requirements driving us to his mercy may be what people actually *saw*. Or to put it another way, iconostases, if they include a Deësis as they so frequently do, are irreducibly evangelical.

LAW AND GOSPEL IN CATHOLIC FLORENCE

Thus far we have examined covert Cranach law-gospel templates in late medieval manuscripts and icons that predate the contentious sixteenth century. As confessions became polarized in the wake of the Reformation, however, one would think that fleeting connections between the evangelical visual tradition and other confessions would decrease. Nevertheless, in the very midst of these tensions the law-gospel dynamic emerges within squarely Catholic turf. Art historians have uncovered a "world of reforming activity in [early modern Catholicism], some of it very sympathetic to Protestant positions."[56] Moreover, such connections are discernible not only in minor artists but in the most celebrated Renaissance names of the sixteenth century. In fact, with due respect to Lucas Cranach the Elder, the most beautiful and expansive law-gospel painting was completed in 1558 by Jacopo Pontormo and completed by Agnolo Bronzino, artists working for Catholic patrons in the heart of Medici Florence.[57] The fresco program was tragically destroyed in 1742 during an attempted restoration of the Medici chapel just behind it, but survives in a 1598 engraving and in preparatory sketches at the Uffizi. Modern art historians have been exploring the Protestant aspects of this lost program for nearly seventy years.[58]

Perhaps because it was crypto-Lutheran, Pontormo's program was criticized for lacking the honesty (*onestà*) and reverence (*riverenza*) demanded by the Catholic Reformation.[59] In the most well-known art historical source for this period, Giorgio Vasari criticized Pontormo's "mass of dead and drowned bodies," claiming the painting

Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010], 166).

[56]Nagel, *Controversy of Renaissance Art*, 198.

[57]I am in debt to Christopher Castaldo for informing me of this in his 2016 Wheaton Theology Conference paper, now published as "The Bible and the Italian Reformation," in *The People's Book: The Reformation and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 171-87.

[58]This 1598 engraving was published by Charles de Tolnay in 1950. Kurt Forster further established the connection of the series to the *Beneficio di Cristo* and the reforming impulse of Juan de Valdés (Kurt W. Forster, *Pontormo. Monographie mit kritichem Katalog* [Munich: Bruckmann, 1966]). The scholarly history is nicely summarized and expanded in Chrysa Damianiki, "Pontormo's Lost Frescoes in San Lorenzo, Florence: A Reappraisal of their Religious Content," in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 77-118.

[59]Damianiki, "Pontormo's Lost Frescoes," 113.

as a whole lacked "the order of the scene, measure, time, variety . . . nor any rule or proportion."[60] But what may be behind such critiques, other than rivalry between competing artists, is concealment. The conceit of stylistic critique—at the very birth of modern art history—may have been an attempt to suppress theological content.[61]

Pontormo, it has been argued, was chosen for this series precisely because of his sympathies with the Italian Reform movements.[62] The reason was admittedly political. Cosimo I de' Medici, in direct competition with the powerful Farnesese family of Rome, deliberately allowed Lutheran ideas in his city, where the memory of Savonarola's reform had not disappeared.[63] Pierfrancesco Riccio, who held the position of major-domo for Duke Cosimo de Medici, had clear Protestant affinities, and his library contained a manuscript of the *Beneficio di Cristo,* banned in 1549 for its downright Lutheran content,[64] alongside the writings of the Italian reformer Juan de Valdés.[65] Another influence on Pontormo may have been Benedetto Varchi, whose Protestant sentiments were disseminated through a sermon printed in Florence in 1549.[66] These undeniably Lutheran influences each could have influenced Pontormo's program at San Lorenzo.[67] He chose to centralize a benevolent Jesus, to eliminate purgatory and the Virgin Mary, and to offer a clear and direct law-gospel appeal in an age of distracting artistic embellishment.[68] By piecing together the last frescoes from surviving sketches, we can gain a sense of what the original program revealed (fig. 8.3).

[60]Ibid., 83-84.

[61]Or perhaps Vasari was rendering Pontormo a favor: "In attributing Pontormo's failure in this late work to his intellectual and spiritual regression, and to his exhaustion owing to hard work, Vasari found a way of protecting both Pontormo and Cosimo from later accusations of complicity with Protestant heresy" (ibid., 91). Confinement of the critique to the aesthetic realm "may have been responsible for their survival up to the mid-eighteenth century despite their reputation as being heterodox" (ibid., 84).

[62]Ibid., 80.

[63]Ibid., 88-89. As Cosimo wrote in a letter to Ambrogio of Gumppenberg, "I always have been, and always will be, a good Christian . . . ready to give to the Lutherans, too, all possible favours" (Cosimo I de' Medici, *Lettere,* ed. Giorgio Spini [Florence: Vallecchi, 1940], 97).

[64]Because the text was necessarily published anonymously, it has been attributed to various authors. The current consensus is that it was composed by Benedetto Fontanini (who was first identified as Benedetto da Mantova) and refined by the poet Marcantonio Flaminio (Castaldo, "Bible and the Italian Reformation," 176).

[65]Damianiki, "Pontormo's Lost Frescoes," 85.

[66]Ibid., 87. See Salvatore Lo Re, "Jacopo da Pontormo e Benedetto Varchi: una postilla," *Archivio Storico Italiano. Deputazione di Storia Patria per la Toscana* 150, no. 1 (1992): 139-62.

[67]Ibid., 85. Caponetto claims that the first eighteen articles of Valdés's *Catechismo* directly correspond to Pontormo's frescoes (Salvatore Caponetto, *La Riforma Protestante nell'Italia del Cinquecento* [Turin: Claudiana, 1992]). Damianiki claims the entire *Catechismo* can be seen reflected in the program ("Pontormo's Lost Frescoes," 88).

[68]Ibid., 91.

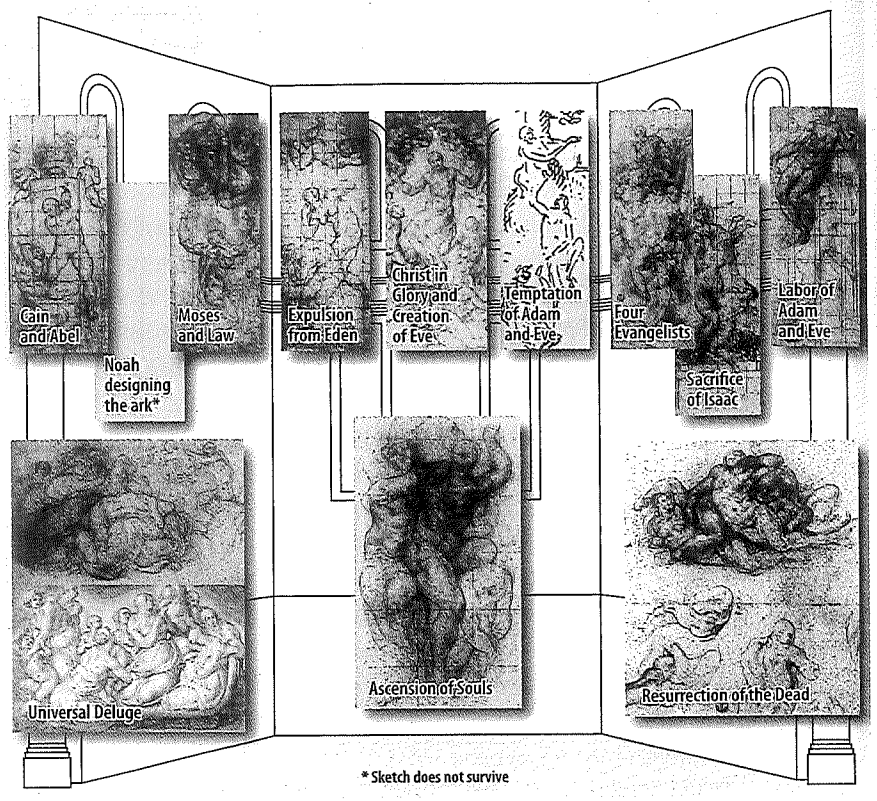

Figure 8.3. Tentative reconstruction of Pontormo's lost San Lorenzo fresco based on Damianiki

In Valdés's *Catechismo* (patterned after Luther's Small and Larger Catechisms) and in the *Beneficio di Cristo,* the flood is emphasized at length to express the hopeless state of the human condition without Christ.[69] Not surprisingly then, the flood is a key feature on the law side of Pontormo's fresco series as well.[70] Pontormo embroils the viewer in drowned, contorted bodies, offering a set up for the marvelous uplift of ascended souls, visually imitating the law-gospel rhetoric of a good Lutheran sermon.[71] The most Cranachian moment, however, is when the

[69]Ibid., 108.

[70]Indeed, Lucas Cranach the Elder used the theme as well in one of his versions of the panels, namely the Schneeberg altarpiece, which illustrates the flood on the exterior panel.

[71]Ibid., 113. For an earlier confirmation of Damianiki's law-left and gospel-right reconstruction, see Janet Cox Rearick, *The Drawings of Pontormo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 327.

flanking walls culminate with law on the left, with Moses stunned by the accusing finger of God, and the gospel on the right, where New Testament writers are buoyed by a trumpeting angel, corresponding nicely with the second and third chapters of the *Beneficio di Cristo* and Valdés's *Catechismo.*[72] Damiankiki even suggests that Pontormo's centralized Jesus, which bears resemblance to Cranach's, might be offering a refutation of Michelangelo's more severe last judgment.[73]

MICHELANGELO AMONG THE SPIRITUALI

And yet, near the time he was completing the Last Judgment, Michelangelo was being swept up in reforming currents as well. Archival breakthroughs have persuasively established that Michelangelo was drawn to Protestant ideas, which came to him through his spiritual friendship with a powerful noble woman, Vittoria Colonna and her circle of Reformers who met outside the centers of power in Viterbo.[74] They were known as the *Ecclesia viterbiensis,* or *Spirituali* ("the spiritual ones") in contrast to their opponents, the *Zelanti.*[75] Even if this reform circle did not realize the desired formal reconciliation with Protestants, there were other ways to express their sympathies for notions of grace, namely by shattering the contractual system of artistic production through free gifts of poetry and art. Alexander Nagel sees the poems freely given by Vittoria Colonna to Michelangelo, and the drawings given by him to her, as directly reflecting the culminating passage of the *Beneficio*: "The remission of sins would not be a gift and a grace but a payment, if God granted it to you because of the worth of your works. But I repeat that God accepts you as just and does not impute your sins to you through the merits of Christ, which are given to you and become yours through faith."[76]

[72]Damianiki, "Pontormos's Lost Frescoes," 110-11.

[73]Ibid., 115-18.

[74]The archival breakthroughs were published in Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto, eds., *Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1981–1989). See also Sergio Pagano and Concetta Ranieri, *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole* (Vatican City: Archivio Vaticano, 1989). These discoveries are reflected in English in (among other publications) Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Antonio Forcellino, *Michelangelo: A Tormented Life,* trans. Allen Cameron (Malden, MA: Polity, 2009); Abigail Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Politics of the Reformation* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016); Christoph Luitpold Frommel, *Michelangelo's Tomb for Julius II: Genesis and Genius* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016); and Sarah Rolfe Prodan, *Michelangelo's Christian Mysticism: Art, Poetry and Spirituality in Sixteenth Century Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[75]Castaldo, "Bible and the Italian Reformation," 174.

[76]Cited in Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art,* 172, with original Italian on 266.

The gift giving in the Viterbo circle directly reflected these ideas, such that "even the exchange of courtesies and the practice of gift giving were, semiplayfully, couched in the terms of the debate over grace."[77] In a series of letters between Vittoria and Michelangelo, dating from between 1538 and 1546, we see just such playful language at work. Presented with a gift (perhaps a poem) by Colonna, Michelangelo struggled with a desire to offer some kind of payment, but then yielded. "Having recognized and seen that the grace of God cannot be bought, and that to have it with discomfort is a grave sin, I say the fault is mine and willingly I accept these things."[78] The grace circulating in the *Spirituali* liberated him from the sense of obligation—noted even by Vasari[79]—under which he labored over a long artistic career. Michelangelo, in turn, scolded Vittoria Colonna for going through an intermediary, his friend Tommaso de' Cavalieri, to urge him to finish a drawing for her. He was, in fact, preparing something even better, and her refusal to make a direct appeal to him had "spoiled" the gift.[80] The friendship between Michelangelo and Vittoria was a kind of tutorial in unmediated grace that drew on the language of Italian reforming texts.

But the Reformation influence on Michelangelo did not just appear in private correspondence and drawings. It influenced his most famous formal commissions as well. The same notions of unmediated grace emerged in Michelangelo's frescoes in the Vatican's Pauline chapel[81] and most dramatically in the tomb of Pope Julius II (in office 1503–1513). Michelangelo's initial plans for the tomb date to the early sixteenth century, decades before the Reformation.[82] After an initial sketch, the tomb quickly mushroomed into a gargantuan scheme that would rival the imperial funerary monuments of the Caesars—a spectacular confluence of Michelangelo's and Julius's ambitions.[83] A figure of Julius II would cap the massive structure, and below him would be Victories standing astride reconquered papal lands interspersed with larger-than-life male nudes, which may have symbolized the arts Julius patronized so abundantly.[84] Moses, Paul, and allegorized figures of the contemplative

[77]Ibid., 172.
[78]Ibid.
[79]"It seemed to him, when someone gave him something that he was put under a permanent obligation" (cited in Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, 172-73).
[80]Ibid., 175.
[81]For unmediated grace reflected in this late fresco, see Forcellino, *Michelangelo*, 224.
[82]Frommel, *Michelangelo's Tomb for Julius II*, 24.
[83]John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, 4th ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 2012), 400.
[84]Ibid.

and active life, reflective of Julius II's spiritual and earthly interests, would be included as well. Moreover, the entire tomb was to be placed prominently in St. Peter's basilica, whose reconstruction—which helped ignite the Reformation—was spearheaded by Julius II.[85] By any account this sepulchral ambition was unrealizable. Despite Michelangelo's long life, only six of the sixteen male nudes were even started, to say nothing of the additional figures. Which is to say, the original tomb of Julius II was the quintessence of Michelangelo's youthful arrogance.

Julius II, however, died in 1513, which left Michelangelo in the position of having been paid handsomely for a tomb that he never created. Michelangelo attempted to sublet the projects to assistants to no avail. By 1532, nearly three decades after the commission was conceived, legal consequences were threatened were he not to complete the project.[86] And so Michelangelo was forced to finish. But the years 1532 through 1545, when the tomb was completed, coincided with the more mature Michelangelo's association with the *Spirituali*. Michelangelo therefore fulfilled his obligations to depict his friend, but not as Julius II, "The Warrior Pope," might have wanted.

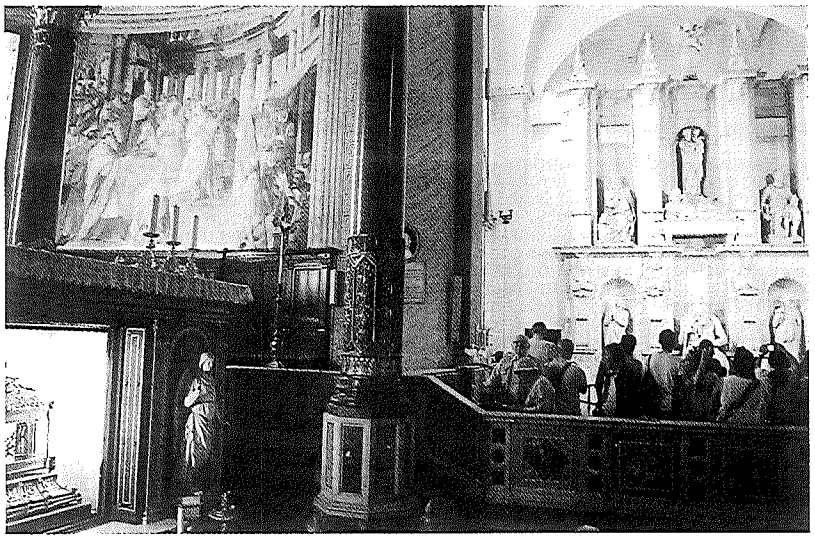

Figure 8.4. Michelangelo's Tomb of Julius II, showing Moses turned away from the chain altar

[85]The tomb's importance is conveyed by the fact that the Sistine Chapel itself was a side project born from Julius's frustration that Michelangelo had not completed his tomb!
[86]Frommel, *Michelangelo's Tomb for Julius II*, 68.

The sculpture was not placed under St. Peter's basilica as planned. Instead, it is tucked away in the side of a church that is itself tucked away in Rome: *San Pietro in Vincole* (St. Peter in Chains), where Julius was titular cardinal before his elevation to the papacy. There Julius was especially fond of the relic of the chains.[87] Legend related that in the fifth century, Eudoxia, the wife of emperor Valentinian III, had been given the chains of Peter's Jerusalem imprisonment by her mother as a gift. When Pope St. Leo I compared them to the chains of St. Peter's Roman imprisonment, the two miraculously fused together. As a result, the chains marked "the symbolic unity of the empire under a new Christian faith."[88] But Michelangelo did not flatter his deceased patron by having his central figure of Moses look upon the chains as planned. Late in the game, he wrenched the head of Moses to look away from the altar (fig. 8.4).[89] The result is a statue that "rebels against the original project."[90]

Indeed, if Michelangelo's Moses symbolizes law—including the law of ambition that drove Michelangelo's early career—perhaps we can see in this figure a record of shocked conversion when faced with a different set of gospel ideals. Indeed, at St. Peter in Chains, the polished ambition of Michelangelo's youthful sculptures are wrenched to an unsettling halt. It might even be possible to see here an echo of the 1529 Prague version of the Lucas Cranach the Elder's law-gospel panel (fig. 8.5).[91] In this version, the subject who had been split onto both sides merges into once central figure, as if to illustrate our condition as sinners always bent toward self-justification, in constant need for reminders of grace. While a direct Cranach-Michelangelo influence here is unlikely, it is at least interesting that Cranach's central figure, overshadowed by a scolding Moses, is similarly twisted in Michelangelo's famous tomb.

But further investigation into the tomb of Julius II makes the Protestant connection here even less of a stretch. The latest sculptures in the series to be completed, from 1542 to 1545, show the most influence from the reforming circles.[92] The male nudes and conquering victories are eliminated, but the image of the active and contemplative life—now reinterpreted—remained.[93] The figure of the active life

[87]Ibid., 55.
[88]Forcellino, *Michelangelo,* 220.
[89]Ibid., 222. A surviving fragment of a letter to Vasari testifies to this sudden shift. Frommel, *Michelangelo's Tomb for Julius II*, 55. Michelangelo is on record joking to his friend Tomasso Cavalieri, "You didn't know that Moses intended to speak to us the other day and that he turned in order to understand us better." But the humor might have concealed a deeper motivation.
[90]Forcellino, *Michelangelo,* 222.
[91]Available at www.lucascranach.org/CZ_NGP_O10732.
[92]Forcellino, *Michelangelo*, 62.
[93]Ibid., 211.

Figure 8.5. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Law and Gospel*, Prague, 1529

shows a female figure's hair merging with a torch. Vittoria Colonna and the circle of Viterbo used this flaming hair analogy to illustrate thoughts of charitable intelligence that plan deeds of service.[94] In addition, the *Beneficio di Cristo* uses the analogy of fire to describe the natural relationship between faith and works: "This is justifying faith. It is like a flame of fire which only bursts forth in its brightness. It is like the flame that burns the wood without the help of light; yet the flame cannot be without the light. In similar fashion it is true that faith alone consumes and burns away sin without the help of works, and yet that same faith cannot be without good works."[95]

This mediating position, which might be called a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) *avant la lettre*, could have done much to reconcile warring Protestants and Catholics were it heeded. Standing to the left of Michelangelo's Moses, moreover, was a figure who stood apart from works completely. The sculpture

[94]Ibid., 212.
[95]Don Benedetto, *The Benefits of Christ* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1984), 130. This English edition offers a more accessible abridged text.

of the contemplative life was "in all probability the last statue made for the tomb and indeed the last sculpture Michelangelo ever completed,"[96] and may also have been a portrait of Vittoria Colonna herself.[97] It might be called Michelangelo's last free gift to his spiritual mentor and friend.

Through association with the *Spirituali*, the greatest sculptor of the Renaissance had clearly been changed by the message of grace, which he even dared insert into the radically reworked tomb of Julius II. But soon came the backlash. Cardinal Giampietro Carafa—the worst enemy of the *Spirituali*—was elected Pope Paul IV (in office 1555–1549), cancelling Michelangelo's commissions his first day on the job.[98] The severity of Paul IV's persecution of Reformers meant Michelangelo had to cover his tracks. Hence, in Michelangelo's dictated biography, the connections to *Il Beneficio di Cristo* in the tomb of Julius II were concealed with benign references to the more acceptable Dante.[99] According to Forcellino, the election of Cardinal Carafa to the papacy may have even been the prompt for Michelangelo's famous attack on his own deposition, which stands in Florence's *Opera del Duomo* museum today. Michelangelo's prominent self-portrait as Nicodemus within this sculpture, which "reveals his guilt over not having the courage to celebrate more openly his dangerous religious beliefs,"[100] offered evidence of reforming sympathies that had to be destroyed.

PERSONALIZED LAW AND GOSPEL IN WEIMAR AND BEYOND

One last version of Cranach's law-gospel template remains to be considered. Described as the supreme image of the Reformation, the Weimar altarpiece was completed not by Lucas Cranach the Elder but by his son (fig. 8.6).[101] Following the tested formula, Lucas Cranach the Younger depicted the damned sinner in the distance, but the sinner saved by grace takes the form of a moving portrait of the painter's own father at the foot of the cross.[102] This portrait of Lucas Cranach the Elder is flanked by John the Baptist, who points to Christ, alongside his dear friend Martin Luther. As in the original law-gospel formula from Gotha, Jesus' imputing blood pours from his side to fall on Lucas Cranach the Elder's forehead. His acquiescent expression conveys that he "is saved not by action but

[96]Frommel, *Michelangelo's Tomb for Julius II*, 67. Frommel discerns a possible pun between the first four letters of Vittoria Colonna's name and the title of the sculpture: Vi(ta) Co(ntemplativa).
[97]Ibid.
[98]Forcellino, *Michelangelo*, 284.
[99]Ibid., 283.
[100]Ibid., 288. "Nicodemus . . . came to Jesus by night" (Jn 3:1-2).
[101]Available at www.lucascranach.org/DE_PPW_NONE-PPW001A.
[102]Noble, *Lucas Cranach the Elder*, 149.

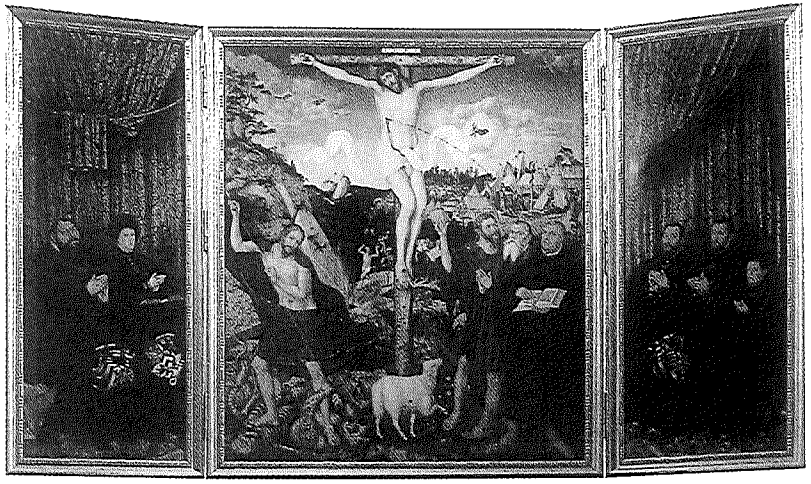

Figure 8.6. Lucas Cranach the Younger, altarpiece in St. Peter and Paul, Weimar, 1555

by passive acceptance of grace."[103] Which is to say, the Weimar altarpiece offers less an abstract discussion of law and gospel than an illustration of the doctrine's direct, personal realization.

This personal thrust causes one scholar to contrast the Weimar altarpiece to earlier crucifixions that only gestured at the possibility of salvation. "The blood splashing on Cranach's head and Luther's text assure the viewer that this is not what the artist hopes for but, rather, what he is guaranteed."[104] Even so, both German and Italian reform circles of the sixteenth century would have agreed that to see *someone else* experiencing this guarantee is inadequate. The *Beneficio* concludes with a personal appeal to not believe in remission of sins in general, but to "apply this belief to your own case, and believe without doubt that through Christ all your iniquities are pardoned."[105] With such personal application in mind, one analogue to the Weimar law-gospel panel is on offer in a famous piece of modern Catholic kitsch.

[103]Ibid. Luther incidentally does not receive it, as he had been dead for a decade and was resurrected for this portrait (ibid., 148). Noble adds very insightfully, "Cranach is the naked sinner to be sure, but his artistic personality remains intact. . . . Cranach as naked sinner does not dissolve his personality into a theological concept" (ibid., 151).
[104]Ibid., 153. It is interesting to note that the blood spurts directed toward Dominican brothers at San Marco in Florence are less plenteous than Cranach's more consistent stream. I am in debt to John Walford for this comparison.
[105]Cited in Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, 172.

The image I refer to (fig. 8.7) can be traced to Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938), who shares many parallels with Martin Luther. She gave endless, scrupulous confessions, such that her confessor sought to offload his burden by asking her to keep a journal, which is why we know so much about her.[106] As with Luther, it was the message of undeserved grace and mercy that set Sister Faustina free. At one point Christ said to her, "The flames of mercy are burning Me—clamoring to be spent; I want to keep pouring them out upon souls; souls just don't want to believe in My goodness."[107] Though she did not enjoy a collaborator as talented as Lucas Cranach the Elder, a visual component to Faustina's piety came when she sought an artist to replicate her vision of Christ. The painting did not live up to her heavenly vision, which caused her to weep, but consolation came from Jesus himself: "Not in the beauty of the color, nor of the brush lies the greatness of this image, but in My grace,"[108] which nicely corresponds to Lutheran understandings of sacred images.[109] The painting survived communist occupation, spawned several versions, and after a time of suppression, emerged to prominence when a Polish pope made Sister Faustina the first canonized saint of the twenty-first century.

As in the Weimar altarpiece, the streams of imputing righteousness are here aimed at the subject—but in this case the subject is not a historic personage, but the viewer. As one devotional guide puts it, "the Divine Mercy Image is not just a picture of Jesus for *us to look at*. It's, in a very real sense, an icon that helps us see with our inner eyes *the way God looks at us*."[110] If anything, the divine mercy image is *more* evangelical than Cranach's wonderful Weimar altarpiece. It is a visual altar call urging the viewer to receive the imparted righteousness of Christ, just as Lucas Cranach the Elder does in the Weimar altarpiece itself.[111] There is also an unexpected resonance with women's ordination that surrounds

[106]Catherine M. Odell, *Faustina: Apostle of Divine Mercy* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1998), 87.

[107]Ibid., 74.

[108]Ibid., 313.

[109]For Luther, sacred images must be "rough-hewn so as to be grasped by simple people (*'groben volk'*). They also must *look* rough-hewn so that the simple recognize them for what they are: not representation of reality, but mere indications of what cannot be represented" (Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004], 248).

[110]Vinny Flynn, *Seven Secrets of Divine Mercy* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2015), 109. There is a remarkable confluence between this popular devotional publication and the learned explorations of Jean-Luc Marion in "Seeing, or Seeing Oneself Seen: Nicholas of Cusa's Contribution in De visione Dei," *The Journal of Religion* 96, no. 3 (2016): 305-31.

[111]The word *impartation* is employed by George Hunsinger to convey the same Protestant insights without falling into the over wrought debates between imputation and infusion. See "Ninety-Four Theses on Justification," in George Hunsinger, *Evangelical, Catholic and Reformed* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 233-44. Thank you to Keith Johnson for this reference.

Figure 8.7. Shrine of Divine Mercy in Lombard, Illinois, with "Jesus, I Trust in You" in Polish at base of painting

devotion to the image of divine mercy.[112] But the clearest Lutheran touchpoint comes from the legible message that accompanies all versions of the image, a prompt for personal devotion: What could be more indicative of the central thrust of the Reformation than the message "Jesus, I trust in you"?

In the divine mercy image, moreover, the connection to sacraments—the subject of this volume—grows very close indeed. If "the pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous [and] the red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls,"[113] then here is something of a sacramental analogue that Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal Christians can actually share. If Simone Weil, without orally receiving the Eucharist, "feasted on the Host ardently with her eyes in adoration, practicing as a paradoxically non-Christian Christian what medieval believers called spiritual Communion,"[114] then perhaps the visual

[112]Sister Faustina heard these words in her heart: "Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, for our sins and those of the whole world" (Diary 475, cited in Odell, *Faustina*, 109, 183). These words are repeated by all present during any Novena to the image.

[113]Diary 299, cited in Odell, *Faustina*, 79.

[114]Anne Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 6.

ecumenism offered by images like the divine mercy can temporarily satisfy woefully divided Christians as well.[115]

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to show in this chapter that three versions of Cranach's law-gospel visual formula—Gotha, Prague, and Weimar—have a vibrant life within non-Lutheran confessional traditions. The Gotha version can be seen in a certain form in late medieval manuscripts, in Orthodox icons of Jesus, and most explicitly in Pontormo's lost program in Florence. A less direct but still viable candidate for the Prague version is on offer in Michelangelo's twisted head of Moses in the tomb of Julius II, which was inspired in part by reform circles in Italy. Finally, the Weimar law-gospel version can be viewed, to a degree at least, in the divine mercy image that non-Catholic Christians can celebrate as well.

While this may appear to be a colonizing of other traditions with Protestantism, it is intended as a way of stripping Protestantism of any sense of exclusive possession of the law-gospel message, enabling us to see it elsewhere.[116] Evangelicals, therefore, can be at home with certain medieval Catholic devotional manuals, Russian Orthodox Cathedrals, some monuments of Renaissance Catholicism, and even modern Catholic kitsch. But nor is this to suggest that the Reformation was unnecessary because evangelical insights have covertly resided in other traditions all along. Were it not for the Reformation, Pontormo and Michelangelo could not

[115]Legitimate questions about the complexion of the figure can be met with two observations. First, Sister Faustina was dissatisfied with the image—it is an inadequate replication. In addition, it was created by Eastern Europeans who understandably used their visual norms. While the image's global proliferation among a variety of races should not be ignored, we can also hope for supplementary images that show different views of Christ, whose ecclesial body includes Eastern Europeans, and every other race as well.

[116]A similar dynamic can be observed in devotional literature as well. The success of much Catholic and Orthodox devotional literature is often the result of a remarkably Lutheran approach. "I am totally unable to root out my resentments. They are so deeply anchored in the soil of my inner self that pulling them out seems like self-destruction" (Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* [New York: Image, 1994], 76). See also Jacques Philippe's section subtitled "From Law to Grace: Love as a Free Gift," in *Interior Freedom* (New York: Scepter, 2007), 111. For Orthodox equivalents, see the *Philokalia* section titled "On Those Who Think They Are Made Righteous by Works: Two Hundred and Twenty-Six Texts," or Orthodox prayers such as the following (brought to my attention by Christopher Iacovetti): "O Saviour, save me by Thy grace, I pray Thee. For if Thou shouldst save me for my works, this would not be grace or a gift, but rather a duty. . . . Let faith instead of works be imputed to me, O my God, for Thou wilt find no works which could justify me. But may my faith suffice instead of all works, may it answer for, may it acquit me, may it make me a partaker of Thine eternal glory" (John Hutchison-Hall, *Daily Prayers for Orthodox Christians* [n.p.: St. Eadfrith Press, 2012], 11-13).

have produced their celebrated masterworks, for in both cases Protestant influence is very difficult to contest. But even where the law-gospel message emerges "spontaneously," so to speak, in late medieval manuscripts, the Orthodox Deësis, or in the vision of a scrupulous Polish nun, there is, for this viewer at least, a peculiar debt to Protestantism as well. For without the Reformation's recovery of the law-gospel dynamic for the sake of the whole church, I for one would not have known what to look for. Grateful for this retrieval, in Catholic and Orthodox regions where Protestants might expect to hear only law, we might learn to see gospel instead.