

With Cranach's Help: Counter-Reformation Art before the Council of Trent

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The sound of the blows of Luther's hammer as he nailed up his theses on the Eve of All Saints' Day 1517 rose to such a thunder pitch in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that it muffled any kind of objective argument, based on sources, about religious beliefs in the sixteenth century. Objectivity was replaced by a profession of faith. Current research into religious beliefs is still not completely free of this approach; indeed the objective study of Reformation history (or church history reflecting its own religious point of view) is in retreat compared with what the so-called 'grey literature' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had to offer. When the 500th anniversary of the epoch-making event comes round in 2017, we may certainly expect a number of further lapses.¹

In the meantime, while the biased tendencies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century research have themselves become subjects of research and of great interest for the study of a general history of knowledge, it is not sufficiently realised how arguments in related fields developed or how separate disciplines reflected aspects in the game for social and political power.

Despite the occurrence of occasional irritations and lapses into Bismarckian cultural methods, for half a century historians of religion have described the period of the Reformation in a markedly different way. Aesthetics entered the debate only belatedly, and since then has produced considerable results; one may even say that it has developed into a separate research area within art history.² Works of art produced for Old Believers during the years of division in order to give visual form to the old religious ideas have also become a subject for research, alongside the new pictorial programmes of the Wittenberg reformers, which have themselves long been the subject of investigation (fig. 1). This research involves other artists in addition to Lucas Cranach the Elder and his workshop;³ for example in the first period Master HL,⁴ Sebald Beham⁵ and Hans Baldung Grien.⁶ For this reason the publication with the provocative title *Der katholische Cranach* enjoyed huge success, drawing attention to the need for research into the commissions which for example Cranach the Elder and his workshop received from Old Believers after 1517.⁷ Then as now, Renaissance artists like their successors in general held firm to the idea that they could as a rule work for one side or the other, irrespective of the religious beliefs they themselves had adopted. The success of *Der katholische Cranach* and the exhibition catalogue *Cranach im Exil*⁸ justify the use of provocative titles to encourage those with specialised knowledge as well as the public at large to reflect on the various scholarly approaches possible, and on widely held narratives of history reaching back over generations.

Until then, religious blinkers had almost prevented two major commissions from the workshop of Cranach the Elder, including some 300 paintings (!), from entering the field of Cranach research.⁹ The Cranach workshop produced a comprehensive Saints and Passion cycle for the collegiate churches in both Halle an der Saale and Berlin. In Halle the 142 paintings were divided among the 16 altars of the collegiate church, in Berlin 117 paintings were divided among 18 altars; as well as these, other paintings were hung in both churches. The altars were similarly constructed: the weekday sides of the folding altars showed full-length saints, generally four at a time. When the weekday sides were folded over, the feast day page revealed a scene from the Passion, flanked to left and right by the figures of saints. The predella showed a scene from the Old Testament related to the Passion, demonstrating the connection between the Old and New Testaments.

The Saints and Passion cycle completed between 1519–20 and 1523–25 for Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg in Halle an der Saale and that painted in Berlin in 1537–38 for Prince Joachim of Brandenburg were seen by the Wittenberg Reformers as extremely dangerous because



1 Virgin and Child (the Innsbruck 'Maria Hilfbild'), in the Baroque high altar, weekday view, Cathedral of St James, Innsbruck

the pictures they contained were 'improper', connected as they were with the old rites of prayer, liturgy and the cult of relics. These two major commissions from the 1520s and 1530s more than adequately demonstrate both in terms of quality and quantity that works by Cranach the Elder and his workshop depicting the Old Beliefs were by no means created in isolation. It can also be seen from other commissions, for example those which served to enhance princely prestige, that Cranach continued to work for Old Believers after the theses appeared in Wittenberg in 1517. Clients included the Albertine branch of the Wettiners, above all Duke George the Bearded (the 'Luther hater'), for whom, among other works, the Cranach workshop painted the altarpiece in Meissen Cathedral (FR, 1979, no. 219) in 1534. In this painting for the burial chapel, Cranach depicts the views of the Roman Church in an almost dogmatic way.¹⁰

In other dioceses, too, for instance in Naumberg, other works are to be seen which Cranach and his workshop painted for Old Believers after the historic year of 1517. Two large altar wings painted on both sides (each about 239 x 100 cm) hang today in Naumberg Cathedral deprived of context (figs 3, 4). They are neither signed nor dated but Werner Schade has proposed an estimated date of 1537.¹¹ They include two bishops of Naumberg. On the left wing we see Philipp of the Palatinate and on the right Johann III von Schönberg (both with their

coat of arms, surmounted by mitre and crozier); in front of each man two saints on a gold ground. Since the left-hand side, from the viewer's point of view (which in heraldry is the right-hand side), is the more important, we can assume that Philipp of the Palatinate commissioned this altar, which is no longer complete. In my view, the style of the works suggests a date between c. 1520 and the mid-1520s. The history of the diocese lends weight to this dating. From 1512 to 1517 Philipp of the Palatinate was the *Koadjutor* or co-administrator of Bishop Johann III of Schönberg, after whose death in 1517 he became administrator. In 1518 he donated an annual memorial in Naumberg Cathedral to his predecessor in office. The two panels may be connected with this event, particularly since Philipp, who was also Bishop of Freising, was only occasionally in Naumberg from 1517–18 until 1526. This was also when his fine portrait was painted, dated c. 1520–22 (FR, 1979, no. 141) and now in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (601). In later years, Philipp limited himself to directing the fate of Naumberg Cathedral from distant Bavaria.

Philipp was supported at first by Frederick the Wise, but their religious views drove them apart. Philipp was, and remained, a strict Catholic and withdrew from the Ernestine branch of the Wettiners, forming an alliance with the Albertine branch. With the help of Duke Georg of Saxony and Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg he tried as best he could to minimise the influence of the Reformation on the diocese of Naumberg, but was only partially successful. Finally the cathedral was left standing alone, an island of Old Believers in a city that had become Lutheran. A similar situation occurred in Meissen. These were more or less the last bastions of Rome, but they were soon to collapse like a house of cards.

From the dynamic early stages of the Reformation process, Luther and his followers emerged as the victors. It was hardly relevant at the time that the roles of winner and loser might be reversed over and over again in the course of history (fig. 2). Thus, for example, Lucas Cranach's last patron, Frederick the Magnanimous, had to leave Wittenberg and go to Weimar, taking his aged court painter with him into exile. The representatives of the Old Church had already had to withdraw and leave the way clear for the introduction of the Reformation in central Germany. The sheer pace of this development caused people to forget that the 'losers' – Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, for example – had in no way given ground to the supporters of the new doctrine without a struggle; the same could be said of Duke Georg of Saxony and Albrecht's brother, Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg. The historical aspect of these events has been



2 Heinrich Stelzner, *Cranach painting Luther at the Wartburg*, c. 1890, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, Alte Pinakothek

widely examined; this research should now be supplemented by studies from an art–historical perspective. The areas to be investigated are those where the Reformation was able to gain a foothold without the help of the regional rulers, in dioceses where the inhabitants gradually turned towards the new doctrine while their rulers stayed with the Old Church and introduced appropriate Counter-Reformation measures. Unlike the systematic implementation that later proved successful, here we are dealing with the uncoordinated, spontaneous actions and reactions of individuals in those areas affected or threatened by the Reformation. Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg is the prime example of a figure involving art in the defensive struggle against Luther before the Council of Trent.¹²

The Council of Trent itself forms an important marker because it was here that the resolutions of the council agreed on a united procedure – whatever it looked like in detail. When measured against their effects on the history of art, the pronouncements of the Council of Trent on the subject of the fine arts, resolved on 3 December 1563, surprisingly came to

nothing within a short time.¹³ And yet the decree is the culminating point at which the foundations for a Counter-Reformation art must be seen. We have to ask how the situation looked prior to this, and whether the representatives of the Old Church, who for centuries had been using the fine arts to give visual form to their religious convictions, had completely renounced this medium in the face of Luther. Had the Roman Church no artistic response to Luther’s religious ideas before the middle of the sixteenth century? This is difficult to imagine; the example of Lucas Cranach the Elder and Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg shows that the Papal Church still resorted to the fine arts to perform their age-old function of giving visual form to its religious ideas.¹⁴

Let us remain with Cardinal Albrecht, for whom we still have no biography acknowledging his historical significance.¹⁵ Until now research into the history of art has, like other historical research, been no more than patchy, although we may draw on it to clarify one or two questions that remain unresolved.



3 Lucas Cranach the Elder and workshop (Master of the Pflock'schen Altar?), SS Philip and James the Younger with the donor Philipp von der Pfalz, inner side of the left wing of an altarpiece, Treasury, Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul, Naumburg

Albrecht's first artistic ventures in Halle were undertaken in the shadow of Luther's Wittenberg theses, but we need not make a causal connection between his deliberations on the foundation and decoration of the new collegiate church and events surrounding Luther. However, from the middle of the 1520s it was more or less recognised that the Reformation could not be combated on a purely administrative level. Bans on reading or possessing the writings of Luther or attending religious services following the new rites, clearly failed in their aim. The struggle for the spiritual well-being of the growing numbers turning to the new teachings had to be waged with the people themselves. Wolfgang Capito maintains that Cardinal Albrecht by his own admission was willing to spare no trouble or expense to lure the souls of the naive to the true religion.¹⁶ Albrecht of Brandenburg had clearly recognised early on that as well as conducting an active confrontation with the religious beliefs

of Wittenberg on a theological and intellectual level, for example through the oppositional writings of Hieronymus Emser, he should also make use of the fine arts – a medium which for centuries had given religious support to the illiterate, and that on a much larger scale than the written word.

It can be assumed that the churches in Wittenberg and Halle were seen as opposing models in their religious functions, each excluding the other in the intensifying religious argument. For example, on Luther's advice Elector Frederick the Wise quietly withdrew his widely famous collection of relics from Wittenberg, while Albrecht of Brandenburg constantly increased the holdings of his collection of relics in Halle and promoted it with a Reliquary book. Even at the beginning of the Reformation, the integration of the treasury of relics into the liturgy of the new church in Halle an der Saale¹⁷ set it at a point remote from Luther's religious ideas.¹⁸ In Halle, everything that customarily belonged to a collegiate church was enhanced both in number and quality. From the middle of the 1520s, worshippers were surrounded by a Roman magnificence that amazed even those visitors most accustomed to comparable sights. In 1533 Johann Carion, court astronomer to the electorate of Brandenburg, neatly expressed his views on a visit to the church during Holy Week and Easter, calling the coronation of the Emperor mere child's play compared to this: 'There [in Halle] we witnessed great splendour and ceremonies, [...]. The vestments we saw there were of silks beyond measure, likewise the shrines, the pictures and gold and silver crosses; there was a cross that cost 80,000 guilders, but it did not come in until Easter Saturday with two large paintings, a Maurice and a Stephen.' He goes on: 'I have seen many magnificent things but nothing like this. I do believe the coronation of the Emperor was child's play compared to this.'¹⁹

The most important part of the church decorations was provided by the Cranach workshop. People in Wittenberg were naturally aware of this and clearly it caused them no concern. In 1537–38 the Cranach workshop again worked on a Saints and Passion cycle – this time for Berlin – only slightly smaller in scale than the one in Halle. Apart from a few exceptional items, this too was designed to suit an Old Church liturgy, as in Halle.²⁰ The displaying of Old Church splendour in the city on the Spree gave the Wittenberg Reformers plenty of scope for mocking remarks. They were fully informed about the decorations for both churches, because in Wittenberg they needed only walk a few steps to reach the Cranach workshop to see what, for instance, was being prepared for Berlin. The painter they were visiting was the only artist in the central German-speaking area, if not in

the whole of it, capable of carrying out such a commission, in terms both of logistics and artistic ability.

Lucas Cranach the Elder had managed to gain sufficient experience in theological matters to satisfy his clients after 1517, for at the time of Luther's theses he had already reached middle age. More than half his long life was lived before the Reformation began. He was born in 1472 and was about 50 when he completed his Halle commission for Albrecht of Brandenburg, and in his mid-sixties when the work for Berlin was finished. Even after the 'Turn' it is clear that he was able to seek advice about his Old Church commissions from the Reformer himself. In 1533, for example, a record of their conversations shows that *Luca pictore* asked Luther what typological references there were to the scene with Christ in the Garden of Olives. His answer was the story of David and Saul.²¹ The subject of David in the wilderness of Ziph is in the First Book of Samuel, 26, and according to an old written interpretation was placed in a typological relationship to the scene on the Mount of Olives. Such comparisons are often found in works commissioned by Cardinal Albrecht. This raises certain problems for scholars investigating works directed against the Reformation. The adherence to old forms of representation – here the typological approach to the events of the Passion – can be seen as opposing the Reformation in an area where there was a confrontation with the new doctrine, but as simply traditional in an area where the doctrines of the Old Church remained stable, in other words without any reference to Luther's new religious ideas, although it was Luther himself who, for example, rejected the typological interpretation. This problem will be resolved only by research into contexts. It is therefore crucial to find out where, when, and by whom a work was commissioned. It is a different matter when dealing with works which referred to current theological debates and present new iconographic links. Albrecht of Brandenburg was particularly imaginative in this field, changing apparently known pictorial formulae to produce new iconographic links, for example in two pictures now in Aschaffenburg, showing the Mass of St Gregory. He wanted his new pictures to show the mass's sacrificial character. 'Other Catholic priests used similar pictorial schemes, particularly for epitaphs. One can also see a clear declaration of Catholic beliefs in the paintings of the Man of Sorrows that Duke Georg the Bearded employed for his burial chapel in Meissen Cathedral. It seems to be a confirmation of the religious significance of the Man of Sorrows that there was such "beautiful and great compassion" on the high altar of Cardinal Albrecht's



4 Lucas Cranach the Elder and workshop (Master of the Pflock'schen Altar?), SS James the Elder and Mary Magdalene with Johannes III von Schönberg, inner side of the right wing of an altarpiece, Treasury, Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul, Naumberg

collegiate church in Halle, "Dorvmb vyl Engel Cum armis Christi", in other words, a Man of Sorrows surrounded by angels with the instruments of his suffering. Whenever a mass was celebrated at this altar, the array of images must have, and certainly should have, recalled a Mass of St Gregory. The old pictorial formula of the Man of Sorrows, which had been used for so long for epitaphs and altars, gained new significance because of the changed religious background. It is not therefore surprising that the Man of Sorrows was employed less and less on the Lutheran side and finally more or less disappeared. In Catholic iconography, on the other hand, it had a long history of development ahead of it. The pictorial formula changed over time to the image of the Heart of Jesus, which is basically a Man of Sorrows with the wounded heart visible on the chest. The visionary features of the subject, reaching beyond history, were reinforced even further by this change in design.²² Albrecht used these two

large paintings representing the Mass of St Gregory to refer to current debates about the mass; they are an appeal to remain true to the exemplary theology and practice of the Church Fathers.²³ This is perhaps the way to understand Albrecht's portrait of himself in the role of St Gregory in the chancel of the collegiate church in Halle.²⁴

Several works of art in this church portray his role as the protector of Empire and Church, including the famous Saints Erasmus and Maurice panel by Matthias Grünewald.²⁵ The painting was commissioned after the coronation of Charles V in Aachen, that is, after 22 October 1520. Erasmus, in splendid bishop's vestments and bearing the facial features of Albrecht, is seen receiving the black-skinned Maurice. Once again this is an iconographic innovation which is not to be found in the lives and legends of the two saints and thus focuses our attention on the patron ordering the painting. The meeting of these two saints has been turned into a political allegory whose key is to be found in the ideas of the cardinal. The painting must be seen as homage by the Brandenburg bishop to the emperor Charles V, since Maurice is seen with heraldic devices – armour with flint striker, royal colours and a bow and arrow. St Mary Magdalen also appears, small and very discreetly positioned on the shoulder cloth, the humeral veil of Erasmus's pontifical robe, so that all the patrons of the Halle church are represented in the picture.

As protector of Empire and Church, Albrecht also appears on the front of a reliquary coffin, one of the items in the great treasury at Halle; when the treasures were displayed this appeared in fourth place in the sixth aisle. One of the long sides of the box-shaped reliquary shows an astonishing picture, another of Albrecht's new creations: an *Erasmus with Protective Cloak*.²⁶ The bishop, clearly identifiable as Erasmus from the windlass and entrails, holds his coat out wide, and beneath it the Pope, the Emperor, the cardinal, the bishop and the princes take shelter. The iconography is so typical of Albrecht that we can safely say it was he who commissioned the work. Once one has made the connection between these portrayals of Erasmus in Albrecht's domain and the cardinal himself, as well as the House of Brandenburg (perhaps we should indeed go so far as to equate them with the latter), the message of this work is quite clear, even without a portrait: Albrecht of Brandenburg as Protector of Church and Empire. Here the cardinal has again taken a motif drawn from Christian art, made it his own and reshaped it: the motif of the *The Virgin Sheltering Suppliants beneath her Cloak*. We may well wonder what Luther said about this picture when he first saw it; we know he declared it 'idolatry' that 'one should

show the people of Christ under Mary's cloak'.²⁷ His polemic against Albrecht can be understood when one learns something of the latter's activities in Halle on behalf of the Old Beliefs. This church operated against Wittenberg not only by means of its material splendour – in which Lucas Cranach the Elder played a considerable part – and its richly decorated liturgy, but also through the deliberately ambivalent messages of many of its works of art. The reliquary coffin may have struck the viewer as a strange but not disturbing picture of a saint. The tendentious nature of the reliquary is clear only to someone aware of the possible political interpretations of the combination of Erasmus = Cardinal Albrecht. In Wittenberg they would have understood the scene very well: Albrecht presenting himself as the protector of Empire and Church against the attacks of the New Belief.

A painting by Hans Baldung Grien, showing the stoning of St Stephen, can also be interpreted in this way. This painting, destroyed by fire in Strasbourg in 1947, was extraordinarily large, measuring 172 x 149 cm. It was signed and dated 1522.²⁸ The panel's provenance is not clear, but since Albrecht appears in the background we can assume it was a painting in his collection. The subject of the picture is also closely associated with him in that it portrays the patron saint of his Halberstadt diocese. In the foreground one sees the stoning of the deacon Stephen, whose splendid dalmatic attracts the viewer's attention. In the background, glimpsed through a strongly emphasised arch, is the following scene: two horsemen exchange a document. The rider in worldly clothes hands the document to a man wearing ecclesiastical dress, whose features reveal him to be Albrecht of Brandenburg. Thus the secular arm gives the church's representative the message containing a judgment to be carried out. It almost seems to be a certificate of authenticity for the bodily remains of St Stephen. This can also be seen as a new piece of iconography devised by Albrecht, whose subject is a clear reaction to the criticism of the cult of saints and relics which he had been leading, particularly since the painting dates from the time of the unrest in Wittenberg. By using the example of St Stephen, the cult of saints and relics acquired a historical legitimacy and could show itself to be above the attacks from Wittenberg.

From an early stage, Cardinal Albrecht realised the power of images and constantly developed new pictorial formulae that sought to enhance the position of the Old Church. His visual responses were directed at a courtly audience. Unlike his opponents in Wittenberg, he had never attempted to conduct a propaganda battle using printed

works aimed at a wide public; a proper examination and evaluation of the illustrations in leaflets and flyers opposing the Reformation has yet to be undertaken. Without wishing to anticipate the results of such an examination, one might well wonder whether there are grounds for seeing Albrecht's neglect of this early mass medium as a reason for his ultimate failure, for it was he, not Luther, who no longer reached a general audience with his works of art, not at any rate those in the collegiate church in Halle.

Four other signed and dated pictures by Lucas Cranach the Elder were also directed at a courtly elite – which means we do not know precisely for whom they were painted. Albrecht of Brandenburg appears in the role of St Jerome (FR, 1979, no. 184–86). Two of them show the Church Father, alias Albrecht, in his study, and two in a landscape (fig. 5), though the latter two show him not as a penitent, but as an author, like the two indoor scenes. In their design and layout they closely follow the study in Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving. Indeed, one can see here a real *paragone*, or model of excellence, in which Cranach the Elder tries to emulate his famous Nuremberg colleague through the medium of painting. One need only compare the way the light falls through the crown-glass window panes in the Darmstadt painting with Dürer's handling of the light in his Jerome engraving.

Albrecht of Brandenburg took on the role of the Church Father Jerome four times, having himself portrayed in paintings of partly related design. Here too, as in the earlier examples, he is taking up a position against Luther. In the years in question (1525, 1526 and twice in 1527), when Luther's translation of the Bible into German was being declared wrong and invalid by representatives of the Papal Church, Albrecht in turn was busy translating the Bible. If there is to be a German translation of the Vulgate, runs the message of the paintings, then it must be one authorised by the official church. In 1527, Emser's edition of the New Testament appeared, and in 1534 Johannes Dietenberger printed the complete Bible. Moreover, the pictures also seem to have been a declaration by the cardinal of the authority of his office, since nothing more could be added to the Holy Script and only the official church could be responsible for its interpretation.

On the question of the correct interpretation of the scriptures and the debate about the office of the church, the pictures could also be a reference to the piety of the Passion.²⁹ In all four paintings a picture of the Crucifixion occupies a prominent position. The duality of the Holy Script, represented by the numerous books in the paintings, and the image, here the Crucifixion, is here being stressed by Cardinal



5 Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg as St Jerome in a Landscape, 1527, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin PK, Gemäldegalerie

Albrecht to give an example of the inwardly consistent piety of the Passion. On the one hand the Script, the word of God, and on the other the visual image conveyed by the picture were intended to bring him and the viewer of the Cranach painting closer to the sufferings of Christ, and to impress these on their memories and hearts. The Church Father Jerome indicated in several of his writings that believers should keep the picture of the suffering Christ before them, either before their inner eye or by looking at a picture.

Cranach's cycle of paintings in Albrecht's church in Halle was also committed to the imitation of Christ and the piety of the Passion. The cycle may have been completed in time for the consecration of the collegiate church in 1523, and certainly by 1525, as is confirmed by a church inventory. Albrecht von Brandenburg made the exemplary qualities and significance of Jerome his own, even the piety of the Passion.

His intentions were supported by the depiction of numerous animals, and these too have a Christian significance. There is a whole zoo on display in the four

paintings: a beaver, pheasant, hare, stag, dog, lion, parrot, partridge and others.³⁰ Cranach proved that he had a thorough knowledge of the Christian significance of these animals in his Innsbruck painting (FR, 1979, no. 169). In all the Jerome paintings, but especially in those depicting Albrecht von Brandenburg in the role of the Church Father, Cranach demonstrates – like his client – his understanding of animal symbolism and conveys it through cleverly thought-out animal iconography.³¹

The differences in the Albrecht-as-Jerome paintings, and the different combinations of animals, also merit a more precise appreciation. In this essay there is space only for one example, which must be taken as representative of the others, to explain how people reacted to the four variations of the pictures with heated debates, comparable to those arising from topical issues in our own times. On Jerome's (Cardinal Albrecht) desk is a parrot, and on the wall hangs a Cranach Virgin Mary of the *Eleusa* type, emphasising the emotional connection between the Child at play (with a raised hand) and the Virgin Mary.³² In my view, the inclusion of the parrot and the picture-within-a-picture needs an explanation. I assume that Albrecht wanted to use it in 1526 as part of a debate then arising. Jerome is seen as the defender of virginity. He described the state of virginity as golden, whereas marriage was silver. Luther was married on 15 June 1525, and shortly beforehand, in about the end of May or the beginning of June, he sent a letter challenging Cardinal Albrecht himself to marry and to turn his diocese into a secular principality. Albrecht showed the letter to Duke Georg of Saxony, who turned to Luther's protector, Frederick the Wise, and inveighed against the letter. It appeared in print in 1526. In the same year, Cranach was commissioned by the cardinal to paint a variant of the Albrecht-as-Jerome picture of 1525, and for this one he included the parrot³³ and the Virgin Mary picture. Both are symbols of virginity. Here they were used to mean celibacy, in other words the unmarried state of the priest, against which Luther – in the view of Old Believers – had offended.

Albrecht can be seen here as representing the Roman Church. As a man, he was also conducting a related debate about whether someone in this early modern age could separate the office from the person. At this point one might usefully include aspects of the history of emotions on which Kerstin Merkel has drawn in her work on Cardinal Albrecht.³⁴ Albrecht clearly pursued his own personal debate about love, in various diptychs and other works that show him in the role of a saint – Martin or Erasmus – together with St Ursula.³⁵

All the works of art produced by Lucas Cranach's workshop are in a large format and there can have been no thought of hiding them. One pair of pictures, however, has a private character, its pointed message making it the most ingenious of this group. Both panels of the Berlin diptych measure not more than about 30 x 20 cm. On the left is the patron saint of Brandenburg, alias Cardinal Albrecht and on the right St Ursula. A detail on Ursula's collar indicates the real message of the saintly pair. The collar is decorated with the letters *OM • VI • A*, meaning *OMNIA VINCIT AMOR*, that is, 'Amor [Cupid] conquers everything' or 'Love conquers everything'.³⁶ The familiar quotation from Virgil can be read as the title of the picture, and thus St Ursula's attribute, the arrow, acquires a double meaning. On the one hand, it is the traditional attribute of St Ursula, who as the leader of 11,000 maidens died a martyr's death from an arrow. On the other, one can also read it as the arrow of love, it being well known that the arms of the god of love are the bow and arrow and that whoever was struck by Cupid's arrow had to yield in to love. This is exactly the sense of the second half of the famous Virgil quotation, and we should bear it in mind as we look at the panel. The first part stands in abbreviated form on Ursula's collar, while the second half of the Virgil quotation states: 'and we give ourselves up to love' ('Et nos cedamus amori'). In other words, we give in to love because we have been hit by Cupid's arrow. Transferred to the historical situation, it means that the cardinal, a victim of criticism by Luther because of his 'women', could do nothing but give in to love.³⁷

When one considers the worsening religious dispute, which in generations to come was often to lead to religious wars, and the problems affecting the dogmatic content of works of art, Albrecht's diptych is a very human commentary on the debate about priests and marriage. With the help of the history of emotions we might once again ask whether, even in this early modern age, the official and the private person should remain separate, for it appears to me that by means of his Cranach paintings Cardinal Albrecht had prepared two answers for Luther in the debate about priests remaining unmarried. One was an official reply, the other a private one.

As I hope to have shown, Albrecht, the highest German dignitary in the Roman Church, used art to react in a richly nuanced manner to the theological challenges of the Reformers. He employed the professional acumen and artistic inventiveness of Lucas Cranach the Elder, and did so at a time when the artist was making such a stand against the Papal Church with his works for Luther – with his woodcuts

for the September Testament, for example – that Frederick the Wise intervened. But the artist's polemics against Rome did not prevent Albrecht from employing Cranach and his studio. The same applied to Sebald Beham, a 'godless painter' who was nevertheless obliged to leave the Lutheran-minded city of Nuremberg because as a supporter of the new doctrine his extreme beliefs made him unacceptable to the authorities. However one chooses to approach the subject, exploring the role of art in an age so dominated by religion and religious division involves discarding many widely-held ideas.³⁸

- 1 For a historical review see Burkhardt, 1998. See also Burkhardt, 1996 and Burkhardt, 2000.
- 2 For the research position see Packeiser, 2002. For information about a new area of research see Münch, 2006.
- 3 In addition to the many examples in the text see also Tacke, 1991. For this picture see also Brinkmann/Kemperdick, 2005, pp. 235–242. Brinkmann assumes the panel is by Lucas Cranach the Elder.
- 4 See Leuker, 2002.
- 5 See Wiemers, 2002; Wiemers, 2005.
- 6 See Weber am Bach, 2006.
- 7 See Tacke, 1992. The research contained in the work were, as far as I am aware, generally accepted by Cranach scholars as opening up a new field. The only opposition, which I do not fully understand, comes from the Cranach scholar Dieter Koeplin whom I generally hold in high esteem. In discussing religious questions in relation to the Cranach family he occasionally takes a distinctly radical and one-sided view; see Koeplin, 2006, pp. 139–176, esp. notes 75–77.
- 8 In this catalogue, the example of Lucas Cranach the Elder should draw attention to those works of art which in an increasingly worsening religious struggle had to be placed in safety from the equally intolerant opposition. See Ermischer/Tacke, 2007.
- 9 Until Steinmann, 1968.
- 10 See Krause, 1973. For more recent literature see Eser, 1996, pp. 282–286, cat. 43 and Koeppel, 2002.
- 11 See Schade, 2003, p. 177, cat. 54 with ill. 62–63. (There is no discussion of the historical background, but the possible models are correctly given.) These panels may possibly be attributed to the Master of the Pflock'schen Altarpiece, whose relationship to Cranach the Elder needs clarification.
- 12 See Tacke earlier in: Jürgensmeier, 1991.
- 13 See Concilium Tridentinum, vol. 9, 2nd edn., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1965, pp. 1077–1079. For its origins, though less on its effect, see Jedin, 1935.
- 14 The circle of artists can be extended to Italy, even to those who worked in the Vatican, as Rolf

- Quednau (Münster) explained in his contribution 'Rom bannt Luther. Michelangelos Jüngstes Gericht im Lichte der konfessionellen Spaltung' (Rome bans Luther. Michelangelo's Last Judgement in the light of the religious divide) at the Aschaffenburg conference Kunst im Kampf ums Seelenheil. Kardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg und seine Zeit (Art in the struggle for souls. Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg and his time), which I organised together with the Catholic Academy in Bavaria on 27–28 April 2007. The contributions to the conference were summarised in the magazine *Zur Debatte*.
- 15 The work of Scholz, 1998 offers the best current introduction.
- 16 See Volz, 1962, esp. pp. 202 ff.
- 17 See the contributions of Livia Cárdenas, Christof L. Diedrichs, Matthias Hamann, Kerstin Merkel, Nine Miedema and Volker Schier in: Tacke, Ich armer sündiger mensch (I poor sinful creature), 2006.
- 18 See Kühne, 2006.
- 19 Johann Carion to Duke Albrecht of Prussia on 23 April 1533 in: Voigt, 1841, pp. 148 f.
- 20 See the 2007 study with new literature by Agnieszka Gasior, 'Der Reliquienschatz des protestantischen Landesherrn: Joachim II von Brandenburg und Hedwig von Polen in Berlin' (The treasury of relics of the Protestant ruler: Joachim II of Brandenburg and Hedwig of Poland in Berlin) in: Winfried Eberhard and Evelin Wetter (ed.), *Formierung des konfessionellen Raums. Eine vergleichende Sicht auf Siebenbürgen und Ostmitteleuropa* (Formation of the religious region. A comparative view of Transylvania and East Central Europe), in print. Basis provided by Tacke, 1989.
- 21 Luther, 1883; here Tischreden (Conversations), vol. 1, No. 533a: 'Cum Doctor Martinus semel quaereretur a Luca pictore, quae figura veteris testamenti addenda esset picturae de Christo in horto tentato, respondebat illam es regum historia de Dauide, quem Saul undique magno exercitu circumdedit'. See Tacke, 1992, p. 169 with note 123.

- 22 Hecht 2006, p. 104 with examples.
- 23 Hecht 2006, p. 106.
- 24 See Kähler, 1955–56. A further aspect may be relevant: Gregory the Great also thought that pictures were the bible of the illiterate. With reference to early German painting, see the informative introduction by Bushart, 2004.
- 25 See Steinmann, 1968, pp. 97–104; Stober, 1984.
- 26 See Tacke in: Jürgenmeister, 1991, pp. 369–371 with ill.
- 27 Luther, 1883, vol. 47, p. 276, line 21.
- 28 For the picture, without the following reflections, see von der Osten, 1983, No. 52 and pl. 119.
- 29 Already noted in Tacke, Albrecht, 2006, esp. note 9. In the following text I incline to agree – as suggested at the time – with the argument in the interpretations of Noll, 2004, pp. 96–107, esp. pp. 98 f.
- 30 All the animals are to be found in alphabetical order in the commendable reference book by Dittrich, 2004. Here they are interpreted with regard to the Albrecht-as-Jerome paintings of Cranach and their connection with the piety of the Passion.
- 31 Friedman, 1980, pp. 129–136 (the four Albrecht-as-Jerome paintings by Cranach the Elder), esp. p. 133: 'Looking back on what we have found in Cranach's pictures, we must credit him with unusual originality in his choice of faunal associates for Jerome, and with remarkable perspicacity in gathering unusual, yet meaningful, creatures for his purpose.'
- 32 According to Weber Am Bach, 2006, p. 40, this Virgin Mary type was ordered from Cranach the Elder by supporters of the Old Church as well as those of the new doctrine.
- 33 On the parrot as a status symbol, and for this reason often featured, there is still much to be said from the point of view of cultural history. Here the reference to Weddingen, 2006, esp. pp. 201ff, must suffice.
- 34 Merkel, 2004; 2005; 2006. For more on this subject see the results of the graduate lecture subject *Psychische Energien bildender Kunst* (Psychic Energies in the Fine Arts), initiated and inspired by Klaus Herding (Frankfurt-am-Main), also Herding/Stumpfhaus, 2004.
- 35 For more on this see Merkel, 2007.
- 36 Thanks to the explanations of Wolfgang Speyer; see Speyer, 1991, esp. note 15.
- 37 For more on this see Tacke, 'Alles besiegt Amor' (Love conquers everything), 2006 and Baumbach, 2006.
- 38 A further appraisal of this subject is planned with the conference *State in Fide. Gegen die Reformation gerichtete Kunstwerke vor dem Tridentinum* (State in Fide. Works of art directed against the Reformation before the Council of Trent), which I am organising together with the Academy of the Diocese of Mainz in Mainz (Erbacher Hof) 15–17 February 2008.