

5.5.1

Figure 5.5. The monk-calf and the Pope-ass
5.5.1–2. Lucas Cranach the Elder, woodcut illustrations for Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon, *Deuttung der czwo grewlichen Figuren, Bapstesels czu Rom und Munchkalbs zu Freijberg ijnn Meijsszen funden* (Wittenberg, 1523).

In this influential pamphlet, Luther and Melanchthon interpreted two recent monsters as prodigies and signs of divine wrath. According to Melanchthon, the "Pope-ass" (fig. 5.5.1), reportedly found dead in the Tiber in 1496, referred to the multiple and monstrous corruptions of the Roman papacy; Cranach underscored the connection by juxtaposing the creature with the Pope's Castel Sant'Angelo, identified by its banner with the keys of St. Peter. Unlike the Pope-ass, which belonged to the genre of allegorized composites like the monster of Ravenna/Florence (fig. 5.2), the "monk-calf" (fig. 5.5.2) was a calf born in Freiberg with a mantle of skin resembling a cowl. Luther interpreted this as a sign that the monastic state was "nothing other than a false and lying appearance and outward display of a holy, godly life."[19]