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978-1-107-03273-6 - Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England

Sophie Read

Excerpt

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## *Introduction*

### EUCCHARIST AND THE POETIC IMAGINATION

The eighty-odd years which this study spans, from the poems Robert Southwell wrote before his martyrdom in 1595 to the publication in 1674 of the twelve-book edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, were an eventful period in English history. To tell the story of the times is, to a great extent, to rehearse the fortunes of its system of organised religion: following the Reformation, theological concerns dominated the political arena whether as provocation or as pretext, and they had their impact, too, on the imaginative writing of the time. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the nascent Protestant Church was a broad one; as it continued to evolve, its doctrinal battle lines became more clearly and more militantly drawn. Powerful personalities hardened divergent views on liturgy and worship into irreconcilable differences, and the struggle for ascendancy accelerated the country's trajectory of civil war, regicide and Restoration. Though it would be a simplification to claim that questions of religion were the only forces at work in these complicated events, they did prove incendiary at crucial moments, and certain kinds of political outlook did tend to go hand-in-hand with certain kinds of religious views: a supporter of Charles I's monarchy, for example, was more likely to incline towards the ceremonial and sacramental worship advocated by his controversial archbishop, William Laud, than the spare and stripped-down services favoured by the Puritan (or 'godly') faction at court.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question of terminology is not the least difficult here. The old opposition of 'Anglican' and 'Puritan' has recently been challenged on the grounds of pejorative intent ('Puritan' was introduced as a term of abuse) and anachronism ('Anglican' was not coined until the nineteenth century). I nevertheless use the term 'Anglican' in this book – with some caution – to describe the system of beliefs of the churches of England and Wales in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. These beliefs are distinct both from the old Catholicism and from the hard-line Calvinism of continental reformers, and can be thought of as being expressed in Cranmer's Prayer Book and the Thirty-Nine

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The sacrament of the eucharist, whose complex literary legacy is the subject of this book, came to be the ideological ground for contention at the centre of these differences: its symbolism and the mode of its celebration proved as divisive in the 1630s and 1640s as they had a century before, when the new Protestant outlook was gaining ground. As the Mass, this ritual of sacrifice, thanksgiving and remembrance had lain at the heart of the Catholic religion officially professed by the English people until the 1550s; the liturgical reforms proposed by continental theologians in the first part of the sixteenth century, and fitfully instituted by Thomas Cranmer in the Prayer Books of Edward VI's reign, compelled a fundamental reinterpretation of its meaning. The question on which confessional position came to be measured was whether or not Christ was really – that is, substantially, corporeally – present in the Host: and if so, to whom? And if not, then how? The implications of what might seem something of a metaphysical wrangle, remote from the concerns of most ordinary worshippers, were on the contrary both immediate and far-reaching: what was at stake was the salvation of their souls, and, slightly more circuitously, the government of their state.

The six writers considered in this study naturally had, whether clergymen or laity, an intimate interest in the question; but for them it has a professional as well as a personal relevance. Patrick Collinson describes the historiographical challenges of the era they were heir to in suggestive terms: 'The Reformation was awash with words. The historian who tries to catch its essence finds his net breaking under the weight of words.'<sup>2</sup> He intends by this both the sheer volume of print generated by contemporary debate – Luther's collected works alone, for example, run to more than a hundred volumes<sup>3</sup> – and, perhaps of more consequence for the literary critic than the historian, the colossal load borne by individual words. Interpretation, of the words of Scripture, phrases in the liturgy, scholastic terminology, became crucial; where a literal sense was no longer compatible

Articles of 1571. The convenience of the term in this case outweighs the disadvantage of its anachronism. I also retain 'Puritan' on similar grounds, and as having a wider currency than the alternative term 'godly', to describe those who were opposed to practices of worship that did not have an explicit scriptural warrant. See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd edn (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 64–7, 1351, and the discussions in Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1988) and Brian Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies and the Stuart Divines: Sacramental Theology and Liturgy in England and Scotland, 1603–1662* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. xii–xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 104 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883–1999). The English translation (*Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan *et al.* (St Louis, MO: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress)) runs to 55 volumes.

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with orthodox doctrine, it could be cast instead as a figurative one. There is no more powerful or significant example of this than the words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper and subsequently adopted as the words of institution: *Hoc est enim corpus meum* ('This is my body'). What happens to the phrase when uttered by someone other than Christ, though a pressing liturgical question, becomes in some ways secondary to what precisely Christ meant when he said it. This moment had long been cited to support the contention that Christ was indeed present in some way in the eucharistic Host, and that the Mass was therefore an iterative act of sacrifice; in the sixteenth century, however, the words underwent a rhetorical redescription that allowed their retention in a reformed communion service: one that rejected both the notion of bodily presence, and the idea of sacrifice. Christ had spoken truly, but the truth of his words was now to be understood only as a metaphorical truth: 'is' means no longer 'is', but 'signifies'.<sup>4</sup>

The ramifications of finding this fissure in what we might want to think of as one of the most securely literal words, the present tense of 'to be', are far-reaching indeed, and have of late proved of central interest to critics of Renaissance literature; Judith Anderson calls this 'Zwingli's seminal insight into the metaphoricity inherent in the verb of being', and recognises that it heralded a linguistic and conceptual reformation every bit as significant as the doctrinal one by which it was determined:

The eucharistic debates of the earlier half (roughly) of the sixteenth century constitute an epistemological watershed between the earlier age and the one to come. Alone, they hardly cause this overdetermined cultural crisis, but even aside from their contribution to its content, they critically organize and crucially express it.<sup>5</sup>

The eucharist, then, becomes the location of a profound imaginative shift: the process of working out how this rite signifies under the new dispensation in fact forges new ways of understanding signification itself, as well as serving more immediately practical liturgical purposes. 'Be they heresies, abuses, manipulations, extensions or extrapolations,' Miri Rubin explains, 'different eucharistic utterances were testing the language, exposing its capacities, filling its spaces and spelling out its possibilities.'<sup>6</sup> The generation that inherited this legacy of epistemological contention and verbal *legerdemain*

<sup>4</sup> These words, spoken by Christ to his disciples at the Last Supper, are related four times in the Bible (Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24); they appear also in the communion liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* ('Take, eat, this is my bodye'). See below, pp. 19–30.

<sup>5</sup> Judith H. Anderson, *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor–Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 44, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 288.

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inevitably exploited its literary as well as its devotional possibilities; how one informs the other (how, that is, the particularities of faith can influence the process of composition at a structural level, and be shaped in their turn by the rhetorical frameworks through which they are expressed) is the subject of what follows.

This enquiry takes its co-ordinates from a number of critical discourses: religion in Renaissance literature has never been an entirely neglected subject, and some of the most important frameworks for debate were established decades ago. Louis Martz's seminal 1954 work *The Poetry of Meditation*, which argued for the influence of Catholic devotional practice on seventeenth-century English poetry, was answered in 1979 by Barbara Lewalski's *Protestant Poetics*: Lewalski maintained against Martz's view that the crucial imaginative basis of this writing was 'contemporary, English and Protestant'.<sup>7</sup> In some sense, each subsequent contribution has situated itself between these poles, and the prospect of final resolution seems distant, if not actually undesirable; gradations of belief do not always submit to precise confessional categorisation, something also witnessed in the exchanges of church and constitutional historians over related questions in a cognate disciplinary realm.<sup>8</sup> The new historicist critics, influential to the point of dominance over the past twenty years, tested their methodologies and refined their concerns against this background of lively dispute in both historical and literary studies of the period. In the first sentence of what amounts to a disciplinary manifesto, *Practicing New Historicism*, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt offer a disarming apologia for ill-assorted interests: 'This book is probably more in need of an introduction than most: two authors, two chapters on anecdotes, two on eucharistic doctrine in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and two on nineteenth-century materialism.'<sup>9</sup> The list turns out not to be as haphazard as it is made to sound: its central term, at least, has remained central for critics, if sometimes in problematic ways. Problematic, because the new historicist focus is both primarily secular and – in effect if not in intention – interested in the material, theoretical and cultural contexts of literature at the expense of its aesthetic properties; thinking about the way Renaissance writers think about the eucharist has proved difficult without a precise and nuanced

<sup>7</sup> Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: a Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 1, n. 1, above.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 2nd edn (University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 1.

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consideration of contemporary theological and rhetorical viewpoints, as Sarah Beckwith's critique of Greenblatt's methods has started to show.<sup>10</sup>

More recently, there have been several important works that have sought to redress this imbalance, and to match a historicist rigour with profound aesthetic engagement; Brian Cummings's *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* is exemplary and influential in the depth of its historical and doctrinal learning, and the sensitivity with which that learning is brought to bear on literary concerns. Studies by Robert Whalen, Judith Anderson, Timothy Rosendale, Regina Schwartz and Frances Cruickshank, among others, have in various productive ways followed this lead, and most have made the eucharist central to their accounts of poetic sensibility (Donne and Herbert feature prominently in their accounts, as they do here).<sup>11</sup> This rise of interest testifies to a growing sense that early modern disputes over the theology of the eucharist and its expression in doctrine and liturgy were a way of testing the nature of language as well as the nature of belief; critics have started to look to theologians as well as to rhetoricians for contemporary theories of figuration, which are then used to illuminate the imaginative writing of the period. This is not to overlook the importance of the critical discourse around rhetoric itself, as a discipline and an art, which has undergone a parallel advance over the past few decades; since the efforts at rehabilitation in the work of Richard A. Lanham, Terence Cave, Brian Vickers and Debora Shuger in the 1970s and 1980s, a number of critics – usually writing about either pedagogic history or individual authors – have offered valuable perspectives on rhetoric as a creative and dynamic process, and, latterly, as related in fundamental ways to processes of cognition.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Beckwith, 'Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet* and the Forms of Oblivion', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 33 (2003), 261–80. Beckwith points out the shortcomings of Greenblatt's account of 'eucharistic anxiety' in the play by means of a detailed exploration of 'the ritual and liturgical settings' he ignores (273).

<sup>11</sup> Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert Whalen, *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert* (University of Toronto Press, 2002); Anderson, *Translating Investments* (2005); Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Regina Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford University Press, 2008); Frances Cruickshank, *Verses and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Richard A. Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Debora Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: the Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton University Press, 1988). See also Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford University Press, 2001), and Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*

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The current study seeks to unite elements of these two methodologies by giving theological enquiry a firm rhetorical focus: aspects of eucharistic theology are described by and themselves in turn describe a number of different figures and tropes, and so each of the chapters that follows is organised around the appearance of one such device in the work of a single writer where it has particular expressive significance. There are limitations as well as opportunities in such a structuring principle: poets and their poems cannot always be so neatly categorised, and in these cases I have preferred rather to deviate periodically from its parameters than to restrict the scope of the discussion. It is my hope, however, that the shape of this book (in particular this foregrounding of technical rhetorical terminology) describes a conviction that patterns of thought and belief are found naturally reproduced in patterns of figuration, which they anchor and animate; ‘It seemeth verie conforme, to reason,’ as one contemporary writer puts it, himself using a eucharistic metaphor by way of illustration, ‘that poetrie and divinitie shouldbe matched together, as soule and bodie, bodie and garment, substance enwrapped with hir accidents.’<sup>13</sup> Or in Yeshayahu Shen’s more prosaic formulation, ‘basic cognitive principles underlie the use of figurative language in poetic discourse’.<sup>14</sup>

Rhetoric, as a tool for determining meaning, and as a system for establishing cognitive frameworks, is of incalculable polemical and poetical importance – as will become evident below, starting with the discussion of Cranmer’s defences of his Prayer Book. This importance has not always been acknowledged. The suspicion influentially articulated by Plato (of rhetoric’s propensity for ‘insincerity, mere display, artifice, or ornament without substance’<sup>15</sup>), combined with a reluctance to engage with a quantity of elaborate and arcane terminology,<sup>16</sup> has led in subsequent centuries to the marginalisation of rhetoric as a pointlessly convoluted and hopelessly outdated system. Truly understood, however, the art is a dynamic instrument of composition and analysis, interested in codification only insofar as that

(Cambridge University Press, 2002). One of the most significant of the recent studies appeared too late to be given here the consideration it deserves: Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> F.W., quoted in Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 61.

<sup>14</sup> Yeshayahu Shen, ‘Cognitive Constraints on Verbal Creativity: the Use of Figurative Language in Poetic Discourse’, in Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper (eds.), *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis* (Amsterdam, 2002), pp. 211–30 (p. 214).

<sup>15</sup> Vickers, *Defence*, p. viii.

<sup>16</sup> ‘[W]hile we may be impressed with the technical acumen which can applaud a “pretty epanorthosis”’, Neil Rhodes, for example, observes, ‘it is more difficult for us to feel the same kind of enthusiasm for such verbal effects’ (*The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. vii.

endeavour might aid the study of the emotional and intellectual processes that were constituted in writing and speech. Both Renaissance rhetoricians and the classical forebears from whom their accounts are derived intuitively recognise that language is a faculty not separate and apart, but one intimately involved with other conceptual and cognitive frameworks; ‘metaphor, metonymy, metalepsis, and others’, Raphael Lyne explains, ‘may be treated not only as ways of conveying the results of complex thought, but also as maps of the way complex thought might actually happen’.<sup>17</sup> ‘Take not a figure and make of it a plaine speech,’ was Lancelot Andrewes’s profound advice on Christmas Day in 1616; ‘Seeke not to be saved by *Synecdoche*.’<sup>18</sup> Poetic expression is not aberrant or ornamental – the translation of something literal and anterior into different, more difficult terms – but a representation of ordinary structures of thought.

The foundational premise of this study is that particularities of belief can be made manifest in the verbal texture of a poem, and that rhetorical and theological planes of understanding are linked by a common mental framework. This is based on the notion that a sort of dual mapping is taking place: the shape of a liturgical cadence or a theological belief might be instantiated in a mind by custom or by force of attraction, and then reproduced by that mind in the rhetorical structures of a poem. A trope or figure does not simply express a thought or belief that has already been had, and which is reducible to some literal paraphrase, but *constitutes* it – has in itself a form of cognitive content. There is an important caveat: the poetry considered here is not, and could not aspire to be, ‘eucharistic’ in any direct or literal sense; literature is not liturgy. Which is not to suggest any kind of defeat or pretence, a poetic equivalent of pasteboard chalice and paper mitre: neither is liturgy literature. It is in fact the very analogical distance across which they must strain that generates, in poems interested in eucharistic operations, their devotional energy and their imaginative force.

One last question remains to be addressed before this introduction can move to the lengthy business of establishing the historical, theological and literary foundations for the argument that follows. Why ‘eucharist and the poetic imagination’? Prose has at least an equal claim when thinking about rhetoric in this period, and there are significant genres (the sermon, the pamphlet) and indeed individual works that deserve attention in this regard; almost all of the authors represented here, with the exception perhaps of

<sup>17</sup> Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Andrewes, *XCVI Sermons by the Right Honorable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, Late Lord Bishop of Winchester* (London, 1629), p. 106.

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Crashaw, produced notable prose writings which are mentioned only in passing. Part of the point of this argument, however, is to suggest that poetry had a particular status in the devotional economy of early modern England, as a mode both elevated (Milton describes writing in prose as ‘hav[ing] the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand’<sup>19</sup>) and productive of considerable anxiety: Herbert’s struggles with the form he thought of himself as rescuing from ‘stews and brothels’ into the service of the church are only the best known.<sup>20</sup> Cranmer chose to frame the vernacular liturgy in prose, thus rupturing the previously ‘unselfconscious relationship between metrical form and lay devotion’: poetry comes to be a thing apart, importantly connected to devotional practice through the example of the Psalms (themselves described by Sidney as ‘a divine poem’), but still at a crucial distance from ordinary modes of worship.<sup>21</sup> The poets who form the basis of this study reserve a concentrated imaginative power for their writing in verse; the eucharist provides both subject and model for the cognitive connections and rhetorical transformations that characterise one of the most inventive periods in English poetry.

HISTORY OF A CONTROVERSY: RHETORICAL  
REFORMATIONS

To understand the circumstances which made the first half of the seventeenth century a period of such productive theological and linguistic instability, it is necessary go back some way to the origins of the differences then being played out. The literature on the impact of the Reformation is immense and contested, and this introductory summary is by no means designed as a comprehensive account: it seeks only to draw out some of the events and circumstances that establish the framework for this argument, at times perhaps in an elliptical or lopsided fashion. The decision, for example, to start this relation a hundred years before most of the works considered in subsequent chapters were written, and in a different country, is rather convenient than anything else: on the one hand, a little beforehand, and on the other, a little late, because any search for origins must always lead to the origins of those origins. But something of extraordinary and lasting

<sup>19</sup> John Milton, *The Reason of Church-Government* (London, 1641), p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> George Herbert, *Works*, ed. by F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 176.

<sup>21</sup> Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: the Language of Devotion in Early Modern England* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 65; and see pp. 57–84 for an account of the place of rhyme in the liturgy; Sir Philip Sidney, *Sidney’s ‘Defence of Poesy’ and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. by Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 7.



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significance did happen in the continental Europe of the early sixteenth century. When Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk from Erfurt in Germany, expressed his dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church's practice of selling indulgences (pieces of paper that purported to guarantee time off Purgatory, then being assiduously peddled to finance the ambitious building projects of Pope Leo X), he acted as the catalyst for a series of events which would revolutionise the religious and cultural life of a continent. Luther's sense of the impossible burden of God's righteous wrath, combined with his anger at the corruptions and inadequacies of the church as he saw it, led him to formulate through careful exposition of his text an alternative understanding of the teachings of Scripture. His ideas, in embryonic form, were first made public in 1517 in a letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Brandenburg, and were most famously promulgated in the ninety-five theses he hammered to the church door in Wittenberg later that same year. In the decades that followed, adopted and developed by theologians and liturgists across Europe, the arguments that had led to Luther's excommunication from the Catholic Church became the basis for the new Protestant religion.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, so closely related that they have become all but historiographically indistinguishable (inspired as they were by the same impulses, and enabled by the same technologies), there began a cross-continental movement whose cultural impact would be hard to overestimate: the translation of Scripture, hitherto inaccessible to the vast majority of the population of Europe, into the vernacular. Using Erasmus's Greek New Testament (the *Novum Instrumentum*, first published in Basel in 1516 and heavily revised and republished thereafter), in 1522 Luther produced a German translation of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Tyndale's English New Testament followed in 1526, and though he was to be burnt for his book, its influence on the language and literature of subsequent generations of his countrymen is incalculable; 'The Englishing of theology', Brian Cummings observes, 'left its traces on English as well as on theology.'<sup>24</sup> This is a precise and

<sup>22</sup> See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 115–57, from which this brief account is derived.

<sup>23</sup> Luther's was not the first translation into the vernacular; Derek Wilson points out that, in 1522, 'Vernacular bibles had existed in Germany for more than half a century and no less than eighteen versions were in existence' (*Out of the Storm: the Life and Legacy of Martin Luther* (London: Hutchinson, 2007), p. 182). It was, however, by far the most significant, due both to its mastery of the language in which it was composed – High German – and to its dissemination through the relatively new culture of print.

<sup>24</sup> Cummings, *Literary Culture*, p. 264. The scholars who prepared the 1611 Authorised Version of the Bible, perhaps the most influential work in (and on) the English language, made considerable use of Tyndale's earlier translation.

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economical assertion of a vital truth about the Reformation: there is, in this period, an absolute interdependence between theological belief and the form of words in which it is expressed, most particularly if it is a native tongue that must be made to twist around them. The war of interpretative control is waged not just in the translation or exegesis of scriptural texts, but in the scholarly apparatus of a language: the vernacular grammars, the handbooks of rhetoric and style that are written to help the reader to a right understanding of literary (and so therefore of biblical) tropes. Janet Martin Soskice points out that ‘if one’s focus of interest is religious language’ – as it certainly was for the reformers, though in a slightly different sense from the one she primarily intends – ‘figures of speech are the vessels of insight and the vehicles of cognition’.<sup>25</sup> Recognising this, a significant number of early Protestant writers produced treatises on rhetoric and cognate disciplines, such important thinkers as Melancthon and Zwingli among them; in addition, much of the most sophisticated and profound writing on the nature of language and figuration in this period is to be found not in handbooks of poetry, but in expositions of doctrine. To employ grammar and rhetoric as polemical tools was politic: there is a clear advantage in suggesting that the long-accepted views being challenged are nothing more than the mistaken interpretation of a scriptural text, and these kinds of argumentative strategies characterised, for instance, the doctrinal disputes of Erasmus (who remained Catholic despite some reformist tendencies) and Luther; ‘In the absence of consensus on established meanings in Scripture, and in the interests of minimizing or avoiding violence, both parties availed themselves of the resources provided by rhetoric.’<sup>26</sup>

For these reasons, many of the first writings on rhetoric to be produced in the English vernacular were guides to the tropes of the Bible, or used scriptural texts to furnish their examples. Thomas Swynnerton’s *The Tropes and Figures of Scripture* (c.1537) is one such work; the theological agenda of this evangelical Protestant preacher – ‘one of the very earliest Englishmen “to embrace the light of the Gospel”’, according to his modern editor – is fairly clear. ‘ΜΕΤΟΝΥΜΙΑ’, Swynnerton declares, ‘is when we gyve that power and vertue, to the Sacramentes, whiche properly belongeth to the thinges signified by them.’<sup>27</sup> Swynnerton’s treatise was not published during his lifetime; other contemporary vernacular rhetorics that did make

<sup>25</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 111.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Swynnerton, *A Reformation Rhetoric: Thomas Swynnerton’s The Tropes and Figures of Scripture*, ed. by Richard Rex (Cambridge: Renaissance Texts from Manuscript, 1999), pp. 8, 135. This argument is made in Calvin’s *Institutio Religionis Christianae* (hereafter *Institutes*): ‘I say that the expression which is