Introduction

EUCHARIST 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.[1]

[1] 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.'[2] 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[3] – 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.

[2] Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), p. 27.

[3] *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'.[4]

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.[5]

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.'[6] The generation that inherited this legacy of epistemological contention and verbal *legerdemain*

[4] 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, eate, this is my bodye'). See below, pp. 19–30.

[5] 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.

[6] 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 Lewalksi's *Protestant Poetics*: Lewalski maintained against Martz's view that the crucial imaginative basis of this writing was 'contemporary, English and Protestant'.[7] 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.[8] 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.'[9] 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

[7] 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.

[8] See p. 1, n. 1, above.

[9] 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.[10]

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).[11] 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.[12]

[10] 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).

[11] 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, *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

[12] 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 seemethe 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.'[13] Or in Yeshayahu Shen's more prosaic formulation, 'basic cognitive principles underlie the use of figurative language in poetic discourse'.[14]

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'[15]), combined with a reluctance to engage with a quantity of elaborate and arcane terminology,[16] 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).

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

[14] 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).

[15] Vickers, *Defence*, p. viii.

[16] '[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.

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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'.[17] '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*.'[18] 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

[17] Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition*, p. 9.
[18] 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'[19]) 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.[20] 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.[21] 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

[19] John Milton, *The Reason of Church-Government* (London, 1641), p. 37.
[20] George Herbert, *Works*, ed. by F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 176.
[21] 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.[22]

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.[23] 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.'[24] This is a precise and

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

[23] 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.

[24] 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'.[25] Recognising this, a significant number of early Protestant writers produced treatises on rhetoric and cognate disciplines, such important thinkers as Melanchthon 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.'[26]

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. 'METONYMIA', Swynnerton declares, 'is when we gyve that power and vertue, to the Sacrementes, whiche properly belongeth to the thinges signified by them.'[27] Swynnerton's treatise was not published during his lifetime; other contemporary vernacular rhetorics that did make

[25] Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 54.
[26] Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 111.
[27] 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

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it into print were perhaps less barefaced in their proselytising, but are nonetheless obviously influenced by Protestant ideology. The earliest such work is *The Arte or Crafte of Rhetoryke* (1530) by Leonard Cox, a slight volume treating only the art of invention, which slips in some scriptural allusions among its classical examples.[28] Thomas Wilson published *The Arte of Rhetorique* in 1553; this work demonstrates what it would like to be taken for casual Protestantism in, for example, its definition of 'Intellection', or synecdoche: 'All Cambridge sorowed for the deathe of Bucer,' Wilson writes, 'meaninge the most parte. All Englande rejoyseth that pilgrimage is banished, and Idolatrye for ever abolished: and yet all England is not glad, but the most parte.'[29] More significant still because of its wider currency is Henry Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence*, published in 1577 and in an enlarged second edition in 1593; Peacham was a minister of the church, and has frequent recourse to the Bible to illustrate the great range of tropes and figures he marshals. As with Swynnerton, this can sometimes work the other way round; there are subtle doctrinal implications in some of the examples Peacham gives for 'Metaphor': 'Psalme 34. Taste and see how gracious the Lord is, for, trye how gracious the Lord is. Hebrues 2. And have tasted of thy heavenly giftes, for, have hadde knowledge of thy heavenly gyftes.'[30] Readers are encouraged to discard the corporeal surface of such scriptural expressions in favour of an immanent spiritual sense; the doctrinal agenda is clear.

This close connection between rhetorical theory and a reformed theological outlook persists throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, partly as a result of the influence of the *Book of Common Prayer* and its animating principles of figuration (explored in detail below). Protestant

uniformly used in Scripture, when the sacred mysteries are treated of, is metonymical' (Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), trans. by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), IV. xvii. 20 (pt. II, p. 573)). Given that the first, shorter, edition of the *Institutes* was published in Basel in 1536, Swynnerton would have had to be very quick off the mark indeed for Calvin to be a direct source, if Rex's dating of his manuscript is accurate.

[28] Cox relied heavily on Philipp Melanchthon's *Institutiones Rhetoricae* (1521) – the *Arte* is largely a translation of Book I – as did many of his successors: 'Virtually every rhetoric produced in England from 1530 to the end of the century shows marks of [Melanchthon's] influence' (Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, p. 135).

[29] Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London, 1553). Martin Bucer was a continental reformer who came to England at Cranmer's invitation and was instrumental in his revision of the Prayer Book (see p. 26 below); Lee A. Sonnino remarks on Wilson's 'quaint examples' (*A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 240). According to Susan Doran and Jonathan Woolfson, the 'Protestant sentiment' in this work led to Wilson's imprisonment and torture by the Inquisition in Italy during his exile from the Marian regime; see their entry for 'Wilson, Thomas (1523/4–1581)', in *DNB* online.

[30] Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London, 1577), p. [7]. For an account of the tensions between the sacred and the secular in this work, see Cummings, *Literary Culture*, pp. 275–7.

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tenets are emphasised under the cover of pedagogical instruction, as, for example, in the instructive orations of the *Booke Called the Foundacion of Rhetoricke* (1563) by Richard Rainolde, or Dudley Fenner's *Artes of Logike and Rethoricke* (1584). Both men are ordained and both profess reformist views; Fenner is a committed Puritan (or 'godly') thinker and, as might be expected, he also puts the words of institution firmly under the heading of 'chaunge of name or Metonimie'.[31] In the following century, scriptural rhetorics include John Barton's *The Art of Rhetorick Concisely and Compleatly Handled, Exemplified out of Holy Writ* (1634), John Prideaux's *Sacred Eloquence* (1659) and John Smith's *Mysterie of Rhetorique Unveil'd* (1665). Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester from 1641 to his death in 1650 (his book was published posthumously), was a more ambivalent figure politically than some of his predecessors, but his views on Christ's eucharistic presence are never in doubt. '[W]hat more frequent in the Old and New Testament, then Sacramentall metonymies?', he asks; 'In which metonymicall sense, the words of institution of the Lords Supper must be understood . . .; except we would make a prodigie of the blessed Supper, appointed to set at variance, not in unitie to fix believers.'[32] This tactic did not, of course, go unnoticed by those who adhered to more traditional forms of belief; the Jesuit John Radford firmly refutes reformed rhetoric along with doctrine in his *Briefe and Plaine Discourse* (1605): 'they knewe no such figure, as the sacramentaries have devised', he says of the Church Fathers: 'they never could tell of *Synecdoche* or *Metonymia*, they knewe sacramentall, and not rhetoricall figures, mysticall, & not poeticall, holy and not prophane'.[33]

If rhetoric can be a way of arguing in this period, then it can also be a mode of argument, and this presents some difficulties for the scholar of early modern eucharistic controversy; a great deal of confusion stems from rhetorical habits of expression, and from the conflict of interpretation over certain key words. A common feature of sixteenth-century polemic is the distortion or exaggeration of the adversary's position, which means that it is impossible to gain an accurate picture of contemporary Catholic practice and belief from hostile reformist commentary, or even, in fact, an accurate picture of how those hostile reformers themselves actually

[31] Dudley Fenner, *The Artes of Logike and Rethorike . . ., for the . . . Resolution or Opening of Certayne Partes of Scripture* (Middleburg, 1584), p. [20].

[32] John Prideaux, *Sacred Eloquence: Or, the Art of Rhetorick, as it is Layd Down in Scripture* (London, 1659), pp. 10–11; and see A. J. Hegarty, 'Prideaux, John (1578–1650)', in *DNB* online.

[33] John Radford, *A Directorie Teaching the Way to the Truth in a Brief and Plaine Discourse Against the Heresies of this Time* ([England], 1605), p. 217.

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understood contemporary Catholic practice and belief. Words used to describe Christ's presence in the eucharist – 'real', 'true', 'natural' – are alarmingly subject to semantic shift, according to who is using them and to what ends. In addition, Francis Clark identifies a need to distinguish between Protestant objections to points of doctrine, on the one hand (for example, a belief in Purgatory), and to 'practical abuses', on the other (in this case, the corresponding sale of indulgences): 'The relevant question to ask about them [objectionable practices] is whether they were the abuse of what was good and true or the exploitation of what was false and evil.'[34] In this instance, as with the mode of Christ's presence in the eucharist, there is a real and fundamental difference of belief which is paradoxically in danger of being obfuscated through being overstated. Just as it was in the reformers' interests to stress their own figurative interpretation of words of Scripture, so it served them to caricature the Catholic view of presence as reductively carnal and intellectually unsophisticated: as logically and rhetorically unsound. Cranmer's *Defence* is typical in this respect:

> They say, that in the sacrament, the corporall membres of Christe be not distaunt in place, one from another, but that wheresoever the head is, there be the feete, and wheresoever the armes be, there be the legges, so that in every parte of the bread & wyne, is altogither, whole head, whole feete, whole fleshe, whole bloud, whole hearte, whole lunges, whole brest, whole backe, and altogither whole, confused, and mixte withoute distinction or diversitie. O what a foolishe and an abhominable invencion is this, to make of the moste pure and perfect body of Christe, suche a confuse and monstruous body?[35]

It is impossible to tell from such *reductiones ad absurdum* whether or not the polemicist thinks he is giving an accurate statement of his opponents' beliefs; the power of this argument is not in plain reason, but in trope and figure: hyperbole and alliteration, syllogistic parison, cumulative anaphora. 'Thomas Cranmer was not a great theologian,' Peter Newman Brooks observes;[36] he was, however, a great rhetorician, and the crucial difference between his reformed position on sacramental presence and the traditional belief in transubstantiation he parodies here is one of signification. Cranmer insists on the iconicity of the elements; he restores to symbols, whether verbal or physical, their power to represent.

[34] Francis Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p. 72.
[35] Thomas Cranmer, *A Defence of the True and Catholike Doctrine of the Sacrament* (London, 1550), p. 47.
[36] Peter Newman Brooks, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist: an Essay in Historical Development*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 55.

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EUCHARISTIC FIGURATION: LUTHER, ZWINGLI, CALVIN

From the dawn of the Reformation, then, theological and rhetorical understandings developed alongside one another in a kind of conceptual symbiosis, with far-reaching implications for each. Swynnerton's early rhetorical explanations seek to establish a figurative interpretation of certain passages of Scripture, and to claim furthermore that any other interpretation is simply mistaken, a failure to read right. Fifty years later, Fenner does the same thing; 'So Christ sayde: This is my bodie, that is, a signe or sacrament of my bodie' is an example of 'Metonimie', just as it is for Prideaux, writing in the 1640s.[37] This shared act of reading shows these men as direct, if distant, inheritors of Luther's thought: behind it lies the embrace of Protestant teaching on the efficacy of the sacraments, and behind that an acceptance of the Protestant position on grace. For the most significant and contentious challenge Luther made to orthodox Catholic doctrine when he issued his theses in 1517 was over the question of *how* humankind might be saved: he came to believe that grace was something freely given by God, absolutely outwith the power of sinful humankind either to merit through inherent virtue or to earn by good works. Faith alone could ensure salvation, and only God could grant the gift of faith.[38] This doctrine, known as the doctrine of justification, was not an entirely original one, or even that much of a significant departure from mainstream theological thought; Luther was, after all, greatly influenced by Augustine's teaching on the subject. The novelty came both in the way the doctrine was restated, and in the particular political conjunction that gave it such force at this time. To point out its convenience for secular leaders looking to shake off the yoke of a powerful church (for the doctrine in many ways represented a challenge to institutional authority) is to risk a dangerous oversimplification of an extremely complex situation, but their receptiveness to the idea undoubtedly contributed to its influence, and to the passionate and protracted disputes over its validity. Whatever the reasons, Luther's promulgation of the doctrine of justification had a huge impact on early sixteenth-century Europe, largely – as these definitions of 'metonymia' and 'metonimie' demonstrate, in their

[37] Fenner, *Artes of Logike and Rethorike*, p. [20].

[38] This is the matter stated, as ever, in its most basic terms, and is therefore inevitably rather reductive; there is not room here to explicate the subtleties of the doctrine of predestination, or to attempt to cut the Gordian knot of contemporary controversy over its operation. One of its most vexed implications was the existence of a justified 'elect', destined for salvation and unable to fall from this state of grace. For a comprehensive account, see Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: a History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

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own small way – because of its inevitable consequences for the central rite of Catholic Christianity: the Mass.[39]

Following the logic of Luther's argument, the ceremony must cease to be an act efficacious in itself, and become a symbol, not a vessel, of that grace already given. Christ's single, historical sacrifice on the cross is sufficient to expiate for human sin for all time, and does not need to be reiterated; if the priest is believed to be offering the sacrifice again, as would be the case if Christ were really present on the altar, this would both derogate from the sufficiency of the crucifixion, and imply that human effort might have a place in the economy of salvation. This would stand in direct contradiction to the rejection of the system of 'works' which was one of Luther's chief tenets of belief; as Clark explains of the continental reformers' emphasis on the doctrine of justification, 'it was this inner logic of their position that made their rejection of the Catholic doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice inevitable and unambiguous'.[40] It had another corollary: minimising the function and importance of the sacrament in this way necessarily diminished the role of the priesthood; Christ is not materially present and so cannot be offered by a minister of the church, whose power is therefore commensurately less. A receptionist doctrine, which transfers the focus from the sacrament to the elect communicant and his or her relationship to Christ, reduces the work of the priest in consecration by an order of magnitude. Max Weber is succinct in outlining the huge ramifications of such a line of thought: 'Every consistent doctrine of predestined grace inevitably implied a radical and ultimate devaluation of all magical, sacramental and institutional distributions of grace.'[41] The devaluation in this case was exacerbated by Luther's rejection of the old understanding, on a model derived from the works of Aristotle, of the mode of Christ's presence in the eucharist. This theory divided categories of being into 'substance' and 'accidents', and held that the substance of the Host, its essence, was changed by the words of

[39] 'The liturgy lay at the heart of medieval religion, and the Mass lay at the heart of the liturgy' (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 91).

[40] Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, p. 130; he is quite clear that 'Luther's rejection of the sacrifice was bound up with his doctrine of justification' (p. 106).

[41] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (London: Methuen, 1965), p. 203. Weber goes on to add: 'By far the strongest such devaluation of magical and institutional grace occurred in Puritanism.' Keith Thomas confirms this view: 'Protestantism thus presented itself as a deliberate attempt to take the magical elements out of religion, to eliminate the idea that the rituals of the Church had about them a mechanical efficacy, and to abandon the effort to endow physical objects with supernatural qualities by special formulae of consecration and exorcism' (*Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 87.)

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consecration into the body of Christ, while the accidents (external irrelevancies such as appearance, smell, taste and so on) remained the same. This process, known as 'transubstantiation', was described thus by Aquinas in the thirteenth century: 'We have under this sacrament ... not only the flesh, but the whole body of Christ, that is, the bones and nerves and all the rest.'[42] It was re-expressed in the 1562 decree of the Council of Trent on the sacrifice of the Mass: 'Christ himself is contained' in the Mass, and 'his body and blood are offered to the Father under the appearances of bread and wine'.[43] Luther argued that the rational analysis offered by Aristotelian categories was inappropriate to the mystery of the sacrament, which should instead be apprehended and accepted purely as a matter of faith. This teaching was a 'time-bomb', and it 'soon blew apart any unity in Protestantism'.[44]

For Luther did not, in fact, follow through his own argument on sacramental grace, maintaining consistently that there was some sort of physical presence in the eucharist. He developed a doctrine, later known as 'consubstantiation', which held that the whole substance of the body and blood are simultaneously present in the consecrated elements with the whole substance of the bread and wine. The theory of ubiquity on which this depends (Christ is everywhere, so there is no reason he should not be in the Host) proved to offer too diffuse a comfort to exert a lasting attraction even for his closest followers.[45] The logical extension of Luther's original principles was left to Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin, two of the most influential of the continental reformers. Their respective positions on the scriptural evidence for Christ's corporeal presence in the Host (how literally to take the words 'this is my body', in short) are summarised by Dom Gregory Dix in his monumental work on the history of the liturgy: 'Luther insisted that [Scripture] must mean what it plainly said,' he writes. 'Zwingli and Calvin replied that if it were to be accepted in this sense it must overthrow the whole protestant conception of the sacraments and with that the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith alone.'[46] Zwingli's stance was the more extreme: he saw the eucharist as simply an act of

[42] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (London: Blackfriars, 1964–80), 3a.76.1.

[43] Quoted in Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, p. 94. The Council of Trent was the Counter-Reformation ecumenical council of the Church of Rome. Clark points out that Catholic theology in the post-Lutheran period was characterised by a desire to close ranks and to re-express traditional doctrine, rather than to innovate; this is not to imply, however, that the doctrine of transubstantiation had been a constant in Catholic thought. For a full account of its development in medieval times, see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*.

[44] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 130. [45] See Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, pp. 160–1.

[46] Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A. and C. Black, 1945; repr. 1993), p. 634.

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remembrance, a way to imagine though not to participate in or to reiterate Christ's passion, which was in itself an entirely sufficient redemptive sacrifice. It was in order to support this view that he proposed his revolution in reading: 'The whole difficulty lies not in the pronoun "This" but . . . the verb "is". For this word is often used in Holy Scripture in the sense of "signifies",' Zwingli writes; 'To eat sacramentally can be nothing else but to eat the sign or figure.'[47] The inescapable corollary of Luther's thinking on grace was, for Zwingli, a sacrament that was a sign, and only a sign: his insistence on this interpretation (a position known as 'memorialism') caused a deep rift in the Protestant Church almost from its inception. A colloquy was held at Marburg in 1526, attended by reformers including Luther, Melanchthon and Zwingli, in order to reach a consensus on this and other points of doctrine; though a form of words was found to which all subscribed, it was little more than 'a studied exercise in ambiguity'.[48]

Calvin, though he might be thought of as being close in some ways to Zwingli's position – they are in agreement, for example, in their opposition to Luther's belief that bread and wine become body and blood in an objective sense – stops ingeniously short of denying Christ's presence in the eucharist. 'There is no ground to object that the expression is figurative, and gives the sign the name of the thing signified,' he asserts in the *Institutes*; 'we duly infer from the exhibition of the symbol that the thing itself is exhibited. For unless we would charge God with deceit, we will never presume to say that he holds forth an empty symbol.'[49] This influential teaching occupies a conceptual middle ground in early Protestant thought, between Luther's sense of Christ's real presence in the eucharist, on the one hand, and on the other, Zwingli's insistence that this presence is only figurative. It combines a clear rejection of the notion that consecration can transform the eucharistic elements into body and blood with an equally clear assertion that the body and blood are indeed in some way received by the elect believer: 'in the mystery of the Supper, by the symbols of bread and wine, Christ, his body and blood, are truly exhibited to us'.[50] Precisely how this happens is not susceptible of conception, much less of explanation: 'though the mind is more powerful in thought than the tongue in expression', Calvin writes, 'it too is overcome by the magnitude of the subject'.[51] Calvin negotiates the paradox of a theory of predestination coexistent with

[47] Huldrych Zwingli, *On True and False Religion* (1525), quoted in Darwell Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1909), II. 40.
[48] Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 61. See also MacCulloch, *Reformation*, pp. 172–4.
[49] Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. xvii. 10 (pt. II, p. 564). [50] Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. xvii. 10 (pt. II, p. 564).
[51] Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. xvii. 10 (pt. II, p. 561).

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the eucharist as an instrument of grace by making divine presence in the Host mysterious and contingent on the faith of the communicant: only the elect receive Christ's substance in the eucharist, because to eat God means life, and the unregenerate cannot be saved.

This brief summary has necessarily flattened out many of the subtleties of an intricate and profound debate, but the point nonetheless emerges that there were, in sixteenth-century theological thought, four broad positions on the nature of Christ's presence in the eucharist to which it was possible to subscribe. On a spectrum moving from the most to the least corporeal, or from the literal to the literary, these are: the traditional Catholic view of transubstantiation; Lutheran consubstantiation, also known as a belief in the 'real presence'; Calvinist focus on Christ's spiritual presence in the eucharist; and Zwinglian memorialism, which rested on a purely figurative interpretation of Christ's words at the Last Supper. What is notable in all of these formulations, though perhaps most marked in the three Protestant ones, is their shared terminology and subsequent reliance on the need for right interpretation of language that is, as all concede, on some level figurative. Different ways of understanding the mode of Christ's presence in the eucharist are founded on different ways of reading, and on competing symbolic economies. This also of course works the other way around: the exponents of each position are compelled to exploit varying degrees of distance between sign and referent; in effect, to evolve theories of rhetoric that will justify their theological stances. Though he resisted its full logical implications, therefore, one of Luther's most significant contributions to Renaissance culture was to make eucharistic doctrine as much a rhetorical as a theological matter. Having early on rejected the notion and the name of transubstantiation, Luther sought an alternative way to explain the mode of Christ's presence in the Host; what he came up with was something he called *Fleischbrot* ('fleshbread'), a sort of composite substance that avoids the problematic dynamic of one physical reality supplanting another. Brian Gerrish describes what such a theory involves in these terms: 'The words "This is my body" are therefore not an instance of symbolism but of synecdoche, naming the part for the whole, since what Christ offered his disciples at the Last Supper was his body *with* the bread.'[52] Even a Lutheran belief in a corporeal presence, that is, involves a figurative understanding of the words of institution: there is a necessary gap between what is said and

[52] B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: the Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1993), p. 165.

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how it should be taken, and the interpretative tool is a rhetorical device – synecdoche.

When Calvin came to elucidate the same difficulty, he too took advantage of the opportunity presented by saying one thing and meaning something slightly different; on the surface, nothing could be clearer than his assertion of eucharistic presence: 'I willingly admit any thing which helps to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord.'[53] As Dix points out, though, his stance is not as straightforward as it sounds. 'There is a presence of Christ at the eucharist – [Calvin] does not hesitate to call it a "Real Presence".' But, Dix cautions, 'such traditional language must not mislead us as to his real meaning'.[54] Calvin turns old terminology to new ends, redeploying Catholic phrases to describe reformed ideas; it is not just the words of Scripture that undergo a rhetorical realignment, but those words customarily used to explain and amplify its meaning. His theology works on the principle of maintaining volatile concepts in tension: the fissures are there, between sign and reality, but he seeks to contain them with a linguistic ambiguity that reflects a genuine theological position. That position is distinction without separation; just as the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, are perfect, entire and indivisible, so are the eucharistic bread and body: the substance that holds them in a state of mystical suspension is faith. 'It was', MacCulloch writes, 'the perfect model to be used by this theologian so consciously striving for a Catholic balance.'[55] As continental reformed thought on sacramental presence developed in the first half of the sixteenth century, then, it sophisticated the verbal and interpretive technologies that were needed to sustain it. It is one of the central contentions of this book that the rhetorical opportunities thus provided were to have a profound impact on English poetry for at least the next hundred years; the chief vehicle through which this influence was conveyed, the liturgy of the Protestant Church newly established under the Tudors, is the subject of the next section.

TYPES OF AMBIGUITY: *THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER*, 1549–1559

If a judicious ambiguity was useful for Calvin in establishing the Protestant formularies of worship in Geneva, it was to prove even more so for Cranmer in his attempts to produce a liturgy for the English church that would be a

[53] Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. xvii. 19 (pt. II, p. 571).
[54] Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 633.
[55] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 250.

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reasonable exposition of the reformed theology he embraced, whilst still preserving enough of a connection with the old rites to be acceptable to the more traditionally minded among his fellow clergy (and indeed the laity on whom it was to be imposed). *The Book of Common Prayer*, a monumental liturgical achievement, was both more and less successful than its author could have foreseen. When Cranmer died in 1556, executed for heresy during Mary Tudor's brief Catholic reign, the two versions of the Prayer Book he had instituted had been used for a little over three years; reintroduced by Elizabeth I in 1559, it was to endure, with one short but significant interlude, as the liturgy of what would be known as the Anglican Church in England and abroad for the next four centuries. (This extraordinary longevity would perhaps have gratified Cranmer, though he might have been surprised to learn of the diversity of doctrinal belief his orders of service in practice engendered and allowed.) There can be no doubt that the impact of the *Book of Common Prayer* on the intellectual lives of the members of the church, among whom are numbered the six writers in this study, was very considerable: as applied doctrine, a rite rehearsed and sung across parishes throughout the period and beyond, it had more impact on the formulation of belief than even the most powerfully argued treatise could hope to achieve. This influence was felt not just in borrowed words, structures and cadences, though they abound, but in the ideas about language and rhetoric enshrined in the expression of its theology. Inspired by the theological and rhetorical methodologies of the continental reformers, restricted by the political circumstances of Edward VI's reign, Cranmer produced a liturgy of deeply productive ambiguity which was to be of defining importance for imaginative writing in the Renaissance.[56]

The subject of Cranmer's influences and his innovations in constructing this work is a complex one, to say nothing of the history of its reception, and of its revisions over the subsequent century; no short survey can hope to be comprehensive, and so the account that follows attempts simply to give a general overview and to make a few connected points about what could be described as the literary repercussions of the circumstances of the Prayer Book's composition, in particular the eucharistic theology set forth in its

[56] This is, surprisingly, a relatively unexamined area, though two recent studies have taken the influence of the *Book of Common Prayer* on literature as their subject: Targoff, *Common Prayer*; Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*. The latter is particularly useful in drawing out the implications of Prayer Book worship for imaginative writing: 'What ultimately emerges from the Reformed understandings of the Eucharist, and from the theologically ambivalent formulations of the Prayerbook, is a figurative, interpretive, *readerly* conception of the sacrament' (p. 107).

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Order for Holy Communion.[57] One of the first difficulties consists in understanding precisely what the text, in each of its versions, hopes to achieve: liturgy provides a template and direction for active worship, and though it is a practical and communicable expression of theological doctrine, it is in itself neither treatise nor article of faith. The rite exists as a structure separable, that is, from the beliefs of those who composed it: it stands as independent and eminently interpretable. Judith Maltby makes an important point about the ways in which Cranmer's words could act: 'the Prayer Book', she reminds us, 'is first and foremost "liturgy"; that is "work", intended not so much to be read in a passive sense, but to be used, performed, experienced'.[58] This means that calibrating Cranmer's personal theology of sacramental grace, though a crucial endeavour, is of only so much help in construing the services of communion even in the versions of the Prayer Book he oversaw (1549 and 1552); the political circumstances in which he was operating, as well as his own inclination to find devotional formulas that could unite an emergent Protestant faction with fully as wide a shading of belief as that found on the continent, made for a work whose governing characteristic was a careful ambivalence.[59] (It is notable that the version that must be thought of as approaching most closely to Cranmer's own doctrinal position, the revised Prayer Book of 1552, was also the shortest-lived; Rosendale remarks that it is the only version 'that, abortively, staked itself on clarity rather than ambiguity'.[60]) That so much of the Prayer Book is adapted or translated from traditional sources presents an additional interpretative crux. Above all, Cranmer was skilled in linguistic salvage: in borrowing the communal, authoritative (but not authored) voice that came with those old forms, but investing them with new meaning. MacCulloch notes 'Cranmer's extraordinarily omnivorous pursuit of a good phrase which could be captured from the enemy and put to godly use': the frame

[57] There are a number of studies that offer much fuller explorations of various aspects of these questions; for an account of the development of Cranmer's thought, see Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*; for the composition and early reception of the *Book of Common Prayer*, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 351–409, 504–13, *et passim*; for its place in a wider liturgical context, see G. J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982); for a parallel-text collation of the changes between successive versions, see F. E. Brightman, *The English Rite: Being a Synopsis of the Sources and Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer*, 2 vols. (London: Rivingtons, 1915). Brian Cummings's introduction to *The Book of Common Prayer: the Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford University Press, 2011) offers a concise and helpful overview of its history and use.

[58] Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 3.

[59] As Clark observes, 'At that critical stage, vagueness and ambiguity were preferable to a clarity which might disrupt the forces of the Reformation' (*Eucharistic Sacrifice*, p. 167).

[60] Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*, p. 89.

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of the traditional devotions stayed the same, but their words underwent the kind of radical reinterpretation that is familiar from the strategies of thinkers like Zwingli, whose magical formulation 'is = signifies' opened up such rhetorical possibilities for the reformers.[61]

Thomas Cranmer's eucharistic theology evolved gradually over the latter part of Henry VIII's reign; the king, though anxious for doctrinal reform for political reasons, remained liturgically conservative, and it was not until the accession of his son that real innovations could be made in the forms of worship. There is some speculation over when precisely Cranmer, influenced by his chaplain Nicholas Ridley, crossed 'the great theological divide between real and spiritual eucharistic presence' – from a Lutheran belief, that is, to something closer to a Zwinglian memorialism – though some time around 1546 seems likely.[62] In any case, by the time Edward VI came to the throne in February 1547 Cranmer's thinking had matured; the reformers were in the ascendant at court, and plans for a reformed English liturgy seemed likely at last to come to fruition. Cranmer's vernacular liturgy, *The booke of the common praier and administracion of the Sacramentes and other rites and ceremonies of the Churche*, officially superseded the collection of old Latin rites that had hitherto been in use on Whitsunday, 9 June 1549. It is in many ways a puzzling work: a carefully but-half-reformed interim measure, always intended to be replaced with increasingly more progressive forms of worship; a patchwork of various sources translated from various languages, probably composed at various times; a masterfully equivocal exercise in practical theology that is also one of the most resonant and powerful prose compositions in the language. Though clearly reformist in intention, its verbal structures were braced between the old beliefs and the new, just about susceptible of either interpretation. Nowhere was this more evident – or more important, given its central place in distinguishing doctrinal difference – than in the order for celebration of communion; 'Cranmer's Canon', as Brooks recognises, 'cleverly concealed revolution behind the conservative forms of hallowed usage'.[63]

The 1549 service announces a deceptive ecumenism in its title: 'The Supper of the Lorde and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Masse'; it follows the shape of the Sarum Missal (a widely used Latin

[61] MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 417. Brightman's careful scholarship at the start of the last century uncovered the extent of Cranmer's liturgical borrowing; see *English Rite*, *passim*.

[62] MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 355. Brooks favours 1546 (see *Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 36), though MacCulloch finds definitive evidence of the transformation only in the next year. He also rejects Brooks's terminology of a change from a belief in 'real' to 'true' presence.

[63] Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 75.

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order originating in Salisbury), and incorporates material from Cranmer's own 'Order of the Communion', an English insert in the ceremony composed the previous year as a reformist place-holder.[64] As might be expected, both the text (words to be spoken by minister, or congregation) and the rubric (instructions for preparation and reception of the sacrament) tend towards undermining the idea of any real presence in the Host, whether this is understood in a Catholic or a Lutheran sense. The celebrant makes it clear in his first exhortation that 'the moste comfortable Sacrament of the body and bloud of Christ' is to be accepted 'in the *remembraunce* of his moste fruitfull and glorious Passyon'; that these substances are there 'to feede upon *spiritually*' (my italics).[65] In the canon, which comprises a prayer for 'the whole state of Christes church', the act of consecration and the words of institution ('Take, eate, this is my bodye which is geven for you'), things are left a little more open:

> with thy holy spirite and worde, vouchsafe to bl✚esse and sanc✚tifie these thy gyftes, and creatures of bread and wyne, that they maie be unto us the bodye and bloude of thy moste derely beloved sonne Jesus Christe.[66]

Timothy Rosendale points out the subtlety of this phrasing: 'the transformational consecration is made into a metaphorical one as transubstantiation is replaced by trope'.[67] Despite its figurative intent, though, there are aspects here that are patient of a more traditional interpretation. Most striking are the twin black crosses, which interrupt the priest's words with an intimation of ineffability; these extra-linguistic signs mark the moment of consecration as something apart, a divine intervention in the text. In the more thoroughly reformed Prayer Book of 1552, they are gone.

The first *Book of Common Prayer* had a discomfiting reception. It was not radical enough for some (the firebrand bishop John Hooper called it 'very defective and of doubtful construction, and in some respects indeed manifestly impious'), and it met with an unwelcome if sardonic approbation from others. Stephen Gardiner was a deeply conservative bishop and an old adversary of Cranmer's; his claim that 'touching the truth of the very presence of Christ's most precious body and blood in the Sacrament, there was much spoken in that book as might be desired' was, in the circumstances, double-edged to say the least.[68] Gardiner's is a cleverly exploitative response to a liturgy whose efforts to temporise between the conservatives on one hand and the ultra-radicals on the other had left it

[64] MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 384–5. [65] Cranmer, *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), p. 24.
[66] Cranmer, *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), p. 30. [67] Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*, p. 212.
[68] Quoted in Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 139.

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fraught with ambiguity, and vulnerable to such wilful misinterpretation. He was a lawyer by training, and he had a precise and elegant style of argumentation; it is not at all clear that Cranmer came off better in the pamphlet battle that followed the publication of the new liturgy. His two contributions to the conversation, however, the *Defence* of 1550 and the *Answer*, published in the following year, are the fullest and most explicit expressions of his mature eucharistic theology; what emerges very clearly from both is Cranmer's absolute commitment to the idea of figurative language.[69] Again and again he asserts that the words of institution cannot be understood literally, and accuses those who do so of a disastrous lack of literary sophistication: 'as for this saying of Christ, this is my body, it is a figurative speach, called *Metonymia*, when one thing is called by the name of another', he writes in the *Defence*; and again, in the *Answer*: 'the bread after consecration is not called Christ his body, bycause it is so in deed, for then it were no figurative speach, as all the old authors say it is'.[70] Gardiner approves the Prayer Book but questions the explanation of its eucharistic theology offered in Cranmer's *Defence* because he perceives a gap between them that can be exploited to polemical ends; this is a valuable opportunity for Gardiner, but it does not come from anything so simple as a mistake on Cranmer's part. The two men, rather, are of a fundamentally different cast of mind: they exemplify alternative rhetorical outlooks, and their theological divergences are involved, whether as symptom or cause, in interpretative differences in thinking about language. For Cranmer, there is no necessary literal level to which figurative expression can be reduced. 'I doe as plainly speake as I can,' he says with evident sincerity, 'that Christes body and bloud, be geven to us in deede, yet not corporally, and carnally, but spiritually, and effectually.'[71]

Cranmer's investment in the possibilities of figuration is thorough-going and far-reaching. Rejecting the doctrine of real presence redirects the focus from priest and Host to communicant and word, from objective meaning to subjective interpretation. As the previous quotation suggests ('in deed'), it does not diminish the power of that word. In this dynamic, the linguistic transcends the corporal – has, in fact, no need of it: 'it is the nature of al sacramentes to be figures', Cranmer writes, in a near equation of spiritual

[69] Cranmer, *Defence*; Cranmer, *An Aunswere . . . Unto a Craftie and Sophisticall Cavillation* (London, 1551). Gardiner's response to the first, which was refuted in the second, was the *Explication and Assertion of the True Catholique Fayth*, privately printed – probably at Rouen – in 1550. For a fuller account of the controversy see MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 485–92.

[70] Cranmer, *Defence*, p. 58; *Aunswere*, p. 189. [71] Cranmer, *Aunswere*, p. 34.

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with rhetorical efficacy.[72] As the exchanges with Gardiner demonstrate, doctrinal necessity led Cranmer to crystallise a method of reading that centrally distinguished between word and referent, and so allowed him to use traditional frames and phrases (in the liturgy and elsewhere), but to mean something different by them. His trust in this method's power and transparency made him impatient of what he regarded as ignorant misinterpretation (Cranmer complains of how those 'not used to reade olde auncient authors, nor acquanted with theyr phrase and manner of speech . . . dyd carpe and reprehend, for lacke of good understanding');[73] such frustrations did not, however, prevent him from exercising the considerable creative licence implied by this mode of interpretation in his own writing. 'Cranmer mocks a literalism baffled by metalepsis and metonymy,' Anderson explains; 'at the same time, his examples attest to the figurality even of ordinary language.'[74] It is significant that the realist rhetoric of the revised Prayer Book liturgy is matched by some unrepentantly immediate and affective passages in Cranmer's polemical works:

> the eatyng and drinkyng of this sacramentall breade and wyne, is as it were a shewyng of Christ before our eies, a smellyng of hym with our noses, a feelyng and gropyng of hym with our handes, and an eatyng, chawyng, digestyng and feedyng upon hym to our spirituall strength and perfection.[75]

'As it were.'[76] And again:

> with our fayth wee see Christ crucified with our spirituall eyes, and eat his flesh, thrust thorow with a speare, and drinke his bloud springing out of his side with our spirituall mouthes of our fayth.[77]

To those who did not share Cranmer's faith in figuration, the modifying phrases which insist on a metaphorical reading here ('with our fayth', 'spirituall'), even doubled up as they are, might seem a flimsy protection against the vivid corporeality of his imagery.

Gardiner's pseudo-approbation of the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* was not the only factor influencing its revision, but it is notable that none of the aspects singled out for praise by the truculent bishop survived; not

[72] Cranmer, *Defence*, p. 72. [73] Cranmer, *Aunswere*, p. 236.
[74] Anderson, *Translating Investments*, p. 46. [75] Cranmer, *Defence*, p. 11.
[76] For the significance of this formula in Cranmer's prose, see Joe Moshenska's illuminating work: '"A Sensible Feeling, Touching and Groping": Metaphor and Sensory Experience in the English Reformation', in *The Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis (forthcoming).
[77] Cranmer, *Aunswere*, p. 340. Brooks quotes this moment, observing: 'It is surprising what realist language Cranmer can use' (*Cranmer's Eucharistic Doctrine*, p. 102).

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surprisingly, it was the communion service that underwent the greatest alteration. Cranmer probably anyway planned to revolutionise the liturgy in stages, according to his own inclinations and in correspondence with other Protestant thinkers; soon after its first publication, for example, he asked for a critique from the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer, then (at Cranmer's invitation) Professor of Divinity in Cambridge.[78] The subtle-minded suggestions of the resulting *Censura* (1551) seem to have been as influential as Gardiner's dry mock, if the movement towards memorialism is anything to go by. Bucer's eucharistic theology was close to that of Zwingli, but with 'finer shadings'; 'there is a figure in the words of the Lord', he believed, 'because more is understood than is said'.[79] His own liturgical reforms exploited the kind of figural ambiguity that Cranmer found so intellectually congenial; it was fitting, then, that his untimely death in exile in the fens should be remembered in Wilson's instance of synecdoche.[80]

Whether intended from the start, or framed in response to hostile or friendly comment, the changes made to the Order for Holy Communion in 1552 transform the nature of the ceremony by banishing its equivocations. There are revisions, major and minor, to its structure and to the wording of both prayers and rubric, all of which tend to the elimination of any residual opportunity to hold to a real presence doctrine; 'a whole series of changes', Cuming remarks, 'aimed at removing any suspicion of transubstantiation'.[81] The word 'Masse' is dropped from the title; 'altar' is replaced by 'table' or 'Lord's table'; the reordering of prayers and priestly action ruptures the old integrity of the Canon, and removes the moment which might have allowed for a secret adoration of the sacrament: now, communion happens immediately after the elements are consecrated, with no oblation or prayer in between.[82] There are signs that the body of Christ had vanished even in the smallest and most practical of details. At the end of the ceremony, as at its start, the rubric makes clear that what was offered is just bread; should there be any left over, 'the Curate shal have it to hys owne use'.[83] Whereas in 1549 the Host was administered directly into the mouths of the congregation, lest the efficacious fragment be spirited away and employed in some nefarious

[78] See MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 505–8. Clark remarks that the two men 'were kindred spirits in their desire to reconcile the rival parties in Protestantism and in their skill in devising formulas to which as many as possible could subscribe' (*Eucharistic Sacrifice*, p. 122).

[79] Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 64; Letter by Bucer (1533), quoted in Stone, *History of the Eucharist*, II. 45.

[80] See p. 11 above. [81] Cuming, *History of Anglican Liturgy*, p. 106.

[82] For a full list of the changes, see Brightman, *English Rite*, pp. cl–clv.

[83] Thomas Cranmer, *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, ed. by E. C. Ratcliff (London: Everyman, 1910; repr. 1999), p. 392.

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purpose, now the minister gives it 'to the people in their handes kneling', to pocket if they feel like it.[84] And if they still kneel, it is through ordinary respect, and not superstitious belief that they prostrate themselves before a present divinity, as the notorious 'black rubric' appended at the last minute to the 1552 Prayer Book explains:

> it is not ment thereby, that any adoracion is doone, or oughte to be doone, wyther unto the Sacramentall bread or wyne there bodily receyved, or unto anye reall and essencial presence there beeyng of Christ's naturall fleshe and bloude . . . And as concernynge the naturall body and blood of our saviour Christ, they are in heaven and not here.[85]

What symbolism is left is carefully controlled; as Cummings observes, this is a liturgy 'undeniably more verbal and less visual'.[86]

The verbal aspects too, are, thoroughly revised. The words of invocation and consecration lose their permissive ambiguity along with their black crosses: blessing and sanctifying are gone, as is the reference to 'thy holy spirite and worde'; communicants may be 'partakers of his most blessed body and bloud', but what they receive is 'thy creatures of bread and wyne'. Rosendale summarizes the effect of this change: 'The ambiguous metaphoricity of the 1549 formula is refracted and reoriented here in what Dix notes amounts to a formula of non-consecration.'[87] This movement continues in the moment of communion. As the Host is administered, the words spoken by the officiant turn the emphasis very firmly from an idea of intrinsic efficacy in the elements to the devotional and intellectual work required of the recipient. In 1549:

> The body of our Lorde Jesus Christe whiche was geven for thee, preserve thy bodye and soule unto everlasting lyfe.

In 1552:

> Take and eate this, in remembraunce that Christ dyed for thee, and feede on him in thy hearte by faythe, with thankesgeving.[88]

What is given here is thanks to God, not Christ to the people. The language of this second formulation recalls Cranmer's explanations in his dispute with Gardiner; 'feede on him in thy hearte by faythe' is a liturgical rendering of the polemical 'eat his flesh, thrust thorow with a speare, and drinke his bloud springing out of his side with our spirituall mouthes of our fayth'. Both are clearly invested in an idea of belligerent figuration, predicated on

[84] Cranmer, *First and Second Prayer Books*, pp. 230, 389. [85] *First and Second Prayer Books*, p. 393.
[86] *The Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Cummings, p. xxxiii.
[87] Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*, p. 98; citing Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 664.
[88] Cranmer, *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), ed. Cummings, p. 34; *First and Second Prayer Books*, p. 389.

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the responsibility of the hearer or recipient to read right. There is no room in this revised liturgy for another form of belief, no loophole or lifeline left for doctrinal conservatives like Gardiner; England at last had a vernacular liturgy that was thoroughly and unequivocally reformed.

Not, however, for long. Cranmer's revised *Book of Common Prayer* came into effect on All Saints' Day 1552; on 6 July 1553 King Edward VI, always sickly, died, and after a brief and doomed scramble for a Protestant accession, his Catholic sister Mary took the throne. One of her first acts was to repeal the Prayer Book, and to reinstate the Latin Mass; it is at this point that Cranmer's authorial involvement with the English liturgy ends. After a trial for heresy and a repudiation of his reformed beliefs, he was burned at the stake in 1556; on the last day of his life he dramatically reverted once more to the Protestant faith, and held the hand that had signed his recantation steady in the flames.[89] Cranmer did not live to see the order change, once again, on Mary's death just two years later; how he would have regarded the lightly revised vernacular liturgy reinstituted by the new Protestant queen Elizabeth is therefore a matter for speculation. In any case, the work that was Cranmer's lasting legacy now takes on an existence independent of the theology of its chief author, obliquely and contestedly expressed as that was even in the two versions produced in his lifetime. Whatever they may have thought about it, the writers in this study – with the possible exception of Robert Southwell (who was, from the age of fifteen, educated on the continent) – all had a deep familiarity with a *Book of Common Prayer* written by Cranmer, but which did not necessarily reflect either his own beliefs or the agreed doctrine of the church in England.[90] This Prayer Book, the last revision for a hundred years, was instituted in 1559 with 'three minor but significant changes' from the 1552 version: fulminations against the Pope's 'detestable enormities' were removed from the Litany; the 'black rubric', which offered a pragmatic rationale for kneeling during communion, was dropped; a new formula for administration was devised by simply bolting the 1549 words on to those of 1552.[91] Collectively, these alterations move the liturgy away from

[89] MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 601–3.

[90] Dix sees a contradiction enshrined at the most fundamental level of the liturgy: 'It could not reasonably be maintained that Anglicanism as such has ever been Zwinglian in doctrine. But a great part of Anglican history is taken up with difficulties caused by the fact that the Anglican rite was framed with exquisite skill to express this doctrine which the Anglican Church had always repudiated, tacitly since 1559, explicitly since 1563' (*The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 670).

[91] Bryan D. Spinks, *From the Lord and 'The Best Reformed Churches': a Study of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the English Puritan and Separatist Traditions, 1550–1633* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1984), p. 21; Cranmer, *First and Second Prayer Books*, p. 362; *Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Cummings, p. 117.

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what doctrinal stability it had achieved in 1552; the revisions of 1662, when the *Book of Common Prayer* returned from continental exile after its Interregnum absence, continued this conservative trend.[92] Ambiguity is resurgent, a belief in the real presence of Christ in the eucharist tolerated if not encouraged; the Prayer Book that would endure was once again an interpretatively permissive, complicatedly figurative text.

In some ways, the details of the distinction between what the Prayer Book says and what it means are almost irrelevant for the argument that follows: what is important is to recognise that the Anglican Church embodies in its doctrinal foundation a culture of fissure and flexibility when it comes to words and their significations, and that this could be seized on with devotional intent by the poets and writers who were members of that church. Because thinking about the nature of God must ultimately entail the nature of language, worship and writing, the respective practical expressions of these activities, are cognate: a rhetorical figure can describe, and describe the shape of, a theological belief. Cranmer's new Prayer Book establishes a framework for this dynamic both in its liberties with words and in the peculiar status it accords them: the vernacular liturgy, on the one hand, makes the word absolutely central to worship, and, on the other, it robs it of its power to effect itself, or to claim any but a figurative truth. The qualified literalism of the old Catholic rite has disappeared, and left in its place a world of rhetorical possibility: words cannot turn into things, or turn things into other things, but they can assert and even enact their ability so to do. Hyperbole can insist on Christ's presence in the Host; punning can perform it. However gradually, and whatever the subtleties of the situation at any given point, the Reformation acted as a lever to separate the sign from what it signified, to institute a distinction between symbol and reality; the literary history of the succeeding century is in many ways the record of how writers responded to what was at once a loss and an opportunity. '[I]t is hard to avoid the conclusion', Gerrish writes, 'that something portentous was making its appearance in Zwingli's explanation of the sacraments, and that poetry and art had as much cause for alarm as did divinity.'[93] Though he is absolutely right to identify the importance of

[92] The communion service in the Restoration Prayer Book was substantively the same as that of 1559, but with the rubric changed to make it even less radical in its stance on eucharistic presence; the left-over consecrated elements were no longer given to the curate's own use, for example, but he was directed 'immediately after the blessing, reverently [to] eat and drink the same' (Brightman, *English Rite*, II. 717). For a description of the changes, see Stone, *History of the Eucharist*, p. 321; for the fortunes of the Prayer Book during the Interregnum and on Charles II's accession, see Cuming, *History of Anglican Liturgy*, pp. 146–67.

[93] Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, p. 167.

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this cultural revolution, Gerrish misjudges its effect: what may have been cause for alarm for divinity was, on the contrary, cause for excitement for poetry and art; the central place that ritual had held in the religious life of the people was to be taken by words, and the creative possibilities that resulted from this monumental shift were limitless.

WRITING AFTER THE REFORMATION: 1559–1674

From its inception, the Protestant Church in England held within it the potential for – even an inevitability of – conflict over its theology of the eucharist. The rhetorical interest of this fact, its implication for a theory of signification, has been explored; its political consequences were also highly significant for the writers that inherited this masterfully equivocal liturgy, and who form the subject of this study. A doctrinally ambivalent communion service would inevitably have been a cause of tension in an ostensibly Calvinist institution, even were it not for the additional complication of the non-conformist views (both Catholic and, more significantly as the new century progressed, Puritan) that came swiftly to challenge its orthodoxy. At the end of the Elizabethan period, however, and throughout the reign of James I, on the surface the situation seemed, if fundamentally elastic, at least relatively stable. Prayer Book worship was increasingly established, and it attracted in Richard Hooker a forceful and eloquent defender; the monumental fifth book of his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1597) discusses in great detail the devotional prescriptions of the *Book of Common Prayer* in the course of outlining what would come to be known as the Anglican 'via media', or middle way, between Puritanism and Catholicism. Hooker advocates the ambiguity he finds enshrined in Cranmer's liturgy, and condemns questions about the manner of Christ's presence in the communion service as 'enemies to pietie'. He also borrows the archbishop's vividly figurative mode of expressing himself: 'let curious and sharpe witted men beate their heades about what questions themselves will', he writes;

> the very letter of the word of Christ giveth plaine securitie that these misteries doe as nayles fasten us to his verie Crosse, that by them we draw out, as touching efficacie, force and vertue, even the bloud of his goared side, in the wounds of our redeemer we there dip our tongues, wee are died red both within and without.[94]

Hooker measures precisely the same rhetorical distance as Cranmer between corporeal vehicle and spiritual tenor; the 'nayles', for all their

[94] Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie: the Fift Booke* (London, 1597), p. 181.

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startlingly bloody effect, are simply a powerful figure for the eucharistic 'misteries'. His, too, both doctrinally and stylistically, was an influential example.

For all its temperate idealism, the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* comes out of a situation of some strain; a recent editor writes of Hooker's 'perception of the age as a perilous one, a time in which persistent and conflicting discontents with the 1559 settlement threatened the most basic social and spiritual values'.[95] A significant sector of the population was ideologically estranged from the common worship, whether from adherence to tenets of the old faith, or from a conviction that the reforms did not go deep or far enough. Elizabeth's government was ruthless in outlawing and punishing the defaulters. Jesuit renegades like Robert Southwell, the subject of the first chapter of this book, were supressed with an efficient savagery that may have suggested a certain anxiety on the part of those in power, but also demonstrated clearly the strength of Protestant authority. As a fervent Catholic and early exile from his country, Southwell stands at an oblique angle both to the institutional structures described here and to the literary tradition that continues to efface his influence; he represents, in the terms of this study, a rhetorical oddity that nonetheless provides a foundation for much of what follows. Southwell's *oeuvre* is an early attempt to forge a voice for devotional poetry in the vernacular; it picks up on a hint in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (*c*.1580) that instead of writing 'lyrical kind of songs and sonnets', poets would be better employed 'singing the praises of the immortal beauty, the immortal goodness of that God who giveth us hands to write and wits to conceive'.[96] Important as Southwell's poetry was in both missionary and devotional terms, however, the word was never so central to his imagination as the flesh – Christ's, as the transubstantiated elements he administered to England's recusant community, and his own, offered as imitation and response in his martyr's death. Southwell favoured the figure of paradox, and in one sense his position as a priest and writer was itself paradoxical: he believed, perhaps more firmly than any other writer considered here, in the sacramental efficacy of words, but not in the transference of that efficacy across the domain of liturgy to that of literature. The rhetorical opportunities presented by Cranmer's polemical insistence on the figurative nature of realist language proved intellectually uncongenial to the young Catholic.

[95] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. by Arthur Stephen McGrade (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xv.
[96] Sidney *'Defence of Poesy'*, pp. 48–9.

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Twenty years after Southwell was hanged at Tyburn, the grounds of contention in English church politics had shifted decisively, and the most significant disagreements were no longer between Protestants and the now-routed Catholics. Two opposing factions had developed in the newly-established church: the first remained staunchly Calvinist on the subject of predestination, valuing its grace as conveyed by the preached word of God over any benefit that might be conferred by the eucharist; the second group, the Arminians, took a contrary stance, elevating the role of outward worship (public prayer, the administration of the sacraments) to the position of prime importance.[97] On the accession of Charles I, the Arminians rose into the ascendancy, led by the notorious figure of Archbishop William Laud. John Donne and George Herbert (who died within a few years of one another, in 1631 and 1633 respectively) were spared the escalating doctrinal and political tensions of the 1630s that culminated in the drastic upheaval of the established church and, ultimately, the executions of archbishop and king. While the precise causes of the civil war in England remain in dispute, it is generally allowed that the Arminian policies pursued by Laud with such inflexible rigour played a significant part in bringing matters to a crisis; his insistence on the importance of the external accoutrements of worship – the fabric of the church, its adornment and decoration, the splendour and positioning of altar and font – was viewed by the Puritan element with a suspicion bordering on hysteria. The rationale behind such an emphasis was the real point at issue: Christ's presence in the Host, and so in the church, demanded a setting of appropriate magnificence; it also posed a serious threat to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and therefore to the whole basis of the Protestant faith. 'Arminian rejection of the central Calvinist doctrines of assurance and perseverance', Peter Lake explains, 'opened the way to what the Godly regarded as a popish doubtfulness on the issue of personal salvation and an equally popish reliance on human

[97] See Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the Rise of English Arminianism, c.1590–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). As a description of those who believed in this kind of sacramental ceremonialism, 'Arminian', after the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius, is a vexed term: historians who have challenged Tyacke's account of a harmonious Calvinist establishment undermined by the insensitive imposition of quasi-popish practices and rituals have also challenged the accuracy of his label. See, among others, Peter Lake, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered', *Past and Present*, 101 (1983), 34–54. The term 'anti-Calvinist' used in preference is, however, equally problematic, particularly for this study: it refers specifically to the main divisive issue, which was predestination, without necessarily taking account of Calvin's (admittedly contradictory) views on eucharistic presence, which were in fact closer to those of men like Lancelot Andrewes and Laud than those of their opponents. To avoid confusion, and because it has the advantage at least of being a contemporary term, I will use 'Arminian', with the usual caveats.

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works to merit salvation.'[98] Among other pressing ideological and political concerns, England went to war over the question of real presence: the conflict was in one sense the legacy of the Prayer Book's ambiguity over the sacraments, itself an inevitable inheritance from the bifurcated theologies of the earliest continental reformers.

Donne and Herbert, though in rather different positions within its hierarchy, both developed their rich and intricate understandings of sacramental grace in a culture of broad conformity within a national church. The case of Donne, who converted from Catholicism and went on to be one of the most influential Protestant divines of his day, is evidently rather more complex, as I will go on to discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2 below: whatever the precise nature of his mature beliefs, however, he was at least able to hold them as part of an established institution. This is certainly not to suggest that the church he served was internally unified, or proof against attack from without; its liturgy and practice of worship had, though, the stability of a couple of generations' use, its bishops a relationship of mutual support with a monarch who enjoyed the confidence of the majority of his subjects. Unlike Herbert, Donne never found a convincing way to write about the eucharist in his devotional poetry. An older doctrinal apprehension keeps him, so passionately resourceful in other ways, 'strategic rather than euphoric' when thinking directly about this subject, though he often exploits the trope's doubling and splitting possibilities in his secular verse.[99] It was his younger friend, Herbert, who would prove to be the truest inheritor of the culture of permissive figuration instituted by Cranmer's Prayer Book, and shored up by Hooker's *Laws*; first as University Orator at Cambridge, and then as the incumbent of the living of Fugglestone-with-Bemerton in Wiltshire, he evolved a devotional poetics and a faceted theology of the eucharist alongside one another. The old controversy over the shades of Herbert's belief is at least partly a result of his reliance on a rhetoric which, to borrow Sidney's words again, 'never affirmeth';[100] he found the English church of the 1620s and 1630s a hospitable place to experiment with forms of expression that were inward and ambivalent enough to shape his experience of eucharistic grace.

For Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan, born respectively in 1612/13 and 1621, the situation was rather different. Charles I was an awkward and

[98] Peter Lake, 'Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642*, ed. by Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp. 72–106 (p. 90).

[99] Cruickshank, *Verse and Poetics in George Herbert and John Donne*, p. 97.

[100] Sidney, '*Defence of Poesy*', p. 34.

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aloof ruler, his hold on power less firm than his father's; the new king's position was fatally weakened by the high-handed dismissal of Parliament, just four years after his accession in 1625, which ushered in an eleven-year period of Personal Rule. During this time, Charles compounded the imposition of unpopular policies such as the annual levying of 'Ship Money' – a non-parliamentary levy which was widely condemned as unlawful and expedient – with religious beliefs that were perceived as suspiciously high church.[101] His attempt to impose an order of worship on Scotland that was Laudian in temper, if not actually authored by Laud, led directly to a crisis in relations between the two countries when it was violently rejected by Scottish worshippers. Known as the 1637 *Book of Common Prayer*, the rite used only the words of administration of 1549 (unleavened even by the receptionist formula of 1552), thus 'stressing that the sacramental elements were in some way the body and blood of Christ'; this retrograde step proved unacceptable to congregations north of the border, and the resulting riots led to the bishops' wars between England and Scotland which immediately preceded the English Civil War.[102] As ever, political and doctrinal concerns were closely allied: 'Dost thou say Mass at my lug?' was the cry of Protestant outrage said to have greeted the first performance of the 1637 liturgy in Edinburgh.[103]

Within England, too, the conflict took doctrinal lines, and the ascendant parliamentarians sought to impose their own order of worship on its congregations. John Morrill describes the fate of the religion Crashaw and Vaughan had grown up with: 'the old church was dismantled piecemeal between 1641 and 1646. Laudian innovations in doctrine, government, discipline and liturgy were overthrown, and ecclesiastical jurisdiction was emasculated.'[104] It was not just the recent changes in practice that came under attack. During this period, the *Book of Common Prayer* suffered its only real eclipse in England between 1559 and the mid-twentieth century: its use was prohibited by Parliament on the same day as its bill of attainder against Archbishop Laud.[105] Cranmer's Prayer Book was replaced by the

[101] See L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 212–13 *et passim*.

[102] Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies and the Stuart Divines*, p. 96; see pp. 69–112 for a full discussion of the abortive 1637 Prayer Book.

[103] *The Writings of Thomas Carlyle: Historical Essays*, ed. by Chris R. Vanden Bossche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 637.

[104] John Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642–1649', in *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642–1649*, ed. by Morrill (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 89–114 (p. 92).

[105] As Rosendale points out; 'indicating', he goes on to explain, 'the high and related priority of both actions' (*Liturgy and Literature*, p. 6).

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Directory of Public Worship (1645), a much simpler liturgy with no set forms; these were felt to inhibit spontaneity, and so to be injurious to the operation of the spirit. The result was a much slimmer volume, running to only forty pages as against the 1559 Prayer Book's three hundred and twenty-four. The order for the 'Celebration of Communion, or the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper', for example, gives only hints and suggestions in place of the long prayers formerly demanded of the officiant:

> The Elements being now sanctified by the Word and Prayer, The Minister, being at the Table, is to take the Bread in his hand, and say, in these expressions (or other the like used by Christ, or his Apostle upon this occasion:)
>
> *According to the holy Institution, command, and example of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, I take this Bread, and having given thanks, I break it, and give it unto* you (There the Minister, who is also himself to communicate, is to break the Bread, and give it to the Communicants:) *Take ye, eat ye, This is the Body of Christ which is broken for you, Do this in remembrance of him.*[106]

The effect was to dispense with the idea of 'common' prayer altogether; as a counter-proclamation issued by the king claimed, 'it will break that uniformitie which hitherto hath been held in Gods service'.[107] Although it is possible to overstate the centrality of the eucharist as a structural feature of ordinary parishioners' lives (most attended communion only about once a year), it is clear that there was some imaginative attachment to the service whose celebration now, in some areas, 'dwindled away almost to nothing'.[108]

Certainly both Crashaw and Vaughan were deeply committed to the old order, and regarded its defeat by Puritan forces with dismay; their poetic responses to the spiritual disenfranchisement represented by the change, and the consequent reformulations of their beliefs about the eucharist, are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. That the poetry of each was shaped by these events and their implications for worship is not in doubt. Crashaw, removed from his fellowship at Peterhouse, left for the continent in 1644 and converted to Catholicism – a move that critics have traditionally seen anticipated in the opulent and excitable poetry he was writing even while still in England. Vaughan had no living to lose (though his brother did, and lost it); he remained firmly Anglican, and expressed his tenacity and his dispossession in the two volumes of *Silex Scintillans* (1650 and 1655) which

[106] *A Directory for Publique Worship of God thoughout the Three Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1645), p. 25.

[107] *His Majesties Proclamation, Concerning the Book of Common-prayer, and the Directory for Publike Worship . . . With some Observations Thereupon* (Oxford [London], 1645), p. [2].

[108] Arnold Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 161 (1998), 39–83 (82).

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constitute his major poetic achievement, though he was to live for another forty years after writing them. For both men, the republican Interregnum, with its hostile anti-Laudian policies, constituted an absence which compounded a deeper absence. The loss of the rites and ceremonies of their church was a blow, but underlying both Crashaw's move to Catholicism and Vaughan's nostalgic adherence to Anglicanism was a longing for a more securely sacramental mode of worship: an assurance of grace, and of Christ's presence in the world. What Crashaw found in the Church of Rome, Vaughan sought in the devotional writings of his predecessors: Cranmer's Prayer Book, the Bible, Herbert's *Temple*.[109] Cummings remarks on 'a royalist habit of collecting antiquarian prayer books as precious relics during the Interregnum',[110] and this is what Vaughan does in spirit, if not in fact. He, more than Crashaw, creates a poetics of compensation: 'The relationship Vaughan wants his readers to have with his text', John Wall observes, 'is one of finding in it a common meeting ground in a shared experience of loss.'[111] The idea of eucharistic presence becomes in *Silex Scintillans* something more gentle and diffuse, and also more distant, than the fleshly confrontations that populate Crashaw's verse; both men, though, are driven by an increasingly hopeless desire to find a mode of rhetorical incarnation that will supply the liturgical deficiency, and the doctrinal lacuna that underlies it.

The last writer in this study, John Milton, offers a complicated contrast to the writers considered in earlier chapters. As a committed – if doctrinally idiosyncratic – Puritan, and a staunch republican, Milton occupies an ideological position quite opposed to that of his younger contemporaries; he is a fair distance as well, of course, from the beliefs that characterise the writings of Southwell, Donne and even Herbert. The overthrow of the established church that so dismayed Crashaw and Vaughan was for Milton a cause of great satisfaction; it is its re-establishment at the restoration of Charles II in 1660, a bitter defeat for the old anti-monarchist, that prompts the sense of disillusion and dispossession felt in his late works. Milton was 'radically antiliturgical' throughout his career, and he was vehemently opposed to the set forms of the *Book of Common Prayer*.[112] The executed Charles I is contemptuously excoriated in the *Eikonoclastes* for borrowing a

[109] Vaughan's reliance on these sources, a marked feature of his work, is discussed briefly in Chapter 4, pp. 154–8, below.
[110] *Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Cummings, p. xiv.
[111] John N. Wall, *Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughan* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 281–2.
[112] Rosendale, *Literature and Liturgy*, p. 181.

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prayer from Sidney's *Arcadia* ('a Prayer stol'n word for word from the mouth of a Heathen fiction praying to a heathen God'); this reliance on the words of others is held up as an act of spiritual and intellectual poverty: 'he who wants a prayer to beseech God in his necessitie', Milton sniffs, ''tis unexpressible how poor he is'.[113] Milton's response to the reinstitution of the Prayer Book in 1662 can be imagined; he was not a regular church-goer in the last years of his life. Achsah Guibbory describes Milton's poetic response to the altered political situation in terms oddly reminiscent of Wall's vision of the recusant Vaughan: 'As encoded histories of idolatry that spoke to the situation of Restoration England,' she writes, 'Milton's poetry also constituted a site for true worship in an England polluted by idolatrous forms.'[114] This may be so: though Milton's aesthetic of absence is clearly different from the younger poet's, proceeding from quite contrary causes and finding an entirely individual expression, *Paradise Lost* is nonetheless a work, as the title asserts, that responds to some profound consciousness of loss. The final chapter of this book investigates this loss in terms of Milton's thinking about the eucharist, and seeks to demonstrate that the poem both has a perhaps surprising continuity with the devotional literature of the preceding century, and is its consummation. A preoccupation with the absent body of Christ and its refiguration in words characterises the post-Reformation writings of Southwell, Donne, Herbert, Crashaw and Vaughan; despite his polemical vituperation of the idea, it finds an echo and an answer in the great post-Restoration achievement of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

EUCHARIST TROPED

This study follows the literary afterlife of a shift in orthodoxy and its concomitant polemical discourses that transformed the sacrament of the eucharist from a vessel of grace into its symbol. What had previously been understood literally – the words Christ spoke at the Last Supper, and which became the words of institution – Cranmer invested with a rhetorical force; when a prosecutor at his trial objected that Christ would not use misleading figures in his last testament, the former archbishop replied, 'Yes, he may use them well enough. You know not what tropes are.'[115] The implication of

[113] Milton, *Eikonoklastes*, 2nd edn (London, 1650), pp. 11, 15.
[114] Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 189.
[115] Cranmer to Oglethorpe; quoted in Anderson, *Translating Investments*, p. 52.

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this shift for lyric poetry is the subject of what follows; the six authors considered here span the early modern period, and represent between them a variety of doctrinal and confessional positions, from Jesuit to Puritan. The book is based on the idea that particularities of belief can be made manifest in the verbal texture of a literary work: that there is an analogy between the rhetorical and theological planes of understanding, and that their relation can be traced quite precisely. The most characteristic figures or tropes in a body of devotional poetry in this period are often used to express a conception of the mechanics of the eucharistic transformation, even when that is not the explicit point on which a poem meditates. Because the incarnation (word made flesh) and its liturgical re-enactment (bread made body) are fundamentally concerned with the power and possibilities of language, they exert a compelling imaginative pull. Protestant sacramentalism privileges the figurative, and the eucharist acts as a model for rhetorical expression: 'The eucharist is the perfect combination of divine and human, a sacred movement encompassing the real, imaginary and symbolic. It is an identification from the body toward language and return.'[116] Each chapter of this study therefore takes as its subject the eucharist, and associated notions of real presence and transubstantiation, as they are expressed by or refracted through a rhetorical trope that is particularly significant in a writer's *oeuvre*: paradox in Southwell; punning in Donne; *metanoia* in Herbert; metonymy in Crashaw; synecdoche in Vaughan; and, lastly, metaphor in Milton.

The case studies that comprise this book illuminate and develop a central thesis about the continued importance of the transformative dynamic of the eucharist for poets and writers well into the seventeenth century, as a matter of literary and rhetorical, and not just doctrinal, concern. This way of confronting the texts unites the two most marked trends in recent criticism: the historical approach, which reads a sermon or a poem exclusively for what it might say about a contemporary political or theological situation, and the more technical rhetorical approach, which interests itself in particular occurrences of a figure or trope regardless of context. One thing this book does not attempt, however, is a revisionist reassessment of its subjects' confessional stances; it does not seek to surprise Catholic sentiments in Protestant mouths, or vice versa: rather it notices the surprising diversity of contemporary orthodoxy, and the

[116] Kathleen O'Grady, 'The Pun or the Eucharist?: Eco and Kristeva on the Consummate Model for the Metaphoric Process', *Literature and Theology*, 11 (1997), 93–115 (105).

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possibilities of ambiguous expression allowed by the post-Reformation literary climate. Though this way of reading does offer at times an insight into an unexpected perspective, its primary interest is not in doctrine or in the calibration of belief, but in the pressure brought to bear on the world of the imagination and the language of poetry by the eucharistic controversies of the seventeenth century.

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