Newton, Socinianism and 'the One Supreme God.' These papers are concerned with the development of the trinitarian discussions in England under the influence of the Socinianism. Especially interesting is the study of Snobelen on the theology of Newton, until now little known, and his connections with the Socinian theological doctrines. The volume represents an extremely valuable contribution to the history of liberal ideas in Europe which eventually led to the development of the Enlightenment. Spreading such information in America is of particular importance since the American Republic is the country founded directly on the ideology of the Enlightenment.


Anyone writing about Donne’s Sermons at this time is obliged to take very full account of Jeanne Shami’s recent magistral discussion (*John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit*, 2003). Brent Nelson is handsome in his acknowledgement of Shami’s scholarship. A central concern of Shami’s study was to find ways in which to formulate what it is about Donne’s Sermons that renders them simultaneously attractive to present-day readers but yet apparently recalcitrant to appropriate discourse for our present-day response.

Drawing on the recent work of a number of Donne scholars, Nelson, too, is anxious to find an appropriate discourse with which to approach the Sermons. He finds Michael Schoenfeldt’s work on literary courtship particularly amenable to his own thesis, but his argument is most strongly buttressed by a lively and imaginative engagement with the work of Kenneth Burke (1897-1993), a remarkably original but now sadly neglected theorist. Burke outlived his own reputation two or three decades before his death, but is here gratifyingly recuperated by Nelson. Pursuing Burke’s notion of early modern courtship as a suasive device, Nelson quickly and convincingly finds himself in a position to argue that “courtship is tantamount to rhetoric” (9), and it is this identification, based on Burke, that essentially underlies the argument of the rest of his book: elsewhere Nelson writes of “Donne induc[ing] his audience
to court God” (115). Thus Nelson posits that the early modern period’s “broadening sense of courtship provided Donne [with] a flexible discursive and affective structure that would be recognizable and applicable to his congregation’s motives” (12). Nelson concludes his economically structured Introduction by emphasizing the classical nature of Donne’s pulpit oratory, arguing that “inventio and exegesis are almost identical” (17).

This is an erudite and civil study, well-written and courteous in engagement with those with whose views Nelson does not agree, or would nuance differently. After three substantial chapters of a more general nature on Donne and courtship, Nelson sharpens his focus still further in providing three case studies on particular sermons. By means of a rapid but authoritative survey representing Donne’s work as a whole, Nelson begins by showing how central the courtship topos is to Donne. He develops his argument further by embedding it in a thorough understanding of Donne’s pulpit oratory, so that Donne the preacher, in an arresting phrase, “render[s] godli-ness desirable” (32). What is more, Nelson’s imaginative recourse to contemporary emblem tradition allows us to see such desire at work within other kinds of overtly hierarchical structures. To this is added a section that traces, from Aristotle into the early modern period, a consistent tradition, regardless of confessional position, it would seem, of what Nelson terms “a cognitive-affective model of appeal” (58, etc.) that will find full articulation in the writings of Kenneth Burke.

This satisfying contextual introduction complete, Nelson prepares for his case studies by ranging through Donne’s Sermons to demonstrate a wide variety of ways in which Donne uses courtship as a topic of inventio. Thus the first half of his book proceeds across an entire range of human experience, from life to death. One instance must suffice. Dwelling for a moment on the commemorative sermon on the death of Lady Danvers, Nelson remarks that

the famous and disquieting (and to many puzzling) image of Lady Danvers’ remarkably active corpse crawling with worms below the feet of the congregation is fittingly emblematic of the incessant goad of desire in the flesh that is never satisfied (91)[] adding that Donne’s aim here is not simply “to bring consolation in the assurance that Lady Danvers is in a better place, but to goad his audience to desire the same for themselves” (91-2). Having examined the rhetorical figure
of *inventio*, Nelson concludes the first half of his book with a careful discussion of what he sees as a complementary formal figure, that of *dispositio*. The principal element here is to be found in what Nelson terms “courtship as a principle of conceptual arrangement” (137); “Donne’s *dispositio* is [...] frequently designed to bring his congregation low in order to raise them up again with a new vision” (145). This densely-argued chapter shows that in Burkean terms “[e]ach [Donne] sermon [...] is an individualization of Christian forms, or, in Donne’s register, a sacrament” (163).

To show how Donne’s oratorical power allows him to present biblical forms in terms of shared experience between the *rhetor* and his congregation, Nelson concludes with three case studies, of which space permits only brief consideration. Nelson discusses courtship and prodigality in the early Sermon on Isa. 52:3 and courtship and purification in the Sermon “Preached to the Lords upon Easter-day,” 1619, on Ps. 89:48. Concluding with what is perhaps Donne’s most notorious, even controversial sermon, *Deaths Duell*, on Ps. 68:20, Nelson shows how Donne throughout his pulpit oratory draws on the totality of human experience, even “visit[ing] death as a courtship *topos*, as a means of evoking conditions of ‘estrangement’ that can be used to move his audience towards identification with God” (198). In a dazzling analysis of *Deaths Duell*, Nelson convincingly rescues this sermon from charges of indecorum, basing that analysis on a firm understanding of Donne’s rhetorical practice, linking it as always to the practice of courtship as fully exfoliated in his preceding pages. Addressing an aspect of this sermon that has troubled some readers, notably Stanley Fish—who has written of its “bald repetition” (240)—Nelson instead posits that “the [...] precise repetition of parallel structures through increasing intensity wins the assent of the reader-auditor by the sheer persuasiveness of form” (244).

It should be clear that this book is a major, necessary contribution to discussion of Donne’s pulpit oratory, and that in it Brent Nelson demonstrates a sharp and scrupulous intelligence. Still, without, on that account, in the least wishing to sour the positive tone of this notice, I do feel bound to draw attention to one or two irritating aspect of the book’s layout, all the more so since the black-and-white emblems and other illustrations are (surely) as clearly produced as could technically be managed, and the text is meticulously proofed. But line spacing frequently varies from passage to passage, producing in the reader (at least, this reader) a faint nauseous premonition of migraine; and on

Matthew Reynolds’ study of early modern Norwich is an ambitious project that engages with a number of historical controversies. Reynolds maintains that Norwich was neither the insular city described by John Evans, nor the “modern liberal pluralistic society four centuries ahead of its time” outlined in Munel McClendon’s recent work (32). Far from being a haven of religious toleration that underwent a relatively uncontested Reformation, Norwich became Protestant “in a process that was far from quiet” (35). The religious divisions the Reformation created remained rife, providing Laudian reforms with a measure of lay support within the city, which in turn helped to create “a grass roots royalist contingent by 1642” (255).

Reynolds’ volume is separated into four sections. The first considers Norwich’s response to the Reformation and its emerging identity as a Protestant city from the 1560s to the latter part of James’ reign. Religious division was widespread, evident amongst the higher clergy attached to the Cathedral, where relations were defined by a split between those who stood against further reform and evangelical Protestants. In civic politics a group of evangelical Protestant aldermen sought to promote godly learning, through the patronage of charismatic preachers and the attempted removal of those deemed to be obstructing the progress of the Reformation. By the mid 1570s Norwich had come to Elizabeth’s attention as moving dangerously towards the puritan camp and her fears were realised as the separatist tradition promoted by Robert Browne gained footholds during the 1580s, as did a separatist element led by William Hunt in the 1590s. While Reynolds acknowledges that in assessing levels of support for separatism “we may not be dealing with the tip of an iceberg, so much as the iceberg itself,” he argues