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Knees and Elephants: Donne Preaches on Ceremonial Conformity

Emma Rhatigan

If I can be forgiven the pun, it might be said that something was out of joint in English preaching of the early 1620s. Preachers like Lancelot Andrewes and John Buckeridge were becoming increasingly concerned with their congregations' humble, or perhaps not humble enough, knees. Andrewes had always had a bit of a thing about knees. His sermons are pretty consistently peppered with knees that don't bend and heads that don't bow. In the early 1620s, however, the fixation seems to have spread. Kneeling was first catapulted into the fore of theological debate in 1618, when James sought to enforce liturgical and episcopalian conformity in Scotland through the Five Articles of Perth, which specifically demanded kneeling.[1] Then, in the early 1620s, chronic anxieties about the emergence of avant-garde conformity at court and the planned marriage of Prince Charles to a Spanish princess meant that more and more preachers became concerned with knees that bend, or do not bend, at the right place and time. I wish here to explore John Donne's Encaenia sermon of

[1]See Lori Anne Ferrell, "Kneeling and the Body Politic," in *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688*, ed. by Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 77-79; and Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 138.

1623 in which he too is drawn into the debate. I hope to show, however, that Donne's contribution is marked by a slightly ironic distance. Undoubtedly Donne accepted the serious implications of outward conformity, but he and some members of his Lincoln's Inn congregation seem also to have been able to enjoy a perspective on the more absurd side of the debate.

In the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* kneeling was defined as *adiaphora*, one of the things "indifferent" which were not necessary for salvation. Worshippers were told, "As touching kneeling, crossing, holding up of hands, knocking upon the brest, and other gestures, they may be used or left, as every man's devotion serveth, without blame."[2] Kneeling at communion, however, was prescribed; the rubric stated that the congregation must be "all kneeling humbly upon their knees."[3] This kneeling at communion was ambiguous and could be taken to represent either religious worship of Christ or merely good order. This issue was confronted directly in the 1552 Prayer Book in which the rubric specifically denied the real presence and insisted that the prescribed kneeling at communion was only "for a signification of the humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ, given unto the worthy receiver, and to avoid the profanation and disorder, which about the holy Communion might else ensue."[4] The 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, however, left out this rubric and the Thirty Nine Articles of 1563 and 1571 deliberately avoided strict renunciations of a real presence in the Eucharist. Hence kneeling at communion became problematic. While for some it indicated popish superstition, for others it encapsulated due respect and proper worship. The issue was complicated, as Lori Anne Ferrell has

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[2]*The First Prayer-Book as Issued by the Authority of the Parliament of the Second Year of King Edward VI*, ed. by James Parker (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1883), p. 171.

[3]Ibid., p. 82.

[4]*The Second Prayer-Book of Edward VI*, ed. by James Parker (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1883), p. 87.

demonstrated, by the fact that the action of kneeling also intersected with concerns about church order and secular obedience.[5] As a thing "indifferent," kneeling was included among those ceremonies which could be decided on by the monarch. Hence if the monarch chose to retain kneeling, not to kneel indicated secular, as well as religious, disobedience. By the time James succeeded to the throne the English Church was split over the issue. To the scandal of some members of the Church, evangelical clergy were using the definition of kneeling as *adiaphora* to justify their conscientious decision not to kneel and were hoping that James would grant them this leeway. But at the 1604 Hampton Court Conference James stood firm on the issue of ceremonies and a subsequent campaign for conformity sought to enforce bent knees. In reality, however, bishops were often relatively lenient. If clergy were willing to subscribe to the canons of 1604 and maintain a low profile, then most bishops would turn a blind eye to any failure actually to observe the canons.[6]

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[5]Ferrell, "Kneeling and the Body Politic."

[6]On the Hampton Court Conference, see Patrick Collinson, "The Jacobean Religious Settlement: The Hampton Court Conference," in *Before the English Civil War: Essays on Early Stuart Politics and Government*, ed. by Howard Tomlinson (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1983), pp. 27-51; Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I," *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985): 171-182; and Frederick Shriver, "Hampton Court Re-Visited: James I and the Puritans," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982): 48-71. On subsequent attempts to enforce conformity, see Kenneth Fincham, "Clerical Conformity from Whitgift to Laud," in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, ed. by Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 125-158; and Peter Lake, "Moving the Goal Posts? Modified Subscription and the Construction of Conformity in the Early Stuart Church," in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, ed. by Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 179-205.

This relaxed state of affairs was an anathema to proponents of Church order such as Lancelot Andrewes. Andrewes was chaplain to both Elizabeth and James. He gained the parish of St Giles, Cripplegate, in 1589 and the deanery of Westminster in 1601 and this Elizabethan promise culminated in an episcopal career under James, when he gained the bishopric of Chichester in 1605, Ely in 1609 and Winchester in 1619.[7] Peter Lake has drawn attention to the extent to which Andrewes did not fit into the conventional churchmanship of Jacobean Calvinism and has argued that he should be located rather in a trajectory running from Richard Hooker through to William Laud.[8] Lake discusses not only Andrewes's liberal views on grace, emphasis on the sacraments and disapproval of excessive preaching, but also the prominence he placed on a ceremonial public liturgy with gestures of outward conformity such as kneeling. Andrewes refused to let the knees of English congregations rest and references to kneeling occur throughout his sermons. One of the earliest examples is a sermon he preached before James at Whitehall on Easter Day 1614. This was published by the King's printer, presumably by royal command, suggesting Andrewes had the King's support. The text, Philippians 2:8-11, is lengthy, but lays out his position

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[7]On Andrewes, see Nicolas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes, the Preacher: The Origins of the Mystical Theology of the Church of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and Paul Welsby, *Lancelot Andrewes 1555-1626* (London: S. P. C. K., 1958). Andrewes's episcopal career is charted by Kenneth Fincham in *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). His career as a court preacher is detailed in McCullough, *Sermons at Court.*

[8]Peter Lake, "Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity at the Court of James I," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. by Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 113-133. See also Nicholas Tyacke, "Lancelot Andrewes and the Myth of Anglicanism," in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660*, ed. by Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 5-33.

unequivocally; "He humbled Himselfe, made obedient, vnto death, euen the death, of the Crosse. For this cause, hath God also, highly exalted Him; and giuen Him a Name, aboue euery name. That, at the Name of Iesus, euery knee should bow, of those in Heauen, and in Earth, and vnder the Earth. And that, euery Tongue should confesse, that Iesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of GOD the Father." In his division Andrewes explains that his sermon is to fall into two parts. In the first he deals with exaltation by God and then in the second he turns to the exaltation of God:

> Then commeth ours. For, God exalting it Himselfe; He will haue vs to doe the like. And not to doe it inwardly, alone: but euen outwardly to acknowledge it for such: And sets downe precisely this acknowledgement, how He will haue it made by vs. Namely, two wayes: By the *Knee*, by the *Tongue*. The *Knee*, *to bow it*, (verse 10.) The *Tongue*, *to confesse it*, (verse 11.) And both these, to be general; *Euery Knee*, *euery Tongue*.[9]

Andrewes is unequivocal in his insistence that the biblical text be taken literally. There is, therefore, not much sense here of kneeling being *adiaphora*. Perhaps, if pushed, Andrewes would have conceded that kneeling was "indifferent," not necessary to salvation, but the imperatives and emphatic tone in this passage, at least, leave little room for maneuver anywhere, except onto your knees.

As Andrewes develops his argument, his pro-kneeling rhetoric remains emphatic. He continues:

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[9]Lancelot Andrewes, *A Sermon Preached Before His Maiestie, At Whitehall, On Easter day last, 1614* (London: By Robert Barker, 1614), pp. 2-3. *Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, ed. by James Bliss and J. P. Wilson, 11 vols (Oxford: Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, 1841-1854). All subsequent references to this sermon are to the 1614 edition.

> Now these are outward acts, both. So then: first we are to set downe this, for a ground; that *the exalting* of the soule within, is not enough. More is required by Him: more to be performed by vs. Hee will not have the inward parts only, and it skilles not for the outward members, though wee fauour our *Knees*, and locke vp our lippes. No: Mentall deuotion will not serue: He will haue, both corporall and vocall, to expresse it by.
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> (pp. 22-23)

The interjection "No: Mentall deuotion will not serue," combined with the repetition of "more" and the alliteration of "lock" and "lips" must have made this passage extremely powerful when delivered from the pulpit. Once again, outward devotion is not presented as *adiaphora*. Rather, it is set forth as a direct divine commandment, as accentuated by the emphatic position of God, "He," at the start of the phrases "He will not have" and "He will have." Andrewes proceeds to accumulate arguments for his case, invoking the precedent not only of Scripture, but also of the early Church, explaining:

> We begin our *Liturgie* euery day, with the *Psalme* (And we had it from the Primitiue Church, they did beginne theirs with the same.) Wherein wee inuite our selues to it: *Come, Let vs worship, and fall down, and kneele before the Lord our maker*. Shall we euer say it, and neuer doe it? Is not this to mocke God? (p. 24)

Andrewes's allusion to the Venite, Psalm 95, said daily at Morning Prayer, works as an important proof text for his pro-kneeling argument. His use of the rhetorical strategy of *rogatio*, directly questioning his congregation "Shall we euer say it, and neuer doe it?," allows the Psalm to articulate his argument for him. Hovering over his words are accusations of hypocrisy and insincere worship. The image of mocking God is especially emotive, recalling the

guards' mocking of Christ during his Passion. Andrewes's final argument is, however, less obvious. He continues:

> They in the Scripture, They in the Primitiue Church did so, did *bow*. And verily, He wil not haue vs worship Him like *Elephants*, as if we had no ioints in our *Knees*; He wil haue more honor of men, then of the pillars in the Church. He wil haue vs *bow the knees*. (pp. 24-25)

Andrewes is referring to the contemporary belief that elephants had no knee joints. His point is simple, elephants have no knee joints, but men do. Thus men must have been given them for a reason, namely to worship God. It is, nonetheless, a bizarre passage. The image of Andrewes addressing a chapel populated by elephants is rather amusing. Yet Andrewes is clearly not authorizing his congregation to laugh. The comparison of the congregation with the pillars of the church is witty, but also barbed. The shift from the examples of Scripture and early Church to the present moment is deeply sarcastic, so that as he builds towards the climax of his argument Andrewes leaves his congregation with a final stinging example. He may well be allowing his congregation a smile here, but it is not a pleasurable smile. Rather, the wit is intended to hurt.

Over the next ten years knees recur persistently as a topic of concern in Andrewes's preaching. For example, in a sermon preached at Whitehall on 5 November 1617 he used the text, Luke 1:74, 75 ("That we being delivered, from the hands of our enemies, might serve Him, without feare. In holinesse, and righteousnesse, before Him, all the dayes of our life"), to argue that serving God in holiness and righteousness necessitates kneeling. Using the same Morning Prayer precedent as in the 1614 sermon, he points out that "we are told every day in the Psalme, *Let us worship, and fall downe, and kneel before the* Lord *our*

Maker."[10] On Easter Day 1621, preaching at Whitehall, Andrewes took the text John 20:17 ("Iesus saith unto her, Touch Me not") as an argument for due regard when approaching Christ. He warns specifically against worshipping with "a stiff knee" and draws a parallel with Mary Magdalene's approach to Christ in this text, where she is seemingly rebuffed, and her earlier approach to Christ on her knees in Matthew 28:9, which was welcomed: "when she was *on her knees*, fell downe *at His feet*, then did she *touch* Him, without any checke at all." Andrewes draws out the moral for his congregation; "Be you now, but as shee was then, and this *noli me tangere* will not *touch* you at all."[11] Then again, on Christmas Day 1622, he made great store of the fact that in his text, Matthew 2:1, 2 ("Behold there came Wise Men, from the East to Hierusalem"), the wise men *fall down* and worship Christ. Listing the three ways in which man can worship God, with the soul, the body and worldly goods, Andrewes emphasises that all three are necessary:

> If He breathed into us our *Soule*, but framed not our *Body* (but some other did that) Neither *bow* your *knee*, nor *uncover* your *head*, but keep on your hatts, and sitt even as you do hardly. But, if He have framed that *Body* of yours, and every member of it, let him have the honour both of *head*, and *knee*, and every *member* els.[12]

Throughout his preaching career Andrewes's position remains consistent; kneeling is the appropriate, indeed required, posture for true worship of God.

While emphasizing Andrewes's commitment to kneeling, I do not wish to suggest that he was some lone, slightly crazed divine with a fetish about knees. Rather, he was in the forefront of a

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[10]Lancelot Andrewes, *XCVI Sermons* (London: Printed by George Miller for Richard Badger, 1629), p. 990.

[11]Ibid., pp. 549-550.

[12]Ibid., p. 146.

much larger, just emerging religious movement. This movement would eventually culminate in William Laud's campaign for the "beauty of holiness." To use such terminology is to look a decade into the future, but even in the late 1610s Andrewes was not alone in expressing concern about the place of knees. John Buckeridge was equally anxious. Following closely in Andrewes's footsteps throughout his career, Buckeridge shared and was to develop Andrewes's avant-garde leanings, including his emphasis on reverent public worship. Under Elizabeth Buckeridge had been a chaplain to Whitgift, moving in the circle of anti-puritan chaplains that had included Andrewes. When James came to the throne he quickly gained preferment and in 1604 was appointed archdeacon of Northampton and prebendary of Colewall at Hereford. In 1605 he succeeded Andrewes as vicar of St Giles and in 1606 became president of St John's College, Oxford. Even early on in his career Buckeridge's debt to Andrewes gained the notice of contemporaries. In a letter of 5 October 1606 John Chamberlain wrote that "The fowre sermons at court passed with goode commendation, only Doctor Buckridge is somwhat toucht as a plagiarie, in that the bishop of Chichester having communicated with him what he meant to do, he comming immediatly before him preoccupated much of his matter."[13] Buckeridge was, however, to treat issues of ceremonial conformity with far more severity than Andrewes. Significantly, he was William Laud's tutor at St John's and in 1610 Laud succeeded him as president to the college. It was with Laud that Buckeridge would edit Andrewes's sermons.[14] Buckeridge thus forms an important link between Andrewes and the more rigorous avant-garde conformists who were to come to the fore in the 1630s.

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[13] *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. by Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), 1:232-233.

[14] See Peter McCullough, "Making Dead Men Speak: Laudianism, Print, and the Works of Lancelot Andrewes, 1626-1642," *Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 401-424.

In 1617, motivated by the Scottish resistance to James's attempts to enforce outward conformity in the Scottish Church, Buckeridge went so far as to dedicate his entire Passion Sunday sermon to the subject of kneeling.[15] He took the text so favored by Andrewes, Psalm 95:6 ("O come, let us worship, and fall downe, and kneele, (or weepe), before the Lord our Maker"). A seasoned royal chapel congregation, familiar with the preaching of Andrewes, could not have been in any doubt as to what the sermon was going to be dedicated. Buckeridge opens his sermon by suggesting that his text, with its call to exaltation, might be considered inappropriate for a Lenten sermon. He then reassures his congregation that this is not, in fact, the case, explaining:

> But this Verse is *Venite ad humiliationem*, A call to humiliation, which must haue Adoration, and Prostration, and kneeling, or, as the Ancient out of the Greeke of the *Septuagint* read it, weeping before the Lord our Maker. Adoration to him that is the God of all power and Maiestie. Prostration or falling downe before him that came downe from Heauen to raise vs. Kneeling to him that bare our sinnes on the Crosse, and vs as lost sheepe on his shoulders.[16]

In the very first lines of the sermon Buckeridge calls on his congregation to bend their knees. The downward movement of the congregation falling to their knees is aligned with Christ's movement down from heaven to earth, the necessary precursor for his exaltation in heaven and the congregation's eventual resurrection. Adoration and worship are defined purely in terms of

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[15]Andrewes's sermon of November 1617 and Buckeridge's sermon of 1617 were both printed by the King's printer, doubtless because their justification of kneeling constituted a defence of the Articles of Perth.

[16]John Buckeridge, *A Sermon Preached Before His Maiestie Touching Prostration and Kneeling in the Worship of God* (London: Printed by Iohn Bill, 1618), pp. 1-2. All subsequent references are to this edition.

outward conformity and the position of the knee. Once again, there is very little sense of kneeling being *adiaphora*. Rather, Buckeridge claims:

> All his Kingdomes must be obedient to his *venite*, and ioyne together [...] in vniformitie of outward order and ceremony of Gods seruice, if possibly it may be; especially in all the parts of my Text, of Adoration, and Prostration and kneeling, which are not ceremonies, but parts of Diuine worship; and for disobedience must be subiect to his coercion, who beares not the sword in vaine. (p. 8)

The influence of Andrewes is clear. From the choice of text, to the insistence that inward devotion must be complemented by outward worship, Andrewes's shadow lurks behind Buckeridge's rhetoric. Buckeridge's emphatic language demonstrates, however, how he took Andrewes's pro-kneeling rhetoric one step further. His tone is far shriller and more dogmatic. When he insists kneeling "must" be performed, the slight concession "if possibly it may be" carries little weight. Kneeling has been taken out of the remit of the individual conscience and placed instead in the context of "obedience" and "coercion." This notion that kneeling should be enforced would have been especially provocative given the reference to James as the one "who beares not the sword in vaine." Buckeridge was speaking in direct support of James's attempts to maintain religious conformity.

Buckeridge then considers those stubborn members of the Church who refuse to kneel:

> this externall worship of kneeling is opposed by those, that loue their ease more then their dueties, and therefore cannot endure to kneele, or stand, but must sit at their deuotions, which is contrary to all discipline, and sit at the Lords Table, as if they were equall guests with him, else wee shal bee Idolaters. Good God! Is it

> Idolatry to kneele at Gods Table, or at our prayers, when as no man without the brand of irreuerence, and ill manners, make his suite, or askes a pardon, or receiues a great benefit from a mortall King without this bowing or kneeling? (pp. 12-13)

Again, following in Andrewes's footsteps, he accuses those who refuse to kneel not only of having a shocking lack of respect for Christ, but of hypocrisy. The arresting interjection "Good God!" is followed by the forceful analogy with the court. If we kneel before the king, then why will we not kneel before Christ, the King of kings? It is a convincing argument, especially given the architectural context of the chapel at Whitehall, which so carefully situated the monarch in the gallery in a semi-celestial setting, and the tradition that before commencing his sermon a preacher would bow three times to this gallery. And, of course, no member of the congregation could dispute the premise that James should be approached with due reverence. It was, moreover, an argument which would become a favorite of Laudian preachers in the 1630s. Finally, Buckeridge resurrects Andrewes's elephants. He tells his congregation:

> I feare, these *Elephanti*, Elephants that haue not ioynts in their knees, haue sworne and vowed that they will not kneele to God, and his Christ, that they may make it knowne that they esteeme their owne phantasie more then they doe the oath of God, who cannot repent.
>
> (p. 16)

This time elephants are not used as a contrast to men, but rather it is the obstinate straight-kneed churchgoers who are branded elephants. Their religious laxity reduces them to bestial, unthinking animals that are unable to establish the spiritual relationship with Christ for which they, as men, have been given the potential. By asserting that such men have "sworne" and "vowed" not to kneel, Buckeridge presents them as deliberately

turning their backs on Christ, succumbing to that most fatal of sins, pride, as they establish their own "phantasie" of religion in opposition to God's explicit commandment. Once again, moreover, Buckeridge has borrowed from Andrewes only to render his rhetoric more dogmatic. There is, here, absolutely no wit or humor at all, however barbed or sarcastic. No one in Buckeridge's congregation would be permitted a smile.

Given how forthright and, indeed, militant Buckeridge's sermon was, it is not surprising to discover that it provoked some consternation. When it was subsequently printed in 1618, attached was "A Discourse concerning Kneeling at the Communion," in which Buckeridge goes to some lengths to justify his argument. He asserts, "at that time when I spake thereof, I proceeded no further. Since, being occasioned to descend to the particular of the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, I haue added this ensuing discourse" (p. 29). Andrewes's and Buckeridge's ceremonial conformity had never been to everyone's taste. Many clergy saw such flexibility in the knee joint as a clear sign of popish superstition. As Fincham and Lake have demonstrated, though, the broad spectrum of religious belief at James's court ensured that in the early part of his reign avant-garde conformists, such as Andrewes and Buckeridge, could co-exist relatively peaceably along side Calvinist conformists, such as George Abbot and Joseph Hall, who held quite different points of view.[17] Peter McCullough has shown how the broad range of theological beliefs held by the clergy who populated the court pulpit produced intense pulpit debate. Intriguingly, McCullough draws attention to the fact that Andrewes's Easter sermon of 1614 was followed the next Sunday by a sermon preached by Norwich Spackman that directly engaged with Andrewes. Spackman concluded with the assertion that God "will not have a bended knee, but an upright

[17]Fincham and Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of James I."

heart."[18] Factions and divisions undoubtedly existed, but James ensured neither side gained the upper hand.

In the early 1620s this subtle balance was destroyed by the impact of the religious war on the Continent and James's pursuit of a Spanish bride for Prince Charles. Shocked by the public criticism of his foreign policy led by the evangelical wing of the Church, James moved closer to clergy of an avant-garde, proto-Arminian leaning.[19] George Abbot, the staunchly Calvinist archbishop, fell into disgrace. And on the deaths of James Montague in 1618 and John King in 1621, Andrewes was made Bishop of Winchester and the Arminian sympathiser George Montaigne was promoted to the bishopric of London. Laud also finally emerged into favor, gaining the bishopric of St. David's in 1621. At court Andrewes was made Dean of the Chapel Royal, hence gaining control of the liturgy in the king's chapel. This was a significant moment. Andrewes was no longer merely advocating avant-garde conformity from the pulpit; he could now institute it in the Whitehall chapel. Andrewes was thus probably responsible for the King's rules for seating and behavior in the chapel, which included a direct reference to obligatory kneeling.[20] In this context Andrewes's and Buckeridge's rhetoric of knee-bending could no longer be tolerated by advocates of the straight knee with such equanimity. As ecclesiastical tempers warmed, bent knees came to be seen as an indication of a popish revival at court, an ominous foretaste of what was to come if James succeeded in marrying his

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[18]McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, pp. 113-115.

[19]On public concern about James's foreign policy, see Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Simon L. Adams, "Foreign Policy and the Parliaments of 1621 and 1624," in *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 139-171.

[20]McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, pp. 151-152.

son to a Catholic princess. The proponents of the straight knee went on the offensive.

A perfect example of this Calvinist reaction can be found in the early 1620s' sermons of the Calvinist conformist Joseph Hall.[21] Hall's Calvinist credentials are second to none. Born of devout parents in the staunchly Puritan parish of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Hall studied at the Calvinist stronghold of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, among associates such as William Perkins. He was ordained in 1600 and five years later was admitted as one of the chaplains of Prince Henry, preaching among the evangelical clergy who filled the St. James's pulpit. Following the Prince's death he became a royal chaplain to James, but his relationship with the religious establishment was by no means trouble-free. He was reprimanded after the King's Scottish progress in 1617, where he had been received too enthusiastically by the truculent Scottish divines for James's liking, and he incurred royal displeasure for his support of military intervention in the Palatinate. His dislike of the intended Spanish match also led to his being regarded with suspicion by James and he was reprimanded after his sermon "The

[21]The connections between Joseph Hall and John Donne have not, as yet, received adequate critical attention. Both men prefaced their ecclesiastical careers with careers as satirists in the 1590s. Hall's first living, Hawstead, granted to him by Robert Drury, would have brought him into contact with Donne's sister and brother-in-law, Anne and John Lyly. Drury eventually patronized Donne as well, and Hall wrote the preparatory verses to Donne's elegies to Drury's daughter, Elizabeth. Both men became celebrated court preachers and the intimacy between them is finally attested to by Donne's legacy of one of his cross-and-anchor seals to Hall in his will. See R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979; reprinted 1986) and *Donne and the Drurys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

Best Bargaine."[22] Not surprisingly, Hall responded vehemently to the rise of avant-garde conformity at court. One of his strongest attacks comes in his sermon "The Deceit of Appearance," preached before James at Theobalds in 1622. Hall takes as his text John 7:24 ("Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement") and begins with an uncontroversial endorsement of the maxim that appearances can be deceptive. When Hall develops his argument, however, his target becomes obvious. Addressing directly the courtiers seated just metres away from him, Hall proceeds:

> For you: how gladly are we deceiued in thinking you all such as you seeme; None but the Court of Heauen hath a fairer face. Prayers, sermons, sacraments, geniculation, silence, attention, reuerence, applause, knees, eyes, eares, mouths full of God; Oh that ye were thus alwaies! Oh that this were your worst side! But if we follow you from the Church, [we] finde cursing and bitternesse vnder

[22]For biographical studies of Hall, see Frank Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall, 1574-1656: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979); Richard A. McCabe, *Joseph Hall: A Study in Satire and Meditation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); and Leonard D. Tourney, *Joseph Hall* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979). Hall's difficulties under Laud are well known, but the tensions between him and James have only recently been explored. For important revisionist work in this area, see Peter Lake, "Joseph Hall, Robert Skinner and the Rhetoric of Moderation at the Early Stuart Court," in *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History, 1600-1750*, ed. by Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 167-185; and "The Moderate and Irenic Case for Religious War: Joseph Hall's *Via Media* in Context," in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics: Essays Presented to David Underdown*, ed. by Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 55-83.

> your tongues; licentious disorder in your liues, bribery and oppression in your hands.[23]

Hall's cutting remarks about his congregation, starting with his emphatic "For you," would, in the intimate setting of Theobalds chapel, have been rendered very personal. His sarcastic reference to "none but the court of heaven hath a fairer face" could be an allusion to Andrewes's liturgical alterations in the chapel royal. When describing the congregation's holy appearance, Hall lists those very elements of worship so favored by Andrewes and Buckeridge, "sacraments, geniculation, silence, attention," all the ingredients of a "high" Church liturgy with its emphasis on reverence and ceremony, prayer rather than preaching. This list gives way tellingly to an inventory of body parts "knees, eyes, ears, mouths," the physical expression of this outward conformity. And there, leading the list, is the knee. The passage soon develops into biting satire as Hall submits his kneeling courtiers to one of his most devastating parodies. The bended knee is portrayed, not as an expression of humility and reverence before God, but as a perfect example of hypocrisy, a cover for debauchery and immorality. Hall is, of course, careful. He does not say that kneeling is wrong, just that an over-emphasis on it leads inevitably to hypocrisy. It is clear, however, that Hall felt the English Church was at risk of falling into this misguided concern with outward appearances. He concludes:

> We are gone if yee goe by appearance: Gone? alas, who can but blush & weepe, and bleed to see that Christian soules should (after such beames of knowledge) suffer themselues to be thus palpably cozened with the gilded slips of error, that after so many yeares pious

[23]Joseph Hall, *A Sermon Preached Before His Maiestie at his Court of Theobald, on Sunday, Sept 15. 1622* (London: J Haviland for N. Bvtter, 1622), p. 33. *The Works of the Right Reverend Joseph Hall*, ed. by Philip Wynter, 10 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1863). All subsequent references are to the 1622 edition.

> gouernment of such an incomparable succession of religious Princes, authority should haue cause to complaine of our defection? (p. 36)

The argument is fervent. Hall, here, is describing the overthrow of Protestant Truth by Catholic superstition. The reference to "religious princes" is especially audacious. Hovering above Hall's words is the suggestion that James, instead of following in the pious footsteps of Elizabeth, is defecting to Papistry, effectively leading his country away from Christ. Significantly, Catholicism is associated with hypocrisy. Its doctrine is constituted by "gilded slips of error," which may look like Truth, but in fact only "cozen" and trick the godly. Thus the sermon makes a direct link between the hypocrisy of outward conformity and the risk that the English Church might succumb to Catholicism. Hall seems to agree with Andrewes on one point, if only one, that much of the future of the English Church weighed down on the humble knees of its parishioners.

It was when this debate about knees had reached its absolute height that Donne returned to his former pulpit at Lincoln's Inn to preach at the dedication of the new chapel on the feast of the Ascension in 1623. The event was noted by Chamberlain, who wrote that "there was great concourse of noblemen and gentlemen wherof two or three were indaungered and taken up for dead for the time with the extreme presse and thronging."[24] This sermon is crucial for any consideration of Donne's position in terms of the debate over "ceremony." Not only is there the possibility that Donne was involved in the plans and architectural decisions for the new chapel, but the sermon touches on the subjects of festivals and the consecration of churches, which were hot topics in English

[24] *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2:500.

pulpits.[25] I wish now, however, to deal only with one small aspect of this issue, Donne's reference, towards the end of the sermon, to his congregation's knees. Donne takes as his text John 10:22 ("And it was at Ierusalem, the Feast of the Dedication; and it was Winter; and Iesus walked in the Temple in Salomons Porch"). He notes that because it was winter Jesus walked inside rather than outside and from this observation develops the argument that men need not go to excessive lengths in their worship. He explains:

> We doe not say, that infirme and weak men, may not fauour themselues, in a due care of their health, in these places. That he who is not able to raise himselfe, must alwayes stand at the *Gospell*, or bow the knee at the name of *Iesus*, or stay some whole houres, altogether vncouered heere, if that increase infirmities of that kinde.[26]

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[25]For a discussion of how Donne's sermon intervenes in the debate over the consecration of churches, see James Cannon, "Reverent Donne: The Double Quickening of Lincoln's Inn Chapel," in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. by David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 207-214. See also Jeffrey Johnson, "Consecrating Lincoln's Inn Chapel," pp. 139-160 in this volume of *John Donne Journal.*

Donne's location in terms of the theological and political debates on ceremony in the 1620s and 1630s remains controversial. For recent contributions to the debate, see Achsah Guibbory, "Donne's Religion: Montagu, Arminianism and Donne's Sermons," *English Literary Renaissance*, 31 (2001), 412-439; Peter McCullough, "Donne as Preacher at Court: Precarious 'Inthronization'," in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed. by David Colclough (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 179-204; and Jeanne Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003).

[26]John Donne, *Encaenia. The Feast of Dedication Celebrated at Lincolnes Inne, in a Sermon there vpon Ascension Day, 1623* (London: Printed by Avo. Mat. for Thomas Iones, 1623), p. 37. *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by George Potter and Evelyn Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-1962). All subsequent references to this sermon are to the 1623 edition.

The knee, once again, becomes the object of interest, but Donne's treatment of the issue is striking in its contrast to Andrewes and Buckeridge. By focusing on the exceptions to the rules for ceremonial worship, the "infirme and weak," Donne places the whole debate in a larger context and effectively unravels Andrewes's and Buckeridge's uncompromising rhetoric. The moment is a perfect example of the characteristics of Donne's preaching recently emphasized by Jeanne Shami. Shami draws attention to Donne's casuistical habits of mind and his commitment to showing his congregation how to discriminate between the fundamental and the indifferent in matters of religion. It is precisely this emphasis on discernment that Donne demonstrates here. His interest lies less in dictating when his congregation should kneel, than in framing the rule in such a way that they can decide for themselves when it is, and when it is not, relevant.[27]

Donne then continues:

> yet Courts of *Princes*, are strange *Bethesdaes*; how quickly they recouer any man that is brought into that Poole? How much a little change of ayre does? and how well they can stand, and stand bare many houres, in the Priuy Chamber, that would melt and flowe out into Rhumes, and Catarrs, in a long *Gospell* heere? (p. 37)

In many ways Donne's argument here is the same as that articulated by Buckeridge in 1617. Buckeridge asserted:

> Is it Idolatry to kneele at Gods Table, or at our prayers, when as no man without the brand of irreuerence, and ill manners, make his suite, or askes a pardon, or receiues a

[27]See Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis*, especially pp. 19-23.

> great benefit from a mortall King without this bowing or kneeling? (pp. 12-13)

I believe, however, that there is a significant difference between the two passages, namely, that Donne's is funny. The acute observation of the miraculous cure the court can bring about is sarcastic, but not in the cutting, satiric manner that Hall adopted in his sermon. The repetition of "how" phrases couched in rhetorical questions suggests a rather arch tone and the accusation is not made directly to the congregation, but to a nameless "they." The image of an aged gentleman melting and flowing out into rhumes and catarrs during a particularly long Gospel reading is wonderfully drawn. Especially witty is the self-conscious reference to "here." Perhaps there were members of the congregation who were feeling an attack of the rhumes coming on during Donne's lengthy sermon. Chamberlain's letter certainly suggests that it was standing room only. The "melting," with its downward, collapsing movement seems reminiscent of the "falling" to the knees advocated by Andrewes. Donne is making the very movement of kneeling funny. His intervention into the debate about knees is thus less a dogmatic assertion of the necessity for due reverence, than an ironic, distanced comment about the absurdities to which preachers such as Andrewes and Buckeridge were driving themselves.

This is not to say, however, that Donne did not consider outward conformity to be an important concern, that it was for him nothing more than a source of amusement. Indeed, he draws the sermon to a close by explaining the theological consequences of the issue, condemning "the irreuerent manner which hath ouertaken vs in all these places" (p. 38). He concludes:

> *Gods* seruice is not a continuall *Martyrdome*, that a man must bee heere, and here in such a posture, and such a manner, though hee dye for it; but *Gods* House is no *Ordinary* neither; where any man may pretend to doe

> what he will, and euery man may doe, what any man does. (p. 38)

Donne emphasizes that God's House is not an "ordinary," an eating-house or tavern. Yet the humor and lightness of touch with which he has dealt with the issue suggests he felt that Andrewes and his antagonists were becoming overly concerned about something which, in the end, was not that important. The image of a member of the congregation undergoing a "martyrdom," indeed "dying," in his attempt to maintain an appropriately reverent posture is a particularly witty and amusing parody of Andrewes's and Buckeridges's fervent pro-kneeling rhetoric. The wording "here and here" and the convoluted phrasing, moreover, make the debate appear rather frivolous. It is hard to read the passage without drawing the conclusion that the issue is getting out of proportion.

But why was it that Donne could allow himself and his congregation to smile when Andrewes and Buckeridge felt the need to deal with the issue with such severity? The answer does not lie wholly in the fact that Donne possessed a sense of humor, while Andrewes and Buckeridge were miserable preachers who took themselves far too seriously. It is significant that outside of the Lincoln's Inn pulpit Donne is far more straight-laced in his defence of bent knees. In a sermon preached at court in April 1626 he instructs his congregation "not to under-value such ceremonies as have been instituted in the Church, for the awakening of mens consideration, and the exalting of their devotion," while in an undated Candlemas sermon, probably preached at St. Paul's, he insists that "Though not absolutely necessary, [kneeling] is enjoyned by lawfull authority, and to resist lawfull authority, is a disobedience, that may endanger any mans salvation."[28] Donne never goes as far as Buckeridge and Andrewes: kneeling is always portrayed as *adiaphora*, but neither is it a laughing matter.

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[28] *The Sermons of John Donne*, 7:141-42, 333.

More important, I believe, than the individual senses of humor of Andrewes and Donne in understanding this display of knee-motivated wit, is the preaching space of Lincoln's Inn. The Lincoln's Inn pulpit was one which allowed a preacher far more freedom than the court pulpit. Exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, the Inns of Court were relatively uncontrolled preaching spaces. Thomas Gataker, preacher at Lincoln's Inn from 1602 to 1611, recorded his appreciation of this, explaining how he chose to remain as preacher to the Society rather than taking up a position as chaplain to Prince Henry. He comments:

> the times under King *James* [...] proving more troublesom, then formerlie they had been, made me the rather willing to rest contented with a smal portion in a priviledged place, then by removing to a place of larger revenue, to [...] expose my self to the hazard of greater disturbance.[29]

Donne would thus have had far more leeway in his sermon delivered at Lincoln's Inn than Andrewes and Buckeridge would have had at court. The differences between the Whitehall pulpit and the Lincoln's Inn pulpit did not, however, operate only on the level of theoretical freedoms. There were also very tangible physical differences. Not only were Andrewes and Buckeridge having to negotiate the presence of the King during their court sermons, but the very design of the Whitehall chapel was constructed to emphasize monarchical power.[30] James would have been seated in his closet, an elevated space over the west end of the chapel. As McCullough has detailed, this arrangement "articulated the royal supremacy by placing the monarch literally above the nobles and

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[29]Thomas Gataker, *A Discours Apologetical* (London: R. Ibbitson for Thomas Newberry, 1654), pp. 37-38.

[30]On the architecture of the court preaching spaces, see McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, pp. 11-49.

clergy."[31] James would have listened to the sermon through the closet window, thus operating as "a present absence, a hovering, presiding genius."[32] The symbolic power of this spatial dynamic was augmented by the carefully choreographed processions to and from the chapel. Thomas Platter writes of the impact of this display of royal power as he witnessed it on a visit to England in 1599. Significantly, he specifically comments on the act of kneeling:

> Soon after the queen walked alone out of her presence chamber, followed by all her lords, councillors, body guard and retinue, and passed quite close to us and most of the onlookers knelt.
>
> As she looked down from the window in the gallery on her people in the courtyard, they all knelt and she spoke in English: 'God bles mi piple', and they all cried in unison 'God save the Queen', and they remained kneeling until she made them a sign with her hand to rise, which they did with the greatest possible reverence.
>
> For this is certain; the English esteem her, not only as their queen, but as their God.[33]

As Platter's last comment illustrates, the ceremony surrounding the monarch's attendance in chapel meant that reverence to God became intrinsically bound up with reverence to the sovereign. Moreover, having ascended the pulpit, a preacher would then bow three times to the royal closet before commencing his sermon.[34] This conflation of religious and secular obedience is further demonstrated by the 1623 King's orders for behavior in chapel. These orders included not only references to kneeling in chapel, as

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[31]Ibid., p. 28.

[32]Ibid., p. 21.

[33]*Thomas Platter's Travels in England, 1599*, translated and introduced by Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), p. 228.

[34]McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p. 30.

previously discussed, but also emphasized the need for courtiers to maintain suitable reverence towards the King's body.[35]

This architectural and ceremonial dynamic at Whitehall adds a revealing subtext to Andrewes's and Buckeridge's sermons.[36] Let us return to Andrewes's sermon preached before the King at Whitehall on Easter Day 1621 on the text John 20:17. As I have already discussed, Andrewes's sermon elaborates on the theme of showing due reverence to Christ, specifically kneeling. On being greeted by Mary Magdalene, Andrewes argues that "CHRIST will take a little state upon Him." He continues, however, by stating that similar reverence should be used towards secular Princes:

> The truth is, in the *Naturall body*, the *eye* is a most excellent part; but withall, so tender, so delicate, it may not indure to be *touched*; no, though it aile nothing, be not sore at all. In the *Civill body* the like is: There are in it, both *Persons* and *Matters*, whose excellencie is such, they are not familiarly to be dealt with by hand, tongue, or penne, or any other way. The *Persons*, they are, as the *apple of* GOD'S owne *eye*: CHRISTI DOMINI. They have a peculiar *Nolite tangere*, by themselves. Wrong is offered them, when after this, or in familiar or homely manner, any touch them. The *Matters* likewise, *Princes affaires*, Secrets of State [...] points too high, too wonderfull for us to deale with.[37]

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[35]Ibid., p. 27. See also Neil Cuddy, "The Revival of the Entourage: The Bedchamber of James I, 1603-1625," in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. by David Starkey (London: Longman, 1987), p. 182.

[36]On Andrewes's technique of exploiting the architecture in the Whitehall chapel in order to construct sermons which commanded joint reverence for prince and God, see McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, pp. 30-35.

[37]Andrewes, *XCVI Sermons*, pp. 547, 548.

Andrewes exploits the physical presence of James, separated from the rest of the chapel, in order to construct a command for due reverence which operates on both a religious and secular level. A similar technique can be identified in his sermon preached before the King at Whitehall on Easter Day in 1614 on Philippians 2:8-11. The sermon is pervaded by imagery of exalting. The upwards movement of Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven is mirrored by the exalting of his name. Andrewes describes how "[God] *Exalted* His *Person*, in stead of the Crosse, to His owne high throne of Maiestie. And in stead of *Pilates* title, gaue Him a Title of true honour, aboue all the Titles in the world" (p. 14). This imagery of exalting is matched by the physically exalted position of James and Andrewes specifically draws attention to this architectural dynamic, stating, "And sure, when men are so high, as higher they cannot bee, (as Kings) there is no other way to *exalt them*, left vs, but *this*; to spread abroad, to dilate their *names*" (p.15). Andrewes had always believed that religious and secular order were intertwined. In an earlier sermon preached at St. Giles Cripplegate on 23 September 1599, he stated that:

> We conceive of the Church, and place of Gods presence, as we doe of the place of the Princes presence; for we reverence such places though the Prince be absent; so ought we reverence the places of Gods presence, though we have no visible apparition of his presence.[38]

When preaching at court, however, the very architecture of Whitehall expressed this belief.

In the Whitehall chapel preaching space, it would thus have been very difficult to make a joke about knees such as that we find

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[38]Lancelot Andrewes, *Apospasmatia Sacra or A Collection of Posthumous and Orphan Lectures* (London: Printed by R. Hodgkinsonne for H. Moseley. A. Crooke, D. Pakeman, L. Fawne, R. Royston, and N. Ekins, 1657), p. 458.

in Donne's sermon. Donne's joke depends upon a spatial difference between Whitehall and Lincoln's Inn, which he sets up as a difference between a secular space and a religious space. In commenting "how well they can stand, and stand bare many houres, in the Priuy Chamber, that would melt and flowe out into Rhumes, and Catarrs, in a long *Gospell* heere?" Donne carefully distinguishes between a space such as the Privy Chamber, where secular reverence is required, and "here," the chapel, where religious reverence is demanded. This attempt to distinguish between the religious and the secular would have collapsed in the Whitehall chapel, where reverence to God and reverence to the monarch were so carefully brought together. The physical setting would not only have undermined the humor in Donne's joke, but also have risked turning it into a dangerous comment on nothing less than James's royal supremacy. In the Lincoln's Inn chapel, however, there was no such confusion of royal and religious authority. Preaching from the Society's pulpit, Donne's sermon did not have to contend with any subtext from the sovereign's presence. Indeed, Donne's use of humor both draws on and contributes to this sense of Lincoln's Inn as a distinct community. The humor would have both stemmed from the congregation's sense of being a discreet group with shared jokes and simultaneously have worked to unite the community through the cohesive power of laughter.[39]

It was not just the architectural and ideological positioning of the Lincoln's Inn chapel which made such a joke possible, however, it was also the nature of the Lincoln's Inn congregation and the character of Donne's relationship with them. If there were any group that would pick up on and be receptive to the humorous side of the debate on kneeling, then surely it would be the irreverent and witty young students at the Inns of Court to whom

[39]For an introduction to theories of laughter, see Jerry Palmer, *Taking Humour Seriously* (London: Routledge, 1994). Palmer specifically discusses how laughter operates to bind a culture or community (p. 153).

Donne was preaching. A brief glance at John Manningham's diary suggests how these men were able to balance a sincere religious devotion with an ability to joke about religious practice. Manningham's diary juxtaposes extensive sermon notes with witty asides about the religious controversies of the day. In May 1602, for example, Manningham records a joke recounted to him by B. Rud[yerd], "Those which goe to church onely to heare musicke goe thither more for *fa* then *soule*."[40] The serious religious issue of church attendance does not preclude a pun on "soh" and "soule." This B. Rudyerd was Benjamin Rudyard, who, in his memoirs, numbered Donne among his intimate friends. Both men contributed to the second edition of Thomas Overbury's *Wife* in 1614.[41] Evidently Donne the preacher had not forgotten the type of witty allusions to religious practice which had so amused the circle of friends in which he moved in his youth.

Donne's personal understanding of his Lincoln's Inn congregation thus lies at the heart of a reading of his comments on kneeling in this sermon. Any commentary on Donne's ceremonial conformity must take account of the context in which he is preaching and in Lincoln's Inn this context is defined by the physical and psychological distance between Whitehall and the Inns of Court. Outside of the court, Donne and his congregation were able to hold both a literal and figurative perspective on the debates which dominated the court pulpit. Donne's use of humor in his discussion of kneeling, moreover, opens up what I believe is a new space in the historical discussion of outward conformity. It was, as modern historians have acknowledged, a crucial issue, yet it was not one which produced the binary of opinion we have been

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[40] *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, 1602-1603* ed. by Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover: Published for the University of Rhode Island by The University Press of New England, 1976), p. 84.

[41] *Memoirs of Sir Benjamin Rudyerd*, ed. by James Alexander Manning (London: T. & W. Boone, 1841), p. 22. It was Donne's son who posthumously printed Rudyerd's poems.

led to believe. Donne concludes his sermon by transcending the whole issue of whether or not the knee should be straight or bent by calling on his congregation to "let this be the Feast of the Dedication of our selues to *God*" (p. 39). In other words, the relationship between the believer and Christ becomes the central hinge of Christianity, rather than the more tangible knee joint. By allowing themselves to be blinded towards this sector of society, which did not feel the need to take such partisan positions, historians are perhaps running the risk of perpetuating Andrewes's shrill rhetoric. It may well be time to share some of the ironic perspective on the debate that Donne and his Lincoln's Inn congregation seem to have held. Possibly, when we read about Andrewes's elephants, we should not be so quick to smother our smiles.

Magdalen College, Oxford University