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From the Selected Works of Michael F. Graham

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# David Stevenson, Scotland's Last Royal Wedding: The Marriage of James VI and Anne of Denmark, Albion 30

Michael Graham, *The University Of Akron*

Rejecting some current fashions and facile assumptions about early Protestantism, Sanderson is at pains to emphasize the links between Lollardy in Ayrshire and underground reforming activity. Her case is well documented and convincing. A tradition of dissent was nurtured and sustained and, significantly, found recruits among people of widely differing social backgrounds. The missions of George Wishart and John Knox certainly found fertile ground in Ayrshire—the impact was cumulative—and, as Sanderson shows, there was more afoot than some grudging and unimaginative modern accounts suggest. Michael Lynch's dismissive comment (following in the footsteps of I. B. Cowan) that "deep Protestant roots in Ayrshire were confined mostly to Kyle," which failed to become a "platform for its spread elsewhere," needs significant revision (Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* [1991], p. 187; Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation* [1982], p. 103). As Sanderson notes, historiographical fashions have too readily exchanged a Reformation waiting to happen for one that never was, or at best arrived late. Similarly, historians are all too apt to concentrate on the context of the Reformation at the expense of its content. As Sanderson shows, there was an underlying and persistent religious dimension, sometimes deceptively low key, in the emerging movement for reform that continued in expressions of Protestant piety long after the reformers' victory in 1559–60. Similarly, at the height of that revolution, the involvement of the "Lords of the Congregation" was "the most momentous act of lay initiative." Here was "no last-minute grasping of the helm by a party of political opportunists. Given the hereditary background of these men, their social relations, political histories and normal preoccupations with private wars and property interest the wonder is that they acted together at all" (p. 143).

Not only did Ayrshire's political leaders play a conspicuous part in the Reformation-rebellion, its inhabitants also notched up a few firsts in the path toward reform: from Ayrshire came the first attempt to produce a version of the New Testament in Scots, the first outbursts of iconoclasm, and possibly the earliest example of a town council introducing Protestant worship.

The emphasis of Sanderson's study understandably lies in the period leading to the Reformation rather than on its impact after 1560, although, in an important appendix, biographical details are provided of the early ministers, exhorters, and readers who served the parishes of Ayrshire at and after the Reformation. This is a stimulating and authoritative study that deserves to be widely read.

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David Stevenson. *Scotland's Last Royal Wedding: The Marriage of James VI and Anne of Denmark; with a Danish Account of the Marriage, translated by Peter Graves*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers. 1997. Pp. xvii, 158. £14.95 paper. ISBN 0-85976-451-6.

Historians have often cited the unannounced visit to Spain by Charles, Prince of Wales and the Duke of Buckingham in 1623 to woo the Infanta as one of the rashest acts in the annals of the House of Stuart. What is generally forgotten is that Charles was not the first of his line to take ship in pursuit of a princess he had never seen. King James may have thanked God for his son's safe return, but he could not be overly critical of Charles' daring.

This is because in October 1589, frustrated by Danish reluctance to send his bride Anna of Denmark across stormy autumnal seas, James had deserted his original kingdom to fetch her himself. The personal presence of an adult monarch seemed essential to the precarious

stability James was fashioning in Scotland, and David Stevenson opines that James' decision to undertake this romantic rescue was the most "bizarre" of his career (p. 30). As it turned out, Scotland survived the six-month absence of its monarch rather well, and James got the opportunity both to demonstrate his (short-lived) romantic ardor and to strut a bit on the international stage. This charming (if in places rather careless) study details the circumstances surrounding the Danish marriage, James' visit to Norway and Denmark in 1589–90 and Anna's subsequent arrival and coronation in Scotland. Stevenson concludes it with a brief survey of James' and Anna's subsequent relationship, one marked by procreative success (four children who survived infancy) but little apparent affection. Also included is Peter Graves' English translation of a little-known contemporary description by an anonymous Danish observer of the marriage and subsequent festivities.

Denmark has been seen as a peripheral state in modern European history, just as Scotland would have been had it not become a foundation stone of imperial Britain. Thus it is easy to forget the extent to which James was "marrying up" with the Danish match. Stevenson provides a useful reminder of this. Late sixteenth-century Danish monarchs controlled not only Denmark, but also Norway, parts of what are today southern Sweden and northern Germany, and the passage through the Danish Sound into the Baltic. Tolls collected from ships making this passage filled their coffers, and the Scots king could witness this "living pageant of Danish power in action" from his lodgings in Kronborg Castle, Elsinore, overlooking the toll collection (p.48). Lutheran Denmark could also boast of being home to several of Europe's leading savants. This enabled James to cultivate his reputation as an intellectual, visiting with the astronomer Tycho Brahe and debating predestination with the aged Lutheran theologian Niels Hemmingsen. In the latter engagement, the king showed himself "completely a disciple of Calvin" according to the author of the Danish account (p. 99). The Danish penchant for heavy drinking also impressed the Scottish visitors—they themselves no slouches in this department—a great deal.

Stevenson seems to be aiming as much at the archetypal "general reader" so beloved by publishers as at fellow scholars. The latter group will probably most appreciate the inclusion of the Danish Account, which provides valuable source material for students of court culture with its detailed descriptions of the ceremonies surrounding the wedding, Anna's coronation and her formal entry into Edinburgh (delayed from a Sunday to a Tuesday to avoid violating the Sabbath). It also provides additional documentation on the marriage negotiations. General readers will find Stevenson's style accessible, but even the untrained may be put off by his common resort to fragmentary sentences (e.g. pp. 31–32) or his imprecision. Did it cost £800 Scots (p. 57) or £200 Sterling (p. 61)—not at all equivalent sums—for the daily upkeep of the Danish delegation that accompanied Anna to Scotland for her coronation? If Anna, after her conversion to Catholicism in the late 1590s, had moral qualms about her possession of the lands of Dunfermline Abbey to the extent that she considered giving them up (pp. 68–69), who was she going to give them to? Despite such problems, Stevenson has given us a useful and engaging narrative of a critical period in James' career as king of Scots.