

# **Anna of Denmark and the Politics of Religious Identity in Jacobean Scotland and England, c.1592-1619**

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The Lutheran Anna of Denmark (1574–1619) was one of those exceptionally well-placed early modern women. A member of the dynastic houses of Oldenburg and Stuart, she was daughter, sister, wife, and mother of kings, and she also retained close connections to a number of other royal and ducal houses in Europe. Her ancestral dynastic links, coupled with the marriages of her siblings, extended her kinship network beyond her natal kingdom of Denmark-Norway and its territories of Schleswig, Holstein, Stormarn, and Dithmarschen, to include Brandenburg, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Dresden, Holstein-Gottorf, Mecklenburg-Güstrow, and Electoral Saxony. With her marriage to King James VI (1566–1625) in 1589, Anna of Denmark moved to Scotland, and around 1592, or perhaps 1600, she converted to Catholicism. The reasons for Anna's conversion, and the logistics of being

a covert Catholic in a Protestant country, have generated a wide body of scholarship. Almost without exception, however, scholars have asserted that Anna's conversion was a personal and private matter, undertaken without regard for the political consequences, which embarrassed her husband.<sup>1</sup> Throughout her time in Scotland and England, Anna's Catholicism was therefore never publicly acknowledged. The queen consistently maintained a show of outward Protestantism, and awareness of her personal beliefs was limited to James, a handful of Catholic dignitaries, and a select number of elite Scottish and English Catholics. By positioning herself as a Protestant in public and restricting Catholic observances to the privacy of her own residences, Anna was a 'church papist' able to be true to her faith while fulfilling her duties as consort in her support of the religion of the monarchy.<sup>2</sup> As a result, however, the nature of Anna's personal beliefs and the date of her conversion was cloaked in an element of ambiguity, which gave rise to misgivings and doubt among both Catholic and Protestant contemporaries.

This article acknowledges that a certain level of ambiguity remains, and that the evidence concerning Anna's conversion and religious identity needs to be treated in a critical manner.

As much as possible, the extant secondary literature on Anna's conversion and Catholicism has been critically consulted, along with those commonly cited printed primary sources. The traditional narrative found therein is reinterpreted with the support of new archival material from Denmark, England, and Scotland, which includes letters, warrants, and inventories, and it is contextualised within the rhetoric of Danish Lutheranism and Marian devotion among Protestants. In the argument that follows, three specific problems are highlighted in the existing scholarship: the conflicting dates of Anna's conversion; the cited reasons for her conversion; and, most importantly, the questionable nature of the evidence. It is crucial to address the extant circumstantial evidence and to discuss the associated methodological issues. In doing so, it is suggested here that Anna maintained a certain equivocity about her faith for James's political benefit. This is an hypothesis that is bound to lack positive evidence, for the informality of Anna's role – as is very often the case with the channels of influence open to elite and royal women – has removed her agency from the traditional historical record. Yet, as the work of historians including Clarissa Campbell-Orr, Barbara Harris, Olwen Hufton,

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1 The exception to this is the recent work by Meikle and Payne although, for the most part, they are focussed on proving Anna's Catholicism and highlighting the central role that her Bedchamber staff played in the facilitation of her Catholic observances while in England, see Meikle and Payne 2013.

2 Watanabe-O'Kelly 2017, 238. Rome was aware, and tacitly allowed, church papistry in Protestant countries such as England, see Walsham 1993, 50-72; McCullough 1998, 169-73.

and Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly have shown, this does not detract from the significant position that could be available to queens consort through their privileged access to the king, the ability to legitimate and continue the dynasty, their own prestigious dynastic status, and their international networks.<sup>3</sup>

A close reading of the available evidence surrounding Anna’s confessional identity suggests that scholars have been too quick to discredit the possibility that she played a part in the delicate cross-confessional negotiations undertaken by King James in both Scotland and England. Here it is proposed that Anna’s religion was used to help realise four significant aims: firstly, balancing the Kirk and the aristocratic Catholic faction in Scotland; secondly, James’s political accession to the English throne; thirdly, brokering the Anglo-Spanish peace, and lastly, the English bid for a Catholic match for one of her sons.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, this article offers a fresh approach to Anna’s religion, for it does not seek to answer the question of her conversion, but to acknowledge the weaknesses that remain in the evidence, and that a queen consort’s religious observances were heavily inflected with political meanings. This is not to belittle or discredit the authenticity of Anna’s faith, but to recognise that her confessional identity contained an inherently political and performative quality.

## **The Historical Evidence and Treatment**

Historians have been unable to pin down a specific date or clear reason for Anna’s conversion and have not explored the wider implications of this difficulty. In his 1879 article, Father Joseph Stevenson declared that Anna of Denmark suffered a crisis of faith and converted to Catholicism around 1600 while in Scotland.<sup>5</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Stevenson’s claims were strongly supported by historians Father W. Plenkers, Canon Alphons Bellesheim, Adolphus William Ward, George Warner, and John Duncan Mackie, whose work has formed the scholarly foundation of Anna’s religious identity.<sup>6</sup> Most subsequent scholarship has looked to

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3 For example, see Campbell-Orr 2002, 25-26, 32-42; Harris 1990, 260, 265-270; Hufton 2000, 1, 9-12; Watanabe-O’Kelly 2017, 243-246. See also Smuts and Gough 2000, 4-5.

4 Though commonly thought of as the infamous ‘Spanish Match’, the Stuarts concurrently sought Catholic brides for Prince Henry (1594–1612), and then Prince Charles (1600–1649), from a number of other kingdoms including Florence, France, and Savoy, as clearly summarised by Murdoch 2003, 45.

5 Stevenson, 1879.

6 See chronologically: Plenkers 1887–8, 403-425; Ward 1888; Bellesheim 1889; Ward 1905; Warner 1905.

substantiate these early claims.<sup>7</sup> Recently, however, Maureen Meikle and Helen Payne argue that it was earlier, in 1592 or 1593, under the influence of her friend and confidant, the Catholic Henrietta Stewart, Countess of Huntly (1573–1642) that Anna ‘secretly adopt[ed] the Catholic liturgy in her private devotions’.<sup>8</sup> For, writing to the English Jesuit priest, Father Robert Persons (1546–1610) on 15 December 1593, the Jesuit intelligencer Richard Verstegan [formerly Rowlands] (1550–1640), reported that Anna

seemeth to be very well enclined unto Catholique religion, beeing thereunto partly perswaded by the Lady Huntley, of whome she hath received a Catholique Cateschisme in French, which she much esteemeth; and hath told unto the said lady that she was in her youthe brought up with a kinswoman of hers that was a Catholique.<sup>9</sup>

Adding to the complexities of the orthodox understanding of Anna’s religious position, Meikle and Payne counter the earlier view that Anna’s crisis of faith was occasioned by her Lutheran chaplain, Johan Sering (1589–1619) converting to Calvinism.<sup>10</sup> Rather, they suggest that it was ‘the lack of an heir to the throne’, or the likelihood that Anna found the ‘Scottish Catholics far friendlier than the Presbyterians’ as reason for her turning to the Catholic faith.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted, however, that irrespective of Sering’s conversion, he accompanied Anna from Scotland to England in 1603, and remained in her household as her ‘minister of the Dutch [German] tongue’ until her death

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7 For scholarship that has sought to prove Anna’s Catholicism, see chronologically: Stafford 1940; Chadwick 1942; Hicks 1960; Hicks 1961; Hicks 1962; Hicks 1963; Loomie 1963; Loomie 1971; McCullough 1995; Davidson and McCoog 2000; Payne 2001a; Meikle and Payne 2013; Fry 2014a.

8 Meikle and Payne 2013, 46. Henrietta was never made an official member of Anna’s household, although she had offered her services to the queen in 1590. Henrietta’s sister, Mary, was appointed gentlewoman of the chamber in February 1591, see Juhala 2000, 329–30. Also noted by Fry 2014a, 272.

9 Petti 1959, 196, letter #XLVI, and quoted in Meikle and Payne 2013, 48. The ‘Catholique’ lady from Anna’s youth remains unidentified.

10 Meikle and Payne 2013, 49. Meikle and Payne still concede that Sering ‘became sympathetic towards Presbyterianism, which alienated him from the queen, and further assisted her conversion to Catholicism’, 58. Sering’s conversion is first stated by Stevenson 1879, 258–59, n.9, as having been noted by Father Robert Abercrombie in his 1600 letter to John Stuart, Prior of Ratisbon. This was repeated by Plenkens 1887–88, 408, although he states that this inspired Anna’s conversion as early as 1593. It is further possible that the argument concerning Sering’s conversion derives from his decision to sign his letters to King Christian IV of Denmark and the Danish Council, from 1595 onwards, as ‘Scotorum Minister’. However, in the late sixteenth century, the term ‘minister’ did not explicitly refer to a religious (evangelical) position, but encompassed both ‘servant’ and ‘functionary’. See letters in RA, TKUA Skotland A I, 2. On Sering, see also Riis 1988, 294.

11 Meikle and Payne 2013, 48.

in 1619.<sup>12</sup> There is also a significant difference between being friendly with Catholics and perhaps even attending a Catholic Mass, and fully converting to the faith; and it is highly unlikely that the comparatively 'friendly' nature of the Catholics would have inspired conversion. This is particularly true given that many northern Catholic lords, including Huntly, were in open revolt throughout the 1590s and James was expending much time and energy trying to quell them.<sup>13</sup>

While the date and motive of Anna's conversion shifts between scholars, and both conversion dates cannot be correct, the fundamental problem with both arguments is the nature of the evidence. It consists of claims in letters, reports, rumours, and dispatches by Spanish ambassadors such as Alonso de Velasco (d.1620) and Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Count of Gondomar (1567–1626), by Catholic officials including Father Robert Abercrombie (1533–1613), Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1577–1633) and Pope Clement VIII (1536–1605), and significantly, by Anna herself. In each case, context and recipient are important. These are not the pieces of objective historical evidence that they are frequently assumed to be. While Meikle and Payne acknowledge the 'largely indirect and questionable' evidence for Anna's Catholicism they conclude, together with other scholars, that this is due to the 'necessarily covert nature' of Anna's Roman faith in Protestant Scotland and England.<sup>14</sup> Crucially, however, the quality of the evidence together with the divergent dates of Anna's conversion should also be considered as a potential consequence of the political intelligence of the queen.

### **Anna's Catholicism and Factional Politics in Scotland**

Beyond religious affiliation, Anna's association with Henrietta Stewart, Countess of Huntly, held a distinct personal and political benefit. As Cynthia Fry notes, it was through the countess that Anna gained the support of a powerful Catholic faction in her struggle to regain custody of Prince Henry from the Presbyterian John Erskine, 2nd Earl of Mar (ca.1562–1634) and his mother, Dame Annabella Murray, Countess of Mar (d.1603).<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Anna's connection to Henrietta is likely to have been of political assistance to James. As many historians have argued, from around 1588 until the close

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12 TNA, LR6/154/9; TNA, SC6/JASI/1646; TNA, SC6/JASI/1648; TNA, SC6/JASI/1650; TNA, SC6/JASI/1653; TNA, SC6/JASI/1655.

13 Murdoch 2002, 3-31; 7-11.

14 As quoted in Meikle and Payne 2013, 61; see also Plenkers 1887–8, 421-22; Payne 2001a, 241-55.

15 Fry 2014a, 272-73. See also Barroll 2001, 17, 166.

of 1596, James was engaged in a particularly delicate balancing act.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, he sought to appease the Kirk, which was supported by the English puritans and key members of the English Council such as Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester (1532–1588), who James believed were central to the English succession. On the other hand, however, he maintained cordial relations with leading Counter-Reformation Catholics, most notably, Henrietta Stewart's husband, George Gordon, Marquess of Huntly (1562–1636), which would protect his interests for the English throne if either France or Spain managed to land an armed force on the British Isles, while also offering James a counterweight to the dominance of the Kirk, and a reminder of his – and Scotland's – strategic value to Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, as Ruth Grant outlines, Huntly headed 'a conservative, generally Francophile party' and had been a known supporter of France since his return to Scotland in July 1581.<sup>18</sup> However, by 1586 he was also in contact – through Henry I, Duke of Guise (1550–1588) no less – with Philip II of Spain (1527–1598), from whom Huntly sought support in order to save James from 'the power of his enemies' and the control of Elizabeth.<sup>19</sup> More generally, Huntly was the most powerful lord in the turbulent region of north-east Scotland and, with an extensive kinship network of both Catholics and Protestants, he was not a figure James wished to antagonise.<sup>20</sup> In fact, as Fry and Grant among others have noted, the king was consistently lenient in his treatment of the Catholic nobility – Huntly especially.<sup>21</sup> In his execution of a delicate confessional policy, both domestic and foreign, Anna's Catholic connections would have been beneficial. By remaining on friendly terms with her co-religionist Lady Huntly, and other female members of the Catholic network, such as Elizabeth Douglas, Countess of Erroll (wife of Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Erroll [1564–1631]), Anna would have been able to act as a conduit for James, helping him

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16 For a systematic analysis of the intricacies of James VI's domestic and foreign policy in the 1590s, see for example, Fry 2014b; Grant 2000, 96-109; Smuts 2014. My thanks to Professor Smuts for sharing his paper with me in advance of publication.

17 Fry 2014b, 81-96, esp.84, 86-90; Grant 2000, 95-6, 98-100; Smuts 2014; Grant 2008, 211-12. For a nuanced discussion of the shifting factional climate – on religious and political lines – see Grant 2000.

18 Grant 2000, 99.

19 Grant 2000, 94-99. Later, Huntly was one of the Catholics discovered to have written to Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma (1545–1592) expressing regret that the Spanish had not used Scotland as their point of entry into England and suggesting that they should for the second attack. Huntly's second letter apologised for his necessary display of outward conformity and intimated at his need for future funding in an episode of political intrigue now commonly known as the 'Parma Letters'. See Grant 2000, 101-03; Fry 2014b, 89-96.

20 As Grant 2000 outlines, in 1587/8, for example, Huntly's faction extended to Protestant Scots 'such as Rothes, Atholl, Monstrose and Lord John Hamilton' along with Catholics 'Lennox, Errol, Crawford, Seton, and Maxwell', 99.

21 Fry 2014b, 89-90, 92-93; Grant 2000, 93-99; Goodare 2010, 22-24; Smuts 2014.

to preserve contact with aristocratic Scots Catholics without compromising his position as a Protestant ruler.<sup>22</sup> Although Henrietta was not a formal member of Anna's bedchamber, she was connected to many of Anna's servants and she enjoyed the confidence of the queen. Thus, Henrietta was often at court and, as Grant asserts, between 1592 and 1594, she provided James with a crucial line of communication to her husband. This afforded James the ability to publicly decline to read Huntly's letters in order to pacify Queen Elizabeth and the Kirk, while keeping abreast of Huntly's position.<sup>23</sup> Anna's role in the execution of this policy is bound to lack positive evidence, but it remains a distinct possibility and it is one which deserves further research and consideration. From early in her marriage, Anna may very well have used her religious position to assist James in the realisation of his political aims. This is not to belittle or discredit the authenticity of her faith, but to recognise that early modern confessional identities contained an inherently political and performative quality, and that royal women constantly negotiated a shifting scale of priorities where politics could, at times, even trump religious practice.

### **Widening Catholic Connections: Abercrombie's Letter of 1608**

The conventional view that Anna became a Catholic around 1600 rests on a letter written eight years later by the Scottish Jesuit priest Robert Abercrombie, in which he claims to have facilitated her conversion. This letter details Anna's crisis of faith, outlines Abercrombie's role and acknowledges James's complicity. It has become the cornerstone of the argument for the certainty of Anna's Catholicism.<sup>24</sup> It is possible, that by the turn of the seventeenth century, Anna felt the need for stricter religious guidance, or had yet to undertake a full conversion and sought out Abercrombie. However, the timing suggests that it is equally possible that Anna was looking to widen her Catholic connections for political benefit. The queen must have known that Abercrombie would report such a high-profile conversion to fellow Jesuit leaders, and that this knowledge could then be used as proof of her Catholicism and James's tolerance. For, at the time that Abercrombie is believed to have facilitated Anna's conversion, around 1600, the Stuarts were engaged in a political battle for the English throne, which should be

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22 Meikle 2000, 138.

23 Grant 1999, 101. It should be noted that it was not just Anna who was close to Henrietta, for James too, was well inclined to the Countess who was the daughter of his cousin and first favourite, Esmé Stewart, duke of Lennox (ca.1542–1583), and referred to her as 'his daughter, and beloved of his blud', see Grant 1999, 97, 100–102; quote from 100.

24 The letter has been translated and printed in full in Stevenson 1879, citing Fonds Lat. MS 6051, fol.49, 50, formerly Colb. 3236.

seen to have influenced the timing of Anna's decision to make knowledge of conversion more widespread.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the English succession drew marked attention in England, Scotland, and Europe. In the first instance, it should be remembered that James was only one of several candidates for the throne and, as Susan Doran points out, many did not consider him to be the strongest contender, for his claim had issues of a legal, religious, ancestral, and practical nature.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps most importantly, James was from a different dynasty and a different country, which incited fears around a loss of English identity and sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> As a result, James went to considerable lengths to ensure that he would be successful. Believing that if Queen Elizabeth did not name him as her heir, he would need Catholic support for an unchallenged accession, James sent a number of personal letters, unofficial agents, and ciphers to various Catholic leaders on the continent.<sup>27</sup> The goal was always the same: to spread the promise of better treatment for English Catholics under James's rule, and to advertise the possibility of his own conversion. In the summer of 1602, with an elderly Elizabeth reportedly unwell, James's Scottish envoy in Rome, Sir James Lindsay, went so far as to announce that if Spain would support James's claim for the English succession then the Scottish king would be willing to raise his eldest son and heir, Prince Henry, as a Catholic. Whether Lindsay was acting on direct orders however, or of his own volition, remains unclear.<sup>28</sup> James was also potentially involved in the events leading up to the disastrous Essex Rebellion of February 1601, and around this time he entered into a daring alliance and unauthorised communication with the English Secretary of State, Sir Robert

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25 Doran 2006: 29-32. See also Mackie 1924: 268; Loomie 1963: 7; Peck 1982: 18-19, 21; Croft 2006: 143-44.

26 Much has been written on the issue of the English succession; see for example, Croft 2003: 32-6; Doran 2006: 25-43; Russell 2006: 1-15; Richards 2002; Mackie 1924.

27 Notable examples of James's diplomatic tactics in this period include a letter to Pope Gregory XIII (1502-1585) on 19 February 1584 requesting support for his bid for the English crown and offering the promise of Catholic concessions in return. James was later in touch with the papacy, writing a letter to Pope Clement VIII on 24 September 1599, requesting that William Chisholm, Bishop of Dunblane and Vaizon, be awarded a Cardinal's hat. Unofficial emissaries who were sent to the continent to determine James's reputation and work for the support of the English accession included, among others, the Master of Gray in 1600, and Sir James Lindsay in 1602. See *CSP Spanish*, vol. 3: no. 371; Doran 2006, 32-34; Fry 2014a, 274-75; Grant 2008, 212-15; Mackie 1924, 271-73, 275, 277, 280; Mackie 1912, 377-78; Warner 1905, 124-25. Scholars often include James Ogilvy of Pourie in this list, although evidence shows that he was, in fact, an official agent of Anna to Denmark in 1596, see RA, TKUA Skotland A II, 3.

28 Loomie 1963, 12. Fry discusses the relatively common need for ambassadors to make an 'executive decision' without the sanction of their sovereign, and provides the excellent example of William Asheby having promised James VI 'a larger pension to fund a personal guard, a dukedom ... and official recognition of his claim to the English throne', on behalf of Elizabeth I, which was promptly disavowed, see Fry 2014b, 82-86.

Cecil (1563–1612), that lasted – without the knowledge of the aging English queen – right up to her death in March 1603.<sup>29</sup>

It was during this period of highly politic manoeuvring and intrigue that Abercrombie is reputed by some to have overseen Anna's conversion, rather than the earlier date of 1592/3 posited by Meikle and Payne. James was evidently capable of orchestrating a determined and ambitious programme of international diplomacy and, by this time, he had been laying the groundwork for his English accession for almost two decades. However, the possibility that Anna's religious politicking assisted his realisation of this aim cannot be overlooked. Rumoured among select Catholic dignitaries and some elite Scottish Catholics, Anna's faith helped James's quest for the English throne in three crucial ways.<sup>30</sup> Firstly, Anna's alignment with the Catholic and pro-Spanish network at the Scottish court assisted James's maintenance of a delicate power-balance where he kept the Kirk, the Catholic faction, and the pro-English group onside, while offsetting them against one another.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, Anna's Catholicism strengthened James's popularity among Catholics – both locally and abroad – believing that he would better the situation for their English co-religionists, and hoping that he might convert, and/or that the royal children might be brought up Catholic. Thirdly, it added weight to discussions around James's own religious beliefs and his levels of toleration, which have been interpreted by scholars as a strategy to heighten Elizabeth's insecurities, and pressure her to confirm him as her heir.<sup>32</sup>

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29 Akrigg 1984, 9-10. For James's letters to Cecil during this time 178-207, letters 79-92. See also Doran 2006, 39-42; Peck 1982, 18-19, who adds that other courtiers implicated in the correspondence included Edward Bruce, Lord Kinloss (1548/9–1611) and John Erskine, Earl of Mar (ca.1562–1634) in Scotland, and Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton (1540–1614) in England.

30 By 1600, Catholics who are known to have been close to Anna and suspected of knowledge of her Catholicism include the Earl and Countess of Huntly, William Douglas, 10th Earl of Angus (1552–1611), Francis Hay, 9th Earl of Erroll (1564–1631), George Conn (d.1640), Alexander Seton, 1st Earl of Dunfermline (1555–1622), James Elphinstone, 1st Lord Balmerino (ca.1553–1612), Helen Hay, Lady Livingstone (d.1627), Jane Drummond (ca.1585–1643), Elizabeth Gordon of Gight, Countess of Dunbar (ca.1575–1645), William Schaw, Master of the Works (ca.1550–1602), Francis Stewart, 1st Earl of Bothwell (1562–1612), Sir James Lindsay, James Wood of Boniton (d.1601) and a select number of Scottish Jesuits including Alexander MacQuhirrie and Robert Abercrombie. Knowledge of Anna's Catholicism outside of Scotland extended to the recipients of letters from the abovementioned people as well as Catholic notables such as the Scottish Jesuit William Crichton (ca.1535–1615) who was resident in Spain, Claudio Acquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus in Rome (1543–1615), John Stuart, Prior of the Monastery at Ratisbon, Pope Clement VIII, Cardinal Scipione Borghese, and Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (1571–1621).

31 Fry points out that not only did James succeed in this regard, but he also managed to avoid excommunication and to maintain peaceful relations with Spain and England, Fry 2014a, 273-74.

32 Grant 2008, 215-16, 226-27, 233-35; Fry 2014b, 97-8.

In 1601, Anna followed James's example and wrote to powerful Catholics including Pope Clement VIII and Cardinal Borghese to secure their support for James's bid for the throne. As queen consort, however, she was in a position to take greater risks than James and she couched her appeals within statements of personal Catholicism. For example, in her letter to Borghese of 31 July 1601, Anna asserts that she is writing 'with the grace of the Holy Spirit from the heretic darkness towards the true and honest light of Catholics'.<sup>33</sup> As Warner notes, the use of ambiguous personal pronouns throughout the letter works to encourage the view of James's complicity and adds credence to his possible conversion. This is heightened by Anna's statement that the messenger carrying the letter is acting as a plenipotentiary and is able 'to publicly confess the Catholic faith from our name towards the Holy Apostolic See'.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in her letter to Clement VIII, Anna directly sought papal support for James's English succession, and then moved to request protection for herself and her children. She sought absolution from the pope for 'attending the rites of heretics', which in these 'hostile times', she claimed, 'we are compelled to endure'.<sup>35</sup> While Warner and Mackie acknowledge that James used Anna's Catholicism as a political tool in his quest for the English crown, they do not consider the possibility that Anna's professions, while being genuine expressions of piety, may have been politically motivated.<sup>36</sup> By confirming her Catholicism to notable Catholic officials, Anna was able to legitimise the promises and assurances that James had already made about the Catholic question. Significantly, when James was finally announced as Elizabeth's successor in March 1603, it was the first time in English history that a new dynasty had peacefully taken the throne.

### **The English Reign: Negotiating the Anglo-Spanish Peace**

In the opening years of James's English reign, Anna's Catholicism continued to be of political assistance. James was set on brokering peace with Spain, and at the level of international relations, negotiations focussed on the Catholic question. Philip III of Spain (1578–1621) was resolute that English Catholics were to be granted freedom of conscience as a term for peace. Accordingly, Philip sent Juan de Tassis, 2nd Count of Villamediana (1581–1622), to assess the religious climate of England, and to report on the attitudes and convictions of the English and their king. For his part, James was well

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33 The full transcription of the Latin letter is published in Warner 1905, citing BL Add MS 37021.

34 Warner 1905, 126 (*italics mine*).

35 As quoted in Loomie 1971, 305, citing Biblioteca Vaticana, MSS Marberini Latini 8618, fols.15-16 (*italics mine*).

36 Warner 1905, 125-26; Mackie 1924, 271, 274, 277, 282.

aware that Tassis had to see Catholic toleration as a definite possibility, and he consequently sent the Catholic Scotsman and courtier, Sir James Lindsay, to meet twice with Tassis. The first meeting occurred in September or October 1603 and, acting under royal instruction, Lindsay reminded Tassis of the good relationship that James enjoyed with Rome. More importantly, perhaps, Lindsay deliberately recounted that while in Scotland the queen had been under the guidance of the Jesuit priest Abercrombie, that she had received the Holy Sacrament before she left for England, and that she had a 'private oratory in her apartments'.<sup>37</sup> While Loomie states that 'what Lindsey [sic] hoped to gain... was far from clear', what is critical here is what James hoped to gain.<sup>38</sup> By sending the Catholic Scotsman to confirm Anna's Catholicism to the Spanish envoy, the king was hoping that Tassis would assume that since he allowed himself a Catholic wife then he would most certainly be open to toleration for English Catholics; Philip III's main term for peace.

Reinforcing Tassis's belief that James would improve the situation for Catholics in England, was also the main aim of Lindsay's second visit to the Spanish envoy in December 1603.<sup>39</sup> Importantly, as was the case with Abercrombie mentioned above, James knew that Tassis would report these points back to the Spanish king and Council of State, and this was exactly what happened. In his dispatch of 14 September 1603 to Philip III, Tassis dispelled the rumour that had been circulating in Spain for over a year that James would convert and, crucially, he confirmed Anna's Catholicism based solely on the information that he had received from Lindsay, since he had still not been granted an audience.<sup>40</sup> Then, in front of an elite, and relatively public, audience, Anna visualised her support for Spain, simultaneously encouraging perceptions that she was pro-Spain, and that England was ready to enter formal negotiations. On 8 January 1604, Anna's first court masque, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, was performed at Hampton Court. The Spanish ambassador, Tassis, was the queen's guest of honour and she accordingly sat him under a canopy to the right of King James.<sup>41</sup> She also wore 'a scarf and a red streamer', which the French Ambassador Christophe de Harlay, Comte de Beaumont (ca.1570–1615), pointedly interpreted as an express honour to Tassis, who was similarly attired in red.<sup>42</sup>

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37 Loomie 1963, 24, citing Seccion de Estado, Archivo General de Simancas E 841/155 (italics mine).

38 Loomie 1963, 24.

39 Loomie 1963, 27.

40 Loomie 1963, 24.

41 Sullivan 1973, 14.

42 Sullivan 1973, 16. The original French correspondence is 194, appendix 6, citing King's MSS, cxxiv, fol.720.

Anna was not alone in her decision to visually support Spain during *The Vision*. Nadine Akkerman argues that Anna's staunchly Protestant lady-in-waiting, Lucy Harington, Countess of Bedford (1580–1627), masqueraded in a specifically Catholic dress during the masque. Noting that Bedford played the role of Vesta, or religion, Akkerman observes that Lucy was attired in red with a headpiece 'like a nun, the cap denoting religion', which she interprets as 'an act of reconciliation'.<sup>43</sup> The colours and costumes that Anna and Lucy chose to wear were not indicative of their genuine faith or support of Catholicism, but rather, this Catholic role-playing is an example of religion being marshalled for politics. Following his accession, it is clear that James stopped masquerading as a potential Catholic convert, but that he continued to use Anna's Catholicism – and to support her use of it – to encourage the belief among Philip and his councillors that he was willing to better the situation of the English Catholics. To reinforce this perception amongst the Catholic powers more generally, James granted significant pardons to recusants in July 1603, which saw the total number of fines drop by almost 80% from the previous year.<sup>44</sup>

### **Matrimonial Alliances and Ambitions**

Anna's Catholic alliances and strategic professions of her Catholic faith supported James in balancing the Presbyterian and Catholic factions in Scotland, securing the English succession, and the brokering of peace with Spain. In 1611 and again in 1617, Anna sought to use her Catholicism to assist with Stuart foreign policy, although now the recipients were Spanish ambassadors and the intention was to buttress the Stuart bid for a marriage alliance with the Habsburgs. Interestingly, Anna's dealings with the Spanish ambassadors reveal the difficulty of her position as she endeavoured to satisfy them that she was a genuine Catholic, while concurrently preserving her outward stance as a devout Protestant.<sup>45</sup>

Writing to Philip III on 27 September 1611, the Spanish Ambassador, Alonso de Velasco (d.1620), claimed that a Scottish priest was being concealed

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43 Akkerman 2014, 302-303.

44 Loomie 1963, 14-15; Seccion de Estado, Archivo General de Simancas E 840/119 'avisos de Londres' 19 June; Dietz 1928.

45 While beyond the scope of this article, it should be remembered that the House of Stuart persistently pursued a number of Catholic options, of which Spain was just one, and Anna's role in those negotiations is deserving of investigation. Furthermore, there were a number of Catholic factions in Britain at this time; being pro-Catholic did not necessarily mean being pro-Spanish. This is emphatically outlined by Antonio Foscarini, the Venetian ambassador, who writes that 'in England there are twelve parties, one of Catholics dependent on the Jesuits in Spain; two of Catholics who swear fealty to the king, and obey his Majesty in temporal matters; three of the indifferent; four of the religion of his majesty and two Puritan parties'. CSPV, vol. 15, 386-401.

at Anna's court under the pretence of being a 'servant' of her Catholic first lady Jane Drummond (ca.1585–1643), adding that the priest said Mass, but did not administer the sacrament to the queen.<sup>46</sup> The letter has been variously interpreted by scholars, with Loomie suggesting that Anna did not take the sacrament as she still attended Protestant services with James, but that 'she permitted Catholics to use her chapel'.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, Meikle and Payne interpret the report to mean that the priests punished Anna for her outward conformity by withholding the sacrament and confession, which is more likely.<sup>48</sup> It remains unclear however, whether Velasco had personally seen the priest, or whether he had been told of the priest's existence by Anna or Jane. Either way though, it is significant that the ambassador was informed, and it should be contextualised within the diplomatic negotiations surrounding the much-desired, but confessionally-problematic marital alliance with Spain.

Anna's investment in a marriage with Spain should not be seen solely as the result of her Catholic leanings, for James too, was eager for a Catholic bride, and the House of Stuart courted several options beyond Spain, including Florence, Savoy, and France, and it was with the latter kingdom that a marriage alliance was eventually brokered. Pointedly then, it is more likely that Anna's favour for a Habsburg marriage stemmed from political and familial considerations. It was well known that Anna was proud of her Austrian Habsburg ancestry, which included, on her father's side, Isabella of Austria (1501–1526), sister of the all-powerful Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (1500–1558), who had married Christian II of Denmark-Norway (1481–1559) – Anna's first cousin twice removed. On the other side, Anna's great-great-great grandmother was Elizabeth of Austria (1454–1492) from the royal house of Habsburg. Well aware of the rank and precedence attached to the Habsburgs, Anna repeatedly reminded foreign emissaries of these connections. For example, following the signing of the Treaty of London in 1604, Juan Fernández de Velasco, the Constable of Castile (ca.1550–1613) and one of the Spanish delegates, reported to Philip III that Anna 'is extremely devoted to the house of Austria and always mentions with great pride her relationship to it'.<sup>49</sup> Later, in December 1618, the Venetian diplomat Antonio Foscarini reported to the Doge and Senate that the queen 'is descended on the female side from the House of Austria in which she takes great pride. She has an intimate friendship with the Infanta archduchess [Isabella] and calls her sister'.<sup>50</sup>

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46 Loomie 1971, 308, citing Seccion de Estado, Archivo General de Simancas, E 2588, fol.66, Velasco to Philip III, 27 September 1611.

47 Loomie 1971, 312.

48 Loomie 1971, 312; Meikle and Payne 2013, 62. See also Payne 2001a, 241-43, 245, 247-69.

49 Translated from the Spanish and published in Loomie 1973, 42, letter 8.

50 CSPV, vol.15, 392, no.658, 19 December 1618.

From as early as 1604, James and Anna were canvassing a match between their eldest son and heir, Prince Henry, and the eldest Infanta of Spain, Ana Maria (1601–1666).<sup>51</sup> On 13 January 1605, Nicolò Molin (d.1617) stated that the question of a Spanish or French bride for Prince Henry had been discussed between the queen and ‘a number of Privy Councillors’ and that ‘almost all of them, and the Queen foremost, showed themselves very favourable to this [Spanish] match’.<sup>52</sup> Anna’s investment in a marriage with Spain was presumably threefold: of all the European powers, the Habsburgs were possessed of pre-eminently illustrious lineage; as an extremely wealthy kingdom, the Stuarts could hope to gain a larger dowry than that offered by Savoy, Tuscany, or even France; and thirdly, as abovementioned, Anna was exceptionally proud of her own Habsburg connections, which is likely to have coloured her attitude to potential matrimonial candidates.<sup>53</sup> Foscarini’s dispatch, to the Doge and Senate on 31 May 1612, is revealing in this regard. He asserts that ‘the Queen [Anna] remarked to one of the leading personages of de Bouillon’s suite that she would prefer a Princess of France without a dowry to a Florentine Princess with any amount of gold they might offer’.<sup>54</sup> It is worth pointing out, however, that this incident can also be seen as another example of Anna’s religious politicking. Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne and Duc de Bouillon (1555–1623) was a French Protestant, who was sent to England in 1612 as ambassador extraordinary to broker the French match. Thus, Anna was strategically relaying exactly what she knew Bouillon would want to hear, and it is perhaps significant too, that she made no mention of the Savoyard match, which was gaining traction at this time.

While Anna verbally expressed her support for a marital union with Spain, she is also known to have fashioned her physical appearance to indicate Spanish leanings. In the same manner as her political self-fashioning in the lead-up to the Spanish negotiations mentioned above, Anna again chose the semi-public masque as the site for her display. During the performance of *The Masque of Beauty*, on 10 January 1608, Anna wore the jewelled collar inherited from Mary Tudor (1516–1558) that was adorned with the ciphers ‘P’ and ‘M’, which Philip II had given to the Tudor queen.<sup>55</sup> This was calculated politicking. The necklace was intended to signal the queen’s support for the

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51 Loomie 1971, 307; Gardiner 1869, 103-05.

52 CSPV, vol. 10, 208, no.325, 13 January 1605.

53 The question of a match between Prince Henry and a daughter of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany had been broached as early as spring 1601 when James was still angling for the English succession. At this time the dowry was set at 300,000 French crowns (£75,000 sterling), which is a fraction of what James later demanded from Tuscany, Savoy, France, and Spain after becoming King of England. See Mackie 1924, 282; Mackie 1927, xvii.

54 CSPV, vol.12, 365, no. 539, 31 May 1612.

55 Scarisbrick 1995, 14, 53, 75-76; Ungerer 1998, 156-57.

Stuart-Habsburg marriage and would have reminded Spain of their previous union with England, underscoring the fact that such a match was highly possible, for it had precedent. Anna's desire for a Spanish marriage alliance continued unabated. Even after considerable setbacks with the engagement of Philip III's eldest daughter to King Louis XIII (1601–1643), in November 1611, and the premature death of Prince Henry on 6 November 1612, James and Anna still looked to a match with Spain, although an alliance with France likewise remained a serious consideration. In regard to Spain, the marriage was now to be between Philip III's second daughter Maria Anna (1606–1646) and the new heir to the British thrones, Prince Charles. In August 1614, it was reported 'that the queen is in favour of it [a marriage with Spain]', and it was still being 'much discussed... especially in the queen's court' in March 1616.<sup>56</sup> The conditions outlined by the Habsburgs during the preliminary negotiations for both matches were strongly focussed on the issue of religion. While James was primarily concerned about the dowry, Philip III, and subsequently Philip IV (1605–1665), were adamant that, in addition to the Infanta being given confessional freedom, the bridegroom was to convert to Catholicism, and toleration was to be granted to English Catholics.

The religious demands of the Spanish underscore the importance that rested on the Catholic question, particularly in England. Considering the political advantages that Anna's Catholicism had previously brought, it is logical that she would seek to remind Spanish officials of her Catholicism in order to add weight to the likelihood that some of the Spanish terms for religion could be fulfilled. She certainly tried such an approach when the Stuarts were looking to a marital alliance with Tuscany in 1612. Attempting to smooth over some of the religious demands for the marriage, Anna personally wrote to Pope Paul V. She professed her Catholic faith, requested his consent to the marriage and signed the letter 'obedientissima filia' (obedient daughter).<sup>57</sup> However, Paul V was not convinced of Anna's Catholicism. Writing to the Nuncio at Paris on 15 August 1612, Paul V voiced concerns about what he perceived were 'the queen's frequent changes in religion'. The pope added that he did not believe in Anna's most recent shift to Catholicism, or in her declarations of

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56 CSPV, vol.13, 171-2, no.356, 8 August 1614; CSPV, vol.14, 155, no.219, 19 March 1616.

57 I have been unable to trace the original letter. The first reference to it is found in Galluzzi 1781, 323. Galluzzi's account of the Stuart-Medici marriage negotiations carried out at the Grand Ducal court in 1611-12 is apparently drawn from material in the Medici archives although he provides no reference. The passage in question reads: *Assieurava del desiderio e delle istanze di tutti i buoni Cattolici di quel Regno perchè ciò avesse effetto, e finalmente con una lettera tutta di suo pugno indirizzata a Sua Santità di cui si dichiarava obbedientissima figlia lo pregava a credere a quel di più che il Lotti gli averebbe manifestato in suo nome*. The letter, as given by Galluzzi, is subsequently cited by Bellesheim 1889, vol.III, 350, note 2; Ranke 1837, 371-406, 397; Mackie 1924, 282.

her faith, which he referred to as her 'good words'.<sup>58</sup> Rome, then, understood Anna's Catholicism to be in word only, and without conviction or action, which highlights the difficult position that Anna was in as she strove to uphold a reputation of outward conformity. Accordingly, despite the queen's efforts to reassure Paul V of her Catholicism, in order to secure the British-Florentine marriage, Rome dismissed the match between Henry and Caterina de' Medici (1593–1629). The pope's rejection of the alliance underscores the importance that was placed on the question of religion and the possible benefits of Anna's Catholicism. This is readily borne out by a comment made by the Spanish Ambassador in 1614, when he states that Anna was:

a Catholic and her Lady of the Bedchamber [Jane Drummond] most Catholic, and it is in the company of these two persons that the Princess [Maria Anna] will have to be, which will greatly lessen the inconvenience of the attraction of the wife and children to the husband [the future King Charles I].<sup>59</sup>

If Anna could assure Catholic officials that she was a genuine co-religionist, then the Stuarts would be more likely to broker a cross-confessional marriage alliance, for the queen would be able to protect the religious rights of a Catholic bride. Unfortunately for the Stuarts, however, the greater political need to placate Protestant English and Scots compromised Anna's success.

Given the perceived advantage of Anna promoting a particularly Catholic religious identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that she would try a similar tactic in 1617. At this time, negotiations for a Spanish marriage were again intensifying. On 7 April 1617, Giovanni Battista Lionello, Venetian Secretary in England, observed that James was 'very anxious to make an alliance with Spain, the queen is inclined the same way and the prince also'.<sup>60</sup> In August 1617, John Digby, Earl of Bristol (1580–1653), was dispatched to Madrid to begin formal talks.<sup>61</sup> Two months later, on 22 October 1617, Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador to England, reported to Philip III that Anna maintained a chaplain and a priest at Oatlands, but added that Anna 'is not a very good Catholic... there are many days when she doesn't take the Sacrament and doesn't confess

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58 Letter of Paul V to the Nuncio at Paris, 15 August 1612, as cited in Bliss 1889, 110.

59 Gardiner 1869, 121, note a.

60 CSPV, vol.14, 484, no.718, 6 April 1617.

61 Smith 2004. It should be noted that the possible Stuart-Habsburg alliance was of great interest in Denmark-Norway and the political implications of the match were being freely discussed at court. Further, once back in London, Digby made sure to inform Sir Robert Anstruther (1578–1644/5?) of the care he had provided to the Danish agents in Madrid, which Anstruther relayed to Christian IV, see RA, TKUA England A II, 7.

because they don't want to absolve her... and [she] favours some puritans to the scandal of good nobles [ie. Catholics]'.<sup>62</sup> As she had done with Velasco several years earlier, Anna was trying to persuade Gondomar that she was a co-religionist in order to further the marriage talks. While some scholars, including Loomie, Barbara Lewalski, and Clare McManus have mentioned Anna's Catholicism at play in the cross-confessional marriage negotiations at the Stuart court, it is generally in passing, and it is unequivocally accepted that her only intention was to secure a fellow Catholic daughter-in-law with little regard for, or understanding of, the political climate or consequences.<sup>63</sup> The possibility that Anna favoured matches for political rather than, or as well as, religious reasons, and that she used her Catholicism to assist marriage negotiations for her sons, has not been considered.

### Religion in the 'privacy' of the Palace

Despite the political element of Anna's professions of faith to the Spanish ambassadors, these dispatches have only been cited as proof of her Catholicism. Scholars such as McCullough, Lewalski, Loomie, and Payne and Meikle, among others, have argued that Anna practised Catholicism in her own residences and was aided by Catholic members of her household. Looking to Anna's main residence of Somerset House,<sup>64</sup> Meikle and Payne follow Simon Thurley's suggestion that 'the little room between the two galleries' likely served as private oratory for Anna to secretly hear Catholic mass and make confession.<sup>65</sup> The tendency to read this room in such a fashion is due to its furnishings, for it was home to a crucifix in an ebony case and five paintings, four of which were religious in subject: *the Walk to Calvary*; *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*; *the Virgin Mary*; and *a Pietà*. The two paintings of the Virgin, together with a coronation portrait of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth I, were fitted with green taffeta curtains, which usually served as a form of protection, or to control their visibility. For Thurley, the presence of these paintings establishes the room as Anna's 'secret oratory', and he claims that aside from the Great Gallery, this was the only room in the palace that 'was furnished with devotional pictures'.<sup>66</sup> This, however, is incorrect, for Somerset

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62 Fitz-James, 1936, 109 (Gondomar to Philip III, 22 October 1617). Meikle and Payne also cite this letter, but make no mention of Gondomar's doubts about the genuine nature of Anna's Catholicism, see 2013, 62.

63 Loomie 1971, 308-09, 311; Lewalski 1993, 21; McManus 2002, 136, 203.

64 James officially changed the name of Somerset House to Denmark House in March 1617. For matters of consistency, the palace will be referred to by the more common title of 'Somerset House' in this article. For a discussion of the diplomatic context, and possible political motivations, of this decision see Field 2015, 198-99.

65 Thurley 2009, 43; Meikle and Payne 2013, 62-63.

66 Thurley 2009, 43.

House sported a number of religious paintings with four hanging in the Great Bedchamber: three featuring Christ, and one of Mary Magdalene, while the Cabinet held a miniature of St Anne and one of Christ, and the room beyond the Cross Gallery contained an image of the Resurrection.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, situated between the two galleries, this 'little room' was in a relatively public area of the palace. It would have undoubtedly received visitors, and would not have been suitable for the practise of apparently clandestine Catholic observances.<sup>68</sup> Anna's involvement in selecting these paintings, and her engagement with them, is difficult to determine, but there is one instance that sheds precious light on her affinity and ownership. Residing at Hampton Court during her final illness in 1618, Anna 'sent for' six religious paintings from Oatlands Palace to be hung in her rooms at Hampton Court: 'A picture of our Saviour at his passeon & Maudy'; a 'picture of our Saviour's birth, & ye shepherds coming to him with Gloria in excelsis'; a 'picture of our Saviour, our Lady, Joseph & Mary'; a 'picture of night worke, when ye souldiers put scornefully a reede into our Saviours hand'; and 'An other of our Saviour with ye woman of Samaria'.<sup>69</sup> This suite of paintings would have, as Erin Griffey has noted, provided Anna with devotional solace as 'an exemplar for a noble, Christian death'.<sup>70</sup> Importantly, we know that Anna dutifully looked upon the paintings, as a letter from one of her attendants reports that the queen came 'to hir gallerie everie day allmost, yit still wayk [weak] of hir leggs that scho [she] could not stand wpon them'.<sup>71</sup> When the queen finally passed away, on 2 March 1619, it was widely reported that she died an honourable Protestant death, whereby the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London 'kneiled at hir bed syde... and thairefter said a prayer, and word by word scho [she] followes them' until her last moments when 'hir hart, hir eyes, hir face, was fixed upon God'.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, as Lewalski, Meikle and Payne argue, this testimony was 'probably fictionalised' to ensure that the queen was known to have died 'a good Protestant death', which would have been crucial to maintaining her reputation, and that of the monarchy, as the figurehead of the Church of England.<sup>73</sup>

The presence of religious paintings in Anna's residences does not point to her Catholicism, but should be read as evidence of her judicious understanding of what was deemed appropriate to the context: none of

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67 Payne 2001b, 39, 36, fols. 24r-v, 18v.

68 Girouard 1978, 100-02.

69 East Sussex Record Office, Glynde MS 320, fol.12r.

70 Griffey 2015, 71-2.

71 Maidment 1837, 5.

72 Maidment 1837, 5, 7.

73 Lewalski 1993, 27, 334, note 55; Meikle and Payne 2013, 68.

the paintings could be held against her (or James) as a sign of popery, for such imagery was considered suitable in numerous Protestant interiors – of Lutherans and Anglicans – in Britain, Denmark-Norway, and many German cities and towns. In the first instance, the painting depicting Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, which was hanging ‘in the little room between ye two galleries’ at Somerset House formerly belonged to Anna’s Calvinist son, Prince Henry, and has been identified as the work by Hans Vredeman de Vries (1526–1609) which is still in the Royal Collection.<sup>74</sup> Anna’s other son, the future King Charles I, repeatedly exhibited a marked proclivity for Marian imagery, having paintings of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene in his Bedchamber at Whitehall Palace, while a large quantity of religious paintings were displayed in his Cabinet. These included depictions of the Virgin, Christ, and numerous saints, and even a supposedly very Catholic image – a Madonna Lactans – which, like Anna’s version at Oatlands Palace, was equipped with its own curtain.<sup>75</sup> Beyond the visual proclivities of the Stuarts however, the research of Tara Hamling and Bridget Heal has persuasively demonstrated that intercessors – including the Virgin Mary – continued to play a central role in visual and liturgical practices in post-Reformation England and Germany.<sup>76</sup> However, as these authors rightly stress, a highly nuanced approach needs to be exercised in the question of the religious tolerance of devotional images, for this was not a doctrinaire approach, but one predicated by local cultural, social, and political circumstance.<sup>77</sup> Extending the discussion of the devotional aids used by Anna’s Lutheran siblings further dispels the argument that her display of religious artworks was thoughtless confirmation of Catholicism.<sup>78</sup> Both King Christian IV of Denmark (1577–1648) and Anna’s younger sister

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74 Wilks 1997, 42; Millar 1958, 52, no.56. For the painting, see RCIN 405475.

75 For the Marian images in the Bedchamber, see Millar 1958, 36, nos.6, 9, 10; for the religious paintings in the Cabinet, see 79, no.17; 80, nos.19, 21; 81, nos.26, 28; 82, nos.31, 33; 83, nos.36-38; 84, nos.40, 41; 85, no.44; 86, nos.53, 55; 87, nos.58, 59; 89, nos.68, 70, 71; 90, no.75, 76; 91, no.78. See also Griffey 2015. Anna’s Madonna Lactans was displayed in the Cabinet at Oatlands Palace and was fixed with a green taffeta curtain, East Sussex Record Office, Glynde MS 320, fol.8r.

76 Heal 2007, 2-8, 64-148, esp.109-114; Heal 2011; Heal 2017, 4-8, Hamling 2010, 25-65, esp. 38-43. Heal not only highlights the variance of approach among Protestants, but extends this argument to the Catholic faith, which likewise sheltered a diversity of positions and beliefs, and should not be seen as a monolithic or homogenous entity. On the roles of religious imagery – beyond that of the Virgin Mary – in ecclesiastic and domestic Lutheran interiors in Electoral Saxony and Brandenburg during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see Heal 2017.

77 Furthermore, as the discussion above shows, by the close of the sixteenth century, a complex range of positions were sheltered under the blanket terms of ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’.

78 On Luther’s attitude to images, and a discussion of the response of Lutheran theology to Calvinist posturing, see Heal 2007, 142-46; Heal 2017, 16-39. For the complex relationship, more broadly, between Reformed faith and the visual arts, see Koerner 2003.

Augusta, Duchess of Holstein-Gottorf (1580–1639), had private oratories that were magnificently decorated. Christian's oratory at Frederiksborg Castle, for example, was hung with paintings featuring scenes from the Life of Christ by a selection of artists including the Dutch Pieter Lastman (1583–1633), and the Danish Pieter Isaacsz (1569–1625), and it also featured a painting of the penitential Christian IV kneeling before the Crucified Christ.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the adjoining Royal Chapel at Frederiksborg was dominated by a magnificent ebony and silver-gilt altarpiece, dating to 1606–8, and featuring the Crucifixion in the central panel.<sup>80</sup> In the case of Augusta, a quantity of her stamped devotional objects have survived, which show that she owned an elaborate gilt-silver ebony altarpiece featuring the Crucifixion with the compartmentalised panel wings offering scenes from the Passion.<sup>81</sup> In addition, she possessed a personal gold and enamel altar set that was adorned with sapphires and precious stones. Comprising a wine jug, oblate box, chalice, and paten, the set was richly engraved with various scenes from the Passion.<sup>82</sup> As these examples attest, Anna's ownership and use of religious imagery cannot be contextually interpreted as evidence of Catholicism, for it is clear such subjects were concurrently considered appropriate by royal Lutherans (Christian IV and Augusta of Holstein-Gottorf), Calvinists (Prince Henry), and Anglicans (Charles I).

Writing on Anna's collection of paintings at Denmark House, Erin Griffey recognises that the queen 'felt a particular affinity with Passion imagery', which she notes was not shared by her Catholic successor, the French queen consort Henrietta Maria (1609–1669).<sup>83</sup> It was, however as shown above, evidently shared by her Lutheran siblings, Christian and Augusta.<sup>84</sup> In line with the work of Heal and Hamling, these various examples remind us that religious imagery persisted in England (and Lutheran Denmark-Norway and the German lands) after the Reformation, and that their existence and use cannot always be used as an index to the confessional identity of the owner.<sup>85</sup> This is especially true considering the late-sixteenth-century fracture of Lutheranism into Gnesio-

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79 Heiberg 1988, 64-65.

80 Bencard 2011, 327.

81 Heiberg 1988, 202-05, nos.713, 714.

82 Heiberg 1988, 204-05, no.714.

83 Griffey 2015, 71.

84 On 'images of the crucified Christ' holding particular importance for Lutherans in the Freiberg region see Heal 2014, 49; and for Lutheranism more generally see Heal 2017, 125-57.

85 On the complexities of the existence and use of religious imagery in Reformation and post-Reformation England, see Hamling 2010, esp.25-65; for Germany see Heal 2007, 116-147; Heal 2011; Heal 2017. It should also be noted that crucifixes and religious ornaments were still evident in Calvinist Scotland in the 1630s, see Lawson 1844, 638-42.

Lutherans and the more moderate Melancthonians or Philippists, which aptly highlights the range of confessional positions existing within just one branch of Protestant Christianity.<sup>86</sup> For her contemporaries, Anna's possession of Marian and Passion imagery would not have necessarily indicated that she was a Catholic, for these images retained currency in various Protestant practices. We should remember too, that even the act of withdrawing to a private closet for religious meditation was not restricted to Catholics, for the Puritan diarist, Lady Margaret Hoby (bap.1571–1633), makes frequent mention of retiring 'privatly in my Closit... wher I praied'.<sup>87</sup> Evidently, even the puritanical in seventeenth-century England had hallowed spaces in their houses for private devotions. Thus, the little room that joined the two galleries at Somerset House, which would have been likely seen by visitors to the palace, could just as probably have been understood as a space reserved for the performance of Protestant reflections – thereby reinforcing Anna's outward demonstration of conformity – rather than furtive Catholic worshipping.

Recently, Meikle and Payne have argued that specifically Catholic devotional aids, such as rosaries, Agnus Dei, and Roman catechisms were the domain of Anna's select Ladies of the Bedchamber. Furthermore, they, together with Loomie, believe Jane Drummond was responsible for smuggling priests into Anna's palaces for the queen to hear Mass and make confession.<sup>88</sup> The likelihood that Anna's Catholic Bedchamber servants acted in this capacity is supported by the actions of her French Catholic page of the Bedchamber, Piero Hugon, around the time of her death in 1619. At this time, as Meikle and Payne discuss, Hugon removed a quantity of religiously contentious jewellery from Somerset House and sent it to Paris. He was later charged with theft, but the authors raise the likely possibility that he was acting under Anna's orders, ensuring that no distinctly Catholic jewels were found among her belongings after her death.<sup>89</sup> Such attentiveness would certainly accord with the lack of Catholic liturgical equipment in her accounts, and the absence of any definitively Catholic paintings in her residences: Anna made sure that none of her possessions could jeopardise the monarchy, or expose her carefully preserved outward conformity. In doing so however, Anna compromised her ability to convince co-religionists of the sincerity of her Catholicism. Somewhat paradoxically then, Anna was too successful in playing the Protestant, and while this was to James's benefit, it ultimately marred the potential for her Catholicism to be used in royal policy.

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86 Grane 1990, 180-183; Lockhart 2007, 63-77, 173-85; Farthing 2004, 9-11.

87 Quoted in Stewart 1995, 81.

88 Loomie 1971, 308, 312; Payne 2001a, 241-43, 247-69; Meikle and Payne 2013, 64-65.

89 Meikle and Payne 2013, 66-68.

## Conclusion

It is clear that on the level of international diplomacy, Anna's confessional identity carried a high political value. For the most part, however, scholars have been much too quick to accept that Anna's conversion was little more than a political embarrassment for James, and one that she was forced by her husband to keep secret. The possibility that Anna's political acuity was responsible for her decision to keep her Catholicism private, or that she tried to use her Catholicism for political benefit has rarely been considered. The ambiguity surrounding the dates of her conversion and the inconclusive nature of the evidence concerning Anna's Catholicism are proof of her success in keeping knowledge of her genuine beliefs contained. While maintaining an appearance of outward conformity, Anna, together with James, privately professed or qualified rumours of her Catholicism to a select few Catholics both locally and abroad as a matter of political expediency. Anna attempted to use her Catholicism to help balance the religious-based factions at the Scottish court, and to smooth the way for James's accession to the throne of England. She also employed her religion in the quest for peace with Spain, and to strengthen the Stuart's proposal for a Spanish marriage alliance. While there is little positive evidence of Anna's success in using her Catholicism to further royal policy, the possibility that she was an active member in the execution of Jacobean foreign policy is important and deserving of further research. In this context, it is worth considering the possibility that scholars have perhaps been too quick to buy into the religious rhetoric of the period: identifying people with a single confessional identity without duly considering the political advantages that could accompany a more ambivalent position – a position demonstrated by the confessional complexities of Anna of Denmark.

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