

**MBS TEXTE 148**



7. Jahrgang  
2010

*George M. Ella*

**John Durie (1596–1680):  
Defragmenter of the  
Reformation**



Reformed Forum

**Reformiertes Forum**

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# John Durie (1596–1680): Defragmenter of the Reformation

George M. Ella

## Part One: Europe and Britain Working Together

### *Who on earth is John Durie?*

Most computer users have experienced hard disks full of jumbled, fragmented files which block spaces causing memory and retrieval problems. What a relief it is to switch on a defragmenter and have everything made ship-shape again. The Reformation in mid-seventeenth century Britain had reached such a fragmentation and a defragmenter was called for. The man for the job was certainly John Durie who was possibly the most well-known man in Europe at the time and one whom countless crowned heads, church leaders, politicians, generals, educators, social reformers and humble men and women loved and respected. If anybody, he was the one to knit together again what denominationalism, legalism, rationalism, political strife, opportunism and personal ambition had rent asunder.

“Who on earth is John Durie?” you might well say; “Never heard of him!”. This common ignorance is one of the tragedies of our present confused churches. Britain has forgotten another of her greatest Christian heroes. Where

is the modern man of God today who is world-renowned as a great preacher, pastor, diplomat, educator, scientist, linguist, translator, man of letters, ambassador, library reformer, mediator and politician? Who today produces best-sellers on a monthly basis, writing in half a dozen different languages? In all these fields John Durie has been called ‘great’ or ‘the greatest’, yet he is forgotten by his mother country whom he served so long and well. This is perhaps because it is beyond human imagination that such a man could have existed and his ‘type’ today is not called for. Trevor-Roper, speaking of the great deeds of Durie and his colleagues in his *Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* says ‘the need produced the men’. Does it? We are in such a ten-fold need today but where are the men? Yet, Durie’s idea of a pan-European Reformed Church based on a reformation of church life and education was supported by the majority of Reformers and Puritans from Elizabeth’s days to post-Restitution times.

Durie was supported by Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, besides most of the crowned heads of Europe and the leaders of the various republics and Swiss cantons. Reformed Bishops and Archbishops Hall, Davenant, Morton,

Bedell, Abbott and Ussher backed Durie and even Laud promoted Durie's plan of Protestant unity in Europe with a surprising degree of enthusiasm as his letters show. Later, the Commonwealth parliaments and the Westminster Assembly fully supported Durie's enterprise. Indeed, John Durie was made a member of the Westminster Assembly and Britain's ambassador-at-large to Europe chiefly because of his lead in promoting a pan-European Protestant union and his great proficiency as a linguist. Cromwell is famed for his international diplomacy but without Durie's help, Cromwell would never have been taken seriously in Europe for a number of reasons. Indeed, when Charles' head fell, most of the Continental kingdoms and dukedoms broke with England. It was largely due to Durie's frequent diplomatic tours of the Continent that relations bettered. Thus when James Reid in his excellent *Memoirs of the Westminster Divines*, introduces Durie as: 'A Scotchman, and learned Divine, who was eminently distinguished by his indefatigable industry to promote union among Christians, and a member of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster', he does not reveal a fraction of Durie's value to Britain.

### *An exile Scotsman becomes a leader in Europe*

John Durie was born in Edinburgh in 1596 of a long line of ministers, diplomats, lairds and rebels. His grandfather of the same name worked with Knox

and Melville as pastor of St. Giles, Edinburgh. He was banished twice by the King but ended his life on a royal pension. John's father, Robert Durie was an ex-monk and Presbyterian minister in Anstruther, Fife, who had evangelised Lewis, the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands. After a short prison sentence and growing differences with James VI which led him to extreme measures, he was found guilty of treason and exiled in 1606. He and his young family found a new home in Leyden, Holland. There John was educated in French, Dutch, German, and Latin and matriculated in theology aged 15 at Leyden University before doing further studies in Sedan under his cousin Andrew Melville. Other sources say that Durie finished his studies at Oxford because of the great libraries there. It is said that when Durie travelled anywhere in Europe, he would adopt the clothing and languages of the various countries and always be taken for a native. He even adapted his own name to suit the local language being known on the Continent as Johannes Duraeus and at least five other variants.

Now twenty-five years of age, Durie became a private teacher for two years in France, coaching the son of Barthelemy Panhausen, a Huguenot merchant. Then Durie was called to pastor the Belgic church in Cologne from 1624–1626 where he preached in French, Dutch and Latin. Durie's great talents as an internationalist reached Charles I's ears and he was asked to accompany Ambassador Extraordinary,

Lord James Spence on his Swedish journey to make Gustav II Adolf a knight of the Order of the Garter. Durie was accepted gladly by the Swedish Court and leading ministers and gained lifelong friends.

King Gustav decided to make Elbing in West Prussia the capital of his German-Polish territories and Durie was called in 1624 or 1625 to pastor the multi-national church there, originally founded by Scottish and English merchants. Durie found himself ministering in several languages again, now including Lithuanian. Because of the different church backgrounds involved, he pastored ‘ecumenically’ but based on the sound doctrines of the Reformation. Having qualms about not being ordained, he corresponded with Bishop Joseph Hall of Dortian fame on the subject. At this time Sweden had gone through a real indigenous Reformation so they did not feel obliged to accept any other major European Reformed Creeds whether Lutheran, Reformed or Anglican. They did, however, instruct their theological students in Melancthon’s *Confessio Augustana Variata* of 1540. This version toned down consubstantiation so much that it was accepted by both Calvin and Beza, leaving the Frenchmen less Reformed than the Church of England Reformers who followed Bullinger’s interpretation of the Lord’s Supper. The *Book of Concord* was not even on the curriculum. So, Michael Dewar is incorrect in saying that the Swedes held ‘tenaciously to the doctrine of Consubstantiation’.<sup>1</sup>

A small Gnesio-Lutheran faction campaigned for a full acceptance of the Lutheran formulas but there was a stronger Reformed group amongst the Swedish middle-class, a large group of Reformed Waldensians immigrants and a number of Greek Orthodox on the borders of Sweden’s Baltic Empire, each with their own views of the Lord’s Supper, so no one view prevailed. A recent chat this author had with Archbishop Anders Weyryd concerning Cromwell’s efforts for church union with Sweden confirmed that, even today, the State Church in Sweden allows local churches freedom in expressing faith rather than enforces nation-wide strict rules of faith and order. It must be added that not even the German Lutherans stood unanimously behind the *Book of Concord* which became a *Book of Discord* for many.<sup>2</sup>

Gustav Adolf also set up his High Court at Elbing and the new senior judge and Privy Councillor, Kaspar Godemann, who had recommended Durie as pastor to the King, was a fervent Reformed Unionist. Gustav called English statesman and Reformed Christian Thomas Roe as ambassador to mediate in the Swedish-German-Polish peace treaties. Roe soon told Durie that he, too, desired a stronger pan-European church and political union based on a common Reformed stand against Rome. Roe felt this union could stretch as far as Turkey as he had been successful in gaining an ear for Reformed doctrine during his ambassadorship there. A further resident of

Elbing, Samuel Hartlib, who was to help reform England's schools and agriculture under Cromwell, also shared Durie's views. Some time later, Durie's and Hartlib's friend and co-worker John Amos Comenius, the internationally famous Reformed theologian and educator, settled in Elbing, so for many years the city became the centre of international political, religious and educational reform.

Durie, Roe and Godemann began to work out a programmed strategy for international cooperation on the basis of the Reformed faith and Durie's two new friends begged him to resign his post at Elbing and solicit the English Court, Church and Parliament to send him out as England's negotiator in Europe for 'the procuring of true Gospel Peace, with Christian Moderation and Charitable Unity amongst the Protestant Churches and Academies'. Godemann felt that Durie was just the man to bring unity between the Germans and the Swedes and then bring in the other European countries. Roe thought that Durie could be very influential in settling disputes between Episcopalians and Presbyterians in Britain and strengthening Britain's close ties with Europe. Thus, armed with recommendations from Roe who represented Britain and Godemann who represented the vast territories conquered by Sweden, Durie returned to Britain, wondering how he would be accepted because of his family history. He need not have feared. Charles, was thankful for Durie's diplomatic services in

Sweden and Germany and Archbishop Abbot was immediately captivated by Durie's charm, faith and great sincerity. Both authorised Durie to represent Britain as ambassador to Europe in the interest of ecumenical peace. He was equipped with a limited budget, diplomatic passports and recommendations from leading politicians and clergy.

On the Scottish side, ties with Sweden at this time could hardly have been stronger as Gustav Adolf recruited armies from Scotland and a good number of his senior officers and advisors were Scotsmen. Throughout three reigns, Durie kept the Scottish churches and Assembly up to date on his mission of peace.

### *Plans for union mature*

Durie spent most of 1631 in England and published his *Instrumentum Theologorum Anglorum* and *Problemata de Pacis Ecclesiasticae* to which his Reformed supporters such as Richard Sibbes, John Davenport, Samuel Ward, Richard Holdsworth, Philip Nye, John White, Cornelius Burgess, Thomas Edwards, Thomas Goodwin, Daniel Featley and Joseph Hall subscribed. Even Bishop Laud added his signature to a covering letter from Archbishop Abbot recommending the *Instrumentum* to the German and Dutch churches. Roe provided a covering letter to Oxenstierna, the Governor of Sweden's conquered territories. Whilst still in England (March, 1631), the news reached Durie that the Reformed and Lutheran

princes at the influential Leipzig Colloquy had agreed to work together on lines suggested by Durie and wished for him to return to Germany. This was mainly through the efforts of Prof. Johannes Bergius of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder who swore he would never rest until Europe had one united Protestant church. Bergius, chaplain to the Brandenburg court, was a great contender for Reformed principles and turned down an invitation to the Synod of Dort because he felt that the Dutch and German Puritans had departure from the Reformed faith. He had no qualms, however, about supporting the English delegates and Durie. Bergius asked learned Joseph Mede to aid Durie, but the latter, already a Unionist supporter, answered, 'From his wisdom and abilities therein, I am fitter to receive knowledge and instruction than to censure or give direction.'<sup>3</sup> Naturally the princes at the Colloquy had also a political aim in promoting Unionism. They wished to give Protestant Germany a stronger 'third-party' bargaining position with Sweden and the Roman Catholics. This was necessary for Germany's own self-respect as for the next thirty years or so, Sweden counted herself as the pivoting centre of what they called their German Kingdom with the right to rule her. The Roman Catholic Emperor made the same claims but at a safe distance.

The academy of Sedan on the French, Belgium and Luxemburg borders now promised their cooperation and Durie found at first a cautious, then a strong interest at Zürich where he was given

substantial financial support by the city. Thereafter, Protestant Switzerland became Durie's chief supporter.

Durie now felt that the time was ripe for concrete action as Oxenstierna, the Marquis of Brandenburg and the Duke of Hesse had enough pan-European influence between them to work out a permanent union with Britain. Their union, they claimed, had already been cemented in 1620 through the marriage of King Gustav to Maria Eleonora of Brandenburg. Durie was now invited to diets and convocations held in Hessen-Kassel, Hanau, Wetterau, Palatine, Heilbronn and Darmstadt and found his proposals backed by the Swedish and German political and religious authorities wherever he went. Frankfurt also voted to move towards church union. Brandenburg, the Palatine and Hessen-Kassel ruled to call a conference between the various denominations to take definite steps towards a common Reformed statement of faith. At the Heilbronn Conference in 1633, all the delegates from all the non-Roman Catholic churches voted to adopt Durie's plans for union and this was the case in Mainz and Darmstadt where Sweden still held the reins. However, the Lutheran universities, with the exception of Helmstedt still opposed Durie's plans.

Helmstedt, the great centre of Reformation learning in Germany, was radically influenced by Unionist George Kallisen or Callixt (1586–1656). He angered the Gnesio-Lutherans by rejecting the *Book of Concord* and the

Lutheran dogma of ubiquity. This became the official stance of Helmstedt in its debates with the Gnesio-Lutherans, the Swedish Reformed and the Roman Catholics. The Helmstedt theologians developed a balanced theology similar to that of the pre-Rebellion Church of England as an alternative to Gnesio-Lutheranism and the legalistic post-Reformed churches of the Heidelberg school.

Durie was received twice by Gustav Adolf at Würzburg who promised to give him letters of introduction to further Protestant rulers and churches. Gustav was killed at the Battle of Lützen before he could fulfil this promise. Sweden's Secretary of State Spence (another Scotsman) and Chancellor Oxenstierna, however, continued to give Durie full support. Gustav introduced Durie to his two chaplains Jacob Fabrius and Johannes Matthiae who were quickly won over to Durie's cause. When Matthiae became Princess Christina's private tutor and chaplain, he influenced her in taking a keen interest in plans for unity. Durie's correspondence with the Swedish Royal family and government and Matthiae's correspondence with many of the Unionists are still extant and open to researchers in the Uppsala and Stockholm archives. The full story of this correspondence and its subsequent enormous impact on the development of Europe, including England has still to be told. Sadly, in 1632, shortly after promising Durie that Sweden would

accept his plans, Gustav was killed in the Battle of Lützen. The Swedish Empire was left to be ruled by young Christina, born 1626 and educated as a Unionist, and the extremely competent Lord High Chancellor Oxenstierna whose first duties were political rather than religious. Durie realised he must return to Sweden as soon as possible.

## **Part Two: Ideas of Union Grow**

### *New terms under a new Archbishop*

Durie had to postpone plans to visit Sweden as in 1633 Archbishop Abbot died and Durie was called from Germany to report to the King and William Laud, the new Archbishop. On his way to England, Durie found an eager interest in Reformed union amongst the Dutch. Ever since becoming chaplain to the Earl of Dunbar in 1608, Abbott had campaigned for church union between all Reformed Churches whether Episcopal or Presbyterian. His policy was to leave England as James found it and leave Scotland as James left it but with the two churches joining hands in Reformed fellowship. Laud envisaged a merging of Continental protestant churches around the standards of the Thirty-Nine Articles. The author of *A Romish Recusants Life of Archbishop Laud*, argues that Laud wanted to make himself a protestant pope to rival the papist pope. Luther, Westphal, Calvin, Beza and Cromwell all had such dreams. Abbott had thus



blocked Laud's proposals for a Scottish-English church union from 1606 to 1633. When Laud took over, he revoked Abbot's church-union strategy. It was thus a very anxious Durie who returned to England. Laud has had a most negative write-up recently, especially by neo-Presbyterians who forget that many of the Westminster Divines were trained, mentored and ordained by Laud and his like-minded bishops and furthered his politico-ecclesiastical policies during the Commonwealth period. They merely rejected what was least harmful in him: his Episcopalianism. Many a Commonwealth rebel looked to theological heroes such as Thomas Cartwright and Theodore Beza who campaigned for unity based on doctrines and orders of worship less Reformed than the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Irish Articles and the Reformed Prayer Book, i.e. the doctrines to which Laud held. In spite of highly contradictory opinions, Michael Dewar is historically correct in stating that Laud gave Durie 'every support', praising his work in the most glowing tones.<sup>4</sup> Laud wrote to Ambassador Roe informing him that the matter of union was so good a cause that if it failed, it would not be for lack of his support. Laud's method of financing Durie was not the best. He gave Durie a living in Devonshire to provide him with an adequate income but Durie protested that this was no good as he lived mostly abroad. Durie followed Laud's advice to appoint a curate but paid him a full minister's stipend so there was little left

for himself. There were other minor obstacles. Laud told Durie that in order to represent the Church of England, he must be ordained. Durie had been considering ordination for several years himself so he accepted Laud's advice and was ordained by Unionist Bishop Joseph Hall. Charles made Durie a royal chaplain and ambassador to Europe's courts,<sup>5</sup> but would not hear of church agreements without their governments' backing. Now, Durie had, with some restrictions, the Archbishop and King behind him; many leading politicians; some forty major Reformed British churchmen; most of the European Protestant royalty and many major Continental church leaders. The Continentals proved more ready than England to support Durie financially but we read now and then of Irish and English bishops sending him small donations.

Back on the Continent in 1633/34, Durie and Comenius were able to unite the Reformed and the Bohemian Brethren in Poland. Though many northern dukes were Gnesio-Lutheran, in 1633–35 Durie gained the backing of Duke Frederick Ulrich of Brünswick-Lüneberg who had studied at Helmstedt and Duke August his successor. August's name has gone down in history because of the famous Wolfenbuttel Library which Durie helped plan. Then Durie took part in the Synod of Utrecht in April 1636 and won the backing of the pro-Augsburg Confession Lutherans and the Reformed Church who voted to merge. At the

Synod, Durie met Comenius' son-in-law Petrus Figulus Jabvlonski of Bohemia who became Durie's private secretary. Jabvlonski was of great assistance in helping Durie produce books all the speedier.

### *New problems in Sweden*

In 1636 Durie was free to return to Sweden, staying there two years. He quickly consulted with the Royals, churchmen and the theologians at Uppsala university. Uppsala presented Durie with eight conditions for unity which Durie accepted. Whatever Durie said or wrote was published in Uppsala or Stockholm, including letters sent to him with his replies, which caused criticism. Many insisted Durie should join the Swedish Church before attempting to reform her orders. They said he could not be a member of more than one church, i.e. denomination, at once. Durie looked on his own ordination as a missionary authorisation to preach salvation and to shepherd flocks everywhere as an ambassador for Christ. He thus had little sympathy with denominational shackles. He had expected nothing but red carpets in Sweden, but Sweden was only a single state in a vast empire of states, each with their own ideas. Durie's greatest problem was that now Gustav, 'The Lion of Protestantism' was gone, there was no single spokesman with whom Durie could cooperate. Each church district or separate denomination insisted on bargaining with Durie themselves. Agreements

leading to church union could not be administrated at the level of international law but on the initiative of an influential group of supporters. When these died, shifted their allegiance, or the political situation altered, such plans were often dropped. Thus danger was illustrated by the 1634 Council at Frankfurt. Oxenstierna arrived in a coach, making the German nobility appear on foot to demonstrate Sweden's power. This caused some animosity but, nevertheless, Durie won the majority for his plans. However, on 6. September, before the conference ended, Nördlingen fell to the Emperor and France entered the Thirty-Years War which became so bloody that thoughts of church unity were dismissed because of the seriousness of the situation. Obtaining food and clothing and retaining one's life became major priorities. Roe had already found out how fragile success could be when dealing with Patriarch Kyrillos Lukaris. Kyrillos was born in Crete; had studied in Europe; was very open to Protestant ideas and a firm contender against Rome. By 1620, he had gathered a large circle of like-minded men around him and Roe supplied him with printing machines and Greek type from England in order to publish and circulate Kyrillos' Reformed *Confessio Fidei*. This ran through several editions, was translated into several languages and was strongly supported by the Swedish authorities and the Church of England via the Dutch Ambassador Cornelis Haga; Sweden's agent Paul Strassburg

of Nürnberg and England's Thomas Roe. Gustav Adolf and Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna corresponded with Kyrillos whose influence was now spreading throughout the Greek Orthodox realms. Kyrillos thanked Sweden and England for their help by presenting Gustav II and Charles I with ancient Biblical manuscripts. However, when Roe left Turkey for Prussia in 1629 and the Swedish King died in 1632, opposition against Kyrillos grew and he was removed from office in 1635. Haga still supported Kyrillos who was enabled to bring out a Greek New Testament in both Biblical and modern Greek in 1638. Hopes of a Reformed Eastern Church were brought to a standstill in the same year when Kyrillos was murdered by his opponents.

### Sweden v. Finland

The rivalry between the Swedish and Finnish theological faculties prevented a speedy union. Swedish Uppsala and Finnish Åbo seldom agreed. Whenever Uppsala appeared too 'Calvinistic', Åbo suddenly became Gnesio-Lutheran and *visi versa*. The problem was that neither faculty had a fixed confessional basis. Theology professors either ignored all formulas or requiring their students to be merely familiar with them. Each diocese had different theological traditions, Strängnäs, for instance, rarely agreed with Vesterås, They nurtured their different peculiarities and sense of piety which produced ideas that were neither Lutheran nor Reformed

but very much 'Swedish' or 'Finnish'. By 1638, however, discussions concerning Durie's views became so intense that Queen Christina's advisers forced her to published a decree on 7th February 1638 stating that John Duræus had offended the peace of the Church and must leave the country. Durie, now became very ill, worn out with years of travelling, frustrated plans and poor health and received permission to stay in Sweden until his recovery in August of the same year. He left Sweden for Denmark and then toured his Continental connections before accepting the position of Court Preacher to William of Orange and Charles I's daughter Mary at their palace in the Hague in 1641. However, Swedish events soon changed. Christina became Chancellor of Uppsala University and managed to persuade Oxenstierna's protégé Åbo to accept her unionist ideas and efforts were made to set up training colleges in Germany on a unionist basis. On the other hand, some politicians were frightened that if Sweden followed Durie, they would lose control of Saxony and the Gnesio-Lutheran states.

### Hetherington's alternative history

**Among Durie's numerous works on unity printed in 1641 are** *A Memorial concerning Peace Ecclesiastical: To the king of England and the pastors and elders of the Kirk of Scotland meeting at St. Andrews* and *Petition to the Honourable House of the Commons in England now assembled in Parliament.*

These documents led to Durie being proposed as a member of the planned Westminster Assembly because of his Continental Unionist activities. These writings and especially Durie's address to the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk on unity, help debunk the myth fostered by W. M. Hetherington in his *History of the Westminster Assembly* that, "This truly magnificent, and also truly Christian idea, seems to have originated in the mind of that distinguished man, Alexander Henderson."<sup>6</sup> Henderson, according to Hetherington, passed the idea on to the Scottish Commissioners who then persuaded the Westminster Assembly to accept it and ask the Continental churches to join them. As evidence, Hetherington adds an appendix to his work entitled *Our Desires Concerning Unity in Religion, and Uniformity of Church Government, As a Special mean to Conserve Peace in His Majesty's Dominions*. This he ascribes to Henderson, claiming that it was sent to each foreign country in 1543 with a copy of the Solemn League and Covenant attached.

Hetherington's view has no historical basis and ignores Durie's long and close connections with the Scottish Presbyterians. Hetherington presents Durie as first allying with Westminster pleas for unity towards the end of 1543, over two years after Henderson allegedly broached the theme and over a decade after Durie himself campaigned for such a union. However, *The Solemn League and Covenant* ratified in Parliament in February 1644 was not around

when allegedly used as a basis for unity abroad. Besides this political manifesto contends for a united British church only in which all adults are forced to accept it or be severely punished. Such a Solemn League was only possible in a Tyranny or Dictatorship and was not applicable to the Continental churches. Durie was a co-member of the Assembly with Henderson when the letters Hetherington mentions were allegedly sent abroad. By this time Durie's views were well known and supported by most of the Assembly members and, as Antonia Fraser writes in her Cromwell biography, Durie 'exercised much influence in the Protectoral circle'. Indeed both the English and Scots Reformers and Puritans had been literally bombarded with Durie's pamphlets, letters and books on unity since the late 1620s and Durie had been officially supported in his work of unity both by Charles I and Cromwell and their Parliaments. So, too, Durie already had the backing of most European crowned heads and governments long before Assembly letters were sent out. Moreover, a good number of the Westminster Puritans, both English and Scottish, had supported Durie in his pan-European plan for unity and peace with their time, prayers, work and purses since 1631. The fact that both Durie and Hartlib had been lobbying Parliament concerning pan-European involvements for years led to the official invitation of the great Puritan Educator Comenius of Prague by the Long Parliament in 1641 to help set up international pansophic schools

and theological training colleges with ideas gathered by himself, Hartlib and Durie from all parts of Europe.

The document Hetherington quotes is not a circular letter appealing for mutual Protestant union but the view of an extreme intolerant faction. Nor does it reflect Cromwell's European policy in Europe as promoted via Durie. Christopher Hill rightly says, 'As for the protestant interest, it was useful to be able to employ a man like John Dury, with an international reputation as a worker for protestant unity, as diplomatic representative to Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands.'<sup>7</sup> Henderson's alleged 'desires concerning unity', are non-apparent as the author castigates Episcopalianism and promotes a Hyper-Presbyterianism totally unknown outside of Scotland. The Solemn League Presbyterians claimed that their views stemmed from Calvin, associating him quite wrongly with Melancthon, as a 'Presbyterian'. However, the doctrinal policy the Scottish Assembly had received from Geneva via Beza was totally different from Henderson's alleged 'Calvinism'. Indeed, Beza presented the Assembly with Bullinger's Confession as representative of Geneva's views, not Calvin's. Bullinger and his successor Gwalter were opponents of the Presbyterian system and stern critics of the up and coming 'puritanism' that they fostered. Non-Presbyterians Calvin and Beza praised England's bishops and criticised the 'puritans'. Hetherington denies that the document he quotes was an effort

by a Scottish minority to force their uniquely political and tyrannical idea of church government onto the English which appears to be the only objective interpretation possible. Furthermore, as Hetherington believed it 'impractical' to consult the main Assembly records, we cannot take his presentation of the Assembly's work seriously. Moreover, it is risky hiding behind Henderson here. During the entire Covenanter and non-conformist debates in Scotland, Henderson's enemies constantly quoted him as expressing views which were never his and he found no backing in his Edinburgh church. At this time, he, like Durie, was royal chaplain to Charles I, obtaining large sums from the Bishops' Budget for use at his university and, unlike Durie, received a most substantial pension from the King. Henderson preached before Charles both in Scotland and England and in both countries Episcopalian opened their pulpits to him. This would suggest that Henderson was a supporter of the *status quo* under Charles I. Gunnar Westin and David Mason produce far stronger evidence to show that Durie was the instigator of unity with the churches of foreign nations at the Assembly, not Henderson. Furthermore, Westin of Uppsala University, shows how Durie corresponded personally with Henderson sending him his plans for unity several years before the Westminster Assembly came into being. If Henderson is indeed the author of the fierce, intolerant paper of 1641, then this would have been a most

violent reaction to Durie's and Cromwell's plans for unity. The unfounded position Hetherington takes has sadly become the standard Presbyterian view which has helped erase the memory of Durie's great work from British church history.

Durie continued to publish on church union and educational reform throughout 1642. He planned international theological colleges in London and Heidelberg under British supervision and a chain of schools throughout Britain based on his, Comenius' and Hartlib's system. Durie was praised repeatedly before Parliament as a man who (Hetheringtonites take note) 'well advanced the peace and unity of the Reformed churches' and linked with Bacon and Comenius as a 'pioneer of a new age'. However, the political unrest in Britain and the growing rebellion limited Durie's philanthropic and ecclesiastical endeavours greatly as monies were reserved for the war game that put a stop to the natural progress of Reformation. Durie then published his *Motion Tending to the Public Good of this Age and Posterity* which late nineteenth and early twentieth century Foster Watson called 'the best model' for a child's education ever put forward in the seventeenth century. Last century's J. M. Batten went further and called it 'a landmark in the history of English education'.

## Part Three: Working for Cromwell

### *The Westminster Assembly*

In 1643 Durie became a permanent member of the Westminster Assembly, working for international church and political union. He was told to keep a base on the Continent to this end, so he accepted a call as chaplain to the English traders in Rotterdam. Durie immediately gained Cromwell's and Parliament's full backing and that of the leading Puritans, but he was also supported by men of science and letters such as Robert Boyle and John Milton. Indeed, Durie, Hartlib and their close supporter Cathrine Viscountess Ranelagh, Boyle's sister, formed the heart of Milton's famous Petty France group of educational reformers. Because of his great reputation, Durie was given St Peter's, the Cathedral Church at Westminster, to pastor and told 'to reform that place.' Durie promptly prepared a catechism of Christian doctrine and drilled ministers and congregation in the doctrines of the Reformation. Westminster School moved him to produce further bestsellers on education and reform; works such as *The Reformed School* being used by teacher training colleges until modern times. In 1645, Durie, now aged forty-seven, married Mrs Dorothy Brown, Lady Ranelagh's aunt and the widow of Viscount Moore of Drogheda's son. Mrs Moore brought two sons into the marriage and had a son and a daughter by

Durie. In 1646, Durie was given the task of tutoring the King's children, James, Elizabeth and Henry. Though Durie was widely employed fostering relationships between the Assembly and the Continental churches, he was also given the responsibility of collecting and cataloguing all the Westminster Assembly's records. Durie fulfilled these tasks with meticulous care and his ensuing works on librarianship are still claimed to be sound, practical and revolutionary. His handbook, *The Reformed Library-Keeper* (1650), became the first standard work on librarianship. Indeed, librarians, especially in the USA, claim that modern library ideals have not yet reached John Durie's standards.

During the years 1645–49 Durie co-worked on the *Westminster Confession* and the *Westminster Catechism*. Whilst at Westminster, he published many works in English, French, German and Dutch, including expositions of Revelation, a rarity at the time. One of Durie's best known works is his *Israel's Call to march out of Babylon unto Jerusalem* (1646) based on Isaiah 52:11 preached before the House of Commons on Nov. 26, 1645. Durie felt that the Puritan tendency to savour their preaching with party politics was not being faithful to the gospel and so denounced this mixing of pulpit with Parliament in his *A Case of Conscience concerning Ministers meddling with State Matters in or out of their Sermons* (1649). His French works, with their emphasis on experimental religion became best-sellers amongst Continental Christian leaders

such as Philipp Jacob Spener. On the political side, Durie wrote a number of pamphlets and books defending the Rump Parliament and the Cromwellian Commonwealth. His 'common sense' attitude to Parliament was that any government is more use to God than no government and ought to be obeyed. He felt that Cromwell's system worked, so nobody had grounds for complaint.

### A multi-party Assembly

Durie, a non-party man, offended several Assembly members through withstanding hypocrisy and unrighteousness no matter where he saw it, believing that faith and tolerance went hand in hand. He found the Commonwealth government's charges against Charles false and illegal so prepared a defence of the King, believing he could demonstrate his innocence before a just court. This reaped strong criticism from the Assembly's Regicides. It was Durie's policy not to let his conscience be guided by the ever-changing party-thinking that proved the Commonwealth's downfall. Durie was criticised for his anti-Socinian stand but also because of his connections with Hugo Grotius, suspected of Socinianism though Durie was thoroughly Trinitarian in his theology. His connections with Grotius were in academic pursuits and education not doctrine.

Durie was as loyal to Cromwell as he had been to Charles. This caused Durie many difficulties abroad. Charles I wrote a book during his imprisonment



shortly before his scandalous execution. It was called the *Eikon Basilike* (*Royal Portrait*) or *The Pourtrature of His Sacred Majestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings* but commonly entitled *Royal Sighs*. It was written in the language and spirituality of the *Reformed Book of Common Prayer*, expressing a deep Christian faith and witness, including fervent prayers for his executioners. The book was an immediate bestseller and went into 36 editions in 1649 alone and many more in succeeding years. It had a wide acceptance amongst all Christians, including the Puritans, so Parliament commissioned John Milton to destroy its popularity by arguing that the faith of a Church of England believer, that is the faith of our Reformers which was so devotedly expressed in Charles' book, was merely a faith in idols. Milton thus wrote his *Eikonoklastes* or *The Ikon-Breaker* (1652). Those who read the *Royal Sighs* were ranked with the 'malignants' and 'drunkards', Cromwell's jargon for those Christians who adhered to the Anglican Confessions and Articles which Cromwell and his Parliament had outlawed in 1643. Church historian W. H. Hutton says, Milton's answer was 'little more than a piece of vulgar railing, and proved utterly ineffectual to stay the horror and pity which the *Eikon* had evolved.'<sup>8</sup> Scholars are almost unanimous in concluding that Charles' dying testimony helped to draw the curtains on Cromwell's Commonwealth and prepared Britain for the restitution of the monarchy and the Church of England. Be

this as it may, Parliament now commanded Durie to translate the offensive work into French. Milton was Secretary of Foreign Tongues and ought to have performed the task himself. So why did Durie support Milton in his most objectionable task, knowing that this would bring him disfavour throughout Europe and jeopardise his entire mission of peace and unity? There are five reasons. First, Durie believed to a point of naivety that the powers that be (here Parliament) were ordained by God and Parliament used this opportunity to test Durie's loyalty. Secondly, Milton was one of Durie's closest friends. Thirdly, Milton had suffered greatly under the fierce intolerance of the Scottish Presbyterians, so Durie wanted to show that not all Scotsmen were against Milton. Fourthly, Milton was fed up with Presbyterianism, finding the movement worse than Trent. Durie had also rejected Presbyterianism's intolerant system and was open to those who showed independent views. Lastly, it appears that Durie was naively trying to protect himself from charges of being a traitor to the Commonwealth cause.

It is often forgotten by modern defenders of the Great Rebellion that the Assembly members were not allowed freedom of speech. Yet they represented all aspects of the Christian community whether Arminian, Amyraldians, Reformed, Cartwrightians, Erastians Anarchists, Aristotelians, Platonists, Ramists, Socialists, Liberals, Conservatives, opportunists, careerists



or turncoats. Also, secular, political and military pressure played a very influential part in ruling the Assembly. Over the years, the Assembly radically altered its policies, passing from anti-Anglicanism to pro-Presbyterianism and then from anti-Presbyterianism to pro-Independency and then from anti-Independency to an unholy chaos. This author's opinion of Cromwell's 'Christian' Commonwealth was that it was the first major attempt in Britain's history to found a religio-political one-party government supported by a strongly legal system and upheld by the sword. It floundered because it could not recognise that Christ's saving love is big enough to include a Charles Stuart, a John Milton, a John Durie and an Oliver Cromwell – warts and all.

Now Durie strove to unite the many factions of the Assembly in his Accommodation Committee work. The praise which came from political, ecclesiastical and educational bodies was of the highest order. He was closely attached to Independents Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye and Samuel Hartlib, disliked by many Presbyterians, with whom Durie composed several exegetical works. It was rumoured that Durie was an Independent himself but he denied being of any party. In 1650, Presbyterian politician William Prynne, who detested Independency, wrote a tract against Durie called *The Time-serving Proteus and Ambidexter Divine, uncased to the World*, complaining that Durie was always changing his opinions. Prynne, who suffered terribly

under Charles I, could give as much as he took in matters of intolerance. As all his views were extreme, he had difficulty in being accepted by any party. Nevertheless, Prynne must have been the most surprised and disappointed man in England to find that the rebel regime he had so heartily supported turned against him in December, 1648 and banished him from Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Durie replied to Prynne with several tracts, including *The Unchanged, Constant and Single-hearted Peace-Maker drawn into the World* (1550), recapitulating on his work for peace over the previous decades. If Durie erred at all in his books, it was the sin of repetition rather than of a changing mind.

#### More work on Christian education

Durie began to reap criticism from the would-be upper classes who spread the rumour that he was going to close down the universities so that he could use their staffs to instruct the lower classes. This produced a number of books from Durie's pen such as his *Seasonable Discourse* demonstrating how educational reform was to the advantage of the entire society.

In 1647 Durie founded a pan-European Think Tank (Office of Address and Correspondence) as a special Commonwealth Commission to pool all the reforms that were being made in religion, education, science and statesmanship so that 'the glory of God and the happiness of the nation may be highly advanced.' Durie, like Bacon,

Comenius and Hartlib believed that knowledge was one and the Aristotelian idea of dissecting knowledge into subjects which were viewed as absolutes in themselves, whether in the pulpit or classroom was completely contrary to all natural, God-given, methods of learning. Durie introduced 'Pansophism' or 'Universal Learning', with project learning, team-teaching and integrated learning systems. Durie's ideas are light years ahead of the programmed learning methods of the nineteen-sixties based on Skinnerism and Atheistic-Behaviouristic theories, sadly still used in schools, pastoral and youth work, seeing no difference between people made in God's image and Pawlov's dogs. In the seventeenth century, the old Roman Catholic Aristotelianism was rejected by Roman Catholic educators but the English Puritans were returning to it, believing that knowledge must be dissected to be understood. Thus they produced monstrous philosophical doctrines and antitheses like dividing the work of God on man from the work of God *in* man which led them to invent all kinds of new doctrines concerning justification, imputation, sanctification, election and predestination which still handicap modern Reformed thinking. No wonder the Old Faithfuls of the Reformation such as Foxe, Whitgift, Davenant, Ussher, Abbot, Featley and Hall protested that this was Rome with another name. Milton protested that Presbyterians were 'priests writ large'. Durie complained strongly about Oxford's and Cambridge's monopoly

on learning and wished to see free colleges set up all over Britain and Europe. He also campaigned for professorships in Practical Theology so that students could first learn the basics of the Christian faith before analysing it. He argued that students learnt to cut the Scriptures up before they had seen it all put beautifully together by a loving and caring Hand. In 1650, Durie was put in charge of Charles' library, manuscripts and medals at St. James Palace which stopped the breaking up of the library in the way many other great libraries had been plundered by Cromwell's soldiers and 'Malignant Hunters'.

### *Durie's great value to Cromwell*

Modern scholarship has produced a Cromwell void of the natural simplicity and devotional piety and the eagerness to learn which is so very evident in Cromwell's foreign correspondence. This is what drew him to Durie who was so able to teach. So, too, Cromwell, like Durie, was very keen on reading the signs of the times through everyday observance and Scripture but sadly, Cromwell developed a superstitious interest in 'omens'. It was now that Durie showed his value to Cromwell. The Continental royalty were mainly related to the Stuarts and had been strongly supported by Charles I's foreign policy. The Palatine rulers, for instance, were horrified to hear of the murder of a beloved father and kinsman and accused Cromwell of destroying union. Thus Durie's work was brought

to nothing in many areas. When in 1649, Reformed Charles I Ludwig, named after his English uncle, ascended the Palatine throne, he was displeased with Durie's immediate visit, ranking him with the 'King killers'. The Great Elector of Brandenburg turned his back on Durie, too. Bergius accused Durie of rejecting the Reformation to join a band of murderers. Durie slowly won back much of this support through year-long diplomacy. Frankfurt, the imperial city who had sheltered the Marian exiles, welcomed Durie in 1655 as did the city-state of Bremen. The Netherlands still welcomed Durie enthusiastically. The General Church Conference at Aarau celebrated Durie in 1654 as the 'famous ambassador of the Protector' and Zürich again donated a large sum in support of Durie's work. British historians tell us that Cromwell's greatest work was his foreign policy. However, this side of Cromwell appears to have been researched the least. When an honest, objective, comprehensive study is eventually made of Cromwell's European influence, John Durie will be found to have played the major role in making the Commonwealth acceptable to Europe.

### *The most disappointed man in Europe*

Meanwhile, in Sweden, Durie's old friend from his Würzburg visits, Johannes Matthiae, now Bishop of Strängnäs, was working from 1644 on with the Bohemian Brethren for a

union of Lutheran and Reformed based on Durie's plans. The Swedish Church now called itself 'evangelical' rather than 'Lutheran' and in Christina's 1644 *Konungaförsäkran* (Royal Declaration) Lutheran influence was greatly reduced. The 1638 ban on Durie was now lifted and overtures were made to him as 'Cromwell's agent' to continue negotiations. Matthiae declared "Nobody would be more welcome than Durie in Sweden". Professor Ravius of Uppsala said talks with England were useless if Durie were not present. Sweden's great financier Louis de Geer said, "I am full of hopes, that the Lord, by Mr Durys solicitations, and his other depths of wisdom and goodness, will beat us off from shallow and narrow factions to unite in charity and purity." Thus Cromwell asked Durie to prepare a visit to Sweden for a team of theologians, diplomats and politicians. He believed that European political and ecclesiastical union was now certain and Sweden and England would play an apocalyptic role against the papal Anti-Christ. To be absolutely sure, Cromwell consulted his court astrologer and friend William Lilly who assured him that the stars predicted a positive outcome. The year 1654 was given as been Scripturally favourable for re-opening transactions with Sweden but Cromwell was out of touch with Swedish developments and their high view of Durie. Not doubting Sweden's interest but doubtful about Germany, Cromwell made the blunder of his life. He sent his best man Durie to gain assurance from the Con-

continent and sent his old critic Bulstrode Whitelocke, a total novice in the affairs at stake, to clinch the deal with Sweden. The result was a farce. Matthiae and Uppsala refused to see Whitelocke who had no connections with the Unionists whatsoever and viewed his negotiations as secular and military. Christina, who had led the Durie negotiations, hopelessly dejected, abdicated and Karl Gustav was crowned the same day whilst Whitelocke was still in Sweden. The new King, in great financial debt to the Unionists, promised Whitelocke, for form's sake, to keep up the negotiations. Lilly said Karl Gustav was a *stella nova* who teamed up with a royal Cromwell would usher in a New World. Instead, in 1658, Cromwell died and Richard was a national and international flop. Durie was the most disappointed man in Europe. At the Restitution, Durie found Charles II a Unionist in principle. However, Scotland used and abused Charles and Parliament hardly gave him a chance. The King was scarcely able to keep Britain together, never mind Europe. Though aging fast, Durie accepted a call to Hessen in 1661 where the *Tolerantia*

*ecclesiastica* had been signed at Kassel by several leading theologians and universities and King Frederick William of Brandenburg had once again given the right hand of fellowship to Reformed believers. Further such edicts were signed throughout the country. Many Lutherans, however, still called Durie a new Thomas Munzer and a Regicide whereas High Calvinists criticised his tolerance. A most dejected Durie wrote to the Swedish Parliament shortly before his death: "I have done what I could to advance the union of saints. Henceforth I shall solicit the help of no one because I have asked them all. Neither do I see any Patron in Germany, whom God would point out to me as fit for the work." He died at Kassel on 28th September in 1680 aged 85. Sweden still remembers his work gladly and in Germany the Lutheran and Reformed churches obtained full union in a number of states and a joint national synod. Sadly, the Reformed Church of England and the Scottish Presbyterian churches are further from Reformed unity than ever and disappearing rapidly into disintegration. As yet, in Britain, Durie's fifty years of hard work were in vain.

## Annotation Anmerkungen

<sup>1</sup> *They Subdued Kingdoms*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> See *Negotiations about Church Unity*, p.27 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Brook's The Lives of the Puritans*, vol. 3, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup> *They Subdued Kingdoms*, p.49.

<sup>5</sup> See *Life of Archbishop Laud: By a Romish Recusant*, Chapter XVIII.

<sup>6</sup> *History of the Westminster Assembly*, p. 363. See also pp. 362–364; 376–384.

<sup>7</sup> *God's Englishman*, p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> *A History of the English Church from the Accession of Charles I to the Death of Anne*, p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> Pymme was one of the victims of Pride's Purge.

## The Author

### Über den Autor



Dr. George M. Ella was born in England in February 1939, and as a teenager moved to Sweden to continue his training as a Forestry Apprentice. After his conversion he returned to England to study theology. Whilst at the London Bible College, he attended the worship services of the well-known Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Upon graduation at London and Hull Universities, he worked as a school teacher and evangelist among the Lapps. For the past 32 years Dr. Ella has lived in Germany, near the Dutch border. Now retired,

his career included work as a Senior Civil Servant, university examiner and writer of curricula for librarian assistants and apprentice retailers for the state's commercial colleges. This work included editing and grading textbooks. After adding various external degrees and post-graduate qualifications in theology/literature, business studies, education, history, psychology and library science at Uppsala, Duisburg and Essen universities, he gained a doctorate in English Literature at Duisburg University. He has written a number of books prior to this volume, including works on William Cowper, James Hervey, John Gill, Andrew Fuller, William Huntington and Augustus Toplady. Dr. Ella was nominated for the John Pollock Award by Prof. Timothy George in 2001. A major work on the English Reformation Exiles under Mary I will appear shortly. Dr. Ella has written over twenty books on Church History and doctrinal issues, including works on William Cowper, James Hervey, John Gill, Andrew Fuller, William Huntington, Augustus Toplady, the Marian Exiles and Henry Bullinger. Dr. Ella was nominated for the John Pollock Award by Prof. Timothy George in 2001. Dr. Ella has also published several hundred doctrinal and biographical essays which have appeared in magazines such as the Banner of Truth, the Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth, the English Churchman, the Baptist Quarterly, Focus, New Focus, the Bible League Quarterly, and the Evangelical Times. At present, he is working on a detailed biography of John Durie and a Dr. Theol. thesis on 'Defragmenting Knowledge: The Contributions of John Durie (1596–1680) to Christian Pansophism'.

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