

speaking Presbyterian churches of the world. It is no small tribute to have its understanding of scripture accepted as substantially the true understanding of it by so many of their fellow-men, generation after generation—as honest, intelligent, and spiritual as could be found in a religious community of like size. Neither must it be forgotten that their work was accepted generally by the Independents and Baptists of their own day, as well as by Presbyterians. We need not, however, be astonished at this wide and long-continued acceptance of their work when we consider the character of the men producing it. That character, indeed, in respect of learning and theological ability, has been attacked—attacked, to take present-day examples, by Dr. Stoughton and by Principal Fairbairn (of Oxford). It is suggested that the really greatest divines of the day were absent from it. Where were Usher, Chillingworth, Jeremy Taylor, Cudworth, Hales of Eton, Bishop Hall? Why were they not invited? Why were inferior men chosen? It may be fairly answered, in regard to some of these, that their presence could not have been had because of their staunch adherence to the Royalist or church party. This was true of Usher, Chillingworth, Taylor, Hales, and Hall. In regard to Cudworth, it is enough to say that he was but a youth of twenty-six in 1643, and that his work, which gives him his position with us, was not published till thirty years after the assembly. Others whose names we miss were not then known as great divines. Were such an assembly to be called in our time, probably many of its most outstanding members would be out of view two centuries hence, as many of the leading Westminster divines are now; while some, still unknown, whose fame is yet in the future, would be well remembered. But there was no lack either of scholarship or intellectual power in the assembly itself. Even Dr. Stoughton is compelled to say: “The Westminster divines had learning—scriptural, patriotic, scholastical, and modern—enough and to spare, all solid, substantial, and ready for use.” The impartial Hallam speaks of the assembly as “perhaps equal in learning, good sense, and other merits, to any lower House of Convocation that ever made a figure in England.” And Richard Baxter, a contemporary of the divines, testifies of them in the following terms: “The divines there congregated were men of eminent learning, and godliness, and ministerial abilities, and fidelity;