

We pass on, however, now to consider our *third* point, viz., The sources of weakness (if such there are) in Congregationalism or Independency. It is sometimes a charge brought against us, that there is a weakness attached to our principles which prevent their permanence and increase; and there may be cases or districts where possibly the charge may seem to be established. From what we have advanced concerning these Provinces, it may appear to many that there are evidences of weakness here, if they are not to be found elsewhere. Though doubtless elsewhere there may be similar facts, traceable to like causes.

If, however, there may appear to be any sources of weakness in Congregationalism, they are not to be found in the *principles* themselves. For "our principles," says the Rev. Thomas Binney, "have a history, and one not at all mean in its character or result. They may be traced, some of them, through various stages of growth, development, apprehension, utterance, for many generations, always *in spite of the weakness and error of their advocates*, doing a work and leaving a result in the thinkings of the community beyond the sphere within which they were themselves accepted or professed—(yes) over and above what they effected there. It might not, perhaps, be owned at the time—it may be denied *now*; or the accidental evils that always attend the advent and appearance of great thoughts in the world, or their perversion or corruption by the half-disciplined or unfaithful; *these things* may be remembered, insisted upon as the sole results; and stigmatised as the natural products of what was inherently bad in principle." "With those who thus speak (he continues), we are not disposed to argue, nor careful to answer them in this matter." Yet, while with our much esteemed and talented brother, we would not argue with those who malign our principles, because they cannot understand them; as regards ourselves, if there be "weaknesses" and "errors" manifested by the professed advocates of our principles, or "accidental evils" which may and do attend their advent, or *perversions or corruptions* of those principles by the *half-disciplined or unfaithful*; it becomes us to review our position, and look with circumspection to our conduct for the future.

It may be that each of these, to a greater or less extent, has proved a source of weakness to us as a body, in these provinces, and all of them may possibly be summed up as a want of that "deep and intelligent piety," referred to in the former part of this address. Yes! Beloved Brethren, if there has been the manifestation of apparent weakness in the working of our Congregational principles, here or elsewhere,—this *want* we conceive will prove to be its true source.

It is possible that we and our predecessors in office as ministers of God's Truth, may have been too contented with the results of our labours, if we have succeeded in awakening thought and suitable enquiry about the state of the soul, leading those who were its subjects to seek earnestly, diligently, and perseveringly for eternal life. This indeed is the *first* great matter of our mission, without which result, all our other efforts were vain and worthless.—But this is not *all* we have to accomplish: though *this* from the history of our once called "New-Light Churches," seems to have been for the most part, all that has been attempted by their leaders—excitement in religious duties and exercises, has been desired and laboured for, rather than growth in the knowledge of *all* Truth, and the consequent development of its fruit, in the life and character. Not that we would in any way undervalue zeal or earnestness in religion, or any of its duties; or stifle all expression of warmth of feeling. Any one who will read the life of the late Rev. Henry Allim, (though a most worthy and useful man,) and review the character of his labours and his co-associates, tracing the history of our body as far as practicable since their day to the present time, will be led I think to similar conclusions. The *consequence* of all this, has been, that a love of religious excitement has been fostered—with many the conclusion has been arrived at, that Religion cannot exist or spread without it. A species of indifference as to correct views of doctrine and church order, has been also encouraged. A want of deference to the teachings of the inspired volume has been yielded to, even going