

"One effect of a too highly organized Congregationalism is to create a false standard of denominational loyalty. Thus, by turning our free and noble polity into a congeries of precedents and authoritative traditions, we may soon come to say—not to do this is cowardice, and to do this is treachery; to be here is to be right, to be there is to be wrong. We shall be lectured by anonymous echoes; we shall have the organ-grinders under our front windows every dark night; we shall have much barking, some biting, and occasional open war. Is the denominational conscience kept by three or four men! (Cheers.) Where is the centre of authority in free Congregationalism? Has Congregationalism country residences in Manchester, Birmingham and Plymouth; and town residences in Fleet-street, Farringdon-street, or even on the airy heights of Holborn Viaduct? (Laughter.) God forbid! Remembering the history of cliqueism, oligarchy, and tyranny of every name, I repeat, God forbid. Congregationalism is in the keeping of every Congregationalist. (Cheers.) As long as I am a Congregational minister, I will claim the right of personal liberty; and when I want to surrender that liberty, I will change my denomination. There are no hereditary or prescriptive leaderships in Congregationalism; we have leaderships, but they are natural, not mechanical; they are the proper honours of superior sagacity, spiritual insight, and commanding eloquence; of other leaderships Congregationalism knows nothing. (Cheers.)

"Another effect of a too highly organized Congregationalism is to create a kind of uniformity of thought and speech quite foreign to everything that is distinctive of our principles and history. Every organization is in danger of making vital distinctions between Shibboleth and Sibboleth. Congregationalism has always developed personality; it has encouraged every man to be *himself*. It has preferred a strong individualism, to the very nice, clean-looking, willow-pattern, which makes one plate so strikingly like another. (Laughter.) I hope the day is far distant when the advertisements of the Congregational Union can be shortened into 'The usual speeches will be delivered by the usual speakers.' (Laughter.) I have lately seen, with great satisfaction, a tendency in the other direction. Every man who comes to this platform should have a fair hearing, even though he comes, in an orderly manner of course, to oppose the committee, to criticise the secretary, and even to dispute the infallibility of the chairman himself." Discussion, he thinks, is "the free air in which Congregationalism delights to live. 'Discuss, discuss, discuss,' is the watchword of free institutions." (Cheers.)

And farther on—"All I urge is that our organization should never be so restricted, so sensitive, as to be unable or unwilling to avail itself of the service of every honourable man amongst us, how striking soever, and even almost offensive, may be some of his peculiarities. I would even ask a Radical politician sometimes to pray; there could be no harm in it, if done occasionally. I would sometimes turn the usual arrangements right round, and let no man take part in the service and discussion whose income was above £150 a-year. It would do us good, and make some of us more intelligent and ardent Liberationists, if we could hear Congregationalism expounded by missionaries who are scorned by the vicar, damned by the squire, and half-starved by the people, whose own poverty is extreme. (Cheers.) I do not always want at our meetings to hear papers by Doctors of divinity and masters of arts; I do not ask to hear at every meeting specimens of the acutest reasoning and the highest eloquence. Some of us have good memories, and have heard a good deal of that before. (Laughter.) I rejoice in the glittering speech of Mr. Dale, the valiant energy of Mr. Rogers, and the delightfully-ingenuous reasoning by which the secretary persuades himself that he is always right—(laughter)—but now and again I wish to hear such facts as our home missionaries alone can give us, and the pleadings of men whose daily life is a course of opposition and difficulty.

"Another effect of a too highly organized Congregationalism is to turn the Congregational Union into a politico-religious debating club and board of directors. What an amazing amount of so-called 'business' we have to do! We have to