

**CONGREGATIONALISM: OR THE
POLITY OF INDEPENDENT
CHURCH VIEWED IN RELATION
TO THE STATE AND TENDENCIES
OF MODERN SOCIETY**

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Congregationalism: or The polity of independent church viewed in relation to the state and tendencies of modern society by Robert Vaughan

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ROBERT VAUGHAN

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CONGREGATIONALISM :

OR, THE

POLITY OF INDEPENDENT CHURCHES,

VIEWED IN RELATION TO

THE STATE AND TENDENCIES OF
MODERN SOCIETY.

BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

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P R E F A C E.

THE present publication is divided into two books. The first book consists of an Address, delivered before the Autumnal Meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, convened at Nottingham, in October last. Some change has been made in a few forms of expression, for the purpose of securing to the different parts of the subject the advantage of appearing as the topics of distinct chapters. In other respects, the matter of the first book is printed almost *verbatim* as it was delivered.

Having occupied the attention of a very patient auditory more than two hours and a half, it was inexpedient, on many accounts, to prosecute our inquiries further on that occasion. But while restricted to such limits, it was unavoidable that several matters of great importance, in relation to the question to be examined,

should be passed over, or touched upon in a manner much too general to be satisfactory. In complying with the request of the ministers and delegates to print the Address, I might have interwoven other and more enlarged observations with it; but I have preferred leaving that portion of my manuscript undisturbed, and have treated of certain points belonging to the general subject, which are of a more practical nature, and bear more immediately on our present circumstances, in the series of chapters which constitute the second book.

It will be observed, therefore, that the degree in which my fathers and brethren assembled at Nottingham may be held responsible for the publication of this volume, must be limited to the contents of the first book.

In that division of the work, and in what follows, my views concerning the nature and tendency of the principles of congregationalism are freely expressed, and my intention in giving publicity to my thoughts on this subject is made sufficiently plain. In sending forth such a volume I shall, no doubt, have made a large demand on the candour and forbearance of such of my readers as may be disposed to indulge in extreme views, whether on the right hand or the left. My earnest request is, that the judgment

formed in regard to what I have written, may be a judgment having respect to it as a whole, and not exclusively to any of its parts. If it should not appear from the ensuing pages, that a man may cherish a strong preference in respect to his own religious party, and still do homage to religion itself, as a good much too benignant and divine to be confined to the limits of any party, then have I failed in regard to one object, which I not only meant should be on the whole perceptible, but to which I had hoped to give a distinct prominence. The wrongs privately inflicted on English congregationalism at this moment, by large classes of the wealthy and the powerful, are many, widely diffused, and too often merciless—such as might well excuse some sharpness of rebuke, and almost any measure of retaliation. We hope to bear these things as Christians, but we feel them as men, and must be allowed to protest against them in the language natural to the injured.

Notting Hill, Dec. 21, 1841.