

MR. JAMES THOMSON.

Mr. James Thomson, a prominent member of the Zion Congregational church, said, in answer to a query as to the distinctive features of Congregationalism :

"The main characteristic of Congregationalism—its distinctive feature—is that all questions of whatever sort are referred to, and are decided by the entire membership."

"Does that apply to matters of doctrine?"

"There are no matters of doctrine," explained Mr. Thomson, "that are authoritatively binding upon the Congregationalists as a body. Committees have been appointed to draw up confessions of faith, which have received the general approval and consent of the Congregational body, but they are not of any binding effect, and there is no Church court outside of the individual church itself to which such questions may be referred. This is, of course, unlike the Methodist and Presbyterian bodies, which have higher Church courts that make and administer law."

"How would you proceed to eject any person teaching heresy?"

"Our Congregational Union, which is an annual assembly of pastors and representatives of the churches that have united in the membership of the Union—the pastor may be a member and his congregation not, and *vice versa*—that body is only valuable for its consulting powers, and has no authority whatsoever. Suppose any minister became unsound in doctrine, the only discipline that can be inflicted by the Congregational Union is dismembership, and the same with the church. As a matter of policy, the system of Councils has met with general favor from our body. This has reference mainly to the induction of a new minister in a church; then the pastors and members of the neighboring churches meet together, listen to the views of the new minister, and if approved of by them, they unite with the congregation of which he is about to become the pastor, in inducting him into that office. If the Council should not thus agree with the candidate pastor's views, the congregation may still induct him as their pastor, but they will probably lose the friendship of the neighboring churches. For general missionary purposes, church-building objects and for assisting each other, the Congregational Union is a valuable body, but in a matter of law they have no right to interfere with any single church."

"What relation do you bear to the Independents of England?"

"We are a continuation of that body in this country, though, of course, we have not the same name here. It is not necessary, as there is no Established Church here of which we profess to be 'independent.' Congregationalism is a more com-

prehensive name than the other; our motto is, 'One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.' Thus we have no orders as bishops, deacons, etc., but the pastor is simply the first among brethren. The Congregational body is opposed on principle to all State establishment or support, to all church exemptions—many Congregational ministers pay their taxes as a mere matter of protest—and also to the teaching of religion in the Common schools. However, I do not understand this last as an objection to the Scriptural reading in the schools; that is not teaching in any sense of the term, but simply religious service."

FIDELITY OF GOD TO HIS PROMISES.

I have had all sorts of experiences in all sorts of circumstances, and when I have come to God and pleaded His own promises in His own Word, I have never been disappointed. I have been in circumstances of great difficulty, and have been led to ask Him for remarkable help. I was nearly wrecked when I was going out to China the first time. Our vessel was becalmed, and gradually drifting upon the coast of New Guinea. We could see the savages on the shore. They had kindled a fire, and were evidently expecting a good supper that night. When I was a medical student, some of the other students used to jeer at me because I was going among the heathen, and they would talk about "cold missionary." Well, it did look that night as if somebody was going to have a piece of hot missionary. The captain said to me: "We can't do anything else but let down the long-boat." They had tried to turn the head of the vessel around from the shore, but in vain. We had been becalmed for several weeks, with never a breeze, or any sign of one. In a few minutes we would be among the coral reefs. We would be at the mercy of those savages, and they didn't look as if they had much mercy. "Well," I said, "there is one thing we haven't done yet. Let the Christians on board pray about it." There was a black man on board, a steward, who was a very sweet Christian man, and the captain was a Christian and myself. I proposed that we should retire to our cabins, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ask our Father and His Father, for a breeze immediately. They agreed. I went to my cabin, and told the Lord that I was just on my way to China, that He had sent me; and that I couldn't get there if I was shipwrecked and killed; and then I was going on to ask Him for a breeze, but I felt so confident about it that I couldn't ask Him. So I went up on deck. There was the second officer, the chief mate, a very godless man. I went up to him and said: "If I were you I would let down the mainsail." Said he: "What do you want me