

"This is certainly a new aspect of living and visible Christianity, and our business with it at present is to test its operation on society. Can perfect liberty and equality in religion work well when favoured by circumstances as in the United States? Is Christianity itself, in its own revelations, its own glorious platform and basis, its own provisions and divinity, when made plain and put into the hands of a people, sufficient without being formed and modified by the political society, to produce its legitimate fruits? Is this common Christianity, as taught and developed in Scripture, sufficient for a nation? May the people of a State be safely left, other things being favourable, to this simple process? This question is in course of solution in the United States. So far as it has been tested, it is believed to have answered."*

This was written nearly twenty years ago; and Dr. Dixon's questions were receiving an affirmative answer then from the stern voice of fact, from which there was no appeal. But let anyone carefully examine the above figures, published to the world in this Centenary year of American Methodism, and deny the transcendent superiority of the Voluntary System if he can.

The insinuation that religion is superficial in America—that it has lost in depth what it has gained in breadth and extent—is, in my judgment, a mistake or a slander. I give two testimonies out of many now under my hand, that there is no truth whatever in this allegation; but the religion in America will lose nothing by comparison with any part of the United Kingdom. "For the first time since its junction with the State, has Christianity been thrown upon its own imperishable resources in the midst of a great people. And has it suffered from its novel position? Who accuses the Americans of being an irreligious people? Nay, rather, who can deny to them, as a people, a pre-eminence in religious fervour and devotion? . . . Taking the country as a whole, the religious sentiment is more extensively diffused, and more active in its operation in America,

* Dixon's *Methodism in America*, p. 145, 147.