

**THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF 1860:
OR THE PRESENT CONNECTION
OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH WITH SLAVERY, AND
OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO IT**

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The Impending Crisis of 1860: Or the Present Connection of the Methodist Episcopal Church with Slavery, and Our Duty in Regard to It by H. Mattison

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H. MATTISON

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THE

IMPENDING CRISIS

OF

1860;

OR THE PRESENT CONNECTION OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

WITH

SLAVERY,

AND OUR DUTY IN REGARD TO IT.

BY H. MATTISON,
OF THE BLACK RIVER CONFERENCE.

"THIS WILL BE THE LAST OPPORTUNITY THAT GOD'S TRUE SERVANTS WILL EVER HAVE TO RESTORE THE M. E. CHURCH TO HER ORIGINAL CHARACTER, AND PRESERVE HER HONOR IN THE GRANDEST MORAL CONFLICT OF THE AGE."—*Correspondent.*

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"We believe that Slavery has no more constitutional right in the Methodist Church than the Devil himself; and we are determined to use all befitting measures to drive it out."

Rev. ABEL STEVENS, in *Zion's Herald* for Sept. 27, 1843.

HEAR, O ISRAEL!

"Hear, I pray you, ye chiefs of Jacob,
And ye princes of the house of Israel;
Is it not yours to know what is right?
Ye that hate good, and love evil;
Who tear their skin from off them,
And their flesh from off their bones;
Who devour the flesh of my people,
And say from off them their skin;
And their bones they dash in pieces;
And chop them asunder, as morsels for the pot,
And as flesh thrown into the midst of the cauldron."

MICAH iii. 1-8.—*Lowth's Notes on Isaiah.*

TO ALL
MINISTERS AND PRIVATE MEMBERS
OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
WHO DESIRE TO
WALK IN THE OLD PATHS,
AND TO SEE OUR BELOVED ZION PURGED FROM THE
SIN AND DISGRACE OF SLAVEHOLDING,
THIS CONTRIBUTION
TO THE HOLY CAUSE OF "EXTIRPATION"
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,
BY THEIR FRIEND AND FELLOW-LABORER,
THE AUTHOR.

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THE IMPENDING CRISIS.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGINAL POSITION OF METHODISM IN REGARD TO SLAVERY.

IN this chapter we design to show that from 1739 to 1784, or during the first forty-five years of our denominational history, Methodism was *intensely anti-slavery*, both in theory and in practice—a society of *practical abolitionists*.*

I. JOHN WESLEY was an earnest abolitionist.

1. The "*General Rules of the United Society*" were written by Mr. Wesley, May 1, 1743. (*Works*, vol. v. p. 190.) These rules forbid "doing harm," "doing to others as we would not they should do to us," "doing what we know is not for the glory of God," &c. Now, unless there is "no harm" in holding a fellow-being as a slave, and it is in accordance with the golden rule, and "for the glory of God," it is certain that these rules forbade all slaveholding; and, if honestly executed, would cut it up root and branch. These are the Rules now found in our Discipline, page 25 and onward.

2. In 1774 Mr. Wesley first published his "*Thoughts upon Slavery*," in tract form. The whole drift of the tract is not only against the slave-trade, but against every species of slaveholding. He says:

* We use the term "abolitionist" in its true philological sense, as meaning "a person who favors abolition, or the immediate emancipation of slaves." The false meanings attached to the word by slaveholders, in order to cast odium upon the anti-slavery cause, is no reason why we should accept it as a synonym for fanaticism and infidelity. The time has gone by when a man can be a real anti-slavery man and not be an abolitionist; and if any one is not willing to be called an abolitionist, he should never profess to be anti-slavery.

"But waiving, for the present, all other considerations, I strike at the root of this complicated villany: I absolutely deny all slaveholding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice."—(*Works*, vol. vi. p. 286.)

On the next page he says, "all slavery is as irreconcilable to justice as to mercy"—is "utterly inconsistent with mercy," &c.; and in replying to the plea that slavery was *necessary* in order to the cultivation of the soil, he says:

"I deny that villany is ever necessary. It is impossible that it should ever be necessary for any reasonable creature to violate all the laws of justice, mercy, and truth. No circumstances can make it necessary for a man to burst in sunder all the ties of humanity. It can never be necessary for a rational being to sink himself below a brute. A man can be under no necessity of degrading himself into a wolf."—(Pages 287, 288.)

On page 292, he declares that "men-buyers are exactly on a level with men-stealers," and thus vehemently exhorts the slaveholder:

"'The blood of thy brother' (for, whether thou wilt believe it or no, such he is in the sight of Him that made him), 'crieth against thee from the earth,' from the ship, and from the water. Oh! whatever it costs, put a stop to its cry before it be too late; instantly, at any price, were it the half of your goods, deliver thyself from blood-guiltiness! Thy hands, thy bed, thy furniture, thy house, thy lands, are at present stained with blood. Surely it is enough: accumulate no more guilt; spill no more the blood of the innocent! Do not hire another to shed blood; do not pay him for doing it! Whether you are a Christian or no, show yourself a man! Be not more savage than a lion or a bear!"

Next he anticipates and refutes the false reasoning of the slaveholder as follows:

"Perhaps you will say, 'I do not buy any negroes; I only use those left me by my father.' So far is well; but is it enough to satisfy your own conscience? Had your father, have you, has any man living, a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting Revelation aside. It cannot be that either war or contract can give any man such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen. Much less is it possible that any child of man should ever be born a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.

"If, therefore, you have any regard to justice (to say nothing of mercy, nor the revealed law of God), render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due; that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle towards all men; and see that you invariably do unto every one as you would he should do unto you."

Finally, the tract closes with the following prayer:

"O thou God of love! thou who art loving to every man, and whose mercy is over all thy works; thou who art the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and who art rich in mercy unto all; thou who hast mingled of one

blood all the nations upon earth; have compassion upon these outcasts of men, who are trodden down as dung upon the earth! Arise, and help these that have no helper, whose blood is spilt upon the ground like water! Are not these also the work of thine own hands, the purchase of thy Son's blood? Stir them up to cry unto thee in the land of their captivity; and let their complaint come up before thee; let it enter into thy ears!"

How does such language comport with the sensitiveness of some of our modern Methodists, even on free soil, who are offended if the slave is even remembered at the throne of grace in the house of God? Have they the spirit as well as the name of Methodists? Could they have endured the abolitionism of JOHN WESLEY? Indeed, would he, if now alive, be tolerated in more than one half of the pulpits of American Methodism? We doubt if he would, but let the reader judge.

3. Mr. Wesley frequently corresponded with WILBERFORCE and CLARKSON, the great leaders in the movement for the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, and cheered them on in their difficult and arduous undertaking.

In 1787, when the Abolition Committee was formed, Mr. Wesley wrote them an encouraging letter. The following account of its contents is taken from CLARKSON's *History of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, vol. i. p. 447:

"Mr. Wesley, whose letter was read next, informed the committee of the great satisfaction which he also had experienced when he heard of their formation. He conceived that their design, while it would destroy the slave-trade, would also strike at the root of the shocking abomination of slavery. He desired to forewarn them that they must expect difficulties and great opposition from those who were interested in the system; that these were a powerful body; and that they would raise all their forces when they perceived their craft to be in danger. They would employ hireling writers, who would have neither justice nor mercy. But the committee were not to be dismayed by such treatment, nor even if some of those who professed good-will towards them should turn against them. As to himself, he would do all he could to promote the object of their institution," &c.

On the 30th of October, 1787, a second letter from Mr. Wesley was read before the committee, stating that he had read the publication which the committee had sent him, and took, if possible, a still deeper interest in their cause.—(*Works*, vol. vii. p. 238.)

On the 26th of February, 1791, Mr. Wesley addressed the following to Mr. Wilberforce:

"LONDON, February 26, 1791.

"DEAR SIR,—Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious