

INCIDENTS--WORK AMONG THE COLORED PEOPLE, BY J. E. WHITE.



While at Yocco City we had the use of the Baptist church at Wilsonia, a suburb of Yocco City, for services each Sunday night. In our course of lectures we brought out the principles of obedience to God's Word and of forming proper characters here and abandoning all habits which tend to lower the standards of life, and had begun to touch upon the subject of temperance and the avoidance of using tobacco, snuff, etc. This kind of teaching did not suit the rising generation, which has not the moral stamina of their fathers and mothers of slave days. They decided to plan some scheme to stop such agitation in their neighborhood. They managed in some way to have a new election of deacons, by which the older and steadier heads were supplanted by the younger element.

So one morning as we came up the river on our steamer, from services held on points below, we were met by a colored man who was deeply interested in our work, who told us of the situation, and he said that the preacher had been engaged to occupy the pulpit the next Sunday evening, and while these young deacons did not have the moral courage to tell us what they wanted, he said that their intention was to have appointments of their own each Sunday evening, and so crowd us out.

But they reckoned without the chapel of the "Morning Star." So immediately after receiving this information, the copy for a circular was written out, stating that the "Morning Star" would be at the Wilsonia landing next Sunday night, and services would begin at seven thirty. We found that these

circulans were diligently distributed, going for miles into the country. The next Sunday, upon coming from our appointment at Palmdale, we stopped by our regular landing place, and tied up at Wilsonia, and prepared for the regular services of the evening. Meanwhile the deacons of the Baptist church had arranged their preacher, and give n out their appointment.

We had a beautiful toned bell on the "Morning Star" and at 7:15 P.M. the first bell was rung. As soon as it began to ring, some one came out from the Baptist church and began to ring their bell, which had a serious crack all along one side and gave out a very dismal tone. Pretty soon the people began to arrive for the services of the evening, but it was noticeable that they all went to the "Morning Star" instead of to their own church. People came as far as six miles to attend the services. And when we were ready for the service, the chapel was packed, and the fourfoot guard all around this chapel was also packed, and we had seldom had such an ~~unprecedented~~ attendance in all our experience in the South.

There was great interest in the service, and from that time forward our audiences at Wilsonia nearly doubled from what they had been while occupying the church.

As to the service in the Baptist church, one of our friends looked in there about the time of beginning services, and he found three old women there and the preacher. It was not a very encouraging outlook, and very soon the audience of three left the church and came to the services on the "Morning Star." The preacher, although he did not feel like joining the congregation in the chapel, of the boat, took his stand by a telegraph pole on the bank, and listened attentively to the discourse.

INCIDENTS --- No. 2.

As it had occurred in our work in Wicksburg, the Baptist ministers around Tazoo City became alarmed at the interest our work was exciting among the Baptist following of the city. They took occasion from time to time to warn their people from the pulpit in regard to this new work that had come into their midst.

One Sunday a young preacher came to fill an appointment at Wilsonia, and the burden of his remarks was to undeceive his people in regard to the work that was being done in their midst by the Southern Missionary Society.

The burden of his remarks was that we were introducing strange doctrines, and this seemed to him to be very serious. He dwelt on this for some time. He then stated that we did not believe in baptism, and this of course, would be a mortal sin among the Baptists. He also said that we did not celebrate the ordinances of the Lord's Supper. Of course he said many other things, but these were the main points.

As soon as we returned from Palo Alto on Sunday morning, our friend Miller, living at Wilsonia, near the Baptist church, informed us of what he was saying. I told him, "All right, I would like to have him present at the meeting this evening."

At the meeting in the evening I began with calling the attention of the people to what had been said in regard to the importance of believing the Bible and taking God's word just as it was given us, as our guide and our only guide which would bring us to heaven bye and bye. I then stated that

INCIDENTS. ---No. 3.

Early in our work at Yancey City Brothers Carey and Halliday had begun work in the houses of the colored people. In many places they would give lessons in reading, from house to house, using "The Gospel Primer" as a text book, and when we came up to Yancey City some months afterward, we found that many people could read as the result of this kind of teaching. Later we built a church in one of the suburbs of the city, and began our strong work. Our audiences were large, and the interest was good. As a result, the Baptist ministers began to fear for their membership, and would sometimes preach against our work and warn their people against us.

One Sunday a minister in one of the large Baptist churches took his time in warning the people against us, telling them that we had come to bring dissension and work against the interests of the Baptist church. He was very anxious that all his churches should refuse to have any connection with us in any way in any of our teachings.

At the close of the service there was one woman who made her way to the platform about as fast as she could, and said to her pastor, "I do not want to hear any of that kind of talk out of your head again in this church. I am a member here, and I do not intend to listen to such kind of talk against these people. They have come into our houses, they are teaching us to read, they are helping us to know how to live better, and are bringing us wonderful help, and they are doing this without a cent of pay from us." Then she turned upon him, and said, "When have any of you ministers come into our

-3-

houses to teach us to read, to explain the Bible to us, or to show any interest in us whatever? We are paying you a salary to look after our interests, but you do not do it, and when these men come up and do the work that you are not doing, without any charge, and help us in every way, I do not want to hear a word from you such as I have heard this morning."

I had learned of some remarks that had been made earlier in the day by their minister in regard to our work. He had said first, that we were bringing strange doctrines among the people. I called them to witness the teaching which we had given among them. I said, "Is it not so that everything we teach we read to you right from the Bible?" "Yes, yes, yes," came from all around the room. I again asked if we had taught them anything but that we would read it to them right from the Bible. They said, "No, no, no." "Then what we have taught is only what we have found in the Bible?" "Then," said I, "what is the matter with your minister? He says we teach strange doctrine. You say we take it all from the Bible. Then the trouble with this man is that the Bible is a strange book to him, and what he is teaching is something else." I told them that we were not alone in being accused of this, that Paul was accused in the words, "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears." But did not Paul teach the gospel? Have we not taught you the gospel as we find it in the Bible? I think your preacher would do well to study his Bible so that it will not be so strange to him.

Second, He says we do not believe in baptism. He told you that in his discourse this morning. While he was telling you that, our steamboat was down at Palo Alto, and I was baptizing a new convert in the Yazoo River. The current was so strong that Brother Halliday came in with me, for I was afraid that one man would not be able to stem the current. I said I wished that some of them had been down to witness the ceremony. One man jumped to his feet, and said, "I was there and saw it."

preacher when he says we do not believe in baptism?

Third, He says we do not celebrate the Sacrament.
"In this," I said, "you must take our word that whenever a church is organized among our people, about the first thing that is done is to celebrate the Sacrament, and this is a steady ordinance with us in our churches everywhere."

To close the episode, I told them that we had come among them as their friends. We came with the open Bible because following the teachings of the Bible was necessary to salvation, and if they heard any one speak against our teaching, we would be glad if they would tell us of it so that we could have an opportunity to give them the truth as we had been able to do that day.