



NEGRO CAMP-MEETING IN KENTUCKY, 1920  
Workers in the Foreground

## CHAPTER XVIII

# THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND THE AMERICAN NEGRO

### THE "MORNING STAR"

ONE day in 1894, when Elder James Edson White, son of Elder James and Mrs. E. G. White, expressed his desire to work for the colored people in our country, a friend told him there was a testimony calling the attention of our church people to that needy mission field in America. After much searching, Elder White found this testimony, and at once he and W. O. Palmer, with others, began to form plans for this work. Elder White conceived the idea of constructing a small boat in which to travel south, and later to live in while getting the work started. But how these two men could get the boat and man it was another problem, for "both were destitute of means," says one who later joined the group that went south.

The boat was built at Allegan, Mich., not far from Elder Joseph Bates' resting-place, and was paid for largely from the sale of "Gospel Primer" and other small books. It was seventy-two feet long, but later was lengthened to 105 feet, and an upper deck added. Before the year closed, the "Morning Star," as the little craft was named, with its crew aboard, steamed down the Kalamazoo River to Lake Michigan.

And now came the first severe test of its strength. One of the lake steamers towed it across to Chicago. "The adversary of all good," said Brother F. W. Halladay, who was among the workers that went south at this time, "tried first to destroy the testimony given on the colored work. It had been written some time before it was found by Brother White. Then he tried to destroy the boat. The trip across Lake Michigan was made in the worst storm in the history of a ship captain of twenty years' experience, and it was thought the little craft could not possibly weather it. The next morning after the storm, the captain, who was not a Christian, said, 'It's unbelievable that a boat of that type could live in such a sea; you had more than human help.' Then handing Brother White \$10, he remarked, 'Here is an expression of my wish for your success.'"

Leaving Chicago, the "Morning Star" passed through various waterways to the Mississippi River. At Ottawa, Ill., a small barge was purchased to accompany the "Morning Star." It was to be the home of the six canvassers who sold the little book, "Gospel Primer," as a means of supporting the enterprise. In the fall these missionaries reached Memphis, Tenn. While there, they were fined \$500 for operating their boat without a license. But out of this experience came glory to God and salvation to some of His children.

"A missionary boat under arrest! why, what does that mean?" some queried. "Who are these Seventh-day Adventists?" others asked. Finally our workers were released, and the fine remitted. More than that, many in Memphis had their attention called to the third angel's message, and some accepted it and became loyal Seventh-day Adventists. It was from this experience in Memphis that V. O. Cole, one of our veteran colporteurs, received his first impressions of the truth.

Next the little missionary boat steamed farther south, reaching Vicksburg, Miss., the door through which these workers entered the great mission field of the Southland, in January, 1895. An unknown hand had broken the ground for these workers who would sow the seeds of truth in the hearts of the Negro people. According to the story told our workers, it came about in this way:

About a year before the "Morning Star" reached Vicksburg, a God-fearing Negro preacher of considerable ability had been calling people in that vicinity to repentance. "Be ye clean!" was the message he fearlessly proclaimed in the face of bitter persecution. The colored preachers especially were bitterly opposed to him. One day a mob seized him, and soon afterward he died from the injuries inflicted. When dying he said: "I have not given you all the light; after I am gone others will come with more light. Take heed to it. It is your last chance. Bury me with my Bible on my breast."

The workers whom God had led southward knew nothing of this experience when they arrived; but one who reported the incident felt it had contributed toward the success of the work in and around Vicksburg, where a good-sized company was soon raised up.

#### A GREAT MISSION FIELD

It was indeed a great mission field that these earnest workers had entered. Before them was a rapidly growing Negro population. The Emancipation Proclamation long before had given freedom to three and a half million slaves, but by 1895 this number had greatly increased. Nor was their formidable number the only feature of the Negro problem. The more difficult phase lay in the fact that the emancipation of the body did not include freedom of mind and

training of hand. Fettered as he was with the shackles of ignorance, the Negro was not prepared to make the most of the liberty that had been granted him — the liberty that was his just due. Some of the older Negroes, it is true, had been trained in mechanical trades by their masters. There were among them blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, and workers at other trades. But after the Civil War there was no master to reap the benefits of such training. Said one student of the Negro problem about twenty years ago:

“With emancipation, the personal interest of the white man in the Negro ceased, and little attention was given to what he could do or could not do. The young Negro could earn a money wage for his work without a trade, and this to him was the great desideratum of living. He had money to spend, and could use it as he pleased. As a consequence of such conditions, the mechanical trades slipped from the hands of the colored man into the hands of white mechanics. Therefore the colored man is largely relegated to the position of a poorly paid field hand or crop raiser in the country, or a day laborer or loafer in the city. Not knowing or caring how to rise to a higher plane of existence, he lives a happy-go-lucky, day-by-day sort of existence, and such a population is a menace to the community and a threat to the country at large.”

#### BEGINNING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

The little handful of workers who came to Vicksburg realized keenly one fundamental element necessary to successful work in that field. That was the necessity of dealing with the Negro where he was—to begin there, with God's special help, to teach his head, to train his hand, to purify his heart, and to elevate his home life. They appreciated deeply the excellent work done by Fisk University and other schools; as well as the princely services of men like Booker T. Washington, who gave themselves unselfishly to the work of uplifting the Negro. But the workers on the “Morning Star” felt especially called to labor for the masses who were not reached by the large institutions. So they began their work very quietly in Vicksburg.

They went from house to house; they gave Bible studies; and they held night schools, in which many received their first lessons in reading. Soon the attendance became too large for a private home. Then the workers secured the use of a Baptist church, Elder White painting and papering the building for the privilege of using it. “Here,” wrote one of the workers, “the attendance was largely increased, and several classes were formed, ranging from small children to the fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers. At the close of each session a Bible reading was given, occupying from fifteen to twenty minutes.”

## THE SOUTHERN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

In this humble way the workers, who were formed into the Southern Missionary Society in 1898, entered upon their mission. God blessed their efforts. In 1899 their society was legally incorporated. For years the "Morning Star" served as its headquarters. As the work grew in Vicksburg, a small chapel was erected, in which a day as well as a night school was conducted. This building they soon outgrew; and then they secured another location, where they erected a commodious chapel and schoolroom. While our workers were in Vicksburg, a Baptist Bible worker accepted the truth, and for several years she labored among the colored people there, doing much to establish them in the message.

Before leaving Vicksburg, the workers remodeled the "Morning Star," making on it a chapel, with seating capacity for seventy-five persons. "Thus," wrote Brother Halladay, "we had our church and home with us wherever we went."

Yazoo City, Miss., about a hundred miles by river from Vicksburg, was their next place of special effort. There the work was conducted in much the same way as at the former place, and gratifying success followed consecrated efforts. God's care was over His servants as they carried forward His work.

It was in the winter of 1898, when the work was well established, that the enemy stirred up opposition. During this time Elder G. A. Irwin, who then had charge of the Southern field, and Elder I. H. Evans, who was studying his problems with him, were visiting Yazoo City. On the very night the workers took these visitors to Vicksburg on the "Morning Star," a mob had come to the river in Yazoo City to dynamite the boat. This, however, was only one of God's deliverances. "If you knew how many times the Lord had interposed to save your life," said Mrs. E. G. White to her son once, "you would never be discouraged again." While laboring in Yazoo City, the workers started the little paper, *Gospel Herald*, in more recent years published by the Oakwood school at Huntsville, Ala.

The malarial climate, however, told on some of the workers on the "Morning Star." Still they remained till they saw the work established in several Southern cities. Then leaving the work in charge of colored preachers and teachers, most of whom had been trained by the Southern Missionary Society, they moved the headquarters to Nashville, Tenn. There Elder White set up a small press in a barn, and continued to send forth the new missionary paper he had started in Yazoo City. It is interesting to recall today that the flourishing Southern Publishing Association traces its origin back to this humble beginning.

Some years after moving to Nashville, the "Morning Star" was beached at high-water mark with a view of using it as an office, but some one set fire to the boat that had served so good a purpose. There is, however, consolation in knowing that before it was destroyed, the boat that had carried our first missionaries to the Negro also helped to open the work among the poorer white people of the South. One of its last trips was up the Cumberland River, partly to find a location for the school Professors Sutherland and Magan had come south to establish. After the boat was destroyed, its boiler was put to service in the Oakwood school, while the little star that had hung between its smokestacks was sent to adorn the "Morning Star School" for white children near Huntsville, Ala.

The Southern Missionary Society, after functioning many years, was discontinued, the General Conference making other provisions for the promotion of our denominational work in behalf of the colored people. This work has been carried on successfully under the supervision of Elders A. J. Haysmer, C. B. Stephenson, and W. H. Green, serving for varying terms in the order named.

#### HOW THE WORK HAS GROWN

In 1909 we had thirty denominational schools among the Negroes of the South, with an attendance of about 1,000 children, besides a large number of churches, and a few small sanitariums and training schools. These gains had cost continuous struggle, hard work, and genuine self-denial. The men and women who had given years of unselfish service there, knew what it was to sacrifice for the good of others; but after all, the work was only begun, and the splendid foundation that the faithful hands of the pioneers had laid was now a challenge to others to co-operate as never before in the work of rescuing the American Negro. Mrs. E. G. White gave expression to this mute appeal of the Negro race. The *Review and Herald* contained an article from her pen, in which she said:

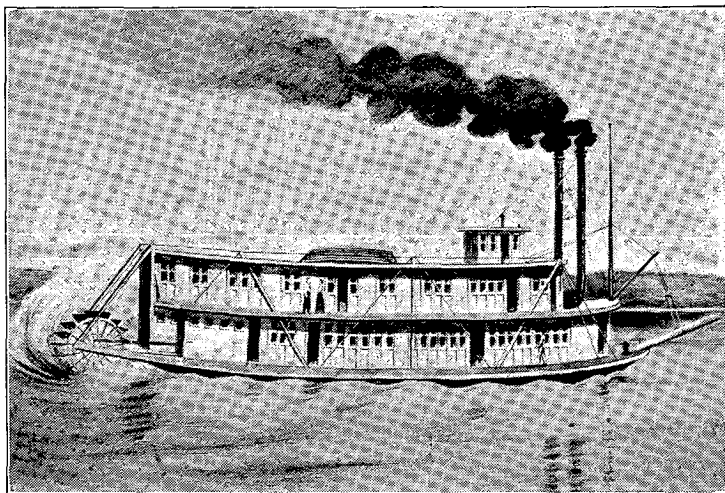
"In no place is there greater need of genuine gospel medical missionary work than among the colored people in the South. Had such a work been done for them immediately after the proclamation of freedom, their condition today would have been very different. Medical missionary work must be carried forward for the colored people. Sanitariums and treatment-rooms should be established in many places. These will open doors for the entrance of Bible truth.

"This work will require devoted men and means, and much wise planning. Years ago we should have been training colored men and women to care for the sick. Plans should now be made to do a quick work. Let promising colored youth—young men and young women of good Christian character—be given a thorough training for this line of service."—*Review and Herald*, Sept. 10, 1908.

Similar calls from the spirit of prophecy urged the development of the educational work; and always God's messenger manifested a deep interest and tender care for the Southern work in behalf of the Negro. God greatly blessed the efforts put forth.

The leading training school for colored youth is known as Oakwood Junior College, and is located near Huntsville, Ala. Near it is a small but well-equipped sanitarium. From that school have gone forth many trained workers, such as evangelists, Bible workers, colporteurs, teachers, and nurses. These are helping to give the gospel of the kingdom to America's 12,000,000 Negroes.

By 1922 the secretary of the Negro work reported 7,000 colored Seventh-day Adventist members; church properties valued at \$300,000, and schools at \$100,000. "Our churches of colored believers," continued the secretary, "are supporters of the various phases of the denominational work. In them we find an army of splendid youth keeping step with other Missionary Volunteers in America and elsewhere as together they are pressing forward in the Master's service."



"The Morning Star"