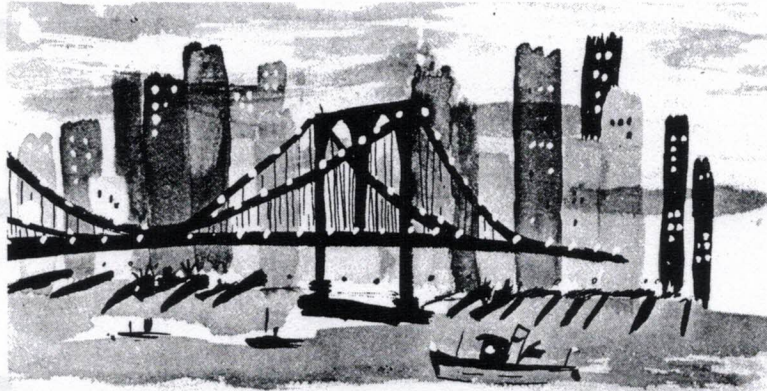


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*January 1973 - Special*



*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

### A COVER UP?

The cover of the Review and Herald for October 19, 1972 bannered the announcement - ELEVEN RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN ZAIRE SEEK AFFILIATION WITH SDA CHURCH. The story appeared on page 14. In the report a former president of the Central African Union wrote:

The reason that these church are seeking affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church grows out of recent changes in government regulations in Zaire relative to churches, missions, and worship generally. As a result, many small independent African churches that sprang up after the country became independent in 1964 can no longer exist as such. Although freedom of worship and freedom of choice as to which church one should join is guaranteed, certain requirements have been made regarding the organization of denominations that preclude these smaller churches. As a result, some of these organizations began looking for a larger recognized church with which they might affiliate.<sup>1</sup>

A story follows which tells of the attitude of the Ministry of Justice which advised these groups that "if they wanted to find a church that really taught what the Bible teaches, they must go with the Seventh-day Adventists."

The impression is left in the mind of the reader that wonderful things are happening for God's church, and that the forces of the Gentiles are indeed coming to the light of the Truth. The Church is being vindicated for multitudes are now knocking at its doors for admittance. But there was much that was left untold. What price was paid to be recognized as a religious community in Zaire? Was this tremendous story of thousands of potential accessions to the church merely used to cover up the real decisions that had been made in regard to our church in Zaire?

In the November 24, 1972 issue of Christianity Today was found a detailed report of the church situation in Zaire.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of the report is to be

found this appraisal:

The united church [The Church of Christ in Zaire - CCZ] jumped from its original forty-five members to seventy-two. Not only were all dissident denominations [Council of Protestant Churches of Zaire - CPCZ] reintegrated; left-over groups unwanted by approved associations were also swept in. . . One of these groups, the Seventh-day Adventists, has the distinction now of being the only SDA group that is a part of a united church.<sup>3</sup>

The preamble to the actual list of authorized communities [denominations] stated: "The associations are grouped by executive order [of the government] within the Church of Christ in Zaire while retaining their own legal status." Furthermore, Zaire, reputedly President Mobutu's own weekly magazine, is quoted as concluding, "All the Protestant communities have been put in the same sack and condemned to get along together." On the other hand, the President of CCZ, Dr. Bokeleale, proclaimed that opposition to organic union was tantamount to rebellion against the regime of President Mobutu. The author of the report in Christianity Today summarized the reaction to this objective of Dr. Bokeleale in these words:

In pushing organic church union, he [Bokeleale] expressed a common sentiment among the Zairians of many church backgrounds. They did not appreciate the historical reasons dividing Zaire's forty-five Western denominations and missions; they do not feel constrained to perpetuate them. Leading churchmen and laymen disagree with Bokeleale on how far and how fast they should move toward organic union. But they agree on the basic principle of a more tangible structure of their common faith in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

It may be true that the Zairians do not understand the historical reasons that have separated the various Protestant denominations, nor care to understand them, but they could understand, if properly presented, the nature of the message of Revelation 14:6-12, and the uniqueness of the people which are called to present the Message. What their reaction would be to such an understanding is not ours to worry about. Results are to be left in the hands of God.

Another problem comes to light in the same report. The author writing of the laity of the Protestant church in Zaire stated - "The average church member is uninformed and unconcerned." If this is true of the 75,000 to 125,000 seeking ad-

mission to the Adventist community within the CCZ, what advantage is there to the church except the propaganda value which can be used to cover up our surrender in Zaire? How can we continue to proclaim our uniqueness according to the prophecy of Revelation 14, and permit one segment of the church to unite with Babylon?

Too many of us "think far too favorably of this present time," warned the servant of the Lord.<sup>5</sup> When we consider that the "mark of the beast" is in reality a mark of religious conformity, the events in Zaire, and our reaction to them should cause us to tremble. We are warned:

The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who step by step yielded to *worldly demands*, and conformed to worldly customs, will not find it a hard matter to *yield to the powers that be*, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the *commandments of men*.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of a cover (up) in the Review and Herald telling of how many thousands wish to join one community of the united Church of Christ in Zaire, even though that community is called by the name Seventh-day Adventist, would it not have been more elevating spiritually if the Review could have reported how God intervened in behalf of His people, because its leadership refused to bow to the mandate of the powers that be, and maintained their integrity as the unique messengers of God's only and final message to the inhabitants of the whole world, including the Republic of Zaire?

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<sup>1</sup>W. R. Vail, "Eleven Religious Groups in Zaire Seek Affiliation with SDA Church", Review and Herald, October 19, 1972, p. 14

<sup>2</sup>Robert L. Niklaus, "Politics Goes to Church in Zaire", Christianity Today November 24, 1972, pp. 9-13

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 80

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 81

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(January, 1973, Special)