

Ntakirutimana Says *Spectrum* Smears His Father's Reputation

I totally agree with you when you say that all those who are responsible for the massacres that took place in Rwanda in 1994 should be brought to justice. I also agree with you when you recommend that every effort has to be made so that what happened in Rwanda will never happen again.

However, I was shocked to read the article entitled, "Sabbath Slaughter: SDAs and Rwanda," by Alita Byrd (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 4). All the accusations made against my father, Pastor Elisephan Ntakirutimana, and myself are false.

It is hard to understand how a Christian journalist of your caliber, who is aware of the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:16), can publish such serious accusations against someone without doing anything in order to check if those accusations are true or false. Since you had my address in Zambia and the Ivory Coast, you should have asked me to give you my side of the story before publishing (Deuteronomy 13:14). What you did to us is just unfair.

Actually, the way you handled this problem is similar to what the police in the State of Texas did on

September 26, 1996. The police acted on accusations made by some members of the Tutsi community in the United States and arrested Pastor Ntakirutimana without giving him the opportunity to defend himself. Now an innocent person is suffering in jail. I am sure that those who made up those accusations are celebrating now because they have achieved their goal. They know very well that Pastor Ntakirutimana, 73 years old, is innocent, but they want him to die in prison so that their godfather, Asiel Kabera, an influential member of the Rwanda Patriotic Front and governor of the Kibuye region, may take over his estate back in Rwanda. However, I pray to God that he prevents those wicked persons from interfering with justice so that my father may get a fair trial.

Coming back to the *Spectrum* article, I want to point out two things: First, I have never discussed with Pastor L. T. Daniel what happened in Mugonero on April 16, 1994. Therefore I have never told him that I wanted to be absolved, as the article reported. I have not done anything wrong. I do not need to be absolved. Second,

Responses to Rwanda, Atlantic Union College, and "Pilgrims in the Hills of Carolina"

being a survivor of a massacre does not make a person always tell the plain truth. Remember what Pastor L. T. Daniel and Heraldo Seidl said about the value of some of the testimonies coming out of Rwanda: "Some of it is true, some is not." "Nobody tells the truth. People are afraid to. You cannot prove anything in a confused situation like that." Please, do not

let your magazine become a channel for smearing other people's reputations.

Finally, I invite you—along with Rakiya Omaar and his informants—to read Hebrews 10:26 and Exodus 20:16, if you recognize the authority of the Bible.

Gerard Ntakirutimana
Cote d'Ivoire

workers. It would have been far better to have adopted the practice of, "from everywhere to everywhere." This might have helped to undermine the continued entrenchment of tribalism and provincialism in the working force. Perhaps we should have expended much more time and effort in interiorizing within the rank and file of the membership the biblical truth that, in Christ, all are one.

In Africa, Adventists Have Catered Too Much to Tribalism

A recent issue of *Spectrum* contained a disturbing article entitled "Sabbath Slaughter: SDAs and Rwanda" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 4). I read it with much interest and a growing concern that perhaps we have failed to ensure that this kind of tragedy does not recur.

I am well acquainted with the Rwandan situation, having been connected with that part of the world for many years as a missionary in Rwanda, Zaire, and the Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Many of the workers who perished in the holocaust were former colleagues and friends. As treasurer of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division from 1990 to the end of 1993, I made repeated trips to Rwanda, both on a routine basis and in response to emergency calls for help in dealing with the worsening situation. The fact that Adventists participated in the killings is particularly disturbing because it raises serious questions that need to be addressed—and I am afraid we are bypassing the issue when we adopt a mentality of, "There should be a point where we just say what is gone is gone. Let's begin afresh." What assurance do we have that, given a repeat of the circumstances, Christians will behave any differently?

We need to have the courage to

examine carefully where, as a church, we may have erred in our presentation of the gospel—how we administered the church program; how we may have set ourselves up for a tragedy such as this. May I submit a number of areas that I believe deserve our careful attention:

1 I fear we were too concerned with numerical growth at the expense of discipling. When we fail to disciple adequately, we bring into being a church whose converts may be vulnerable to pressures such as those that eventuated in the Rwanda tragedy of 1994. As a church we may have relied upon figures of numerical increase as the evidence of true growth. Pressure exerted upon indigenous administrators for numerical growth sometimes resulted in hastily baptized and under indoctrinated accessions to membership. Christianity has had to compete with traditional concepts (tribalism is part of this), and as long as converts do not become new creatures in Christ Jesus, ethnic hatreds and resultant cruelty will surface under the right conditions.

I perceive one of our serious shortcomings was that we catered too much to tribalism in our selection and deployment of church

2 In Africa we have fallen woefully short in the provision of character-building literature for the membership. Rwanda and Zaire are prime examples. In Zaire, for example, until very recently, by and large the membership had no access to Sabbath school lesson quarterlies, Bibles, or hymnals. There was practically no literature available for a church membership that was growing by the tens of thousands every year. Much the same situation existed in Rwanda. We have spent millions of dollars in buildings and institutions, but have not found the funding for literature with which to nurture a growing church. In many parts of Africa, what is seen in print and what comes over the airwaves is accepted as gospel truth. Africa has been bombarded with broadcasts from secular and atheistic sources. Millions, hungry for the printed page, have absorbed non-Christian, revolutionary concepts from the abundance of undesirable publications put out by the purveyors of this poison. It was Brother Andrew, of Bible-smuggling fame, who made the statement that missionaries taught Africa to read, but they left it to the communists to provide the literature. This situation in our church in Rwanda would leave one to conclude that many of the members were ill-equipped to withstand the ethnic pressures that tore the country apart.

3 Our educational system was too dependent upon state aid and approval. When we accept state finance and recognition, we find ourselves having to bow to the state's demands in a number of areas, perhaps the most notable being quasi-control over which students we can accept and the curriculum we offer. History bears witness that students have played not a little part in fomenting unrest and violence in our educational institutions. At the university college located at Mudende, where hundreds of people lost their lives, students acted as informers upon fellow students and staff. Students rioted and even threw hand grenades. Did the curriculum we offered cater more to head knowledge than to a knowledge based upon eternal truths? Were our attempts to balance the budget by opening the doors to non-committed students really worth it in the long haul?

I was present upon a number of occasions when the university board grappled with the crises brought about by student and local community intervention in the affairs of the institution. There was the occasion when three Tutsi students were abducted and killed. Although the university pressed the government for a thorough inquiry, it was obliged to settle for an untruthful, unsatisfactory report as to what became of these three students. I personally helped the widow of one of them as she struggled to cope financially, following her husband's disappearance. What disturbed me in particular was the seeming unconcern of some of our Rwandese board members (administrators both on the union and local field level) about the killings. I remonstrated with them right there on the board. The impression was clear—the victims were Tutsi, so what else could one expect?

More than 60 percent of the baptized membership in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division was under 25 years of age. Because of this, our education system was, likely, a key factor in setting the spiritual tone of the church.

Unless I am mistaken, our church has yet to conduct a serious inquiry into Adventist involvement in the atrocities. We may have underplayed the death toll among Adventists in Rwanda. I am inclined to agree with the article in *Spectrum* that many more than the 10,000—plus or minus—were killed. A mentality of, Let's forget the past and start anew, is not good enough. Denominational employees, in particular, should be held accountable for their involvement in the carnage. What have we done about it? To turn a blind eye in this direction is to ensure that the evil will persist and occur again when conditions are ripe. I am shocked that Elisephan Ntakirutimana and his one son are named as collaborators with the killers. I have known Elisephan for more than 35 years, having met

with him and other Rwandan church leaders as late as April 1993 in Kigali. His is not just another name—he is a brother in Christ who has a fearfully dark cloud hanging over him. We owe it to the victims and their surviving family members in Rwanda to come through with a clear message and stance on the issue. We owe it to Elisephan and others of his kind who may have been guilty of genocide to make them aware of our horror, revulsion, and sorrow for what they did, and to let them know that Jesus is “able to save to the uttermost” even perceived killers like them.

What I have written is in no way intended as destructive criticism. I realize that my observations may be faulty, but my heart bleeds for the Africa in which I grew up as a missionary's son, and for the Africa in which we spent more than 40 years in the Lord's service. The Rwanda and Burundi tragedies are my tragedy, my sorrow, my loss.

Don H. Thomas
Stafford, Arizona

Editors' Response: We Delayed Publication, Awaiting a Response

The anguished letters from Don H. Thomas, a former colleague, and from a son of Pastor Elisephan Ntakirutimana remind us just how tragic the events in Rwanda have been. We can only try to appreciate Dr. Gerard Ntakirutimana's agony.

We do wish to respond to Dr. Ntakirutimana's letter. On November 28, 1995, *Spectrum* sent a fax to the Africa-Indian Ocean Division headquarters in Abidjan, on the Ivory Coast, asking for information regarding Dr. Ntakirutimana's whereabouts. We received no response, and delayed publication of our report.

After the *Washington Times* re-

ported that Pastor Elisephan Ntakirutimana was living in Laredo, Texas, *Spectrum* attempted to contact him at the natural grocery store operated by his relatives. Again, we received no response.

After the *Spectrum* report finally appeared, Dr. Ntakirutimana responded, writing from the Africa-Indian Ocean Division headquarters. Dr. Ntakirutimana cites several biblical texts in his letter, and we certainly agree with the counsel of Deuteronomy 13:14, which says, “Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that

such abomination is wrought among you." We also note the immediately following verse: "Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword" (verse 15).

After finding additional information from reputable human rights

organizations, *Spectrum* printed its account of a tragic and important event in Adventism—a story widely reported in the mainstream media. We regret that the International Tribunal has become so convinced of the evidence that it has indicted Pastor Elisephan Ntakirutimana for crimes against humanity.

—The Editors

The New York Conference Did Not Loan Money to AUC



I read with interest your account of the events that have been transpiring in the Atlantic Union with the college (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 4). It is, by and large, an accurate description of the matter. The one discrepancy that caught my attention was the report that the "college officers secured \$2 million from the New York and Southern New England conference revolving funds to meet the school's payroll and finance general operations."

I cannot speak for the Southern New England Conference, but I can tell you that such was not the case in New York. The New York Conference Executive Committee, following the advice of counsel, voted an action to decline the college's request to use New York revolving fund monies for the purpose of the loan. Our attorney explained that the New York "prudent investor" law, enforced by the state upon all trustees, would not allow us to make the funds of our

trustors, practically all of which are invested in the revolving fund, available to an organization which, according to the audit presented at the college constituency session, is "not a going concern." It is not that the New York Conference does not believe in Atlantic Union College, or is trying to be obstinate; it is, simply, that we are trying to be faithful stewards of the funds that trustors and other New York investors have entrusted to our care. We value the confidence they have placed in us. We do not intend to violate that trust.

Since many of your readers are from the region serviced by the Atlantic Union, it may be valuable to them to have the correct information—to wit, that the union officers have assured us that no New York Conference monies were included in the loan from the revolving fund to Atlantic Union College.

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Northeastern Conference Is Paying "Debts"

I have noted in your recent article about Atlantic Union College (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 4) some observations about Northeastern Conference that should be clarified.

The article states that the Northeastern Conference "refused to join other local conferences in lending money to the college." In fact, only one of the six conferences in the Atlantic Union Conference loaned money to the college. That loan was drawn from that conference's revolving fund. Three other conferences, including Northeastern, expressed a clear willingness to do the same, but had no significant revolving fund account to draw on. Two other conferences who did have revolving fund accounts chose not to lend money to the college. To single out Northeastern on this point seems to me to be both misleading and unfair.

Second, you state that Northeastern "is already \$5.1 million in arrears in tithe payments to the union, according to the official report of the General Conference service." The report to which you refer is dated December 31, 1995. At the time of that GC report, the statement was accurate. However, since that time—and many months before your August publication date—Northeastern began an aggressive payment plan to bring its account up to date. At this writing (August 28, 1996), Northeastern Conference has reduced that account to approximately \$1.4 million. And I must stress that none of that remaining amount is owed to the Atlantic Union. The remaining funds, with a scheduled plan for

repayment, are owed directly to the North American Division, and will simply be passed through the Atlantic Union Conference according to regular policy. Thus, the present-tense statement in an August publication that the confer-

ence "is already \$5.1 million in arrears" is significantly out of date.

I hope this information helps to clarify your story.

Leon D. Thomassian, Treasurer
Atlantic Union Conference

Editors' Response: Latest Information on AUC Is Encouraging

Richard Coston expresses the view that, except for one item, *Spectrum's* report was generally accurate. Many others have also communicated to the editors their appreciation for what they describe as a succinct account of a complex and critical period in the history of Atlantic Union College. We appreciate Pastor Coston's correction—that the New York Conference did not advance the college money from its own funds. We also appreciate Pastor Thomassian's letter. While acknowledging that we accurately reported information from the written, public documents available to us, he provides helpful additional information concerning the Northeastern Conference.

Recent news from Atlantic Union College must cheer its alumni. According to a report by Mark Hyder, the vice president for finance, to a January 26 college constituency meeting, the Atlantic Union and the Atlantic Union Revolving Fund provided \$3 million for the college to operate from March through

August 1996. A recruitment program under the guidance of interim president Clifford Sorenson, resulted in the enrollment of 447 students (financial full-time equivalents) in the fall of 1996. A stringent operating budget that included the reduction of 55 employees, meant that an enrollment above 350 permitted the faculty and staff to be reimbursed for the 17 percent pay cut that they had taken during the summer. By reducing its annual operating subsidy to the college by \$1.2 million per year for the next 15 years, the Atlantic Union assumed the majority of the college's \$8.7 million outstanding debt, leaving the campus nearly debt free. All these developments must have encouraged a new president when he assumed his responsibilities September 30, 1996: Sylvan Lashley, Ed.D, formerly president of Caribbean Union College in Trinidad and of West Indies College in Jamaica.

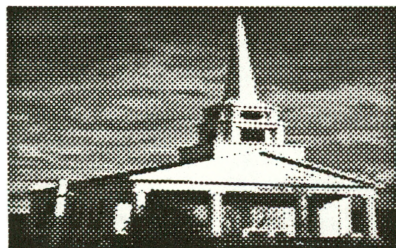
—The Editors

But we must be very careful not to degrade Creationism by maintaining an untenable concept of it. Evidence that life has been present on this planet far longer than 6,000 year has become so abundant, so diverse, and so reliable, that I cannot with integrity ignore, evade, or discredit it. I believe this evidence to be far more reliable than was the primitive astronomical data available to Galileo when he was proclaiming the heretical notion that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the solar system. We must not emulate the Christian leaders of Galileo's day who refused to look through his telescope at the craters of the moon or the satellites of Jupiter. I wonder if we do not make as great a mistake in setting a time for the creation of life on this earth as did our spiritual forebears in setting a time for the Second Coming.

Evidence for a Long Chronology: Bristlecone Pine Tree Ring Chronology and C-14 Dating. The continuous 7,700 year tree ring chronology would appear to rule out a worldwide flood since the 5th millennium B.C. Radiocarbon dates closely follow the tree ring dates, except that they gradually shorten by a few hundred years when dating material several thousand years old. This correction is in the wrong direction to support the concept that radiocarbon was missing or at very low concentrations before the Flood. Biological specimens, such as peat, show radiocarbon dates throughout the 30,000 year range limit of this dating method, and no detectable C-14 is present in coal and petroleum.

Fossil Forest of Yellowstone. More than 40 layers of petrified stumps are displayed in a ravine apparently produced by glaciation or erosion. I visited this site in 1985 while on a geological field trip sponsored by the Association of Adventist Forums. As I remember

Other Pilgrims Searching for the Creator



In response to the article, "Pilgrims in the Hills of Carolina," by Randy Neall (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 5), faith in God as Creator is one of the most fundamental beliefs in all Christianity. Without God as Creator the entire biblical record is without foundation.

them, the layers are perhaps 20 or 30 feet thick. Many of the stumps are several feet in diameter. Nearly all of them are upright and in an apparent position of original growth. One of them has roots embracing a huge stone. To me, the usual explanation of sequential volcanic activity burying the forests appears much more logical than the rafting hypothesis designed to shorten the time span of these formations. How could a raft of trees float in over a tall forest without toppling it? And then repeat the process more than 40 times in a brief time span?

Continental Drift. The west coast of Africa and the east coast of South America, with their continental shelves, would fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The continents are now separating at the rate of approximately a centimeter per year. Similar fossil formations at corresponding areas of both continents demonstrate the presence of life when the continents were contiguous.

The only active volcanos in the

Hawaiian Islands are on the big island at the extreme southeast end of the chain. The other islands are considered to have been previously formed by the same volcanic center, as the continental shelf drifted by. Most of these islands have eroded back into the sea, leaving a chain of more than 1,000 miles of seamounts.

The Grand Canyon. The progression of fossils from primitive to mammal as samples are taken from the bottom to the top of the formations has been explained by the ecological zonation hypothesis. But could not large reptiles be more mobile to avoid the Genesis flood than small rodents? Can we invoke the Genesis flood to explain both the formation of the sediments and then the formation of the canyon by erosion?

A Possible Explanation. Genesis 41:57 reads, "Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world." The author of Genesis, of course, had no concept of the "world" as we

know it and applied the term to the countries adjacent to Egypt.

Matthew 24:1-44 records how, when Jesus was asked by the disciples when the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world would occur, he did not clarify that these were separate events, but mingled in his reply descriptions of both events.

Perhaps the accounts of creation and the flood in Genesis may be a similar mingling of a short-term creation of the Garden of Eden and a long-term creation of the universe. Could the creation story describe a literal, six-day miracle in a limited geographic area? Then, when Adam and Eve were evicted from the garden, they would live "by the sweat of their brow" in land long dominated by the presence of Satan, where many of the animals lived by predation. This hypothesis would solve many geologic problems and preserve the literal origin of the Sabbath.

Ralph Adams
Salem, Oregon