

# Appeals Court Says Pastor Must Be Turned Over to Rwandan Tribunal

By PATTY REINERT  
Houston Chronicle Staff

*Reprinted from the Houston Chronicle, Aug. 6, 1999, sec. A, p. 42. © Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.*

**A**Rwandan pastor living in Laredo and accused of masterminding the slaughter of hundreds of Tutsis in his homeland must be turned over to an international war crimes tribunal, the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Thursday.

The New Orleans court affirmed a ruling by a Texas federal judge that there is enough evidence to allow Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, a Hutu and former president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda, to be turned over to the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

The tribunal, based in Arusha, Tanzania, intends to try the pastor for genocide and crimes against humanity in the 1994 massacre of Tutsis who had sought shelter at Ntakirutimana's church in Rwanda.

If Ntakirutimana is extradited, it will be the first time the United States has surrendered a defendant from America to a U.N. tribunal. If convicted, the pastor could face life in prison.

Ntakirutimana, 75, who legally immigrated to the United States to live with his son in Laredo, could not be reached for comment Thursday. The pastor, who was first arrested in September 1996 in Laredo, then released pending a decision on his extradition, is back in the Webb County Jail. According to his family, he is in poor health, suffering from heart and esophagus problems.

The pastor, a Hutu who is married to a Tutsi, has denied all the allegations against him. His lawyer, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, has vowed to take the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Clark

could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Ntakirutimana is accused of luring hundreds of minority Tutsis to take refuge in his church and then leading a gun and machete attack on the group. He also is charged with taking part in rounding up survivors of the massacre and killing them.

In upholding the lower court ruling by U.S. District Judge John Rainey, Circuit Judge Emilio M. Garza wrote that there is enough evidence, based on the statements of twelve unidentified witnesses who survived the massacre, to establish probable cause for trying Ntakirutimana. The court also said that although the United States doesn't have an extradition treaty with the tribunal, a 1996 law allowing Ntakirutimana's extradition is constitutional.

In a dissenting opinion, Circuit Judge Harold R. DeMoss Jr. found just the opposite, saying the extradition decision is unenforceable.

Circuit Judge Robert M. Parker concurred with the majority opinion, but wrote a brief, separate opinion, urging Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to "closely scrutinize the underlying evidence" before deciding whether Ntakirutimana should be extradited. Albright will make the final decision once the courts have ruled on the legal issues.

Calling the evidence "highly suspect," Parker said it "defies logic . . . that a man who has served his church faithfully for many years, who has never been accused of any law infraction, who has for his long life been a man of peace, and who is married to a Tutsi, would somehow suddenly become a man of violence and commit the atrocities for which he stands accused."

"I am persuaded that it is more likely than not," he wrote, "that Ntakirutimana is actually innocent."

State-sponsored massacres organized by Hutu extremists in Rwanda killed more than five hundred thousand people in 1994, mostly minority Tutsis.





We welcome letters to the editor.  
SPECTRUM  
P.O. Box 619047  
Roseville, CA 95661-9047  
BonnieDwyer@compuserve.com

### Christian Greetings from Uganda.

I am a lonely widow aged thirty-nine years but when I came across your earlier *Spectrum* magazine copy published some years ago, and when I read some articles, I felt a belonging to a certain family. "The family of God." Because my family got devoured by the devil when my husband was executed by the merciless terrorists in our country in these endless cruel wars, some six years ago!! Please send me a recent copy of *Spectrum* magazine and further inform me of the individual charges for a single copy monthly. My son and daughter who are adolescents also found this magazine a blessing. It will be soothing to our family.

**Mawanda Catherine**  
Wobulenzi, Uganda

### The Conditional Nature of Prophecy

The summer 1999 issue of *Spectrum* was, in my judgment, one of the best. I especially appreciated the article by Reinder Bruinsma on Adventists and Catholics. I am a retired Adventist minister, and I love our church very much. However, I have been troubled over our failure to recognize and appreciate the changes that have come in the Roman Catholic Church and the dogged determination on the part of many to enter into a fortress mentality and pretend it is "us" against the rest of the Christian world. I think we should appreciate other Christians when we can.

Bruinsma does state twice in his article that it is very difficult to bring about a change in our attitudes without appearing to be attacking Ellen White. Since I have been troubled over this issue for some time, I am being bold enough to offer at least an attempt in the direction of change. While I am very comfortable with the broad outline of the three angels' messages and the fact that they teach the soon coming of Jesus the second time, I have come to have some misgivings about the

rigidity with which we often feel that we have figured out every detail of the future, assigning other churches and groups their parts to play and believing it will infallibly happen as we have predicted.

There are several reasons for this disquieting feeling. First and foremost is a biblical reason. I wish to quote the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.' So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as it seemed best to him.

"Then the word of the Lord came to me: 'Oh, house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does.' Declares the Lord. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.'" (Jer. 18:1-10 NIV)

Clearly, God has stated that dogmatic assertions about the future behavior of groups is inappropriate, since it is clearly conditional upon the actions of that group. Ellen White clearly agrees with this concept. She says, "It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional." (*Selected Messages, Book 1* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958], 67)

Since both the Bible and Ellen White declare unequivocally that prophecies and threatenings are conditional, it seems presumptuous for me to be so rigid as to declare without reservation that Protestants and Catholics are going to unite to do these negative deeds. In addition to that, it seems to me that if we are committed to a single possible scenario as to what may happen in the future we may be blind to threats that may



come from another quarter.

I wish that we would adopt the attitude of the prophet Daniel, who understood God's love and attitude toward conditional prophecy very well. When in Daniel 4, the prophet tells of a dream that brought a prediction that the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar would become insane and be driven from his throne for a period of years, Daniel did not rejoice at the punishment of the pagan king. He did not even rigidly decree that God had predicted it and that nothing could be done about it. Rather he pleaded with the king to change his ways, with the clear inference that this might bring about a change in the possible prophecy of the future.

Sometimes our preconceived view of future events leads us to view other churches with so much suspicion that we fail to see the good that they may actually be doing. Ellen White warned us that systems of belief that undermine our basically Christian attitudes may be suspect. She said during the 1888 crisis, "God deliver me from your ideas . . . if the receiving of these ideas would make me so unchristian in my spirit, words, and works" as they had become. (Quoted in George B. Knight, *Angry Saints* . . . [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1989], 2)

Concerning rigidity in our ideas and cocksure belief that we are right on every point, she uttered these cautions, "As a people we are certainly in great danger, if we are not constantly guarded, of considering our ideas, because long cherished, to be Bible doctrines . . . and measuring everyone by the rule of our interpretation of Bible truth. This is our danger, and this would be the greatest evil that could ever come to us as a people." (Quoted in Knight, *Angry Saints*, 136)

In short, my plea would be that we remain open-minded about future events and not eagerly accuse other Christians of sinister plots, nor accuse each other of apostasy if we do not always view every detail of prophecy in exactly the same way.

**Charles G. Edwards**

Wenatchee, Washington

### On Sabbath Keeping

In defending the validity of observing the seventh-day Sabbath (*Spectrum*, summer 1999) no writer made a point that is important to me.

Our native intelligence tends to support all Ten Commandments except the fourth. But while our reasoning powers can readily grasp the importance of not being a polytheist, not killing, not stealing, etc.,

those powers do not tell us why observing the seventh day as Sabbath is superior to observing the first.

After all, we can attend Christian services on Sunday, listen to excellent sermons, hear Jesus extolled and Christian morality upheld on Sunday as well as Saturday. Why make such a big deal about one day as opposed to another? We are all worshiping the same God, accepting the same Savior, and seeking to do God's will insofar as concrete aspects of our daily lives are concerned. Aren't we engaging in a lot of hairsplitting and nit-picking?

If I hadn't been raised in a Sabbath-keeping home, I would find this point of view persuasive.

My reasoning in support of observing Saturday as Sabbath runs somewhat differently. Doing God's will when our own intelligence concurs in the wisdom of his commands hardly acknowledges his supremacy in establishing matters of right and wrong. We agree with God, so we do his will.

But if God asks us to do something that may puzzle us—that may even seem a bit arbitrary on God's part—and we still obey, then we truly acknowledge God's authority over our lives.

I think God wants loyalty based not just on our own perceptions of right and wrong but also on faith in the righteousness of his divine commands, whether or not they coincide with our fallible human judgment.

**Reo M. Christenson**

Miamisburg, Ohio

### Movie Review

*Spectrum's* issue of summer 1999 is only the second that I have received. I was rather surprised to see the review of *Star Wars* by Marilyn Glaim. To me, movie viewing is unchristian. Regardless how they are packaged, movies are counterproductive forms of entertainment for the growth of Christian faith, whether one is a Seventh-day Adventist or of some other religious persuasion. Granted, there are a few good movies around, but should one eat a barrel of trash to benefit from a capsule of vitamins? Traditionally, Adventists have opposed going to movies; however, in recent years the trend is to conform to this secular world's entertainment standard. It is sad to see that a high-caliber journal like *Spectrum* is sanctioning movie viewing in a subtle way. We should devote our time to nourishing our spiritual growth rather than allowing entertainment devised by Satan to influence us.

**Won H. Bae**

wbae@compuserve.com