

Christianity False, Chenault Believes

King Suspect Denies He's a Member of Anti-Priest Group

By Austin Scott

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ATLANTA, July 2—The man accused of killing Mrs. Martin Luther King Sr. and an Ebenezer Baptist Church deacon was not a member of any group formed to punish black ministers, his lawyer said today.

He did believe, however, that Christianity was a "false religion," hypocritical in every sense.

Attorney Randolph Bacote said he suspect, Marcus Chenault, told him he read the 23d chapter of Jeremiah earlier this year which helped reveal to him that he had a mission.

That chapter of the Old Testament castigates priests who were not being true to their god. It begins, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! sayeth the Lord," and ends, "And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten."

Bacote said he did not specifically ask Chenault about an unconfirmed report that he was a member of a group called "The Troop," college-educated blacks bent on punishing black ministers.

The lawyer was referring to an article today in the Dayton (Ohio) Journal Herald, which quoted an unnamed friend of Chenault as saying the group believed that black preachers who had influence in their communities were "political pimps" who should be punished because they mislead their people.

"The Troop," according to the copyrighted story, had several members in the Dayton area who considered themselves "Hebrews who believe in God and not Jesus Christ."

The friend, who said he is a member of the group, said, "The King family had been cursed ever since all those black people got killed in the South for following Martin Jr.'s teaching in the height of the 1960 riots," the Journal Herald reported. He also accused the Kings of getting rich "instead of helping out the poor people of the South," the paper said. The Dayton Daily News said the Journal Herald's source was Walter Brooks of Dayton, who said he knew Chenault when they both attended Ohio State University.

Chenault "to name any group, association or organization that he attended, any meetings he attended."

"... As a matter of fact, he was a loner. He said, 'I was alone. I thought alone, I read alone, I investigated alone, I acted alone.' All the conclusions are his, without being modified by anyone else."

If Chenault did confide in anyone else, that person hasn't come to public atten-

tion. Last Mother's Day, the lawyer said, "he told his mother that he disowned her. Everbody else gave her a card or a present. He told her, 'You're no longer my mother.' My impression is he still had at least sporadic communication with" his parents after that.

The FBI has said it entered the case to investigate the possibility of a conspiracy.

Flags flew at half staff in Atlanta today, the second of three days of official mourning declared by Mayor Maynard Jackson, who had been close to Mrs. King since he was seven years old.

"She could always tell what I was thinking whenever she saw me," the mayor said. "I consider this a deep personal loss."

When Mrs. King's body went on display at 9 a.m. today there were already two half-block-long lines waiting at the entrance to Ebenezer Baptist Church. Many of those waiting wore the uniforms of maids and waitresses, and there were some whites also.

At the state capitol, workmen, keeping a schedule set up before the killings, rehung a portrait of Martin Luther King Jr.

It had to be repaired after an elderly black woman who said she loved Dr. King had written across it. It is the same portrait that Lt. Gov. Lester Maddox has vowed to remove if he wins his present bid for a second term as governor.

Bacote said Chenault told him he had been associated with only one organization, which he helped found and which "was extinct six weeks after they started it."

It was cultural, not violent, the attorney said. Chenault, one other black man, and two black women started it to "enlighten blacks," to "address itself to what books and authors were best."

But the founders couldn't seem to get together for meetings, Bacote said, and after one or two attempts to meet, drifted apart. He answered, "no comment" when asked who the others were, where and when the group was formed, and what its name was.

Bacote also elaborated on some of Chenault's thinking and his claim that he is the Jacob mentioned in the Bible.

The biblical Jacob and his father and grandfather Isaac and Jacob, are the traditional founders of the Hebrews.

Among the best-known stories associated with Jacob's name are his theft of the inheritance rights of Esau, his elder brother through deception of their nearsighted father; his dream of the great ladder peopled with angels climbing up and down; and the mysterious

event at the Forkford, where he wrestled all night with a man he took to be a manifestation of God.

When he was arraigned Monday, Chenault told the court, "My name is Servant Jacob. I'm a Hebrew. I was sent here on a purpose and it's partly accomplished."

By Hebrew, Bacote said, he meant "a black follower of the god of Jacob as distinguished from a Jew."

"He was revealed to be servant Jacob about two years ago," Bacote said.

It was revealed to him that black people in this country were of the tribe of Jacob and then it came to him that he was in fact a Hebrew.

Bacote said he does not know exactly what form these revelations took.

"This year certain revelations came to him about the purpose of Servant Jacob. There was not violence up to now. All he knew at that time (two years ago) was that Servant Jacob would have a purpose."

Sometime this year, the attorney said, "He read the 23d chapter of Jeremiah and he says that . . . he became aware through Jeremiah 23 of the enemies of Christian-

ity," meaning major Christian enemies of black people.

The list of 10 black ministers found in his room in Columbus, Ohio, grew out of that revelation, Bacote said.

"On that list you will find his early reverend, J.W. Jones who taught him as a kid. He was the first Christian to put this false doctrine into him," Bacote said.

You will also find his cousin, Howard B. Washington of Akron. Also on the list are the Revs. Ralph Abernathy and Hosea Williams of Atlanta, Jesse Jackson of Chicago, James Cleveland of Los Angeles, Cecil Williams of San Francisco, the "Dreaming

King Family," Rev. Ike, a New York television minister, and Father Divine.

Most of the names on Chenault's list were prominent in the news, Bacote said, and Chenault considered them leaders "most influential" in "misguiding black people."

Chenault included his cousin, Bacote said, to show that he was so sincere he would not even defend a relative if the relative were wrong.