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Aryan Nations/Church of Jesus Christ Christian

Recent years have not been kind to Aryan Nations, once the country's most well-known neo-Nazi outpost. Bankrupted by a lawsuit from a mother and son who were assaulted by Aryan Nations guards, the group lost its Idaho compound in 2001. Though he continued to serve as Aryan Nations' leader, Richard Butler suffered the effects of age and ill health, and the group splintered into factions in 2002. Butler claimed to be reorganizing Aryan Nations but died in September 2004, leaving the group's future as uncertain as ever.

Quick Profile

Founder and Leader: Richard Butler (1918-2004)

Splinter groups (and leaders): Tabernacle of Phineas Priesthood (Charles Juba, based in Pennsylvania); Church of the Sons of Yahweh (Morris Gullett, based in Louisiana)

Founded: Mid-1970s

Headquarters : Hayden, Idaho

Background: Butler first became involved with the Christian Identity movement after serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. He studied under Wesley Swift, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, until Swift died. Butler then formed Aryan Nations.

Media: Internet, videos, posters, e-mail, chat rooms, online bulletin boards, conferences.

Ideology: Christian Identity, white supremacy, neo-Nazi, paramilitary
Connections: Aryan Nations has had members in common with several other white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups, including National Alliance, the Ku Klux Klan and The Silent Brotherhood/The Order
Recent Developments: Once the most well-known neo-Nazi group in the United States, Aryan Nations has suffered substantially in recent years due to Butler's ill health, and a lawsuit that cost the group its Northern Idaho compound in 2001. Butler agreed to share power with Kreis and Redfeairn later that year, but the arrangement dissolved into internal squabbling. Eventually three groups competed for Aryan Nations' dwindling number of followers. It is unclear how Butler's death in September 2004 will affect the group.



Background

Aryan Nations is one of the country's best-known enclaves of anti-Semitism and white nationalism. While founded as a Christian Identity outpost, the organization also incorporates neo-Nazi themes; its founder and longtime leader, Richard Girnt Butler, openly adulates Hitler. It is no surprise, then, that Aryan Nations has for many years had members in common with several other white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups and that the Aryan Nations compound at Hayden Lake has served as one of the central meeting points and rallying grounds of far-right extremists of all stripes.

Butler (b. 1918), is a World War II veteran who later worked as an engineer for Lockheed in southern California, where he was introduced to Identity teachings by William Potter Gale, a retired colonel (and aide to General Douglas MacArthur in the South Pacific), leader of the paramilitary California Rangers, and a founder of the Posse Comitatus. By the mid-1960s, Butler had fully embraced Identity and served as National Director of the Christian Defense League, an organization founded by the most prominent popularizer of Identity, Wesley Swift. Butler worked under Swift for 10 years until Swift's death in 1971, at which time Butler proclaimed his Church of Jesus Christ Christian to be the direct successor to Swift's ministry. Butler moved the congregation to northern Idaho where it became, in his words, a "Call to the Nations" or Aryan Nations. Its goal, as a subsequent newsletter stated, was to form "a national racial state. We shall have



UPDATE

[Aryan Nations/Church of Jesus Christ Christian](#)

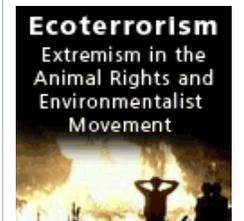
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it at whatever price is necessary. Just as our forefathers purchased their freedom in blood so must we....We will have to kill the bastards."



Walking the Walk

Several Aryan Nations associates have acted on this call to arms. During the early 1980s, for example, Butler followers joined with members of the neo-Nazi National Alliance and Ku Klux Klan splinter groups to form The Silent Brotherhood, known more widely as The Order, which planned to overthrow the United States government in hopes of establishing an Aryan homeland in the Pacific Northwest. In order to raise funds for this revolution, members of the group went on a crime spree in 1983-1984 that included bank robberies, counterfeiting, bombings, armored car holdups and murder. The counterfeiting operation was based at the Aryan Nations compound.

Ostensibly, The Order's activities came to an end in December 1984, when its founder and leader, Robert J. "Bob" Mathews, died in a fire during a shootout with federal agents on Whidbey Island, Washington, and many of its members were caught and incarcerated. Yet The Order, and to a lesser degree Aryan Nations, has retained a mythic status in the far-right underground. Its legend is now perpetuated across the Internet, inspiring a new generation of would-be white revolutionaries and further reinforcing the Aryan Nations "brand."

Ideology

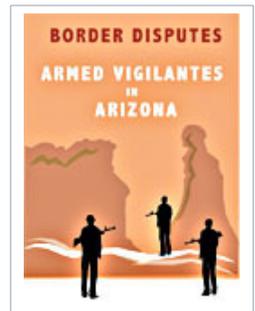
The Order's murderous violence does not typify Aryan Nations, but the anti-government and anti-Jewish hatred of Mathews and his colleagues is the lingua franca of Hayden Lake. A statement of beliefs on the Aryan Nations Web site declares: "The Jew is like a destroying virus that attacks our racial body to destroy our Aryan culture and purity of our race. Those of our Race who resist these attacks are called 'chosen and faithful.'" Anti-Jewish sentiments are blended with opposition to the American government in an Aryan "Declaration of Independence" that mimics the original:

The history of the present Zionist Occupied Government of the United States of America is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having a direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states; moreover throughout the entire world....We, therefore, the representatives of the Aryan people, in council, appealing to the supreme God of our folk for the rectitude of intentions ... solemnly publish and declare that the Aryan people in America, are, and of rights ought to be, a free and independent nation; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the United States of America, and that all political connection between them and the Federal government thereof, is and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that as a free and independent nation they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to perform all other acts which independent nations may of right do.

The "Declaration" concludes by quoting the so-called "14 Words," coined by David Lane of The Order: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." The phrase has become a popular battle cry for white supremacists and neo-Nazis.

White survivalism is of a piece with Aryan Nations' broader Identity beliefs. The group states that God's creation of Adam marked "the placing of the White Race upon this earth. Not all races descend from Adam. Adam is the father of the White Race only....We believe that the true, literal children of the Bible are the twelve tribes of Israel, now scattered throughout the world and now known as the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Teutonic, Scandinavian, Celtic peoples." Folding in anti-Semitism, the group goes on to explain that non-Aryans are not merely inferior but must be destroyed:

We believe that there are literal children of Satan in the world today. These children are the descendants of Cain, who was a result of Eve's original sin, her physical seduction by Satan. We know that because of this sin there is a battle and a natural enmity between the children of Satan and the children of The Most High God. We believe that the Cananite Jew is the natural enemy of our Aryan (White) Race. This is attested by Scripture and all secular history.



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The Aryan Homestead

Hayden Lake, Idaho an otherwise peaceful community was long considered by many white supremacists to be the "international headquarters of the White race," as Butler dubbed it. To aid in recruitment efforts, build support and strengthen alliances among a range of right-wing extremist groups, Aryan Nations hosted white supremacist summer "festivals," known as the World Congress of Aryan Nations, at its 20-acre northern Idaho compound. Patrolled by a security force of armed guards and dogs, Butler's property provided the dual advantages of being remote from potential intrusions by law enforcement officials, counterdemonstrators or media, while also providing an atmosphere of rugged, unspoiled outdoors commensurate with the survivalist and separatist sensibilities of many visitors.

At the conferences, which have attracted as many as 200 participants, Butler's organization offered paramilitary training in urban terrorism and guerrilla warfare as well as, more generally, a chance for like-minded extremists to address issues of common interest. Butler has referred to his joint efforts with Klansmen and other hate movement figures as an "interrelationship of people with the same beliefs and ideas." In their heyday, the meetings were a sort of country retreat attended by a veritable "who's who" of prominent and rising extremists; a July 1982 weekend gathering, for example, brought together members of at least 13 Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazi and other racist groups. The organization has hosted such mandarins of the far right as Klan leader and leaderless resistance formulator Louis Beam, the influential (now deceased) organizer Robert Miles, Tom Metzger of White Aryan Resistance, Posse Comitatus leader James Wickstrom, Identity ideologue Gordon "Jack" Mohr, Grand Wizard (and later pioneering hate webmaster) Don Black, and representatives from such white supremacist organizations as the National Socialist Party of America and the National States Rights Party.¹ John Trochmann, featured at the 1990 Congress, later became leader of the Militia of Montana, one of the most active anti-government militia groups in the country.

For several years, Aryan Nations also hosted youth activities at its rural headquarters. In the early 1980s, an "Aryan Nations Academy" was established to inculcate the group's philosophy in the minds of local youngsters. In 1982, an informational mailing claimed that the "academy" had 15 full-time students, preschool through grade eight. In addition, youth conferences attracting numerous skinheads were held in April to coincide with Hitler's birthday. Aryan Nations has also hosted white power skinhead bands, including Bound for Glory, Christian Identity Skins and Odin's Law.

Since 1979, Butler's organization has been engaged in active prison outreach as well; it corresponds with inmates and distributes the group's materials to them. In 1983, Beam, Butler's assistant at the time, wrote that "the ever increasing Prison Ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ Christian has begun to be felt throughout the state prison system as a major force." This effort became an important aspect of Butler's agenda during the 1980s, given that many members of The Order and Aryan Nations were serving long prison sentences as a result of several major federal prosecutions between 1985 and 1987.

Late in 1987, Butler announced plans to expand Aryan Nations activities, opening a branch in neighboring Utah and launching a weekly radio broadcast called "The Aryan Nations Hour." When the program was quickly cancelled due to alleged death threats and advertising losses, its Aryan Nations host blamed the "liberal-Marxist-homosexual-Zionist coalition." This alleged coalition could not prevent Butler from opening more than a dozen state offices over the years, however, nor from designating regional "ambassadors" to oversee them.

Leadership Struggles

During the 1990s, Aryan Nations endured a spate of internal skirmishes, with several of its key members parting company to start new groups. Carl Franklin, former Chief of Staff, left in the summer of 1993 as a result of friction with Butler, who had named Franklin his successor the year before. Wayne Jones, who had served as Security Chief at the compound since the late 1980s, departed with Franklin. Both resigned on the last day of the World Congress, claiming in a letter to their former compatriots that neither had received a paycheck in over two years. They and two other members

moved to western Montana to form their own white supremacist group the Church of Jesus Christ Christian of Montana.

Six months after these departures, in January 1994, two more key figures in Butler's inner circle, Charles and Betty Tate, who ran the organization's office and printing operation, left to join their son-in-law, Kirk Lyons, a North Carolina-based lawyer who has called himself an "active sympathizer" with his white supremacist clients. In addition, Floyd Cochran, a one-time Aryan Nations official, quit the group and renounced anti-Semitism and racism.

Disunity among the leadership became even more apparent at the annual congress held at the compound for three days in July 1995. Although attendance approximately 125 (including 25 skinheads, a good turnout) was higher than in prior years, a fistfight broke out when it was alleged that the wife of Staff Leader Tim Bishop was stealing money from the organization. The fracas contributed to Bishop's decision to resign his post and return to Kansas, where he had previously been a Ku Klux Klan Grand Dragon.

In December 1995, with Butler's wife having died from cancer and the aging leader's own health in decline, the question of selecting a successor became increasingly relevant. For a time, it was believed that Beam, the militant strategist who had been touted in the past as Butler's heir apparent, might step in. Former Texas Grand Dragon of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1970s, Beam also served as Aryan Nations Ambassador-at-Large and purchased property on the northern Idaho panhandle not far from Hayden Lake. At the 1993 Congress, Beam was one of the main speakers, telling his enthusiastic audience: "The old period is over and a new period is going to begin....I'm here to tell you that if we can't have this country, as far as I'm concerned, no one gets it." Beam delivered another well-received address at the 1995 Congress, and he appeared to have bolstered his standing as the most likely successor to Butler. However, after failing to attend the 1996 gathering, Beam unexpectedly fell out of favor with movement radicals, allegedly for toning down his anti-Semitism, and was dropped from consideration.

For a time in 1997, Aryan Nations' Ohio chapter one of the 18 "state offices" the organization claims to have across the country seemed to be positioning itself as a possible new headquarters upon Butler's demise. Members held rallies and pursued fundraising in several Ohio cities as well as distributing anti-black and anti-Semitic fliers; they especially targeted local rabbis and synagogues throughout northern Kentucky and southwestern Ohio. However, the chapter suffered a setback in September 1997 when its state leader, Harold Ray Redfeairn, was sentenced to six months in prison for carrying a concealed weapon. Later in 1997, after leading some of the group's few hundred followers in its annual march through the streets of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Butler named as his successor Neuman Britton, a longtime member and chaplain of Butler's church known for his fiery oratory. Based in Escondido, California, Britton was the organization's California State Leader and had regularly attended Aryan Nations events in Idaho, Tennessee, Pennsylvania and California. He had spoken at a number of extremist gatherings across the country and, together with his wife, addressed the 1996 Congress. As it turned out, the septuagenarian Britton was outlived by the octogenarian Butler; Britton passed away in August 2001 without ever having served as leader.

Recent Developments

In the past, Butler has managed to raise funds for Aryan Nations activities by encouraging congregants to make offerings and pay membership fees, in addition to selling flags and tapes of his sermons. Supporters are also required to tithe 10 percent of their incomes. The group's financial prospects changed dramatically in 1998, however, when Carl E. Story and R. Vincent Bertolini, acquaintances of Butler who had become wealthy in the field of computer technology, donated a significant sum to the group. Both recent transplants from California's Silicon Valley to Sandpoint, Idaho, they founded and lead the 11th Hour Remnant Messenger, an Identity ministry that shares the apocalyptic racism of Aryan Nations. The two men have underwritten several expensive propaganda efforts, including the distribution of a videotaped interview with Butler that was reportedly sent to 9,000 residents of northern Idaho.

Story and Bertolini's largesse aside, the past three years have been difficult for the

organization. On August 10, 1998, the group received significantly negative publicity when a 37-year-old former Aryan Nations guard named Buford Furrow shot and wounded three young boys, a teenage girl and a receptionist at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles.

Furrow, who had a history of mental illness and trouble with the law, fired more than 70 rounds from a submachine gun, fled from the crime scene and later shot and killed a Filipino-American postal worker, Joseph Ito.

After evading authorities for nearly 24 hours, Furrow surrendered to the FBI in Las Vegas. He declared that his

murder spree was intended as "a wake-up call to America to kill Jews" and that he had killed Ito because the man was nonwhite and worked for the federal government.



Aryan Nations members at Hayden Lake, Idaho in 1995. Buford Furrow (second from right), at the time an Aryan Nations guard, killed one person and wounded five others in a 1998 shooting spree in Los Angeles.

Two years later, in September 2000, Aryan Nations' security force made national headlines again when a jury awarded \$6.3 million to Victoria and Jason Keenan, a mother and son (represented by the Southern Poverty Law Center) who had been assaulted, chased and shot at by Aryan Nations guards after briefly stopping their car on a road in front of the compound two years before. The jury found Aryan Nations and Butler guilty of negligence in the selection, training and supervision of the security guards. The judgment bankrupted Butler and his group, and the 20-acre Aryan Nations compound and the Aryan Nations name were legally handed over to the Keenans: Butler renamed his organization the Aryan National Alliance. Patrons Bertollini and Story purchased a new home for the Identity pastor in nearby Hayden, Idaho, where he vowed to continue his activities, including propaganda distribution and posting to the Web site.

As the bankruptcy sale of the compound and the Aryan Nations name approached, some of Butler's followers began defecting to a newly-established Christian Identity church, the Church of True Israel, based in Noxon, Montana. Headed by a "council of prelates" instead of a single leader, the Church was founded in 1996 by five men, all of whom were once tied to Aryan Nations. During the summer 1995 Aryan World Congress, the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* reported, a faction of state Aryan leaders attempted unsuccessfully to wrest power away from Butler; soon afterward, two of the failed mutineers, John Burke and Charles Mangels, left Aryan Nations and founded the new church. Like its predecessor it preaches white supremacy, but it has distanced itself from Butler's glorification of Nazism. Although precise connections cannot be drawn, several of Butler's close supporters are rumored to have ties to True Israel.

Looking Forward

In January 2001, with Aryan Nations still operational but its future still in question, Butler named as the group's Acting Staff Leader and Youth Activities Coordinator 21-year-old Shawn Winkler, who already held permits for three marches for the upcoming year, in Sandpoint, Rathdrum and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. A new telephone hotline was also announced, along with a new webmaster, Pastor August Kreis III, who has also run a Web site for another Identity group, the Posse Comitatus. Based in Pennsylvania, Kreis serves as Ambassador to the seven states in Aryan Nations' northeast region. Butler also defiantly declared that the organization was reverting to its original name, Church of Jesus Christ Christian/Aryan Nations a decision whose legality, or seriousness, is uncertain.

In a letter reporting these changes to followers, Butler wrote: "The loss of Home, Church, personal possessions and automobiles didn't hurt so much as the loss of those who claimed to be friends and comrades in the struggle to awake our people to

the terrible fate they and their posterity face....The Legal profession, courts, big business and media are united in the proposition that the White homogeneous population of North Idaho be mongrelized."

In September 2001, the group's ongoing leadership issue appeared to be resolved when it announced that Butler had chosen Ohio's Ray Redfeairn as his successor. The selection suggests that the group will remain militant and possibly volatile: Redfeairn has a substantial record of criminal activity, beginning long before his 1997 conviction on weapons charges. In 1979, he shot a police officer several times during a traffic stop, then pleaded guilty by reason of insanity (psychologists described him as a paranoid schizophrenic during the trial) and spent four years in a mental hospital. In 1985, he pleaded guilty to attempted aggravated murder for the shooting and to charges of aggravated robbery for an incident that occurred prior to the shooting. He was released from prison in 1991. The former Klansman has also been convicted for aggravated menacing, disorderly conduct, and at least three times for alcohol-related driving violations. He has also been arrested for allegedly threatening to kill his mother, although she later retracted the charges.

Along with the promotion of Redfeairn, Butler shuffled the titles of two other top lieutenants, naming August Kreis "Director of Information" and Shawn Winkler "Director of Aryan Nation Youth Corps" [sic]. And while Butler will remain the "rock and spiritual leader of Aryan Nations," according to the group, it also announced plans to establish an "office and church grounds" in Ulysses, Pennsylvania, where Kreis rents several acres of land.

¹In April 1987, a grand jury in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, returned indictments charging Butler, Beam, Miles, and 11 others, including several members of The Order, with participating in a seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government. In April 1988, a jury found the defendants not guilty (the charges against one defendant had already been dismissed).