

Dan Gayman

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INTRODUCTION

Dan Gayman, a former high school principal, leads the Schell City, Missouri-based Church of Israel, and is widely regarded as one of the theological leaders of the Christian Identity movement. He has popularized the “two seedline” theory -- widely accepted among Identity adherents -- which purports that Jews descend from a sexual union between Eve and Satan (only white Christians descend from Adam and Eve). He has been credited with inspiring such groups and figures as The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord; James “Bo” Gritz; and Eric Rudolph, who pleaded guilty to bombing three abortion clinics, a gay nightclub, and the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Gayman’s ability to provoke violent action through his teachings makes him an important force in the extremist world today.

Quick Profile

Born: 1937
Ideology: Christian Identity
Publications: The Watchman, The Vision (now defunct)
Residence: Schell City, Missouri
Extremist Affiliations: Leader, Church of Israel
Extremist Associates: Richard Butler (deceased)
 The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord
 Bo Gritz
 Eric Rudolph
 David Tate



HISTORY

The Church of Israel has always been rooted in the Gayman family. Theologically, the Church originally bore a Mormon influence; many of its initial members were former adherents of the largest Mormon splinter group, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. But in the 1930s, a group of roughly 10 families, led by Dan Gayman’s father, Leo, decided to separate themselves from any formal Mormon community and live a simple pastoral life. After a few hardscrabble years in the Colorado mountains, they moved east in 1941 to the church’s current location in Vernon County, Missouri, near Kansas City — an area that had rich historical associations for Mormons. Dan Gayman

Leo Gayman hoped to create a self-sufficient Christian community, shielded from what he and his followers perceived as the country's moral and spiritual decline. According to an account of the church's history in *The Joplin (Missouri) Globe*, a month before his death, in 1945, Leo Gayman and four other church members became officers of a charitable trust that held 441 acres of land. Along with another tract, it gave the initial colony 511 acres upon which to build a community.

The church apparently struggled for many years, but Dan Gayman achieved a measure of secular success, earning a degree in history at Southwest Missouri State College (now University) and becoming a teacher and later a principal. He continued to be involved in the church, but increasingly differed with the views of his brother Duane, the pastor of the church (which was then known as the Church of Christ). Dan believed the church should observe the Sabbath on Saturday and the traditional Jewish feast days; this idea, and the larger theological and racial framework from which it derived, reflected the influence on Gayman of Herbert Armstrong, then-leader of the Worldwide Church of God. Armstrong's views were Anglo-Israelite: he considered white Christians to be the descendants of the Biblical Jews (hence the Saturday Sabbath).¹

Duane Gayman rejected Dan's increasingly radical beliefs, and the brothers and their respective followers parted ways. They became embroiled in a legal fight over congregational property and the church's name. In 1973, according to *The Globe*, Duane Gayman was granted all but 20 of the original 511 acres and was allowed to keep the name Church of Christ; Dan renamed his congregation Church of our Christian Heritage.

The newly reconstituted church reflected its Identity orientation in its board of directors, which included Thomas Robb, current national leader of the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan — one of the largest Klan factions in the United States — and an outspoken Identity believer (he is no longer associated with the church). Additionally, in 1973, Gayman became affiliated with National Emancipation of our White Seed, the Louisiana-based Identity group headed by Buddy Tucker. Gayman assisted Tucker in publishing the latter's anti-Jewish periodical, *The Battle Axe News*, and, in 1976, the two conducted a joint speaking tour of the West Coast.

In April 1976, Dan and a few dozen supporters took over Duane's church building, locking the doors and draping banners from the windows with the legend "The National Emancipation of Our White Seed." A scuffle with law enforcement officers ensued, after which Dan Gayman and eight others were arrested for trespassing (two men were also arrested for assaulting an officer). Gayman claimed that he had simply assumed his group had permission to use the building and had never intended a takeover. The trespass charges — and a federal lawsuit filed by Gayman alleging that the police had violated his civil rights — were dismissed.

Gayman later appeared at other gatherings of Identity groups, including Richard Butler's Aryan Nations, then based in Hayden Lake, Idaho. In the early 1980s, Gayman joined forces with Butler and Identity leaders John Harrell of the Christian-Patriots Defense League and Gordon "Jack" Mohr of the Citizens Emergency Defense System to establish paramilitary training centers in different parts of the country. They created the Endtime Overcomer Survival Training School in Arkansas, run by The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord, and Our Heritage Academy in Missouri — both aiming to help "the elect" train for the coming Armageddon.

Gayman was not among the 14 extremists indicted in 1987 by a federal grand jury in Fort Smith, Arkansas, on charges of seditious conspiracy; however, he was named in the indictment as having received \$10,000

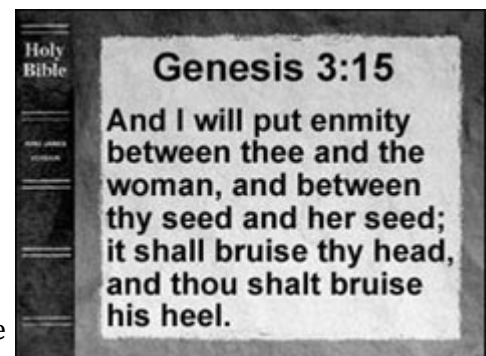
seized illegally by The Order, the far-right criminal group that committed numerous robberies in the Western part of the country and killed Denver talk show host Alan Berg in 1984. Gayman appeared as a reluctant prosecution witness at the trial; afterward, he publicly denounced violence as being incompatible with Identity teachings. (All of the defendants were later acquitted.)

BELIEFS

While Gayman is widely considered a significant leader in Identity, he does not make this claim himself. He rejects the Identity label and refers to himself and his followers as “Christian Israelites.” There would seem to be little difference: Gayman teaches that his congregation and supporters are the true chosen people of the Bible; Adam, Eve and Jesus were white; homosexuality may be punishable by death; interracial marriage is forbidden; and nonwhites are subhuman and soulless. This moral code is imbued with Gayman’s belief that an apocalyptic struggle between white Christians and the international Jewish conspiracy, with its nonwhite troops, is imminent.

Gayman conveyed several of his central ideas in “The Two Seeds of Genesis 3:15,” a booklet often cited in Identity circles; it argues that Anglo-Saxons are descendants of Adam while the Jewish people originated in a sexual union between Eve and Satan. He concludes, logically, that Jews have stolen the Christian Israelite “inheritance.” He wrote in 1991: “Please, dear Christian Israelites, how have the Jews managed to steal their heritage from you....What we must understand is that the Jews have good mental ability, and being guided by their father, the Devil, they have managed to carefully expunge from the Bible major truths upon which they have been able to fool the world into believing they are the true Biblical Israel.”

In the 1996 Fall issue of *The Watchman*, the church’s quarterly newsletter, assistant pastor Gray Clark wrote an open letter encouraging Southern Baptists not to convert Jews, stating, “Jews of today...cannot be converted, just as Christ did not attempt to convert Satan.” Linking Jews and the devil more clearly, Clark added, “Simply stated, Jews are the seed of Cain....Cain, fathered by Satan, was firstborn of Eve.”



Gayman argues that this verse establishes two separate lineages, or “seedlines”: the descendants of Adam and Eve, who are white, and the descendants of Eve and Satan, the Jews.

RADICAL CONNECTIONS

Gayman has inspired far-right activists for more than two decades. Church of Israel member David Tate, for instance, joined the white supremacist gang The Order and is currently serving a life sentence for the murder of a Missouri state trooper. Former leaders of The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord, a paramilitary Identity group, say that they were originally little more than alienated Christians before encountering Gayman’s teachings. Although Gayman denies he ever met them, James Ellison, the former CSA leader, as well as Kerry Noble, his second-in-command, claim it was Gayman’s influence that, in Noble’s words, helped them move beyond being mere “Christian survivalists” to “white supremacists.”

Between 1978 and 1979, Ellison, an ironworker, was working in Vernon County on Minuteman missile silos. During this period he says he met Gayman, who gave him cassette tapes of his sermons interspersed with patriotic music. According to Noble, he, Ellison and others in their circle were “energized” by these tapes. Believing that American society was heading toward an apocalypse, they purchased \$52,000 worth of military hardware in 1978 and 1979 and began training with high-powered military weapons, including 9 millimeter and .38- and .45-caliber pistols, assault and other rifles, and 12-gauge shotguns. By 1985, they would be held responsible for, among other crimes, the firebombing of an Indiana synagogue, a Missouri church arson and an attempt to bomb a natural gas pipeline. They also entertained the idea, more than 10 years before Timothy McVeigh’s terrorist act, of bombing the Oklahoma City Federal Building. An April 1985 F.B.I. raid revealed that the group possessed hundreds of weapons, bombs, an anti-tank rocket and quantities of cyanide allegedly intended to poison the water supply of an unnamed city.

While it has never been alleged that Gayman directed CSA’s actions, Noble credits him with focusing the CSA’s ideology. Thanks in part to Gayman’s teaching, Noble said: “We now believed that other races and those who would betray the white cause in America were destined to be destroyed in the future chaos. We were now not only the elect spiritually, but racially as well.”

More recently, Eric Rudolph, the fugitive believed to be responsible for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Park bombing, the double bombings of an Atlanta area health clinic and lesbian nightclub in 1997, and the 1998 bombing of a Birmingham, Alabama, abortion clinic (in which a guard was killed and a nurse maimed), was connected to the Church of Israel. While federal authorities searched for Rudolph in 1998, major media sources reported that, in 1984, when he was 18, Rudolph and his brother Jamie were brought to the Church of Israel compound by their mother (Rudolph’s father had died of cancer five years earlier, and the family had been essentially uprooted since). Patricia Rudolph had previously spent time with Nord Davis, Christian Identity leader of the North Point Team compound in Tipton, North Carolina. Believing Gayman could help the Rudolphs financially, Davis contacted him to recommend her.

Gayman has insisted that he housed the family out of sympathy for their financial plight and would have done so even if the family had been black. He claims they kept to themselves, lived in a trailer just outside church property, barely became acquainted with anyone at the church, and stayed for only a month. However, in an interview with CNN, Gayman’s wife, Deloris, stated the Rudolphs had stayed with Church members for six months.

In an interview with the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Report (Summer 2001), Gayman’s estranged son and daughter-in-law, Tim and Sarah Gayman, characterized the Rudolphs’ visit differently. Tim and Sarah, who described the Church environment as “cultlike,” claimed they were “ordered” by Gayman to take the Rudolphs into their home; that Gayman assumed a fatherly relationship with Eric Rudolph; and that he was grooming Eric as a potential son-in-law, having encouraged him to date Tim’s sister. Both Eric and Jamie attended school on the compound, the Gaymans said, and Eric was apparently engrossed in the school’s required reading, including Holocaust-denial materials. Moreover, Jamie Rudolph has stated that his brother developed his political views during the family’s stay.

Bo Gritz, a retired Green Beret colonel and longtime leader in the militia movement, has also been associated with Gayman, although they recently had a falling out. Gritz became involved in the Identity movement through his third wife, Judy, who was already active. Thereafter, at a 2000 gun show, Church of Israel member Bob Burney invited Gritz to attend Passover services at the church in April of that year. Gritz initially felt he had found “a true church of God.” Just five months later, however, he received a faxed letter

from Gayman rescinding an invitation to attend the upcoming “Feast of the Tabernacles,” ostensibly because of his paramilitary activity. The letter read in part:

The ministry and general life vision which God has called you to and that which He has called this Church to are not compatible. The program you are essentially calling for was one which the Church here any...program...essentially along the lines spelled out in your Volume 9, Number 10, Center For Action magazine.

Gayman followed with a second letter, comparing Gritz’s Fellowship of Eternal Warriors to The Order, stating,

Reconsider making a marriage between what is commonly called “Identity” and your ministry of “Protection and Preparedness”. It is absolutely unrealistic to try and mix guns and Identity.

Gritz said he believed an F.B.I. visit to Gayman led him to retract the invitation (in an “anti- Christ-like fashion”). Gayman’s connection to Rudolph and other past far-right terrorists had, in fact, left him feeling vulnerable. He has tried on several occasions to dispel rumors that the church is an armed camp with ties to local militia groups. Additionally, in this instance Gritz’s popularity with the church’s congregants may have threatened Gayman.

DEEP RACIST POCKETS

Gayman has been funded by a number of different sources. The Watchman claims to reach a group of approximately 1,200 donors called the “Festival Congregation” — church adherents who live outside Schell City but visit for major religious celebrations. Until recently, Gayman also received substantial sums from Jerry Gentry, a Texas millionaire. Gentry read Gayman’s booklet, “The Two Seeds of Genesis 3:15,” in 1986 and became a devotee. He later donated \$500,000 to fund the construction of two parsonages, wrote regularly for The Watchman, preached and helped create the COI’s Web site (no longer operating). This partnership ended, however, during the recent turmoil surrounding Gayman’s former associate, Pastor Scott Stinson.

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Stinson had attended the church as a Bible student in 1982 and later served as editor of The Vision, COI’s now-defunct glossy, as well as chair of the Church’s Board of Trustees. However, he grew disenchanted with Gayman — because of Gayman’s racial views, he alleged — and pilfered compromising business files from the church in the hope of leveraging them into favorable terms for a separation agreement. After negotiating a severance package with Gayman, which included \$20,000 and the deed to the church parsonage where he and his family lived, Stinson became mired in a dispute with the church about the right to sell the building. Also believing that his family had been repeatedly harassed by church members, he provided an exposé of the church’s activities to The Joplin Globe (February 4, 2001).

Three of his allegations were potentially damaging. He contended that church leaders had covered up details of an alleged child molestation committed by a COI member in 1999, even though a church-administered polygraph test indicated that the suspected member had lied. He also alleged that two for-

profit businesses (both owned by member Bob Burney) operated on theoretically tax-exempt church property: the Paradise Press bookstore, which he said earned more than \$40,000, and Aqua Rain, a water purification company. Neither, Stinson said, paid taxes.

Lastly, Stinson maintained that while Gayman did not claim an official salary for his duties, all church assets were treated as his and donations received by mail went into a separate Gayman-controlled account dubbed “the national treasury.” The files that were taken related to this practice. According to Stinson, following the agreement, which Gayman now terms “felony theft,” many of the files were burned.

Gayman has denied all of Stinson’s allegations, stating that the church does not advocate tax protest or nonpayment of taxes and that the molestation incident was never denied but merely dealt with internally.

CONCLUSION

In some respects, Gayman is more embattled than ever before. His past association with violent extremists has forced him to restrict his current associations. Gentry, his past benefactor, has established a Web site that purports to expose his allegedly illicit and duplicitous operations. Recent media accounts have exposed financial irregularities. But Gayman’s body of literature, Identity ministry and extremist connections have established his lasting place in the far-right firmament. And while he says he completely opposes violent activism, his advocacy of separation from “mud people” and the Satanic “synagogue of Satan” has demonstrably influenced some of the most violent extremists of the past two decades. There is no indication that his words have lost their power for those open to them.

¹Anglo-Israelism was established in Great Britain in the 19th century. Despite its unorthodox views about Judaism, most adherents were not notably hostile to contemporary Jews until the religion began to evolve into Identity in the middle decades of the 20th century, assuming an absolute and apocalyptic racial determinism. A few scattered non-Identity Anglo-Israelites remain, mostly in England. It should also be noted that since Armstrong’s death in 1986, the Worldwide Church of God has repudiated racism and anti-Semitism.
