

## NEW FACE OF EVIL ATTRACTS GROWING FLOCK

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New face of

evil attracts

growing flock

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in New York

IT is a church with no god and a leader who loves to hate.

But the bizarre World Church of the Creator was quick to voice its sorrow when former member Benjamin Smith went on a racist killing spree last weekend, shooting two men dead and wounding eight others before taking his own life in a hijacked van.

The incident was tragic, church leader Matt Hale said. A terrible loss. He was talking about the death of Ben Smith. The victims of Smith's hate-filled violence \_ the black man and the Korean man who were murdered, and the six Orthodox Jews who were injured \_ simply did not count.

``As far as we're concerned, the loss is one white man," Hale said matter-of-factly.

The rest didn't count because they were sub-human, he explained; in the church's extreme terms, they were simply ``mud people".

Clean-cut and articulate, 27-year-old Hale is not your average racist thug. But then, the World Church of the Creator is not your average hate group.

According to organisations which monitor racist activity in the US, it is one of the fastest-growing hate groups in America \_ and one of the first to fully harness the Internet as a weapon in its arsenal.

In 1995, the church had just eight known chapters in the US. Four years later, it boasts at least 46 in states spanning the length and breadth of the country.

Although membership numbers are almost impossible to quantify, Hale, the church's ``pontifex maximus" or supreme leader, claims 7000 followers. Hate-group monitors estimate the real number is probably closer to several hundred.

There is no god mentioned in any of the church's paraphernalia. Unlike many hate groups which share at least some ground with the religious far right, Hale's organisation hates Christians almost as vehemently as it hates blacks, Asians and anyone else whose skin is not white. That is because Christianity is seen as an offshoot of Judaism \_ and Hale and his followers reserve a special enmity for Jews.

In the wake of Smith's rampage last week, Hale was given wide-ranging media exposure, ostensibly to defend his church. The media-savvy law graduate used the opportunity instead to openly spruik the organisation's racist agenda, while simultaneously insisting it was committed to non-violence.

For example, Hale willingly conceded the church's rallying cry ``Rahowa !" was shorthand for ``Racial holy war!" \_ but claimed this was a war in principle only.

``This is no more a war with guns than the war of drugs or the war on poverty," he argued.

Mark Potok, editor of the Southern Poverty Law Centre's Intelligence Report on the radical right, said that while people like Hale were not building the bombs, they were building the bombers.

``This is a religion for and by sociopaths," Potok said. ``(Hale) is articulate, he's got a bit of charisma and he's a veteran hater. He's been doing this for well over a decade. He's also very media savvy."

Hale's career as a white supremacist began when he formed an 8th-grade group called the New Reich after reading Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler.

Caption: MATT Hale

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