

## Appendix

### PARALLELS TO WACO

*The Lundgren cult functioned, in some form, from 1984 through 1990 when they voluntarily disbanded. They had sought to secure their Utopia in a small Ohio town, whose main claim to fame was that one hundred-fifty years prior, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, built there, his first temple. The discovery of Lundgren's (himself, a self-proclaimed prophet and god) 1989 murders of the Avery family became headline news throughout the first half of 1990. The multiple criminal trials of the men and women in the cult as accomplices in the murders were essentially over by mid-1991. The Branch Davidians sought to build their Utopia in an isolated area of Waco, Texas, also in the 1980s. In 1993, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) officials raided, surrounded, then raided again the compound in a final assault, which actions would span 51 days. At the end of the stand-off, the world watched in horror as the Davidian-set fire swept over and destroyed the lives of men, women, and children who had been unwilling to compromise cherished beliefs. By that time, the world also knew the background and motivations of that cult, led by another self-proclaimed prophet, Vernon Howell. For those who cared—and dared—to compare these two cults, enough of a similarity would be seen that there could be no doubt they had been birthed by the same spirit of deception.*

The events of the Waco, Texas Branch Davidians have come and gone in the time I've had to collect these thoughts. The outcome of Waco, as directed by the nation's attorney general, could only be considered an acceptable success if the loss of life was in no way the issue. The entire scope of events was particularly painful to me, not only because of the number of deaths that occurred among federal agents and the compound members, but also in the destruction of the dreams the Davidians shared, which I understand all too well. Followers in such cultic settings have a totally alien and extremely narrow sense of reality and cannot be depended upon to react rationally in response to actions from outsiders.

I had no comprehension of the mental isolation I had been subjected to both prior to and after meeting Jeff and Alice Lundgren. *Ironically, it was in jail that I began to experience the freedom to think for the first time in a long time, and in some ways, the first time ever.* So, watching the events that transpired at Waco, I was identifying with the confusion and frustration they were experiencing; the illusion of a noble cause mingled with fear, and in the center of it all, the annihilation of their hopes and dreams.

Let me emphasize how similar the Waco group was to the Kirtland group. I saw no difference between Vernon Howell (David Koresh) and Jeff Lundgren. Howell chose that name for himself because of the interpreted meaning within it. David was another name for Jesus or Son of David, by way of a physical and spiritual lineage and Koresh is the Hebrew/Aramaic version of the name Cyrus, a Persian king who allowed the building of Jerusalem in Ezra's day. Lundgren, as did Koresh, also assumed the name of Cyrus for himself.

Assuming new names in religious cult activity is common, not only by the leaders, but also assigning them to the followers as well. It's unfortunate that the media and law enforcement were forced to refer to Vernon Howell as David Koresh, because of his having legally changed his name. In terms of what was real in the minds of Vernon's followers, each time the world referred to him as David Koresh he was being called Lord God, Lord King, or more expressly, Messiah.

This narrow view of reality makes members of cults much like Japanese kamikaze pilots of World War II. They are willing, with a sense of predestination, to embark upon that mission of no return. Once airborne, there is no choice but to self-destroy. Once the battle in Waco had begun, their destiny was sealed. Bear in mind that these people were living on their "Mt. Carmel." To them, this was not unlike that of Elijah the prophet (1 Kings 18), in which the evil prophets of Baal were overthrown. How did they perceive themselves as standing invincibly and righteously upon God's holy ground? To come against them was not only interpreted as defiance against God, but equally, as a testing of or, rather, proving their obedience. Not to defend this holy ground with their very lives would place them in a position of disobedience. But even more than disobedience, not to defend God's sacred ground would be an act of spiritual suicide.

The question has been asked, "Why were the minor children not released?" The answer is quite simple once we fully grasp the way the "world" is perceived by the cult follower. Imagine your family under siege by a pack of hungry wolves. How quickly would you send your children out to the superior numbers? In my experience, I perceived "people from the outside," or the world, as spiritually "dead." I pitied them, yet rejoiced in faith, toward the day when we would be able to take the truth to them. Undoubtedly, the people in the compound at Waco saw the forces against them in very much the same way. The forces outside the compound were superior in numbers and firepower—but the followers were on Holy Ground, under God's protection. The forces outside offered safety to any who were willing to leave the compound, yet to the follower, leaving the spiritual security of the compound meant death (at least spiritually, if not immediately physically). To leave would be to deny God's protection. The children were perceived as being infinitely safer under the protection they believed was promised by God. Why would anyone send his or her children out into the arms of death, in defiance to God's all-saving arm?

It does not matter that what I'm suggesting is not rational in retrospect. We are not talking about rational behavior. It is my sincere hope that we can learn from that tragedy in order to find ways to diffuse such situations rather than allowing them to evolve into an issue of "superior firepower." Superior firepower means nothing when it's result is the loss of innocent life. What I can offer about how this aspect of Waco mirrors that of the cult in Kirtland is that, thankfully, we never needed to test our firepower against any governmental agency; although that possibility appeared imminent several times. At this time, I've come to believe that Jeff is too much of a coward to have gone through with combat, but this is also due to my equal conviction that he never actually believed anything he taught. Even from death row, he has struggled to continue to promote his proclaimed, albeit polluted, beliefs on followers of his devious and perverted forms of spiritualism. While there was once a time when I was ready to do whatever he ordered—as though ordered by God Himself, I'm no longer captivated like those swayed by his darkened hold.

Drawing similar parallels are essential in portraying with clarity, the vulnerabilities and realities of this type of activity. Aspirin doesn't actually deal with what's wrong, it only deals with the symptoms. Hopefully, the day will come when we desire to learn what's wrong in a situation rather than to simply settle for dealing with the results.