

Why bother? Doubtless his was one of the 72 corpses recovered from the compound. What's over's over. Finis. My rejoinder: Is the Rev. Jim Jones, creator-destroyer of Jonestown, Guyana, finished? Dead, yes; 913 corpses. But finished? Generically, "holocaust" means total destruction. These two holocausts of religious communities occurred as the Federal government intruded on their space. Were these violations of America's much vaunted separation of church & state? Was the Federal intrusion justified in either case, & if so on what grounds? Should the learnings from the first holocaust have prevented the second? Given the present flurry of Federal self-justification, will we the people & the government learn enough from the second holocaust to prevent a third? Will religious leaders advance beyond condemnation of Koresh to teaching the public some vital transpsychoanalytic religious realities?

OK, but why bother to put the best face on Koresh? (1) My religion requires it. I'm supposed to sing good will to all (as the Christmas angels in L.2.14 before NRSV put a stop to it, except for a footnote). And the dominical command to love my enemies includes him--if indeed he was more my enemy than my friend. (2) Ethically, it's mind-stretching & heart-deepening to try to put the best face on someone it's hard to put even a good face on. (3) My suspicious contrarian nature whispers to me that when everybody's saying the same thing, it's probably wrong.

1 How many David Koreshes were in that one skin? At my last count there were eight. How many are there of me? of you? How many do you have to be to be "a case," ie crazy? Is there an optimal number?...Had he gotten his act together? Yes, to the extent--a very considerable extent--that his act was the community he took over & formed around himself....Had he gotten his thing together? No. He had a number of things, each one corresponding to one of his selves....Had he gotten himself together? Certainly not. (How about me? you?).. ..Abnormal psychology is normal psychology writ large or (photographically) blown up. But if the analogy is strictly read, it teaches that "normal" is crazier than we normally think it is. Every one of us occasionally thinks/says "The world's gone crazy! This society is insane!" Koresh was saying that more than occasionally. It was a basic premise as he viewed the world from within himself. He believed that it's crazy not to see all the time the craziness of the world. Is this an insight implicit in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer? why pray for the arrival of God's rule if we're not crazy without it?

2 Some of the nine who escaped from the burning Ranch Apocalypse reported seeing people reading their Bible through the goggles of their gasmasks. For all who decided to join that religious community (I'll not prejudice this meditation by calling it a cult), the Bible was the instrument for, & door to, the meeting of their human need of the **heroic**, a universal human need. When a person is depressed, the heroic within gasps for breath. When a society--say, south-central Los Angeles--is depressed, the heroic is not free to do its inspiring, healing, liberating work, and human beings & their relationships rot. (The post-Trial 1 rioting was a destructive irruption of the heroic: we pray for a creative irruption there & throughout the socially depressed areas of our country & the world.)

Think, now, of Ranch Apocalypse in the light of humanity's need, your need, Koresh's need of the heroic.

3 It won't do to try to reduce the heroic to the psychotic. The hunger for heroism is more than compensation for our flaws & failures, our regrets & griefs. The government & the media have employed swarms of shrinks who've tried to shrink Koresh down to a religious nut who, after messing everything he tried in earlier life, went megalomaniacal to escape from the pain of the past into the euphoria of delusion. Without benefit of clergy (ie, of theological thinkers), these psycho-types have intensified the all-or-nothing fallacy into the nothing-but fallacy. This instant condemnation of Koresh has a fundamentalist ring to it, the ironic flip-

side of Koresh's own instant condemnation of shrinkdom. But the heroic is to be honored, as structural to human consciousness, even when it takes overwrought, overblown, even demonic form--on a communitarian stage, as Koresh; even on the world stage, as Hitler & Stalin.

4 When the heroic is repressed, it becomes (1) introjected (as in Snoopy, & Walter Mitty before him) or (2) oppressively extrajected (as in "Calvin and Hobbles" Calvin, after garish fantasies of power, oppresses everybody in sight). The first is socially benign, & compatible with everyday values & objectives of ordinary life in a society. But the second & contrary motion of the soul is malignant. In 3 May 93 NW (p.30), Ken Woodward quotes Robt. Jay Lifton, who rightly says that in Koresh there were two "relatively autonomous selves," one "earthbound" & the other, the stronger one, apocalyptic, "consumed by Armageddon and his role in it." Government pressure on Koresh compressed his apocalyptic self, confirming his prophecy that oppression would increase till martyrdom, after which would come the resurrection (my statement, not Lifton). Woodward's mention of the early Christian martyrs is appropriate: Koresh was, on his cataclysmic side, of their mind.

5 As observer & participant in **intentional communities** across the years, I've frequently noted the schizophrenic drift away from reality in leaders who've had it all their way, who've had no confronters to hold the string of their balloon. (It happened, too, in the Nixon White House; it happens wherever power is free from internal criticism.) With an excellent theological education & church connection, Jim Jones went messianic only after withdrawing his People's Temple from the nexus of the wider church & then off into the bush of South America's only English-speaking nation. David Koresh, a public-school dropout with no theological education, & under no church discipline, was both inwardly & outward unguarded against messianic self-delusion....I contrast those two with two community-founders who built criticism of the leader into the spirit, mind, & structure from the beginning. In 1940, both were with me in a doctoral seminar on the Greek of the Gospel of Matthew, & each used that Gospel's radical Sermon on the Mount as personal & communal life-model. Gordon Cosby's Church of the Savior (Wash., D.C.) has survived & prospered to this day, as has--through several permutations--Clarence Jordan's Koinonia Farms (now best known as the womb of Habitat for Humanity).

6 Which brings me to the essential radicality of the **Bible**, which leans hard on the present to launch the biblical community into the theocratic future beyond the anthropocratic present. Biblical history presents a series of **alternative communities**, including Jesus' circle of disciplines & larger circle of lesser followers--a community whose ethos, if not constitution, is clear in the Sermon on the Mount (is it just for the disciple band, or is it only even for the disciple band in the future?). Every early church was a radical-intentional inbreaking of "the rule [kingdom, sovereignty] of God," its members members of the whole Church as "the third race" (after Jews & pagans). The NT is literary outcroppings of these churches, its last book being an ecstatic-futuristic vision of a Christian "prophet" whose words Koresh twisted to serve his messiah complex (in spite of Rev.'s built-in protections against self-idolatry). But Koresh was not as unbiblical as those who tame all the radicality out of Scripture & twist it to serve what is against what should be. The tragedy of Koresh should not dissuade us Christians from radicality. It should rebuke our failure to be radical & renew in us the determination to discover how to be creatively radical in our private, church, & public living.

7 Koresh named himself after two biblical kings who set up empires alternative to those of their predecessors. David subjected himself to internal prophetic criticism (eg, Nathan), & Cyrus (Heb. "Koresh") ruled his vast domains with a lighter hand than any previous emperor. Like David & Cyrus, Koresh had a powerful life-wish. (Freudianly odd that NEWSWEEK's current cover accuses him of "death wish," though the net evidence is that he wasn't suicidal; I believe the fire was accidental). Rank says Freud "created for himself a private religion" of Eros (self-expression) & never completed his humanity into Agapé (self-surrender) (BEYOND PSYCHOLOGY [Dover/58], p.272). It is clear that the author of Revelation was religious: it is not clear that David Koresh was.