

**The Sociology of Damage Control:
The Seventh-day Adventist Church
and the Branch Davidians of Waco, Texas**

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Abstract

The events in Waco, TX with David Koresh and the Branch Davidians, the early part of 1993, have brought to the attention of the nation and the world community the negative side of cult groups. Even though they are several generations removed from the original splinter group that broke away from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 1930's, the name Seventh-day Adventist has been connected with the cult. How does a legitimate religious organization protect itself from a fringe cult, bent on bringing on a holocaust? What kind of processes does an organization engage in, in order to control for possible damage to its image as a reputable and responsible religious body? This study seeks to explore the sociology of damage control and the measures a religious body takes to correct misalignments, misperceptions and misconnections to a deviant religious group. A model is proposed for handling crisis by turning problems into challenges.

The Sociology of Damage Control: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Branch Davidians of Waco, Texas

"Bad press" is a term that came into vogue in the 1980s and 90s as a by-product of the information society. With television serving as the principle medium of information dissemination throughout the world, the "MacDonaldization" (Ritzer 1993) of the media industry has given rise to a fast-food process of dispensing information, to feed the voracious appetite of a public hungry for sound bytes.

Such a setting can result in the emergence of false reports, innuendoes or connections which do not always present the correct picture, or may present a slanted story. Public figures, such as entertainment personalities and politicians, and moral communities, such as religious organizations, are often in the limelight of rolling cameras and roving reporters in search of a good story.

What happens, however, when members of a group bring bad press on themselves as a result of perceived deviant behavior? Events in early 1993 involving David Koresh and the Branch Davidians have brought to the attention of the nation and the world the negative side of cult groups. Even though they were several generations removed from the original splinter group that severed relations with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 1930's, the name Seventh-day Adventist was early connected with the cult, resulting in much consternation within the denomination. How does a legitimate religious organization protect itself from a fringe cult, bent on bringing on a holocaust? What kind of processes does an organization engage in, in order to control for possible damage to its image as a reputable and responsible religious body? What kind of measures can a religious body take to correct misalignments, misperceptions and misconceptions to a deviant religious group, and the resulting bad press that former members bring on themselves? Such is the purpose of this study on the sociology of damage control.

This study begins with a historical discussion of the connections of the Branch Davidians to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A model of damage control is then suggested to explain the process of how the Adventist Church went about handling the crisis. The paper concludes with the suggestion of an additional model of how to turn problems into challenges.

Connections to Seventh-day Adventism:

When the story of David Koresh and his followers first broke into the media through a series of articles published by the Waco Tribune-Herald, connections with the Seventh-day Adventist Church were right on the front page of the newspaper (England and McCormick 1993). "Many of his followers are former Seventh-day Adventists." Though the next sentence tried to play down the connection, nevertheless the connection, historical as it was, was made public. "The Seventh-day Adventist Church strongly denies any connection with Howell's group." Several times in the series the authors continue to link the two: "the Branch Davidians, a spin-off [others times, "an off-shoot"] of the Seventh-day Adventists." It is that preposition "of" that raised great concern

among Seventh-day Adventists, concerns of a possible connection to the group by the media. What has been the connection?

The Branch Davidian group that took on federal agents on February 28, 1993 in Waco, Texas, was three generations removed from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, from whom the original Davidians broke in the 1930s. The three generations are as follows:

First Generation: The Houteff generation-1929 to 1959.

Second Generation: The Roden Generation-1959 to 1988.

Third Generation: The Koresh Generation-1988 to 1993.

The Davidians emerged in history with the person of Victor Houteff, a Bulgaria and a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles. In 1929 he began to espouse his teachings in a Sabbath School class he taught. In 1930 he published his teachings in a book entitled, *The Shepherd's Rod*, from which he took the initial name of the group. There is no space in this brief article to go into his teachings (The Committee on Defense Literature 1955, 1956, 1959, and 1960), but all of it had to do with prophecies: those of Ezekiel, the kingdom of David (from which he drew the name Davidian), the end-time harvest, the sealing, the 144,000 and the second coming of Christ, all of which are important themes in Seventh-day Adventist theology. Essentially the group believed that God would restore the kingdom of David of which the Davidians were the core group, after God had slaughtered Seventh-day Adventists for rejecting the Shepherd's Rod message. "The 144,000 would be Seventh-day Adventists left over from the slaughter of Ezekiel 9" (Breault 1991).

Disfellowshipped in 1930, Houteff, his wife and 11 children in May of 1935 moved to Waco, Texas, a religiously conservative area, with at present some 200 churches, most of them fundamentalists. They bought property near the city and called their place Mount Carmel, after the biblical place where Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal and was victorious (1 Kings 18:20-40).

In 1942 the group took on the official name of "Davidian Seventh-day Adventists," because of government regulations about exemption from military service during World War II (The Committee on Defense Literature 1955). Houteff died in 1955, leaving no successor as president of the Davidians, since he did not expect to see death. But already prior to his death, as is common with new sects, splinter groups were emerging because of disagreements with Houteff's teachings (The Committee on Defense Literature 1955:14, The Research Committee 1960).

After his death, his wife, Florence Houteff, took over the leadership of the group. In 1959 she predicted that God would intervene in history and establish the kingdom of David. Over 1000 people sold possessions and gathered at Mount Carmel to await the restoration of the kingdom, but the prophecy failed (Breault 1991 and Festinger, Riecken and Schachter 1956). After the great disappointment, more splinter groups emerged, but the one founded by Benjamin Roden, the Branch Davidians, became the largest and most important one, ushering the second generation of Davidians. In 1962, Florence Houteff officially disbanded the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia 1966), though a number of Davidian groups continue to operate, who have nothing to do with the Branch Davidians in Waco, TX. They continue to infiltrate Anglo

and Latino Seventh-day Adventist churches in an attempt to gain converts. Their belief is that their mission is to cleanse the Seventh-day Adventist church.

It is at this time in the process of sect transformation that the sect, the Davidians, not only breaks up, but shifts over to become a cult, the Branch Davidians (Rosado 1993). The process of sect-to-cult shift takes place with the emergence of splinter groups that begin to espouse, not new/old teachings, as sects do, but radically new teachings, which fundamentally break with the Bible, basic Christianity, and Seventh-day Adventism. These are teachings that the leader now regards himself as King David, Jesus Christ, or both, or Yahweh, plus other extreme demands and behavioral expectations of the followers, as David Koresh practiced.

Ben Roden relocated the Mount Carmel center to its new location near the Elk community, not far from the original site. He claimed to be the antitypical David, but in 1978 he died. His wife, Lois I. Roden took over the group, and now stronger than ever espoused the teaching, which her husband had not supported, that the Holy Spirit was the feminine part of the Godhead. She began publishing a magazine called SHEKINAH, with emphasis on the SHE, where she also promoted the ordination of women.² An article written by a Los Angeles Times staff writer, and published in the Dallas Times Herald, declares: "When Lois Roden started preaching that the Holy Spirit is a woman, she nearly lost half her folk of Seventh-Day Adventists-the male half" (Barrineau 1980).

In 1981 Vernon Howell, a former Seventh-day Adventist, joined the group, and soon arrested leadership of the group from George Roden, son of Lois and Ben Roden, after an open confrontation which involved gun fire and ended in a court trial in 1988. Howell changed his name to David Koresh, as a result of his belief that he too was the antitypical David of the Bible, and Koresh for King Cyrus of Persia, of whom the Bible says, God would "direct all his ways," and he would rebuild the city of Jerusalem and "let the captives free" (Isaiah 45:13). All of which David Koresh applied to himself. These and other teachings, such as: that he was a sinful incarnation of Jesus Christ; that because he was Christ, only he could have sexual relations with the women in the compound; that because he was Christ, only he could open the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation, and many other teachings David Koresh applied strictly to himself. He exploited his profound knowledge of the Bible to suit his own interests and to manipulate his followers into submission to his will and purposes, which came to an end on April 19, 1993.

Though the group historically was three generations removed from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in actual fact most of the members of Koresh's band had been recent members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Rosado 1993, Haus and Hamblin 1993, Stamples, et.al., forthcoming). Thus the media connection to Seventh-day Adventists was not totally incorrect. At the same time, both connections-the media's and that of former members-sent SDA leaders scrambling to control for any possible damage to the organization's public image as a respectable and respected religious body.

No Crisis Plan:

No matter how prepared one may be, human and natural disasters tend to catch people off-guard. This was made evident by the response of FEMA to Hurricane Andrew (August 1992), which devastated the southern portions of the states of Florida and Louisiana. It took them four days to get organized. Yet within the same amount of time federal agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) had apprehended

two men for the bombing of the World Trade Center on February 26. It did not go so well for the same agency in Waco, Texas, however. There, the supposedly "surprise" raid on the Mount Carmel Compound ended up being a surprise attack on the ATF., as a result of a bungled plan, as suggested by the final reports on the raid.

Seventh-day Adventists did not fare too well either. The failed raid of February 28 caught church leaders, as well as the rest of the nation, off-guard. What made matters worse was that while there was a crisis plan on file, people were not versed on it, nor was it appropriate to the situation. To be fair, it is safe to say that people just don't sit around planning for emergencies. But this is nothing new. Research by David Guth at the University of Kansas shows that only 56.9% of organizations that are members of the Public Relations Society of America, have a written plan for dealing with emergencies and crises (Guth 1992, 1993). A study done five years previous by Western Union revealed the same results, at 57% (Stanton 1989). Guth's study reveals that the less experience an organization has in crisis situations, "the more likely its public relations practitioners will assume a technical role" instead of a managerial one (Guth 1992). Guth's study also shows that only 36.3% of organizations in his survey "have a crisis communications plan that is both written and practiced" (Guth 1992). Thus having a plan does not mean that people are experienced in implementing it.

Such was the case of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There was no crisis management plan, nor persons in managerial positions to oversee any kind of emergency or crisis situation the likes of the Waco situation. The public relations officers of the church are just that, persons that do the technical day-to-day work of keeping the press- and thereby society- informed of the good the church does in its outreach to the world society. The church does have an organization to handle natural disasters and emergencies, such as floods, fires, earthquakes, and hurricanes. This is the Adventist Disaster Relief Agency (ADRA). But the Waco crisis was different. And even though the head of ADRA was immediately brought into the crisis, it became obvious that this situation called for something different.

A Model of Damage Control:

Damage control is the process by which an organization seeks to correct a negative image of itself. Whether this negative image is brought on by mistakes the organization makes, or by events outside the organization over which it may have little control, the results are the same-bad press, a tarnished media image, feelings of self-consciousness, all of which give rise to a negative definition of the situation.

In analyzing the manner in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church handled this crisis, a process emerges which gives rise to four-step model of action:

A Four-Step Model of Damage Control

1. Protection
2. Correction
3. Counteraction
4. Prevention

Protection: When the news broke that a gun-toting religious group, with previous connections to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, had "out-gunned" the ATF, Adventist leaders frantically moved into action to protect the name of the church (Thomsen 1993).

This process of protection went through several stages. The first stage in protecting the name and image of the church was to create distance (socially, theologically, historically) from the Branch Davidians. By mid-afternoon of the Sunday of the raid, the communications staff at the offices of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, at world headquarters in Silver Springs, MD, prepared news releases to be sent out to the media, and to the church membership at large, once there was evidence that the church was being linked with the cult (Kasjiura (1993). The church went to great efforts to distance itself from the Davidians, making sure that in all its statements to the press that there be no confusing of Adventists with the Branch Davidians. This first stage of distancing was regarded by church leaders as the perhaps the most important thing the church did. Yet others saw it as a weakness, a mere reactive posture.

The second stage in the protection process was to get coordinated. In a crisis situation one cannot have multiple spokespersons, each giving what each perceives to be the "company line." Contradictions, conflict of interest, erroneous messages, etc., may emerge. The church needed to speak as one voice. Therefore any official pronouncements had to come from the General Conferences offices. Local pastors were discouraged in giving their own opinions or in doing press interviews. Some pastors were trying to use any opportunity with the press to do evangelism, which church leaders felt was not appropriate.

Realizing also that the church had little experience in handling crises of this magnitude, church leaders moved into a third stage, the need to bring in outside consultants, crises managers to counsel the church in various areas of need, primarily to protect the name of the church. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an international body, and since many of Koresh's followers came from outside the United States, primarily Great Britain and Australia, the fallout from any negative publicity had global implications. At the cost of \$75,000 to \$100,000, the church hired several consulting firms, specializing in crisis management, since "the in-house communications director did not have the skills and/or experience to handle situations such as this" (Memorandum 1993d).

Correction:

The step follows from the first one. The purpose here was to correct any misalignment of Adventists with Davidians. The concern was not only in protecting the church by distancing it from the Branch Davidians. But more important, connecting it with what is regarded as "mainstream Christians" (Memorandum 1993a). The importance of this step was made clear in an in-house memo: "It is not enough to seek to be disassociated with the Waco cult, we must also associate ourselves with the established Christian community (particularly in Texas), and talk about who we are, not just who we are not" (Memorandum 1993b).

Perhaps the biggest problem the Adventist church experienced during the Waco tragedy, was controlling what the church generated to the media. Some pastors were trying to take advantage of the situation by doing evangelism in order to give the public a correct view of Adventist doctrine. Capitalizing on the media's curiosity for a knowledge of the "Seven Seals," some pastors wanted to use the opportunity to strike gold, in the same manner that some preachers like to make calls for conversion at funerals to take advantage of people's experience at the moment. Thus a need for in-house

communication that would control for media blunders and socio-religious faux pas. The problem in such situations is that the greater the crisis the more effectively one needs to communicate internally, otherwise the in-house grapevine can exacerbate the problem for you (Interview with Van 1993). Thus, one problem that arose early was that of giving out too much information by in-house personnel that, while meaning well, didn't realize how such information might be construed or distorted by a media desperate for sound bytes. An effort was therefore made to prevent the wrong information from getting out in the hands of those who might distort it, such as using words like "splinter groups" or "off-shoot," to describe the Branch Davidians, which would connect with them Adventists. The concern was to not associate the "good" with the "bad." Thus, "trying to piggyback positively on a tragedy involving a third party" was regarded as dangerous, since there might be "disadvantages of being too aggressive in trying to make a silk's purse (positive publicity) out of a sow's ear (the Waco tragedy)" (Nixon 1993). This led counteractive measures.

Counteraction:

The concern of the church was not only to protect itself, but also to counteract any negative images or publicity. This step materialized with the hiring of consultants that put together a Crisis Communication Plan. There were several key components to the plan:

1. That a single spokesperson be appointed through whom all media calls and requests for information be routed. Such a person was appointed.
2. Intensive training for spokesperson and church leaders on how to handle media, go on television, do's and don'ts for broadcast interviews, what to say and how much in view of the press's penchant for sound bytes., how to dress, etc. In other words, a total image control program for media coverage.
3. A recommendation to wait till things died down before becoming proactive. In others words, the entire posture was a reactive one.

With regard to point 3 above, while this action was true with regard to any public connection to the Branch Davidians, in-house the church decided to take a more proactive approach as part of the counteraction process. The approach here was to stop telling the media what Adventists were not, and start saying what Adventists are. The purpose here was in "re-aligning Seventh-day Adventists with other mainstream, Christian religions" (Memorandum n.d.). The feeling was that continued emphasis on the uniqueness of Adventism would only be counter-productive, and would only prolong the perception of an association with the Branch Davidians. Three specific points were now to form the core of all information releases and interviews. But all three points had one common goal-to disassociate Adventists from the Branch Davidians and associate them with the larger mainstream Christian population and espouse the positive contributions the Adventists to society.

1. Compassion: "Our heart go out to all involved in the Waco situation. Along with all other people of good will, we express our deep sympathy to the families who have lost loved ones in the Mt. Carmel tragedy;"
2. Connection: "Seventh-day Adventists have no relationship whatsoever to this extremist group;"
3. Christians: "Seventh-day Adventists are a law-abiding people who believe in the Grace of Jesus Christ, and are dedicated to a wide variety of community and international

endeavors which improve the lives and communities which they touch" (Memorandum 1993b). An additional factor added was the statement that almost all [Adventist] doctrines are taught by other mainstream denominations" (Memorandum n.d.).

All of this was part of the counteractive process to re-align Adventists with the law-abiding majority instead of the deviant minority. A major aspect of this re-alignment was to allow others to fight the church's battle. For this reason the SDA Church fielded few theologians, biblical scholars, psychologists or sociologists to provide the FBI with any helpful information that may have been useful in the negotiations. I say "fielded few" because the church did use a couple of its key persons, George Reid of the Biblical Research Institute and Gary Patterson, the key liaison person, to work "with the authorities attempting to assist them in an understanding of what David Koresh was saying" (Patterson 1993). For the most part, however, church leaders felt that others could do a better job of clearing the church's name. Thus the involvement of scholars from Baylor University was greatly appreciated by Adventist leaders, since as a neutral, independent party they could defend the church without coming across as biased. The feeling was that if Adventists were involved in the process of negotiation, the media might not be able to separate Adventist counsel and comments from the past connection of Davidians with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The purpose of this counteractive process was not to mention the Adventist church and the Branch Davidians in the same breath or sentence. Thus, in the various news releases this was of uppermost concern, that the two not be linked. At best the connection was kept to a generic "Christian church and cults." The suggestion was also made to contact renowned church leaders the likes of Billy Graham and Robert Schuler, to see if they would be willing "to stand with the Church [SDA] in the face of the Waco situation" (Memorandum 1993e).

One of the principle concerns of church leaders after the siege had ended in a conflagration was, that now that it was over people would want to focus on the relationship between the Branch Davidians and the Seventh-day Adventists. But as luck would have it, the attention turned to Janet Reno, William Sessions, and the manner in which the FBI and the ATF handle the whole affair. Now that things have settled and normalcy is reigning again, the David Koresh tragedy is more of a footnote in history for the general populace, and only of interest to the inquiring minds of academics. But for the Adventist church, one more stage is being entered-Prevention.

Prevention:

After the smoke had settled the concern was with what did the church learn? Several factors emerged (Interview with Patterson 1993):

1. The church was not prepared, but caught off guard.
2. It had never faced a crisis of this magnitude.
3. In-house communications personnel operated more out of a "public relations" mentality to get the message of Adventism out, than as crisis managers.
4. There was also an "evangelistic mentality" desirous of grabbing every opportunity for press time to explain the Seven Seals and promote "Revelation Seminars." This was a wrong motivation, as the two could not be mixed.
5. Serious analysis needs to be done to determine what attracts people to cults.
6. Damage to the church? None that is apparent, as the media behaved in a responsible way towards the Adventist church.

7. A Crisis Management Plan needed to be developed and implemented.

This latter point is the main concern of the prevention stage. Recommendations from the consultants centered around four proactive key points:

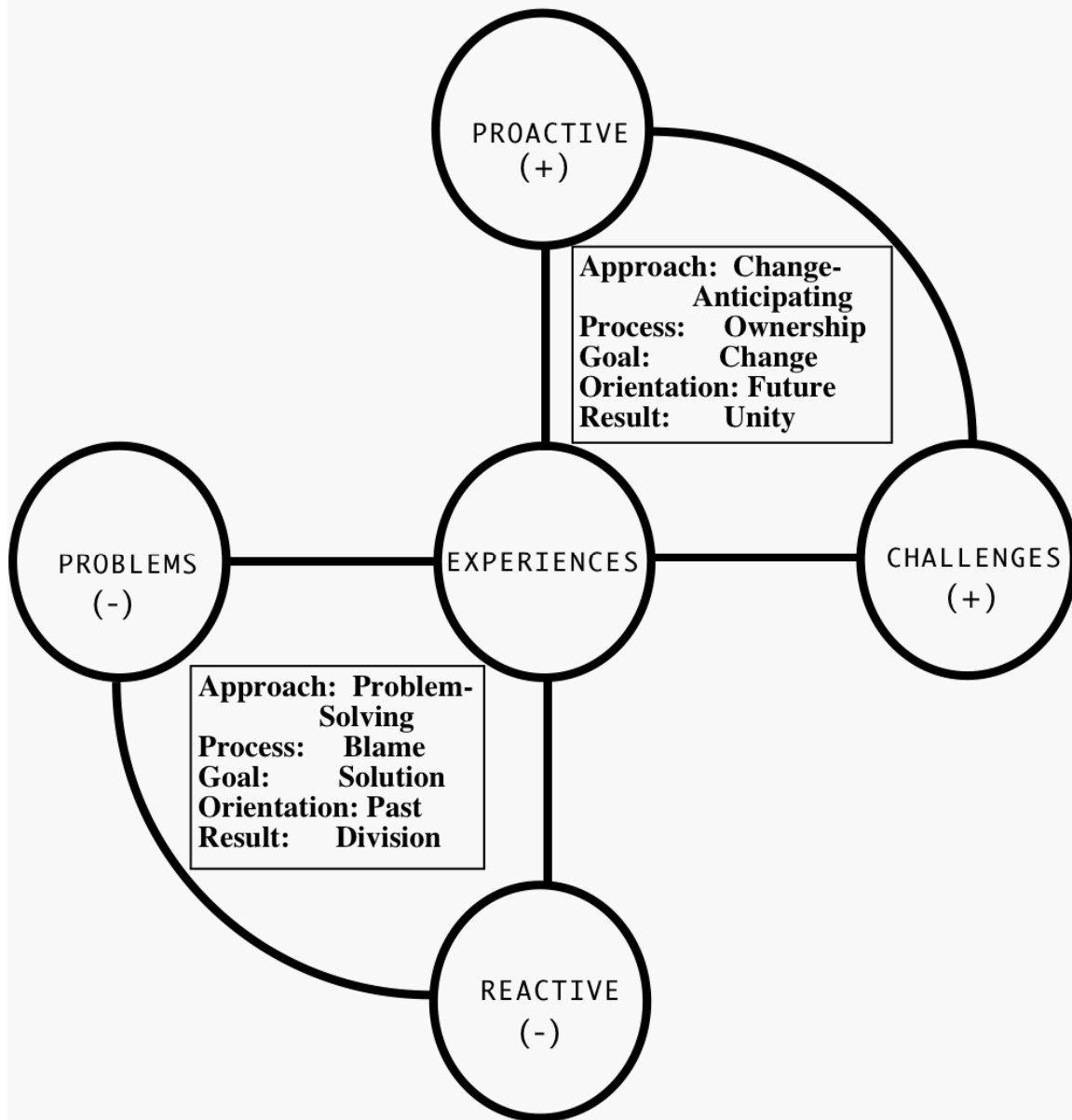
1. The need for the Plan to be communicated to all levels of the church.
2. The need for Team building with all employees, so that all can be involved in an enabling process.
3. The need for Crisis management training to be added to the ministerial training curriculum at seminary, and even college level.
4. The need to develop and implement a quick process of communication to all levels of the field, for example, through fax machines in all churches, for instant dissemination and access of information to and from all churches and institutions.

These recommendations were taken seriously, and a Crisis Anticipation Committee was immediately set up that is working to develop a crisis management plan and team. On reflecting on the Waco experience, a problem-to-challenges model is proposed as a possible approach to future interventions.

A Proposed Model of Crisis Management:

We all go through experiences in life, whether as individuals or institutions. The word "experience" is a good term since it is value neutral, as opposed to the word "problem" that is negative, or "challenge" that is positive. As Aldous Huxley once declared, "Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him." In Chinese, for example, the word for "crisis" is *We-Ji*, and is composed of two picture-characters, the one meaning "danger" and the other meaning "opportunity." How one responds to life's experiences or crises make a big difference in the final outcome, for the same experience can be seen either as a problem or as a challenge. Whether one views the experience as a problem or a challenge, is to a large extent determined by the action one takes towards the experience, whether a reactive (negative) posture or a proactive (positive) process. [See graphic, From "Crisis" to "Foresight" Management]

FROM "CRISIS" TO "FORESIGHT" MANAGEMENT



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If the experience is perceived to be a problem, then the approach that is automatically taken is that of Problem Solving, in which the principal question is: "Who owns the problem?" Such an approach leads to the process of finding whom to blame. Why? Because the goal in this approach is to solve the problem as quickly as possible in order to get back to normal operation. This is because the orientation is to the past, to a "we-have-always-done-it-this way" mindset. Such an approach is not open to that which is new, but is steeped in tradition and its preservation, whether corporate or domestic. But the result of such a past-oriented, blaming process is that it creates division, for people often want to distance themselves from the one who has been identified as the problem. It also creates division in spirit and a climate of distrust. Am I next? Who's watching? Who can I trust? Will I be found out? By immediately looking for blame because of the desire to quickly get back to business as usual, the result may be an overlooking of the possibility that the problem may reside elsewhere, such as in the system, the structure or corporate culture and the way people are treated, or doctrinal position. In which case, nothing is resolved, except cosmetic changes. In time the same problem or a similar one will reemerge, only to be temporarily suppressed. In the end, one is left with a lose-lose situation. The result of such reactive posture is institutional crisis and systemic bog-down, because the focus is on immediacy instead of long-term change.

The opposite methodology is to view our experiences as challenges. The focus is thus on a Change-Anticipating approach. There are reasons why things don't always work out the way we desire. Some are easily grasped; others may elude us. Nevertheless, the concern of the proactive process is not, "Who is to blame?", but, "What can we learn?" With learning comes change, whether minor or major. One of the learnings is that things cannot continue as they are. This approach builds on the maxim of Max DePree, "We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are" (DePree 1989:100). Thus the approach is a change-anticipating one; what needs to be different? Such an approach immediately forces one to realize that this is not the concern of anyone person exclusively. Therefore, the process that emerges is one of ownership by everyone who is affected by this experience or situation. Focusing on ownership instead of blame, enables people to bring to the process several qualities: commitment, this is my concern also; community, since it is everyone's concern, we are all in this together; creativity, because it effects me let me give it by best effort; cooperation, since we are all involved it can only be resolved through group effort. The goal of this process is change-things cannot continue as they presently are. This is because the orientation of the process is towards the future, towards a concern with how improvement can be made. The end result of this proactive process is unity-everyone working together for the common good in a win-win manner where everyone benefits.

This model not only provides a method for crisis management and conflict resolution, but also reflects different philosophical approaches. The first is patriarchal, focused on the individual, independence and power; the other tends to be egalitarian, concerned with the group, inter-connectedness and team-building. In essence they represent two methods for dealing with change, one is static, the other dynamic. This model also exposes two different styles of leadership: the old style of Problem Solver, a reactive posture which dominated management in the 1960's, 70s and 80s, versus the new style of leadership for the 21st century, that of Change Anticipator, a proactive process

(Barker 1992). The model is simple, yet useful, whether one is dealing with domestic/family difficulties or corporate/institutional concerns and crises.

Observations:

It is always much easier to second-guess what should have been done in a crisis than to actually do it under crisis conditions. And in no way do I here at the close desire to criticize what Seventh-day Adventists did under the most grueling of circumstances. What we have in the Branch Davidian tragedy in Waco, Texas, was one of the bloodiest sieges in U.S. law enforcement history, which resulted in nearly 100 deaths, the resignation of the director of the ATF, contributed to the eventual ouster of the FBI director, and the public embarrassment of the United States Attorney General, at the cost of over 100 million dollars for starters, and for 51 days arrested the attention of the world. The fact that a religious denomination, through no efforts of its own, found itself thrust into the midst of this crisis, by a group with no ties to the denomination and which most people in the denomination did not even know existed, only brings greater caution to how one judges the actions taken.

Nevertheless, some gentle observations can be made. Was the distancing/reactive posture the best one to have taken? Church leaders interviewed reluctantly said, "yes." It was the best that could have been done under the circumstances. And while the benefit of the doubt must be granted, given the situation, there may be more behind this posture than at first surfaces. Seventh-day Adventists for quite some time have been desirous of a "mainstream status" among Christian churches. However, their belief system, "remnant" theology, "we-versus-they" mindset, and end-time worldview, have kept them more in the sectarian camp, although within the borders of Christianity, as Walter Martin recognized (Martin 1960). Such an ambivalent posture-"are we a denomination or a sect"? (Rosado 1993)-has given rise to a "minority mentality," hungry for acceptance, approval and accommodation, but never completely getting it in its totality. Thus the push to be better than! Such a situation is reflective of what Emile Durkheim wrote of the Jews in Suicide.

It is a general law that religious minorities, in order to protect themselves better against the hate to which they are exposed or merely through a sort of emulation, try to surpass in knowledge the populations surrounding them. Thus Protestants themselves show more desire for knowledge when they are a minority of the general population. The Jew [read Seventh-day Adventist], therefore, seeks to learn, not in order to replace his collective prejudices by reflective thought, but merely to be better armed for the struggle. For him it is a means of offsetting the unfavorable position imposed on him by opinion and sometimes by law. And since knowledge by itself has no influence upon a tradition in full vigor, he superimposes this intellectual life upon his habitual routine with no effect of the former upon the latter. This is the reason for the complexity he presents (Durkheim 1951).

This minority, partial "siege," mentality creates a social distancing in and of itself, under normal conditions. But when confronted with an external crisis that has the perceived potential of questioning the credibility of the group, the position Koresh's cult

placed the church, the self-distancing posture becomes an almost knee-jerk reaction, as a matter of course. But to show legitimacy, consistent with what Durkheim declared, the group touts its accomplishments. Thus, over and over again the Seventh-day Adventist Church released the following statement:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 7 million members with mission outreach in more than 200 countries. Our parochial school system includes 78 accredited universities and colleges and nearly 6000 accredited elementary and secondary schools. The Adventist Church is a major and highly respected contributor to health care in the United States and around the world. We operate 162 hospitals, 88 retirement homes and 310 clinics (Memorandum 1993c).

To respond proactively demands a conscious deliberate effort. In such a case, it works to the group's overall advantage to let others do its fighting, since in the process it gains doubly. On the one hand they don't have to defend themselves, and on the other, they are able to accomplish what they have been desiring all along-identity with the mainstream. But the loss is the insights and knowledge that the group could impart to assist in the negotiations and in managing the crisis are now not available. Others that may know less about the group, end up speculating without the help of all resources available. Thus, Cari H. Haus and Madlyn L. Hamblin, in their book, *In the Wake of Waco: Why Were Adventists Among the Victims?* Make a most important statement. "Because Davidian theology could be built only on Adventist theology, you had to have an Adventist understanding of the Bible even to understand what the Davidians were talking about" (Haus and Hamblin 1993:69). This is a perspective and understanding which Bible scholar James D. Tabor missed, and therefore ended up speculating on his own view of the Seven Seals, and what he thought Koresh believed (Tabor 1993). Of course, this too is speculation since no one will ever fully know what David Koresh believed.

Conclusion:

Where do we go from here? There is only one direction, towards the future. But it must be a future anchored in the past, by learning from it, so that our behavior can change. Around the turn of the century, a period also marked by dynamic change, the great Spanish-American philosopher, George Santayana, wrote about how people should respond to change. "Progress," wrote Santayana, "far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. . . . and when experience is not retained, . . . infancy is perpetual" (Santayana 1980:284). Infants and children have no memory of the past since they have no past to remember. This is why they make so many mistakes because they cannot call on memory, on "retentiveness," to avoid making the same blunders. Only mature adults can pull from the past that which allows them to avoid the same errors in the future. Santayana then goes on to declare perhaps his most famous lines, the dictum: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The same is not only true of individuals, but also of institutions. Why should the same mistakes be continually made, over and over again? Can we not learn from the past, so as to have an unfogged future?

The church as an institution, as well as a group of individuals, must move away from that stage of perpetual spiritual infancy, because "experience is not retained," to one of spiritual and social maturity, where it no longer behaves as children, tossed about by every ill wind of spiritual deceitfulness, but as spiritually mature adults (Ephesians 4:13,14). The closer we get to the year 2000 the more apocalyptic cults will we see emerge in society, claiming to be spiritual anchors in the midst of social storms. David Koresh was simply the 1993 model. What will the 1994 model look like? Will it also be of the same type? Whatever it is, it might better serve the cause of the church and religion in general to take a proactive posture of serving as intermediary and assist in the negotiations, rather than merely creating distance between itself and the group.

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1The name Waco is probably an anglicization of the Spanish word hueco, meaning "hole."

2The magazine, an 8 and a half by 11 newspaper format publication, consists, not only of articles by cult members, but also reproductions of articles on the teachings of the group from national and area newspapers.