Identifying Destructive Cults From the Motives of the Hierarch to Create the Cult

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It is a customary manipulation for destructive cult to deceive followers under the guise of orthodox religion. Thus, if only to reveal the words and deeds, it is difficult for the dupes to know destructive cult correctly and then break away from it, because understanding the reason for the words and deeds of a man is more important than what he says and does. Based on this, this article puts forward a psychological way to distinguish and recognize orthodox religion and destructive cult: All the motives of the hierarch to create the traditional religion are kind, loving, even noble, and great, while the motives of the hierarch to create destructive cult are to defraud the power to control, deceive sex, and swindle wealth.

Keywords: motive, orthodox religion, destructive cult, Buddhism, Christianism, Islamism

A Psychological Way to Distinguish Destructive Cult

Various destructive cults have been rampant on the mainland China since the reform and opening up. In the name of orthodox religion, they deceived the followers of Buddha and Jesus, causing the followers to fall into the abyss of destructive cult without distinction between truth and falsehood. And once they fall into it, even if the rescuers tell them the “evil”, “false”, and “cheat” of destructive cult with facts, they turn a deaf ear, so that it is often wasted words. Instead, they firmly believed that what they embrace is orthodox religion but not destructive cult, the hierarches are true Gods and Buddhas who are the largest Buddhas in the universe, and the fallacies and heresies are universal truths.

But the fact is that these hierarches of destructive cult who pretends to be Gods and Buddhas are neither an expert scholar nor a highly skilled talent of the senior social, much less a hero model who has made great contributions to the society and the common people. Moreover, they are farmers with primary or junior high school education or other extremely ordinary members of society who only know a few Chinese characters. However, once in the name of orthodox religion, they fabricate a fallacy to masquerade as orthodox religion and claim to be a God or Buddha by boasting. Then they can be the hierarches of destructive cult who can easily be worshipped and adored by thousands of people as the Gods and Buddhas of orthodox religion to control these people and play them in their hands. What is more, it can convince believers that what the hierarches of destructive cult have created is a true religion that can take them to heaven but not destructive cult called by the rescuers. It is hard for believers to wake up even if they are told the truth that they have been...
tricked into being mentally controlled. Destructive cult’s intrigue of mixing the genuine with the fictitious creates an insurmountable obstacle for the treatment of destructive cult believers.

For example, we have been familiar with the process for Li Hongzhi, the master of the Falun Gong Organization, to become a hierarch of the cult. He started primary school at the age of eight and was a middle school graduate during the Great Cultural Revolution. He played the trumpet at the musical instrument class of Mao Zedong ideological propaganda team in the People’s Liberation Army, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, 201 Troops, August 1st Army Racecourse, and the art propaganda team of Jilin Provinzial Forest Police General Team. After the disbanding of the literary and art propaganda team, he served as a waiter for four years at the literary and art propaganda detachment hostel because he did not have a high level of literacy and special skills. Then, he was seconded to Changchun Grain, Oil, and Food Corporation as director of the Security Department. After maintaining his position but stop paying, he falsely used the name of religion, Qigong or even science to wantonly plagiarise and distort Buddhist nouns, fabricate Karmic theory, consummation theory, doomsday argument, and so on, to found the Falun Gong cult. To people’s surprise, he was able to make millions of deceived people, including someone with high education and social experience, fall into the trap of his Falun Gong cult in just a few years. These people worshipped and superstitious him from the bottom of one’s heart, adored him, regarded him as a God and respected him as their father (even believers in their 70 and 80 call him Master and it is noted that there has always been a saying in China that “teachers and disciples are like fathers and sons”). Among them, many people ruined their family or dead because of the deeply false belief. But when social workers treated them sensibly, it was hard or even impossible for some of them to find out that he established the organization of destructive cult in the name religion and Qigong.

Faced with the difficult problem, psychologists believes that it is hard for believers to recognize the evil nature of destructive cult only by revealing that destructive cult is a deceptive organization in the name of religion from the words and deeds of the hierarch. It is necessary to expose deeply from the psychological activities of the hierarch, that is, from the motives and purposes of creating the cult to make the cult followers see clearly the true features of the cult: “evil”, “false”, and “deceptive”. In psychology, although motivation does not account for what the activity is and how going on, it explains why individuals or organizations engage in such activities. In our daily life, to know a person or an organization, we need not only to listen to their words and deeds, but also be aware of the intentions and purposes behind words and deeds, which mean understanding the motivation of his/her behavior. That is to say, it is much more important to know the reason for the words and deeds of a person or organization than to know what he/she says and does.

The action of creating a cult from the hierarch for Orthodox religions and all kinds of cults are governed by motives. We can effectively identify the hierarch of destructive cult and the cult created by him/her through analyzing and exploring the purposes for the hierarch, including the hierarch of destructive cult, to create or expand their cult. Motivation can reveal the intentions of the founders from all kinds of cults under their deep minds.

The Motives for the Founders of Traditional Religions

Although, among the traditional religions, it is hard for some of the ancient religions that took place in the 3,000 or 4,000 years B.C. to find the specific founders, much less to analyze their motives for founding the religion, such as the early Brahmans in India, Judaism on which Christianity depends, etc. Nevertheless, some of the later traditional religions, such as Christianism, Buddhism, Islamism, and the various denominations that
emerged in the world after World War II, all had their own founders, which enables us to judge the motivation and purpose of their founding religion according to their activities and doctrines to identify whether their religion is destructive cult.

If the motives for the founders of traditional religions are compared with that of destructive cult hierarch, it is easy to find that the motives of the traditional religions are all good, loving, even noble, and great. Though, as Marx said (Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin works compiled by the CPC Central Committee, 1999), “Religion is the sigh of oppressed beings, the feeling of the merciless world, just as it is the spirit of a system without spirit. Religion is the opium of the people”. There is no denying that religion does have the effect of escaping real suffering, auto-narcosis, being oppressed, and not thinking of resistance, but it cannot be negated that the sympathy from the founders of these traditional religions for those who struggle in the midst of suffering and their loving heart to all mortal beings. Therefore, as far as their motive for establishing their religion is concerned, it should be said that the motives are out of the total and selfless love and salvation of mankind. As a result, these traditional religions are widely spread around the world, attracting nearly 80% of the world’s people to believe in them. Although the founders of these traditional religions have passed away for thousands of years, a generation of believers still adores and worships them, build gold statues and temples for them and burn incense and pray for them, in which there must be a reasonable reason since it is impossible for a opium giver to do so.

It can be seen from the basic doctrines of some traditional religions that the motives for the leaders of the traditional religions are good. Buddhism believes that life is full all kinds of pains as suffering, illness, death, and so on. The reason for Sakyamuni creating Buddhism is to establish Buddhist doctrines through his own insight under the Bodhi tree, the understanding to the causes of human suffering and the elimination of it, grasping the path to a happy paradise, drawing up a set of ways to get rid of suffering and precepts, and spreading Buddhism all around the world, so that to help the believers get out of the sea of suffering, and finally, achieve the goal of universal salvation. Whether it is true or not, as its founder said, that Buddhism can escape from the sea of misery and ascend to heaven, the motives are benevolent.

The founder of traditional religions pays special attention to the development and purification of people’s hearts. All religions played a boundless creativity and made solemn promises to purify people’s hearts. Buddhism advocates building the pure land of world and soul, helping others, being kind to others, and having compassion in their hearts. Taoism proposes carrying forward the good side of human nature and removing the malignant side, so that all religions in human society can coexist and tolerate each other and the same as people to develop, coexist, and coproser harmoniously. Christianism upholds treating the world with a grateful and peaceful heart. Islamism pursues purity and simplicity for long auspicious celebration. The traditional religions, through its special rituals and methods, makes the believers accept the doctrines convincingly and carry out by actual efforts. As a result, believers make a great change in their mind during the process of accumulation of truth with practice and imperceptibility, which benefit the society and make the country safe and peaceful.

For the noble purpose of purifying the people, different religions have formulated different ways to help the people of the world. Buddhism advocates converting to “three treasures” (Buddhism, law, and monks), practicing “three learning” (caution, determination, and wisdom), dispelling “three poison” (greed, anger, and infatuation), respectfully carrying out “six ferries”, and doing “10 good deeds”. Daoism proposes loyalty to fasting, keep the curse, adhere to the law, and stick to the requirement of food and clothes in the doctrines and practice to find the nature of human and life. Christianism requires believers to believe in almighty God, to
thank God for salvation, to pray for God’s grace, and to do well against evil. These methods lead believers to do good things with one mind day by day, to resist evil consciously in their own hearts and society, and to be a good citizen of society. For one thing, devout religious beliefs can lead good people to the path of light and makes them feel the joy of complacency, so that they are invigorated. For the other thing, they also make certain bad people turn back suddenly from the depravity, break free from the evil abyss, find the right way of the world, change the evil to the good, turn the old into the new, and rebuild the person, so that they can turn ugly into holiness and decadent into magic. People worship God, Buddha, Guanyin, Laojun, Lu Zu, and so on, because they have realized the compassion of these gods to save all living beings and the supreme power of transforming people’s hearts as well as the good and lofty motive for creating and preaching the religion of the gods.

The Motives of the Hierarch to Create Destructive Cults

Defrauding the Power to Control

Contrary to the kind-hearted and merciful motivations from the creators of traditional religions, the motives from the hierarches of destructive cults, who create their cults with the aim of satisfying their own selfish desires, are sinister, cruel, and hostile to human beings together with society by their very nature, which suggests that their motives for creating destructive cults can be described as “greed”. To be specific, the motives behind all such destructive cults are to defraud the power to control, deceive sex, and swindle wealth. This is a major characteristic and a watershed of the difference between destructive cults and orthodox religions, and an important psychological symbol for distinguishing destructive cults from orthodox religions. Greed is a major taboo of orthodox religions, and all orthodox religions must refrain from their greed. For example, the “Nirvana Silence” in Buddhism’s “Dharma Seals” holds that everything in the world has no absolute existence and reality. Therefore, one should break away from greed and desire for anything. Once, the desire is really broken, there will be no greed, infatuation, hatred, and evil deeds. There is a doctrine “Do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not perjury against the good people, and do not covet anything from others” from the Ten Commandments of Moses in Judaism. However, greed is the central motive of the hierarch to create the destructive cult. Some of them have all three behaviors including cheating, deceiving, and swindling, some have both. As for Wu Yangming, the religious leader of destructive cult hates the legal church and curses that it is a “big whore” and is greedy of theocratic power. Jim Jones, hierarch of the people’s Temple who created the mass suicide of 923 destructive cult believers in November 1978, is also a model of creating the destructive cult with the motivation of defrauding the right. He founded the people’s Temple to establish a small kingdom of cults in which he was the supreme ruler and the believers were all playthings of his power. Their actions, thoughts, money, body, freedom, sexual rights, and life are all under his control so that he obtains great psychological satisfaction from this control.

In 1977, he led more than a thousand believers to the jungles of Guyana to build a manor under his brutal dictatorship. He confiscated their passports, laid down strict discipline, asked them to cut down the jungle, reclaim land, build new houses, carry on endless labor, and formed a special detachment of 30 to urge them. In the camp, Jones set up a big box without a glimmer of light to put the believer in for a long time because of not obeying him to clean his mind and obey him absolutely. He asked every believer in the manor to call him the “father” when they see him, to smile and raise their hand. The hierarch, with the avocation of controlling, cannot tolerate a trace of resistance from the believers.
According to Jones’ adopted daughter Bonnie Herman, there was a man in black named Chris who wanted to leave the cult, so Jones stood on the pulpit and said, “You remember what I said, Chris will die in seven days because he walk out of my aura of protection” (Chen & Zhang, 2001). And it really happened. A week later, it was discovered that the man in black had been shot and thrown into the valley. The motive of Jones to establish the people’s Temple is to build a destructive cult kingdom in which he served as the supreme ruler of the crowd and held control over others.

Deceiving Sex

Another specific motive for many hierarches at home and abroad to create a cult is to deceive sex. Liu Jianguo, the hierarch of the “Master God Cult”, can be regarded as a typical example. He once bluntly admitted, “I establish Master God Cult to meet the needs of myself, to cheat more money and play more women”. In the name of the Lord God himself and “communicating with the Holy Spirit”, he make female believers meet his sexual needs under the name of “being called”, and asking the women who have been called to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God, while those who fail to do so will be threaten with coming disasters and force them to surrender. For example, during a gathering at the home of the cult group “Elder” Zhang (35 years old), a 13-year-old young girl watched them with curiosity. That night, Liu Jianguo, who was present that night, instructed Zhang to do the “work” of the young girl, asking her to accept his “call”. The Elder pretended to rummage through the Bible, coaxed and deceived, “You have to rely on God and connect with God to bring you good fortune”. Liu Jianguo, on the other hand, cajoled her into saying that having sex with him was “through the Holy Spirit”, and that “it was the spirit of the people who were determined to get it”. They forced the young girl into the room of Liu Jianguo and let Liu carry out rape. Within this month, the lecher raped a young girl under 13 in the same way, causing her to conceive and have a child (Chen & Zhang, 2001). Liu raped 27 women in the same way, causing six of whom to conceive and have six children (Li, 1999). In a short period of four or five years, the Lord God has “Bai Shiyu Lord” Zhu Xiangyun and other “Hougong Jia Li” 16 people, just like a emperor. Not only that, lustful Liu Jianguo also set up a palace in some places where he hided beauties for its venting beast.

Swindling Wealth

It can be seen from some hierarches’ practices uncovered at home and abroad that they dig in their minds to create a cult with all kinds of psychological methods, which reveals another ulterior motive is to use cults to deceive the money and property of believers and accumulate huge wealth for themselves, so that they can lead a luxurious life. The same is true of Shoko Asahara, the leader of Japanese Aum Doomsday Cult, and Joseph Kibveter and Christine Malinda of the African Uganda Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God. It is especially true of Li Hongzhi, China’s “Falun Gong” leader.

Shoko Asahara is a rich man, except that he is like other hierarch to write his myths and lies into books, compile them into instruction materials and video tapes, and print on T-shirts to sell to believers, he also launched the “PSI” project which meant to be fully saved and taught. It is said that this is developed by the “province of science and technology” of the Aum truths. It is possible to synchronize their brain waves with Asahara by putting a “brainwave synchronizer” on the head of a believer. The headset costs 1 million yen a week to rent and 10 million yen (800,000 yuan) to buy one. However, believers also have to attend a series of ceremonies. For example, “touching the top” (That is, a ceremony in which Asahara touches the forehead of a believer to convey energy to the believer) costs between 50,000 and 500,000 yen for each ceremony.
Accordingly, the doctrines which made by Asahara stipulates that believers should hand over their private property, including real estate, pension, insurance, and so on, to the order. In the cult, the amount of money that you contribute is proportional to your morality. The more you give, the faster you get promoted in the hierarchy, so even the lowest man gives his best. In addition, Asahara has created a secret teaching method of injecting the energy of the hierarch into the liberator, that is, once the believer has drunk the water mixed with the blood of the hierarch, the ablution water of the hierarch, or the water boiled with the hair of the hierarch, he can get close to the Lord’s body and mind, produce all kinds of mysterious experiences, and receive the mysterious energy from him. Of course, this kind of “secret” of Asahara cannot be given free of charge. Instead, it costs million yen to drink a bloody water, 50,000 yen for a 500 ml bath water, 30,000 yen for per centimeter hair and 100,000 yen for a videotape he says (Chen & Zhang, 2001). According to statistics, the assets Aum grew by 250 times, which accumulated about $1.15 billion in the six years between the founding and the outlawing.

The tragedy, that struck the world in the mass murder of more than 1,000 members of the Ten Commandments Movement for the Restoration of God in the Pearl of Africa—Uganda, also proved that the motive to establish the “Restoration of the Ten Commandments Movement of God” of the cult leaders, such as Joseph Kibveter, was to gather money. Because thousands of believers were murdered, the hierarch himself fled the country with the money he had amassed. In order to achieve the purpose of cheating and accumulating money, Joseph Kibveter and others urge believers to break ties with family and relatives as well as friends, to donate personal property and join the new family. In this family, the “hierarch” is the “parent” of the believer and has supreme authority. The believer has to dedicate himself to the Lord, including thoughts, possessions, and even flesh together with life. The hierarch also predicts that the earth would perish on December 31, 1999, and that believers would have to sell their property and donate the money they received to the church, saying that only then could they ascend to heaven, otherwise, they would be sent to hell and never turn over. Through these means and channels, the hierarch amasses a great deal of money. They face a crisis of trust and were in an awkward position when their prophecy is about to go bankrupt. As a result, they kill more than 1,000 people to take possession of this ill-gotten wealth.

Ron Hubbard, the hierarch of a French cult called “scientific theism”, claimed more nakedly, “Today, if you want to be a millionaire, you have to create a religion, which is the most effective way to make money since a small investment can bring a ten thousand fold profit”. To that end, Hubbard instructed his cult to “make money, make more money, and do not ask the methods and reasons, making money is the end” (Tan, 2001).

In contrast to Ron Hubbard, Li Hongzhi’s motive of creating his cult for cheating money shows his brilliance under an obscure way. After a few days of running classes to attract followers with no charge, he amasses wealth through the following channels.

Firstly, he makes use of “nursing one’s health” to deceive money. It was one of the ways for Li Hongzhi to cheat money by practicing medicine to nurse someone’s health illegally. Li Hongzhi had not studied medicine at all, but he illegally used witchcraft to cure people and collect money without the approval of the medical administration. He set up a “virtue box” in his home and put it at a very prominent place. Most of the patients who came to see the doctor donate at most 300 yuan and at least 10 yuan, most of which ranged from 100 yuan to 50 yuan. Li Hongzhi is unhappy if the amount of money is small. In addition to adjusting illness at home, Li Hongzhi uses witchcraft to nurse one’s health every time he goes to a class with extra charge. He has neither a standard rate nor a receipt, and it is not clear how much money he defrauded.
Secondly, he uses the Qigong classes to deceive money. Using Qigong classes to collect tuition fees is another way for Li Hongzhi to collect money after a small area of nursing one’s health. He began to play the cover of meritorious reports and field illness regulation to deceive people who have not been cured for a long time. In the two years from May 1992 to Spring in 1994, Li Hongzhi held 56 classes in Changchun, Beijing, Taiyuan, Guanxian, Dongying, Wuhan, and other cities and counties with more than a million participants and a total charge of more than 284 million yuan.

Thirdly, he makes use of “publishing books” and “audio-visual products” to deceive money. It is a main way for Li Hongzhi to promote various Falun Gong books and extract hard-earned money from believers to deceive money. As a matter of fact, Li Hongzhi’s books have the same contents, including recording of his lectures in his study class, which are arranged and edited by others. In order to defraud more money, the pattern is constantly renovated to entice believers to keep buying. The same is true of the audio and video products of Falun Gong, such as training tape, teaching tape, lecture tape, Falun Gong music tape, lecture disc, and so on. They are sold in different forms to defraud the money of the believers. It is later found out that the value of various Falun Gong publications and related articles directly edited, issued and distributed by Li Chang and others of the “Falun Dafa Research Society” amounted to 135 million yuan with a profit of 42.29 million yuan.

Fourthly, he uses other related items to deceive money. Li Hongzhi deceives money by illegally printing and selling a single-page calendar, making “Falun Gong badges”, producing “certificates of completion”, and printing “Falun Gong” pamphlets. Although these things cost very low, Li Hongzhi made an arbitrary bid to scrape hard-earned money by taking advantage of people’s “worshiping Buddha for fear of not being sincere” (Zhao, 2010).

Although we illustrate the destructive cult hierarches’ greed for power, money, and sex respectively, it does not mean that their greed is a single one. It is not the truth that a hierarch covets power but not money and sex, or a hierarch is greedy for sex but not power and money. Actually, the opposite is true and most cult hierarches are “syndrome” sufferers in terms of greed. Liu Jianguo, the hierarch of Master God Cult, is not only greedy for sex, but also covets money and power. In a few short years in Hunan Province, he defrauds more than 300,000 yuan in cash, 20,000 kilograms of grain, and a large number of gold and silver jewelry. In addition, he is ambitious and proposed to establish a “kingdom of God” headed by Master God Cult. He advocates seizing power through buying guns and carrying out armed insurrection with encircling the cities in the countryside. The same as Liu Jianguo, Shoko Asahara is not only greedy for money, but also for sex and power with a rare frenzy. He not only has a wife and six children, but also has many beautiful god maids to serve him, and he often commits adultery, molestes underage women to satisfy his animal desires. There is a secret “naked bar” in the Aum truths cult, a place where Asahara enjoys himself. All the maids are naked with wine and laughing. In the bar, the floor was covered with glass mirrors, and the maids can be seen through the mirror totally when squatting down to accompany him with the wine. In addition, Asahara is a powerful political ambition mad man who wants to be a leader and prime minister. Within his cult, he establishes a system simulated Japanese government institutions and sets up 21 departments to be the “Aum Kingdom” of the “Holy Law Emperor” since he cannot become a leader and prime minister at once.

All kinds of destructive cult pretend to be religions and also are seemed as ordinary religions which have major elements, such as “common belief, moral standard, religious ceremony, and religious League organization”, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from traditional religions. However, as long as we carefully analyze whether the motivations of the leaders are out of charity, divine intervention, and saving
mankind, or in order to satisfy their greed for power, wealth, and sex, we can accurately judge which the destructive cult at the psychological level is.

References