

## Understanding Deception

from Ronald L. Dart's program notes

Consider a strange irony: Almost every religious deception known to man has been introduced by warning its audience against deception. I have seen many strange religious ideas, and most of them cite Revelation 12:9, which identifies the arch deceiver as: "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."

### Deception is Practiced Diligently

I have been watching various forms of deception in the world for many years, and I have come to certain conclusions about deception.

I don't mean to hurt anyone's feelings, but deception is practiced so diligently, by so many, accidentally and on purpose, I am bound to step on someone's toes. If so, I am sorry, but "no pain, no gain."

I will use a combination of Scripture, human reason and experience. The reason for using Scripture is obvious. The reason for using human reason is that it is the only kind I have available.

The reason for using experience is, it is a lot less painful and expensive for you to learn from my experience. But that is up to you. I have been here 76 years and have bought my share of used cars.

And, while this is about religious deception, it is essentially the same game in politics and every other field of human activity—even, regrettably, in families.

So, what have I learned about deception that might be of value? When I began to think about it, it resolved into a series of principles.

### Deception is like a virus

Like the flu, many people who spread deception don't mean to. Satan himself doesn't have to do a lot of deception. All he has to do is introduce it to a willing mind and then sit back and watch it spread.

Deception is like a virus in that it makes people sick and they are sometimes sick a long time before they know it. They end up hurting and confusing people without meaning to. They are accidental carriers. So was Typhoid Mary.

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My Scripture? "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check" (James 3:1-2 NIV).

Be careful about spreading your "knowledge" around until it has been well tested. You might be a carrier. For example, when you get an email with astounding information in it, especially as a forward, delete it.

If you do consider sending it

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## Make A Difference...

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# Simon Cowell Is Your Friend

By Lenny Cacchio

*“Who is not satisfied with himself will grow” (Chinese Proverb).*

Most reality shows could use more reality. That’s why, if I were competing on *American Idol* (don’t laugh!) my best friend would be Simon Cowell. He can be acerbic and biting, but one thing is certain: If he compliments a performance, you know it was earned.

A number of telling studies reveal that American students are falling behind their peers from other nations, while at the same time these same American students evaluate themselves higher than those from other nations. “In other words, they combined a lousy performance with a high sense of self-esteem,” says Nina H. Shokraii, author of *School Choice 2000: What’s Happening in the States*, in an essay called “The Self-Esteem Fraud” (see *Too Much Self-Esteem Spoils Your Child*).

I have to believe that public education’s emphasis the past several decades on self-esteem without regard to achievement cripples our kids’ and our nation’s future. Self-esteem without achievement is cheap self-esteem. It’s destructive instead of constructive. We do ourselves no favors when we refuse to hear unpleasant truths, and we do our children a grave disservice when we effectively lie to them about their strengths and weaknesses.

This isn’t new stuff. King Ahab, when his counterpart king from the Southern Kingdom asked if they could consult a prophet of the true God as opposed to Ahab’s sycophants, essentially said, “Yeah, there is a prophet of Yahweh here, but I hate the guy because he tells me things I don’t want to hear” (loosely paraphrased from 1 Kings 22).

Isaiah, quoting the people from his day, said, “This is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits’” (Isaiah 30:9-10 NKJV). Simon & Garfunkel, a little closer to our day, wrote, “A man he hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest.”

Isn’t it at least a little wise to listen to your friends, people who care enough to every once in a while peel back a bit of your mask and honestly tell you what you need to hear and not what will make you feel good? We do each other no favors when we let our brothers and sisters—and children—slide blithely into mediocrity or worse when a little wise and perhaps unpleasant honesty can change that person’s path to a more fulfilling and successful life in the long run.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:6). I’m sure Simon Cowell would agree.

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on, cross check it. It doesn’t take long, and it will save your friends time, unnecessary worry, and will keep you from being an innocent carrier of deception. If you need help with this, just rent a kid.

## Deception is confusing

It must be, because clarity and simplicity are the mortal enemies of deception. Deception likes complicated arguments and, in religion,

long, convoluted doctrinal papers. Experience says the more pages it takes to explain an idea, the more likely it is to be wrong. This level of experience has been around at least since the 1300s, when William of Occam opined that, when all has been weighed, “the simplest solution is usually the correct one.” It’s called Occam’s Razor. I suppose because it cuts down to the bone.

My Scripture on this one? “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his

subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

## Deception is a swindler

An old axiom says you can’t cheat an honest man. For the swindle to work, it has to appeal to some desire you probably shouldn’t have.

A man who wants a divorce to take off with his new young cutie has a long, involved explanation of why it is okay to walk away from his wife, children, and responsibilities.

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In religion, he will quickly accept a paper on divorce and remarriage that makes it okay. He will then be a missionary for the new idea—a carrier. This is how many become carriers. With a need to justify a life decision, the more people they convince, the more secure they are in their “belief.”

You should know this about carriers: The longer and louder they preach, the more insecure they are. Deception must be maintained or it will dissolve into painful truth.

### **Deception goes around in circles**

Once again, it has to, because the object of deception is to prevent progress. If you make progress, even in the wrong direction, you will realize you are someplace you didn’t want to go. At that point the deception is defeated because you can repent and go where you were supposed to go in the first place.

This is why so many theological arguments plow the same ground over and over again. It is busy work, like digging a hole and filling it up again. You have better things to do.

### **Deception fights for survival**

It will do whatever it must to keep from being defeated. It will manufacture sources and spin truth so it appears to be falsehood. It will selectively include and delete information. It will lie. It has to, because once found out, it is dead.

Possibly the clearest example of this is in politics, demonstrated every night by talking heads on TV. They call it spin. I call it deception. Better yet, call it a lie. You have an internal lie detector. Tune it up. Pay attention. Call deception what it is.

Call a lie what it is. You will feel better almost immediately.

### **Deception is fond of unprovable assertions**

This should go without saying, because, if you can prove it, the deception is over.

Say one wants to undermine the credibility of an opponent. Deception can spread the rumor that he is a practicing Mason (assuming the audience cares). If a man is a Mason, he could easily prove it, but how does he prove he is not a Mason?

Deception loves this kind of allegation. It is the meat and potatoes of every conspiracy theory. Closely allied is asking unanswerable questions, and creating suspicion that all is not as it seems. Conspiracy theorists are not fond of facts. They prefer questions.

### **Deception imputes motives**

Deception is fond of the *ad hominem* attack, and will discredit anyone who has the nerve to point out that the king has no clothes.

Actually, it really doesn’t matter if the research checks out. Because a theologian is Protestant, Catholic, or wears pink underwear it does not mean his research is flawed. For Scripture on this, see Matthew 7:15-20.

### **Deception projects its image onto others**

When someone accuses someone or something of deception, chances are they too are deceivers, accidental or intentional. It takes one to know one. You must learn to spot them for yourself.

I realize that applies to me. But perhaps you’ll notice I am not

naming names. It is deception I am accusing, not people.

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proof texts out of  
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I prefer to read my  
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I suggest you do the  
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### **In religion, deception loves to quote Scripture (see Matthew 4:6)**

Any deceiver who cannot find Scriptures that say what he wants them to say isn’t worth his salt. The more Scripture the better. When I see a long list of Scriptures in an argument, I ignore it. To me it is a sign of someone with nothing to say.

People who take proof texts out of context and string them together to make a point are immediate suspects. I prefer to read my Scriptures in context. I suggest you do the same. Often.

### **Deception is condescending**

Any time you talk to someone who makes you feel inferior in spirituality, attitude, holiness, or practice, you are probably talking to a deceiver. Not a first line deceiver, a carrier. One who has been deceived and sets out to spread the virus.

A first line deceiver is too smooth to be condescending. He wants you to feel good about yourself. A first line deceiver is

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often a flatterer. Only the second string carrier is condescending.

### **Deception loves to preach and pontificate**

It is very fond of soap boxes. This is also typical of the carrier, not the first line deceiver. The first line deceiver is more subtle. He lets his carriers do the preaching.

*Deception hates labels because they indicate it has been found out. Don't label people, only deception.*

### **Deception is common, not rare**

It is not "somewhere else." You run into it every day. Entertain yourself by watching for it. Hang labels on it for easy identification. Deception hates labels because they indicate it has been found out. Don't label people, only deception.

I was thrilled to discover and name "Radical Anti-Paganism" (RAP). Someone was critical because they thought I was labeling people. Not so. I was naming an "ism." RAP is, roughly, a belief that anything pagans ever did is wrong. I don't want to know that, because for all I know, the pagans invented breakfast.

### **With the possible exception of the Arch Deceiver, all deceivers deceive themselves first**

And being deceived, they don't know they are deceived—they are

sincere. That, too, makes sense. With sincerity and a dollar, you can buy a cup of coffee some places, but you won't get any change.

Be sure you are right, not just sincere, before going off half-cocked. All carriers are sincere. Only the first line deceivers are truly evil. You will have to use your own judgment as to how safe it is to be with carriers. They say there is no risk in hugging an AIDS sufferer but that may not be true of some other viruses.

### **It is very difficult to break through deception**

The carrier of deception often has a great deal invested and will be unlikely to let it go. And he is likely to hate anyone who threatens it.

There is an old saying that "no good deed goes unpunished." This is nowhere so true as of a man who delivers another from a cherished (wrong) belief. It is worse than telling him his daughter is ugly.

I once tried to rescue a little dog that had gotten herself into a trap she couldn't get out of. She bit me. I would rescue her again, but next time I will wear gloves.

### **Deception tries to overpower truth**

In person, deception will shout down the truth. Watch for this from talking heads on TV.

In print, it will use capital letters, italics, and exclamation points—like the preacher who includes in his notes a reminder: "Shout like thunder here. Point weak."

Truth does not have to shout. I suspect shouting in sermons got started by preachers who couldn't get their arguments together. They deserve the congregations they have.

*The carrier of deception often has a great deal invested and will be unlikely to let it go.*

Don't let deception buffalo you. Crank up some good old common sense. If it doesn't smell like something you want to eat, leave it on the plate.

There is more to this subject in a program titled *Understanding Deception*, that I want you to have. For a *FREE* audio CD to hear this entire message and to get the remaining points, just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us. There is no charge and no obligation, but your gifts are always appreciated and used prudently.

### *In Memory*

CEM gratefully acknowledges a generous donation given in memory of Christina Winkelman, of Tucson, Arizona, who passed away on December 15, 2009.

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