

We live in an age of Deceit

We live in an age of widespread deception, far worse than in the past. It is an age when:

- **very prominent politicians in the UK and US are being formally accused of serious lying and dishonesty** (*At the time of writing: 1. Boris Johnson, former UK Prime Minister of lying to Parliament when he frequently denied he had seriously broken COVID rules (this has been upheld by a majority vote of MPs) and 2. Donald Trump is being investigated over 73 alleged offences. 3. Investigation of the former Scottish First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon over allegations of financial misconduct in the Scottish Nationalist Party which leads the Scottish Government – however no senior Minister of the SNP has yet been found guilty*).
- **trust in the honesty of the police in the UK is at a very low level because of deceitful behaviour** (*see below*)
- **trust in church ministers is undermined by the deceitful sexual crimes of a significant number of them in the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and other denominations** (*see below*)
- **fake news is prominent in the media, including social media** (*see below*)
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) is able to spread a great deal of false information and to produce very convincing false evidence** (*see below*)
- **criminals are able to circulate many convincing scams on social media**
- **conspiracy theories are widespread** (*see below*)

Deception is a sign of the End Times. There has always been deceit in society and the church, but it is much more prevalent and influential today than it has been in the past, especially with modern communication.

Deceit can, of course, affect believers. Jesus refers to sinister false prophets who might even work miracles: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matt 24:24). The words “if possible” is interpreted as referring to the idea of true Christians being so deceived that they forsake their faith. But God will prevent that happening. However, that doesn’t mean believers can’t be deceived in lesser ways. We need to be on the alert for less obvious deceit which is an introduction to the false prophets Jesus foretold. And there is plenty of it about.

It is important to remember that we Christians can be bolting the front door against one deceit but leaving the back door open to another deceit. So, we might be bolting the front door against mistaken liberal theology but leaving the back door open to mistaken conservative theology. We might think we have discerned fake news when in fact the information on which we have based that opinion is actually fake news. When you think you're discerning deceit in other people, look over your shoulder to check you're not being deceived yourself. Deceit is deceitful!

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Deceit in politics

There has, of course, been a lot of controversy about the dishonesty of politicians in the British media in recent times, and some investigations continue. Liz Saville Roberts, the Plaid Cymru leader in the House of Commons, said in 2022 “With public trust in our democratic system plummeting as we hurtle helter-skelter from one scandal to another lie, the very reputation of our democracy, and of ourselves, is seemingly at stake.” She added that a Compassion in Politics poll showed that 47 per cent of people lost trust in UK politicians over the last 12 months. The government’s Office for National Statistics said that 2021 Census reported that only 35% of the UK population stated that they trusted the national government.

Full Fact is an independent organisation which fact checks claims made by politicians. It was set up by a cross-party group and their board includes representatives of different political parties and viewpoints. They recently made the following comment: “2022 was a damaging year for standards in public debate: As many as 50 MPs, including two Prime Ministers, Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet Ministers, failed to correct false, unverified or misleading claims, despite repeated calls from Full Fact to do so. The statistics regulator had to write to the UK Government at least 10 times to challenge it on its use of statistics or other data.”

Carnegie UK is an organisation “seeking to influence public debate, public policy and practice through independent commissions of inquiry, pro-active research and strategic partnerships.” It has recently made some very serious comments about the trustworthiness of British politics. In a recent report they stated “The democratic wellbeing of England is in crisis ... (32%) of the public claim that a loss of trust in the government is the biggest threat to democracy right now, with corruption (15%) and fake news/disinformation (12%) also scoring highly on the public’s democracy at risk register.” Sarah Davidson, the CEO, commented “Public trust in Government and in elected politicians is at a low-ebb in England right now and this has a damaging impact on the collective wellbeing of the nation.”

Will Moy, chief executive of Full Fact, said about the Carnegie report: “This is an important reminder about the corrosive impact of dishonesty in public life. Falling trust and bad information can’t go unchecked. Today’s report should be a wake-up call for MPs and elected representatives across the UK, especially those who too often take our trust for granted. When people can’t trust those in power, they disengage. For democracy to function our trust must be earned – in every speech, every interview, and every constituency meeting.”

A 2022 IPSOS Poll found that only 16% of people trust Government Ministers to tell the truth and 12% trusted politicians in general.

Deceit in policing

Andy Cooke, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, said in his 2023 Report: “The police are experiencing one of their biggest crises in living memory. I can’t recall a time when the relationship between the police and the public was more strained than it is now. The public’s trust and confidence are unacceptably low. The fundamental principle of policing by consent, upon which the service is built, is at risk ... There are some obvious and truly atrocious reasons for the decline in public trust and confidence. In 2021, a serving police officer abducted, raped and murdered Sarah Everard. In 2022, another serving police officer admitted to carrying out 85 sexual offences, including a shocking number of rapes. Staggeringly, in both cases, warning signs over several years were missed, and the officers managed to keep their jobs as police constables until they were finally brought to justice ... Unfortunately, I could cite many more examples from throughout England and Wales. Rarely does a day go by without another story of a disgraced police officer reaching the headlines ... Some police forces had repeatedly failed to implement previous recommendations that were designed to prevent police officers from abusing their position for a sexual purpose.” Obviously, there is a good deal of deceit around such behaviour.

A YouGov poll in March 2023 found that 42% of people somewhat or strongly distrusted the Metropolitan Police.

Deceit in modern sexual practice

Jesus was quite clear that we are called to love our neighbour. That includes our homosexual or lesbian neighbour, our transgender neighbour, our bisexual neighbour, etc. If we don't love our neighbour, we are seriously sinning before God. Therefore, we are obliged to show understanding and kindness.

However, loving our neighbour does not necessarily mean loving their behaviour. Any good parent knows this. They love their children but disapprove of some of their behaviour. The same Bible which commands us to love our neighbour, showing understanding and kindness, also teaches that sexuality is to be fulfilled in a heterosexual context, namely heterosexual marriage.

I do understand that some people experience homosexual or transgender feelings, and as I said above, I would want to show understanding and kindness to such people. But I feel bound to regard a person born with male genitalia as male and a person born with female genitalia as female. To do otherwise would be to deceive myself. And I think many people are doing this. I simply cannot accept that gender can be unrelated to genitalia. To say otherwise would be to contradict common sense as well as biblical teaching.

Also, I do, of course, understand the strength of sexual feelings. But, I am also aware that many heterosexual people have been able to live a celibate life – as have homosexual and lesbian people, including today. It is not impossible to abstain from sexual activity, if it contravenes God's Word or would hurt other people.

It is clear to me, therefore, that there is a great deal of confusion and deception about sexuality in modern society.

It is not helped by our living in a My Rights/Me First society which leads us into thinking we can do what we like sexually, so long as we don't harm other people. I believe this approach is deceptive because it can lead to a lot of harm and suffering:

- Undermining of the nuclear family
- Harm to children
- Hurting the wider family e.g grandparents.
- Lack of commitment between sexual partners (traditional marriage encourages such commitment).
- Sexual disease through multiple partners

Research shows that

- Cohabitees are more likely to separate than married couples and having children outside of marriage runs the risk of relationship breakdown.
- Married people are happier and healthier
- Children of married parents have better health, fare better at school and are more likely to go to university.

See [C4M2303_Evidence-of-the-benefits-of-marriage.pdf](#)

Deceit over climate change

(This section is based on my article "Climate Change and Extreme Weather." See <https://christianteaching.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Climate-Change-and-Extreme-Weather.pdf>)

Recent research has discovered that 97% of scientists accept climate change. Also, 75% of adults in the UK are worried about the impact of climate change.

Nevertheless, many objections have been raised by climate change deniers. You may find it helpful to look at a paper which lists 218 such objections and answers all of them. It is an easy read because it describes each objection in a few words and responds (answering the objection) in just one sentence. However, each of those sentences is a hyperlink which can take you to a longer response, if you wish to see it. You will find this at [Arguments from Global Warming Skeptics and what the science really says \(skepticalscience.com\)](#).

Some of the objections to climate change are based on conspiracy theories, e.g. that it is being used to try to bring damaging control of human beings worldwide. Obviously, we must be alert to any such trends in society. However, we must avoid becoming paranoid.

Some facts are certain. Human beings produce some 0.9 kilogrammes of carbon dioxide every day and the population has grown, from 1 billion in 1800, 3 billion in 1960, 6 billion in 1999 to around 7.9 billion today. Currently it is growing at 67 million per year. This is bound to have greatly increased, and still be increasing, the amount of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. Also, the more humans there are, the more fossil fuels are used. Scientists know that carbon dioxide raises the temperature in the environment.

It seems obvious that global warming is taking place. NASA says that, while Earth's climate has changed in the past the current warming is happening at a rate not seen in the past 10,000 years. They point out that:

- **Global temperature is rising**
- **The ocean is getting warmer**
- **The ice sheets are shrinking**
- **Glaciers are retreating**
- **Snow cover is decreasing**
- **Sea level is rising**
- **Arctic sea ice is declining rapidly**
- **Extreme events are increasing in frequency**
- **Ocean acidification is increasing**

However, there are still many Christian climate change deniers, or, at least, they deny that human activity, including use of fossil fuels, contributes to climate change. If climate change is happening and can be combatted but we don't accept that and don't take an action, this would lead to disaster.

The deceit of conspiracy theories, false prophets, fake news

Conspiracy theories

Jesus tells us to be on the alert for signs of the End. He says "keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matt 24:42). So, we have a responsibility to note important and disturbing events and trends in the world. Some people go overboard with this, giving way to paranoia and even incredible conspiracy theories. Others react and don't go on the alert as Jesus commanded us. Others couldn't care less either way. All these attitudes are to be avoided.

The NT does appear to foretell an evil world government. Paul speaks of the "man of lawlessness" who will come to dominate humanity (2 Thess 2:3-4). John gives a similar prophecy in Rev 13, using apocalyptic language about the beast coming out of the sea (the Antichrist) who comes to rule humanity. Paul adds "the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way" (2 Thess 2:7). Similarly, John says that the spirit of the Antichrist is already in the world and many antichrists have already come (1 Jn 2:18; 4:3). So, both Paul and John tell us to be on the alert for trends towards an antichrist world government.

However, we should avoid paranoia and incredible ideas. But it would be naive to think there is no possibility of trends towards an elite or world government. It is shortsighted to ignore the possibility:

- we live in a global village
- modern communication is far beyond any previous age and is worldwide. There are also secret attempts to control foreign governments and other influential organisations by cyber espionage.
- There are megalomaniac political leaders who link up with others similar leaders.
- China and Russia are huge oppressive regimes which are seeking widespread control in the world.
- It is not beyond the bounds of credibility that we could *drift* into an oppressive elite world government through the UN or through a linking of powerful political unions like the EU.
- we have potentially oppressive surveillance and moves towards a totally electronic world, which could be misused (and is in some countries).
- there is the danger of AI control.

Then there is the issue of genuine “secret” elites which have flourished throughout history: e.g. the Knights Templar, the Freemasons, the Bavarian Illuminati, Skull and Bones, and Bilderberg.

- The Freemasons figured in the establishment of the US. 13 of the 39 men who signed the US Constitution were Freemasons. US leaders like George Washington, James Monroe, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Paul Revere and Franklin D Roosevelt were all Freemasons, as was Winston Churchill.
- Skull and Bones, founded at Yale University in 1832, has included George H W Bush and his son George W Bush and John Kerry as well as CIA staff as members. Some have claimed this organisation was aiming at creating a New World Order. In fact, George H W Bush openly used that phrase.
- The Bilderbergers, which is not strictly secret, started in 1954 has included Bill Clinton, Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel, Tony Blair and Henry Kissinger as members. The Bilderbergers are known to have recently discussed Brexit, climate change and cyber security.

I am NOT saying that these organisations are sinister elites, planning to take over the world. But they do show that secret (and semi-secret) societies exist and, in our global village, have potential to develop into something sinister. Also, the fact that we know about some such organisations leaves open the possibility that there are some that we don’t know about. All I am saying is that we should be on the alert and watch for what the NT predicts (whilst avoiding paranoia and naivety).

The European Journal of Social Psychology stated in 2018 “The scientific study of belief in conspiracy theories has developed rapidly in the past decade. This development has taken place in the wake of a growing public awareness that conspiracy theories are not exclusive to a few fringe groups or eccentric individuals, but are widespread and have a major impact on society.”

The European Commission, together with UNESCO, has produced guidelines as to how to identify conspiracy theories. But it is interesting it says “Real conspiracies large and small do exist.” See https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories_en

However, it is also clear that there are numerous false conspiracy theories and examples of fake news. These can create a paranoid approach and can hinder Christians from being sensible and responsible about what is actually going on in the world.

We need to take a critical approach to these claims and be doubly on the alert, carefully checking the main news but also carefully approaching criticisms of the main news, including claims of prophetic revelations about fake news and claims of prophetic discernment of sinister conspiracies.

“The Light” is a UK conspiracy theory newspaper which circulates 100,000 copies per month. It is anti-vaccine and rejects the COVID lockdown policy. It attacks climate change and the financial system. It also attacks journalists, politicians and medical staff, calling for them to be punished for “crimes against humanity.” It says all of these things are part of a government plan to control us and harm us. The newspaper has been accused of encouraging violent action and the editor’s response to this is unclear.

Here are some significant current Conspiracy Theories, which are provably false:

- That the Ukraine War is a hoax promoted by Western media and governments. This is despite overwhelming evidence that the war is actually taking place, including creating huge numbers of Ukrainian refugees.
- That Donald Trump actually won the 2020 election but the result was rigged, hence the partly violent Capitol Hill attack was justified, having been planned by those believing this conspiracy theory. All this is despite numerous legal conclusions following serious research, that the election was not rigged.
- That Bill Gates is on a mission to wipe out humanity through compulsory injections with fertility-blocking, mind-controlling drugs and microchips purported to be Covid vaccines. Some believe Gates and other global elites deliberately started the Covid 19 pandemic to achieve this. There is absolutely no evidence for this but in a 2020 election poll 20% of US voters believed it.

Some other false conspiracy theories.

- That accounts of the Holocaust are untrue and were created to advance the interests of Jewish people and to justify the re-establishment of the State of Israel.

- That there is a secret underground city beneath Denver International Airport which is headquarters of the New World Order, an organisation seeking to take over the world.
- That pharmaceutical companies assist in the creation of diseases (almost 50% of Americans are said to believe that).
- That Bill and Hilary Clinton have assassinated 50 or more of their associates.
- That Barack Obama was not born in the US (and so shouldn't have been President) and is secretly a Muslim.
- That UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson was secretly a KGB spy.
- That noise from wind farms can cause cancer.
- The earth is flat, not round, but the evidence is repressed by organisations like NASA and Global Positioning Systems.

Obviously, if anyone is tempted to believe any of these theories, they should seek definite evidence from independent experts.

False prophets

Similarly, if someone claims to be a prophet, their prophecies should be tested by church leaders and trusted people who have the gift of prophecy, as Paul writes in 1 Cor 14:29 "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (1 Cor 14:29).

Sadly, there have been numerous "prophets" in the modern church who have greatly influenced many Christians, only to be found to be false prophets. I have heard some of these people "prophecy", being supported by many Christians, only to be proved false prophets later. Remember, the devil is trying to deceive Christians as well as unbelievers. An example would be the 'Kansas City Prophets' who were subsequently discredited.

Fake news

There is a large amount of fake news circulating, especially in the electronic media. Some of it is in the political sphere, intended to benefit certain politicians. Some of it is in the commercial sphere, intending to provide profits to businesses. It is obvious that fake news endangers genuine news, not only by contradicting it but also by undermining trust in the media. The media doesn't always get things right. But there is a high degree of reliability in some of the better newspapers and organisations like the BBC. And we need to be reliably informed of what is going on in the world so that we can pray intelligently and so we can seek to understand what God is doing in our world

Some Christians give strong support to Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, saying that the very serious criticisms of such people are actually fake news. I believe they are deceived.

You can see my opinion of Trump in my article "Why I do not support Donald Trump" (see [Why-I-do-not-support-Donald-Trump.pdf](#)). In this article I point out that even some of his family members accuse him of serious errors. The committee investigating the January 6th attack on the Capitol has concluded: Donald Trump was "singularly responsible" for the attack. His allegation that the 2020 election was stolen from him through dishonest vote-counting led Trump to bring some 60 lawsuits alleging election fraud and other irregularities, all of which have been dismissed as without evidence by state and federal judges. Yet a poll found that 60% of white American Evangelicals believe the election was stolen from him. I was profoundly disturbed watching Trump open his arms, looking up to the sky and saying, with a sort of reverent tone, "I am the chosen one." He also thanked a commentator for calling him "the second coming of God." I list various other very serious allegations against Trump in my article

Trump and the Capitol uprising need to be seen in the context of one of the worst examples of Christians being deceived. A theologian and Bible teacher in Nashville, Tennessee has written that "the reality is that most of America's gun culture is driven by Christians." A 2022 survey reported that 28% of US voters feel so estranged from their government that they feel it might "soon be necessary to take up arms against the government." 37% of these people owned guns. Some Christians have become so extreme that they regard Trump as a warrior against the "deep state" (a secret powerful elite). They believe Trump will take the lead in an apocalyptic final battle to reveal evil, which will justify violence. Trump has referred to the 2024 presidential election as "the final battle." There is more information on all this in my article ([Why-I-do-not-support-Donald-Trump.pdf](#)).

One very important principle to be applied in the political sphere is to choose the lesser of two evils. We are not choosing good versus bad but the person with less faults rather than greater faults. So, I personally would not support Donald Trump because of his many serious faults. But, that doesn't mean, I am uncritical of President Biden, who, amongst other things, is strongly supportive of abortion. This is a serious matter but should not blind us to the many serious faults in Donald Trump.

So, we need to look critically at current conspiracy theories and fake news, asking searching questions about the evidence and the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Another example of fake news is the defence and support some Christians give to Putin. This is despite the fact that it is quite clear that Putin has invaded Ukraine in order to gain territory, with the result that many people have been killed, including a large number of innocent civilians. Millions have become refugees. All of that is beyond reasonable doubt. There is overwhelming media evidence of these deaths. "Prophetic" defences of Putin are not credible. The fact that Christians believe such "prophetic" views shows the power of the spiritual deception in our world. It is beyond belief that thousands of media reporters from many countries would be conspiring together to put out fake news about Putin

Before entering politics, Putin was a KGB intelligence officer for 16 years. The KGB has a reputation for evil. It is renowned for harassing and arresting, even exiling, Christian activists. It also is held responsible for crimes against the Russian people. Many estimate that it was responsible for millions of deaths. So, Putin's reputation is seriously undermined by his KGB job.

Under his later political leadership, democracy has been seriously weakened and authoritarianism has grown. There has been corruption and many human rights violations, including the imprisonment of political opponents, a lack of free and fair elections and suppression of independent media.

Putin attends Russian Orthodox Church services on special festivals. But, in 2016, he oversaw the passage of a law prohibiting missionary activity. Some religious minority groups have been repressed under anti-extremism laws. A former Putin adviser, Sergei Pugachev, a Russian Orthodox Christian, says Putin's Christianity is not sincere. In 2007, Putin was asked if he believed in God and replied "There are things I believe, which should not in my position, at least, be shared with the public at large for everybody's consumption because that would look like self-advertising or a political striptease."

It is clear that Putin is seeking to restore former USSR territories and the former 'glory' of the USSR, using invasion, war and the killing of many people, including innocent civilians and children.

The International Court has issued a warrant for arrest against Putin as a war criminal. The evidence is so overwhelming that I don't feel the need to go into it. Yet, some Christians are deceived into giving him support.

Dangers of deceit by AI

Artificial Intelligence is, of course, machine intelligence. It can achieve visual perception, speech recognition, reasoning, planning, learning, decision-making, problem solving and language translation. It can also move and control objects. It has been used in many beneficial ways such as assisting with discovery of antibiotics, helping paralysed people to walk, addressing climate change and health pandemics.

However, it also has great potential for harmful results, including if it controls dangerous weapons, and, at the time of writing, there are strong moves towards agreeing regulations to prevent this. In this paper I am only interested in the potential of AI to deceive people, which is very considerable.

AI can create fake images and videos which are totally convincing. Here are some actual examples:

- A video of the Ukrainian President asking his troops to lay down their weapons before the Russians. The potential for serious geo-political consequences is clear.
- Photos of police forcibly arresting Donald Trump. Such fake photos can facilitate conspiracy theories.
- Trump posted a convincing photo of himself praying (but it was not genuine).
- A video of a fake "drunk" Nancy Pelosi.
- A picture of the Pope in a puffer jacket, which looks completely genuine.

AI can also do “voice cloning.” If it has only less than a 5-second recording of a person’s voice it can make near-perfect reproductions of that person’s voice creating fake comments. For example, there was a fake recording of the actress Emma Watson reading part of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. The potential for convincing fake news, false evidence in legal cases and extensive political manipulation is huge. It makes scams much more convincing.

AI was very briefly instructed to write an article (which I have read). It did so and was a good read. It added a title and invented the name and short biography of a fictional author.

Experts have also pointed out that AI makes lots of errors, some of which seem very convincing.

Recently, there has been a great deal of concern expressed in the media, including by leading figures in the AI world, about AI’s potential to mislead and deceive us through biased responses and misinformation. In March 2023 well-known figures in the AI world, including Elon Musk and Steve Wozniak (founder of Apple) together with hundreds of AI researchers signed an open letter calling for a pause on “giant AI experiments.” In an article about this, Stuart Russell, professor of computer science at the University of California, Berkeley commented on an AI Large Language Model (LLM): “Unfortunately, LLMs are notorious for ‘hallucinating’ – generating completely false answers, often supported by fictitious citations – because their training has no connection to an outside world. They are perfect tools for disinformation”

An experienced Christian journalist commented: AI is different. It is the world’s most perfectly designed tool for fakery and manipulation, and ultimately for undermining or even destroying trust. And it can and does accomplish both, sometimes with human help, and sometimes on its own. AI is inherently not what it seems to be. It has no moral compunctions against deceit. It doesn’t even know it’s deceiving.”

Sexual deceit in the Church

Enormous damage has been done to the church in recent years through the huge amount of evidence which has emerged about sexual abuse amongst clergy and other church leaders.

For example, a report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has found that from the 1940s to 2018, 390 people who were clergy or in positions of trust associated with the Church of England were convicted of sexual offences against children.

Sexual abuse in the church is, by nature, a deceptive activity. But a great deal of it has been exposed in recent years, which is a good thing in one sense. But it has also done immense harm to the trustworthiness of the Church.

I shall never forget reading the Church of England Daily Media Digest one day in 2020. *Every item* in the Digest was about serious crime amongst leaders in the Church of England:

- Coverage of the documentary on BBC 2 the previous evening of the Bishop Peter Ball case. This was a shocking two-part documentary about the extensive and blatant sexual abuse carried out over years by a previous Bishop of Lewes and Gloucester, for which he was imprisoned. He was convicted of abusing 17 teenagers and young men – one of whom took his own life. The present Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek said “I am utterly ashamed that a so-called Bishop in the Church of England committed such horrific abuse.” There was serious criticism of how the church dealt with the situation. Peter Hancock, the Church of England lead safeguarding bishop said “It is a matter of great shame and regret that the Church did not act to address the behaviour of Peter Ball at the time and that survivors were left to fight tirelessly for justice.”
- Report of an 81-year-old former priest convicted of sex offences from the 70s and 80s in Chichester Diocese. (The other two items were non-sexual but very serious: coverage of a Channel 4 documentary about a former deputy church warden jailed for 36 years for murder and coverage of the discipline of a priest who had pocketed £6000 from sham weddings).

Here are some very disturbing statistics about sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests from reliable sources:

- France 1950-2020 c 216,000 victims
- Australia 1950-2010 4444 allegations reported to the church.

- Germany 1946-2014 3677 victims mostly under 13
- US 11,000 complaints lodged according to lawyers
- Ireland 1970-90 estimated 15,000 including in orphanages and schools

All of this does huge damage to the credibility of the clergy. A 2022 IPSOS poll discovered that only about 55% of people trust them to tell the truth. This was 3% lower than in 2021. Clergy were in 17th place in the list of professions in terms of trustworthiness. Such is the deceit in the church.

Theological deceit in the church - Liberal Theology

(This section is a summary of my paper “The errors of Liberal Theology” which is at [The-errors-of-liberal-theology.pdf](#))

Obviously, I am not now talking about deliberate deceit on the part of liberals, but about the deception in liberal theology itself. Liberalism isn't primarily intellectual tolerance. It is a spiritual infection which weakens the faith and spirituality of its proponents. My reasons for saying that are as follows:

1. Liberalism is believing what you want to believe

God intends us to come to personal faith in Christ then to SUBMIT to him, not make up our own version of Christianity. He has provided a written foundation for the faith – the Bible. Scripture is “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:15-17) and written by those being carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Liberal theology does not submit to important, clear teachings of Scripture. Instead, it stresses the reason and the experience of the individual in deciding what to believe. It aims to be acceptable and credible to modern society. This fits in with modern cultural views: the Me First/ My Rights generation.

2. Liberalism dishonours God by undermining his revelation

Truths such as the Virgin Birth, the miracles of Jesus, the bodily Resurrection of Jesus, the uniqueness of Jesus as the only Saviour, the bodily Return of Jesus, are undermined or denied by many liberal theologians.

3. Liberalism weakens faith

Liberalism wants people to rest their faith on human wisdom, rationalistic human thinking which contrasts with what Paul writes (1 Corinthians 2:4-6, 12-14). Liberalism tends to minimize or reject the supernatural nature of God's dealings with humanity in contrast with what the NT teaches.

4. Liberalism is sometimes unloving

One aspect of liberalism is profoundly unloving – when it undermines the sternness of God's love (righteous judgment) and encourages behaviour which leads to condemnation. We need to warn people about divine judgment and the possibility of punishment. It may be alien to our modern society but Jesus frequently speaks of divine judgment and hell. He speaks of hell more than anyone else in the New Testament. If we know someone is heading for disaster and don't warn them, that is profoundly unloving. Instead, liberalism often conveys (wrongly) that we will all get to heaven.

5. Liberalism weakens the motivation for evangelism

Liberalism normally supports universalism: the idea that we all get to heaven in the end, whatever our beliefs and behaviour, which, as we have just noted, contradicts the teaching of Jesus. But belief that those who don't have faith in Jesus are heading for Hell is a powerful motive for evangelism. Liberalism removes this motive.

6. Liberalism weakens appreciation of the cross

Liberalism removes one powerful basis for gratitude, namely that we have been saved from Hell by the death of Christ – we could have gone to Hell.

7. Liberalism undermines the nature of Jesus

Liberalism tends to regard Jesus as only ‘gentle Jesus, meek and mild.’ But, as we have seen above, the NT clearly shows that Jesus manifest both “the and sternness of God” as Paul puts it in Rom 11:22. Liberalism also undermines the crucial teaching about Jesus being the only Saviour. Jesus said “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6 cf Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11-12).

8. Liberalism encourages wrong behaviour

I am not saying that all liberals deliberately promote wrong behaviour. But, because they do not accept crucial biblical teaching on certain moral issues, they do, in effect, promote wrong behaviour. They are weak on some aspects of personal morality: e.g. individual sexual behaviour (including sex outside of heterosexual marriage), abortion, etc.

Deceit in the C of E Bishops’ statements about their decision over gay marriage

James Runcie, the son of Archbishop Robert Runcie, speaks of “a liberal Anglican sensibility that understands ambiguity, seeks understanding and embraces tolerance.” Sadly, that liberal attitude has become very influential in the Church of England, leading to the de facto approval of gay marriage, in contradiction of the clear and long-established teaching of Scripture. Ambiguity is certainly an element. Attempts are made to make Scripture say what it clearly doesn’t say. The House of Bishops put out an ambiguous statement saying “for the first time, same-sex couples could have a service in church in which there would be prayers of dedication, thanksgiving or for God’s blessing on the two people concerned, following a civil marriage or civil partnership. The proposals would not, however, change the Church’s doctrine of Holy Matrimony.” Clearly, even some bishops with traditional biblical views on the subject were taken in by the ambiguity. It is quite clear that what the bishops have decided is accepting gay marriage. The ambiguity is bordering on dishonesty.

Deceit of antisemitism and negativism towards Israel

Why is it that antisemitism and very negative attitudes towards Israel are still very dominant in modern society? It is true that the Jewish people and Israel are very far from perfect. But, then, so are we Gentiles, and our countries. The Jewish people and Israel are singled out for special hatred and antagonism. Why is that? In a nutshell, it is because God still has a very important purpose for them to fulfil. The devil inspires such hatred and antagonism because he wants to prevent this purpose being fulfilled. Antisemitism, including on the part of Christians, hinders Jewish people coming to faith in Jesus.

However, sadly, many Christians are deceived into thinking that God has no further purpose for the Jewish people and Israel. There is a widespread opinion known as Replacement Theology, which holds that the largely Gentile church has replaced the Jewish people in God’s purposes. But that contradicts what the NT says.

In his predictions about the End Times Jesus said of the Jewish people: “They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). It is quite clear that after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD70 the Gentiles have “trampled on” Jerusalem for 2000 years. But Jesus predicts that the Jewish people will regain control of Jerusalem (the unavoidable implication of “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”). Are we therefore to see the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem after 2000 years of exile and the re-establishment of the State of Israel (whatever else needs to happen) as a sign of the End Times? I believe we are (even though much more needs to happen), although I am aware of all the questions that it raises.

Paul clearly predicts God’s purpose for the Jewish people in Romans 11. He says that, despite their rejection of Jesus, God has not finally rejected the Jewish people (Rom 11:1, 2). They did not “stumble so as to fall beyond recovery” (Rom 11:11). He adds: “For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!” (Rom 11:15). Paul goes on to say: “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full

number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved..." (Rom 11:25-26). Some people have tried to make out that "Israel" in verse 26 really means the church (the new Israel) and not the nation of Israel but that flies in the face of the context of the passage.

God clearly has an important future purpose for the Jewish people and it will be fulfilled when they massively turn to Jesus as their Messiah (and ours). This is why I regularly pray for Revival amongst Jewish people

There are more details and quotations from scholars in the longer version of this message which is now at <http://www.prayerforpeace.org.uk/christianzionismbiblibias.html>.

[It is not helpful that some Christians are so supportive of Israel that they show a lack of care, or even negativism towards the Palestinians and Arabs. I believe strongly God is a God of justice, yes for Israel, but also for the Palestinians. (See <http://www.prayerforpeace.org.uk/calltojustice.html>).]

How to avoid and overcome deception

1. Avoid jumping to conclusions.
2. Pray for wisdom against deceit, ideally with other people (Jas 1:5).
3. Look up any specifically relevant biblical teaching on the subject you're examining (if there is any relevant teaching - seek advice on that). Check if the message is biblical.
4. Listen to both sides, including those who believe that what you are tending to believe is actually a deceit. Consult mature Christian leaders on the subject.
5. In the case of a prophecy about a news item, we should check out different news sources, not rely on just one. You could consult the new BBC Verify. The CEO OF BBC News says "*BBC Verify is transparency in action – fact-checking, verifying video, countering disinformation, analysing data and explaining complex stories in the pursuit of truth. This is our promise to consumers - we understand that their trust must be earned and we will show them how we are doing that each and every day.*"
6. Seek evidence about the subject, not just strong opinions.
7. Try to check the motives of the person responsible for the conspiracy theory.
8. Pray against any prejudice and paranoid feelings you may have about the subject. Lay feelings - desires, biases - before God, asking him to remove unhelpful ones.
9. Bear in mind what you want to believe and ask God to prevent that leading you to accept deceit.
10. Be careful that believing one conspiracy doesn't lead you to become fixated on the idea of conspiracy.
11. Remember the warnings of Jesus to his disciples about false prophets and false christ.

Conclusion

It seems that some Christians are unaware of growing deceit in the world, which is a sign of the End Jesus predicted, and so they can easily be deceived. However, other Christians are very aware of the threat of deceit, becoming somewhat paranoid and vulnerably naïve about it, and so they become deceived, believing what is clearly untrue. Such is the power of the deceit. Either way, people are deceived.