

The Salesman

Ken Olson

In a sense, it has always been around, but The Age of the Scam is surely now full-blown. Every day, we are deluged by phone and email deceits trying to separate us from our money. Entire industries exist to protect us from those whose much larger industries exist to bamboozle us. Traditional language is corrupted, and false advertising and false credentials abound. Now, so-called “doctorate degrees” can be obtained via brief online connections with pseudo-institutions accredited neither here nor abroad. Mark Twain’s observation regarding one clergy is pertinent: “He charged nothing for his services, and he was worth it.” (One person who wanted to rake my lawn said he was an evangelical pastor and could perform weddings because he has an ordination certificate from “an online church” in California, which cost him just \$25 and a postage stamp.)

Normally, you have to live a long time to get accused of lies never told and praised for virtues never possessed. But things are now at some sort of radically new level. America needs to be clear and Make Lying Wrong Again. For, there are numerous politicians who really do think that the ends justify the means and for whom lying is a modus operandum, a go-to acquisitive tool for power, status, and self-enrichment. Their pattern for the vile art is Donald Trump, something he’s demonstrated literally thousands of times. It was none other than Trump’s former official White House Lawyer, Ty Cobb, who recently said of the orange man that “Trump is evil.” Even Karl Rove, Former Fox News guru and decades-long Republican strategist, says he will vote Democrat.

So, would anyone buy a used car from someone with Trump’s track record of lies and unkept promises? This unabashed grifter is known as a seller of caps, steaks, water, medallions, bitcoins, altered Bibles, gold sneakers, phones, and his own soul. He even started a bogus Trump University. There are millions of honest people in sales, but Trump has never been one of them. He reminds us of a crass huckster and con artist traveling the western towns of the late 1800s, peddling patent medicines and miracle cure-alls that are mainly effective in transferring coins from the buyers’ pockets into his own. In the days of Prohibition, one brewer sold his strong stuff as a health beverage called Celebrated Stomach Invigorator. Who wouldn’t want that?

Trump says he doesn't drink. He doesn't need to: he self-medicates daily with humungous doses of his own delusional greatness. He also dishes out verbal intoxicants to fans who swallow even his most virulent lies and who buy his false promises of imagined wealth, power, and glory. His MAGA followers are indiscriminate and drink all of it, mild to strong, just so it's labeled Trump. Many such imbibers become product distributors themselves, in print, on blogs and live television.

One of the sales-pitch fables that Trump hypes almost daily is that he has never lost an election, and his adoring and groveling followers demonstrate their loyalty by repeating it. Senator Jon Ossoff (D) of Georgia summed it up: "Among today's false prophets are the election deniers who ...re-tell a lie so absurd and, therefore, so debasing, that the act of telling it proves the teller's total and humiliating submission."

Before we are born and for some time thereafter, we exist as our own sun, with everything else revolving around it. Only gradually do we learn that there are others out there. Then, we adjust, concluding that they, too, deserve attention, respect, and even love. Trump, however, seems to have a case of arrested development, and this at an extraordinarily primitive level. He no longer wets his pants and sucks his thumb, as we all did once, but he continues to see himself as the center of the universe. So, Trump grew up, physically, that is. Emotionally, he is still a self-absorbed toddler, still whining in various ways, "I want what I want when I want it," and when he doesn't get it, he lashes out, threatens, and spews fines and lawsuits by the hundreds. His only difference from a playground bully is that he now occupies a much larger territory to damage -- including our form of government and worldwide politics.

Thus, it is a terrible thing for our country to have a president of such immoral or even amoral character. One can hope that, in time, his off-the-chart perversions will be completely recognized for what they are --that what the con-artist has been selling for so long is poisonous to The United States of America and to the world.

Certainly, there are people like the longtime conservative journalist David Brooks, who writes, "I still believe we're driven not only by the selfish motivations but also by the moral ones --the desire to pursue some good, the desire to cooperate, to care for one another and to belong." That outlook, that spirit, that

heart, needs to be widespread for our country to thrive or even to survive. For the sake of coming generations, are there enough of us who share that creed?

Ken Olson lives in Lewistown, MT. He is the author of *Lens to the Natural World: Reflections on Dinosaurs, Galaxies, and God* (Foreword by Jack Horner).