

## The (life-denying) worship of illusion

Virtual friends, virtual money... virtual reality

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Real disease, loneliness, pain and despair.

The internet, we are told, has changed life, linking us with each other in ways never before envisaged, and giving us access to things that in previous generations we might have heard about, but would never have seen. We are told that in this brave new 'virtual' world, we are all connected and everything is possible!

If you want to go to a concert or the cinema – get tickets online and download them to your smartphone. Want to know train times – download the app. Pay a bill – go online. Need information – look it up on Google. Feeling lonely, misunderstood, or bullied - get friends online. The list goes on and on.

Some of the changes really are phenomenal and good – but there's a downside too. It's a perfect vehicle, for example, for the spread of evil, as we know all too well from the reported explosion of pornography and paedophile rings. But, that apart, the reality is that increasingly all of life is being conducted in some out-of-sight and intangible world that we know *exists*, but that we cannot see or touch. And, paradoxically, the result isn't cohesion, but rather isolation, combined with growing social and cultural 'redundancy', because in this virtual world, the physical contribution of individuals to life and work is becoming increasingly superfluous.

But there's a perhaps less obvious consequence that is even more concerning, because men and women are today so blinded by this chimera of reality, that they can no longer see what's really **real**. Virtual reality encourages demonic delusion, desensitizing people to God by promoting absolute belief in mankind's capacity to re-orchestrate and redefine reality, elevating 'immaterial' illusion over truth. To put it another way, the transcendent has been reinterpreted out of existence by illusion, beguiling the greater mass of humanity so that they can no longer recognise God.

Small wonder then that in all sorts of ways we try to recreate creation, and that Church leaders feel, as justification, that they can rewrite Scripture. And small wonder that, in consequence, families disintegrate, children are shipwrecked by parental and educational inadequacy, and rates of mental illness continue their horrifying spiral into the stratosphere of emotional and spiritual dysfunction.

None of this is to say that scientific discovery and the internet are evil. They are not, but their use is being perverted to separate us from meaning and true purpose. As a matter of urgency, mankind needs to reconnect with reality. Above all, we need to reconnect with God – who is Reality - because only in relationship with Him do we find true meaning and purpose; and only in obedience to Him are we fulfilled.

So as we go forward into 2019, with its many challenges, let us consecrate ourselves anew to God, and in particular let us, in 'real' love, use science wisely, rejecting all that defiles our faith.

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