

Christ and the Media.



It was in November 1976 that John Stott invited journalist and broadcaster Malcolm Muggeridge - whom he hailed as a prophet - to give 3 lectures at All Souls Church, Langham Place, London, on the topic “Christ and the Media”.

The time has surely come for a contemporary update of the nature and impact of the ever-growing influence and the ever-increasing number of media devices and channels through which we keep in touch with one another and are, ostensibly, informed, entertained and educated.

It is well-named the ‘Mass Media’, for we have been hit by a tsunami of Social Media networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, You Tube etc.), hundreds of TV Channels, DVD’s, Live streaming, Podcasts, Netflix, Spotify, Radio, and Gaming. All of this is available to us however and whenever we want it, and wherever we are. It is brought to us through satellites and cyberspace, via our laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc., and not forgetting the humble Newspaper, with paper copies now increasingly being replaced by online content. But at what price?

All of these agencies and media outlets appear to be sucking us in, with more and more of our time being devoted to “The Screen”. Recently, the market research group Nielsen reported that adults spend 11 hours per day interacting with the media, 4 hours and 46 minutes of which are, on average, spent watching TV.

A 2016 report from the Common-Sense Media (as opposed to the Nonsensical Media?), said that teenagers spend 9 hours each day interacting with their media devices (excluding time spent for doing school and homework). Children 8-12 years old spend 6 hours per day, while those aged 2-5 years spend 32 hours per week watching T.V., videos, gaming etc. The accuracy of statistics like this is not easy to ascertain but ‘Screen Time’ has most probably increased since 2016, and certainly by all accounts during lockdown.

Now, as we look back, could the words of prophet Muggeridge have been largely fulfilled when he said:

“Future historians will surely see us as having created in the media a Frankenstein monster which no one knows how to control or direct, and marvel that we should have so meekly subjected ourselves to its destructive and often malign influence.” (1)

And do the words of the prophet Isaiah, repeated and underlined by both Jesus and Paul, also speak powerfully into our times in that, despite all that is seen, heard and communicated, we are ***“ever hearing, but never understanding; ever seeing but never perceiving.”***? (Is: 6:9; Mt. 13:14&15; Acts 28:26&27)

What is indisputable, however, is that all of our modern technology and the devices for improving communication have not been able to solve the problem of loneliness in our society. One could have expected that as communication improved, loneliness would have decreased, but it would seem not.

Might there be some kind of inherent fault-line in our modern communication technology, and/or our capacity to use it positively, which is affecting our ability to communicate with each other in a meaningful and mutually satisfying way?

Britain was the first country in the world where the Government appointed, in 2018, a Minister for Loneliness, the current occupier of the post being Baroness Diana Barran. This strikes me as being a rather lonely appointment; maybe they could have given her a partner to work with or even a small team to keep her company!

And surprisingly, it is younger people, rather than the older generation, who are apparently suffering most from loneliness. A 2018 nationwide survey, which assessed 55,000 people, found that 40% of young people aged 16-24 said they felt lonely often or very often, compared to 29% of those aged 65-74 and 27% of those aged over 75.

Incidentally, the 5 main characteristics of being lonely, if you want to do a self-assessment, are: - 1. Having nobody to talk to, 2. Feeling disconnected from the world, 3. Feeling left out, 4. Sadness, 5. Not feeling understood.

My own view, for what it is worth, is that there is very little ‘in depth’ communication today, it seeming to be mostly superficial. There are different levels of communication and we somehow find it hard to get beyond the basic level of “How are you today?”, “Oh, very well thanks.”

Unless we have some people around us with whom we can share our fears, failures, shortcomings, disappointments, frustrations and sadness, as well as our successes, joys and accomplishments, we are likely to experience loneliness, for we have no one with whom we can be real.

But in the world of modern communication, everything has to be edited, glamourised, polished and made presentable; and in the process, the communication can become artificial, superficial and even irrelevant.

The Impact of Television

Some people I have known, even some friends, decided they were done with TV and had their aerials taken out or were otherwise disconnected. I respected them without wanting to join them.

I respected them because, as Jesus might have said, “If your aerials are causing you to sin, better to have them removed; better to enter heaven without TV than hell with it.”



However, I never joined them because I consider the £157. 50 I have paid this year for my TV Licence to be excellent value for money. It's a bill that I never mind paying!

Perhaps I should also own up to the fact that I am a regular subscriber to and reader of the Radio Times magazine which, once upon a time, had the highest circulation figure of any magazine in the country.

There are certainly programmes on TV (have we been watching more during lockdown?) which do inform, educate and entertain me. But I also watch it with a certain amount of scepticism and incredulity; some of it is pure fiction and fantasy, all the more dangerous when it purports to be revealing the truth.

I remember when our 3 children were young teenagers, they would all plonk themselves down on the sofa at 5.35 pm to watch “Neighbours”, an Australian ‘soap’.

One day, something sad was happening on the programme - I never watched it myself you understand but just happened to be passing through! – and I said to them ‘Are you feeling sad about what you are seeing?’ They said, “No”. I said, “Why not?”, and they replied, “Because it’s not real.”

I was encouraged by that; they were able to distinguish between reality and fantasy, between a TV programme and real life. Alas, not everyone, it seems, has that same discernment or critical faculty.

One of the questions we must continue to ask, though not in any way new, is whether TV programmes stimulate or merely reflect the depravity and violence of our way of life. Do they undermine society or simply mirror what is already happening in society ~ or both?

Of course, there are those indomitable souls who believe that they can watch any amount of TV and not be influenced or affected by it at all. In my view, that is a delusion.

TV programmes, and especially advertising, are powerful influencers which affect us all, whether we are aware of it or not.

Why is it, we may ask ourselves, that advertisers will spend large sums of money for the prime-time slots on TV to promote their wares? It is because they know how effective such advertising is in persuading us to part with our hard-earned cash and buy their latest, ‘must have’ products at knock-down prices.

It must also be true that if some programmes are able to enliven and even enrich people’s lives, which they clearly are, then other programmes must also be able to debase and degrade human life and dignity and even undermine social ethics.

It is well known that the BBC’s first Governor General, Sir John Reith, had these words inscribed at the entrance to Broadcasting House in London in 1931: -

“This temple of the arts and muses is dedicated to Almighty God by the first governors of broadcasting in the year 1931, Sir John Reith being Governor General. It is their prayer that good seeds sown may bring forth a good harvest, that all things hostile to peace or purity may be banished from this house, that the people, inclining their ears to whatsoever things are beautiful, honest and of good report, may tread the paths of wisdom and righteousness.”

Muggeridge’s comment on this in his 1976 lectures was: -

“How fortunate that the words are in Latin, not English! Otherwise, for decency’s sake, they would have had to be removed, or, like the seven commandments in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, adjusted.” (1)

If Muggeridge could write that then, how much further has TV degenerated since that time? Quite recently, the ‘Beeb’ were even happy to appoint an atheist as Head of Religious Broadcasting.

Vicarious Viewing

Another downside of TV, it seems to me, is that it encourages us to live our lives vicariously through the experiences, thrills and spills of others. By comparison, our lives then become humdrum, dull and boring.

But does TV itself, and what the camera portrays, essentially present us with a false image, a distortion rather than a true reflection of reality - a mirage and a fabrication? Does it, after all, just provide a pale and a second-rate ‘window on the world’?

I was reminded of this recently as my wife and I watched an old episode of Michael Palin’s world travels – ‘travelogues’ being one of the most popular, and recurring, genres of TV programming. This particular sojourn took in Lake Titicaca, Cuzco and Machu Picchu in Peru, all places, as it happens, that my wife has visited.



So although the pictures, for her, could refresh and to a certain extent bring to life again what she had experienced during her visit, it was never going to be possible for the flat screen image, no matter how big, pixelated, or colourful, to recreate or recapture the sights, sounds, smells, scale or wonder of actually being there in person and meeting the local people; and certainly not the taste of coca tea or chewing on a coca leaf, which she assures me was the local cure for altitude sickness!!

Thus it is that any TV programme or image can only provide a dumbed-down version of reality. Hardly the ‘life in all its fullness’ that Jesus promised us.

And when we look at the wider TV programming menu for adults, what do we find? Well, there are the staples covering food, sex, politics, gardening, comedy, house renovations, repairs, game shows, motoring, sport, music, quizzes and the weather forecasts (the latter being the most watched and in demand of all). Then there are the dramas, the documentaries, the 'fly-on-the-wall' documentaries and that mysterious admixture and no-man's-land, the docudrama. And then, forever rolling in and breaking, like the waves on the seashore, we have "The News", all day every day.

And why are these programmes on? Because we want them, we pay for them and we love them! We sit there, hour after hour, mesmerised and intoxicated!!

But let's take the News. Who decides what is News and what isn't? Most of the News recently has been pretty grim, though thankfully sometimes the manifestly absurd does break through; like the story of the man arrested for feeding a Police horse with a Danish pastry 'because it looked hungry', or, on Burns' night, a picture of the first Haggis in space!!

And then we have that consummate professional newscaster, Simon McCoy, having to bite his lip in an attempt to prevent himself from dissolving into uncontrollable fits of laughter as he explained an item of news in which we saw a man playing classical music – Bach, Brahms and Schubert as it happened - to a troop of monkeys as they sat, attentively, on his head and shoulders and clambered over his piano!!

Furthermore, there were two of our 'red-top' newspapers earnestly discussing on their front pages whether serving 'Scotch Eggs' constituted a 'substantial meal' and, if so, whether this would enable pubs to avoid lockdown measures!!



So this is the News: served, in fact, like eggs and according to taste, - scotch, poached, fried, scrambled, hardboiled, or otherwise reconstituted, and available hot, cold or lukewarm, day and night - 'opinion' and the 'Editor's choice' masquerading as versions of truth, reality and newsworthiness!!

And it is against this backdrop – sometimes as dreary, farcical and convoluted as it may be – that we are called to proclaim the only genuinely Good News in town ~ the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Does the Camera always lie and distort?

I must be careful here as some of my family and friends are avid photographers and my walls are adorned with some of their finest artistic creations!

But when the camera was first invented it was called **camera obscura**, literally a ‘dark chamber’ ~ something that conceals and obscures rather than reveals, maybe?

Today you can go to Edinburgh and visit “Camera Obscura & The World of Illusions.” This includes ‘Bewilder-world’, ‘Magical Mirror Maze’, and the kaleidoscopic ‘Vortex Tunnel’. And, if you want to enhance the effect further, you can first visit the “Scotch Whisky Experience” which is strategically placed nearby!!

Perhaps the **camera obscura** has led us into darkness, distortion, fantasy and depravity even, rather than light, truth and reality. This was certainly true when I worked in laboratories which always had attached to them a ‘dark room’ in which old style photographs could be chemically developed. Alas, the darkness seemed to regularly attract all those who wanted to view their pornographic pictures and films ~ camera erotica.

Malcolm Muggeridge, who spent many years on both sides of the camera, filming and being filmed, said the camera **always** lied and was the more dangerous because it purported to show the real world.

Walter Brueggemann wrote that one of the prophetic tasks of the Church is ‘to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion’. (2) How true! How necessary!

Larry King - the legendary American chat show host who died recently having interviewed over 50,000 people - said that his interviewing technique was about ‘making the camera disappear’, an illusory statement if ever I heard one!

The legendary British chat show host, Michael Parkinson, always knew that many of his guests would only appear on his show if they could perform **for the camera** and the studio audience; bringing with them their tricks, their props, and their answers to questions which they knew in advance they would be asked.

Nowadays, it seems to me, we are obsessed with image; the image is more important than the reality, and for some, the image **is** reality.

I was reminded of this when, on one occasion, I stopped off at a service centre on the M4 and, being hungry and in a hurry, decided to buy some fast food.

There in front of me was a large picture of a scrumptious, juicy beefburger, glistening with melted cheese, gherkin, onions, crisp green lettuce, moist red tomatoes and yellow American mustard, all encased in a soft, enticing bun. Salivating, I was hooked and persuaded to buy!

But when the reality arrived and I compared it to the image, I am sad to say it fell well short. In a strange kind of way, the paper representation was much 'tastier' than the real thing which was wizened, dry, colourless, flat and generally unappetising by comparison!

To see With, or Through, the Eye? – that is the Question

The problem with camera obscura is that it induces us to see with, not through, the eye. These 4 lines from William Blake now seem prophetic, as though he foresaw the advent of the camera: -

“This life’s dim windows of the soul
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole,
And leads you to believe a lie
When you see with, not through, the eye.”



When we look **with** the eye, we are seeing but not perceiving, merely looking superficially without understanding, this can lead to a passing rather than a pondering interest in the subject. But when we see **through** the eye, we are looking at the bigger picture and are seeing and understanding more of the greater reality and the truth and significance of all we behold.

Jesus himself highlighted the problem his disciples often had when they only saw **with**, but not **through**, the eye.

One example is when Jesus told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

They then started to say to one another, “We have no bread.” And Jesus said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears you do not hear? And do you not remember?”



Of course, the disciples had already seen **with** their eyes that Jesus had fed a Jewish crowd of 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish (with 12 baskets of broken pieces left over) and had seen **with** their eyes that Jesus had fed a Gentile crowd of 4000 with 7 loaves and a few fish (with 7 baskets of broken pieces left over).

However, they had been unable to see **through** their eyes with revelation and understanding. They found it difficult to understand not only the significance of who Jesus was but also the significance of the number of baskets of leftover pieces on each occasion. That meaning was hidden from them (Mk. 8:14-21).

I think we can always pray that the Lord will enable us to see **through** our eyes and not just **with** them.

Consider part of Paul’s ‘lockdown’ message to the Christians in Ephesus; only someone who has seen **through**, not **with**, the eye could write: -

“For God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.....he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” (See Eph. 1:3-11)

But how does our obsession with images – whether photographed, filmed, videoed, digitalised, whatever – play out with the Second Commandment? - “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.” (Ex. 20:4 & 5a)

Whereas most of us are happy, occasionally, to pose for the camera - or if we are a celebrity to actively seek out appearances in front of it to promote our latest book, film or album – ultra orthodox Jews and Mennonites avoid any exposure whatsoever on the basis of this Second Commandment.

The classic image-making incident in the O.T. is the fashioning of the golden calf. Unhappy about Moses' absence and the fact they had no visual image of God that they could relate to or worship, the people, aided and abetted by Aaron, wanted a god they could see. Thus, in making the golden calf image, they could be said to have 'televised' God.

Similarly, could camera obscura, in all its different manifestations and which produces image after image after image, have led us into idol worship? Or do you think I am being overly pessimistic about the media in general and T.V. in particular?

In a thoughtful piece in the famous 'Double Edition' of the Christmas Radio Times (19/12/20 - 1/1/21), headed '**TV can heal us**', the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, points out that during this pandemic "many lonely, frightened and isolated people have turned to television (and the radio) for help, companionship, relief and guidance."

He sees television as 'a companion' and even 'a friend', and one of his favourite programmes is '**Gogglebox**', where, apparently, we are entertained by watching other people watching television! Not having seen it myself, I couldn't possibly comment, but the mind does goggle!

However, there is no doubt that for some people, especially older people, TV is a lifeline, and which of us doesn't enjoy jiggling along with '**Strictly**', singing along to '**Songs of Praise**' (now scheduled at a time when most folks are having their Sunday lunch), or even answering the odd question on '**University Challenge**'?!

But I would like now to return to a question I have already touched on and ask:

How much 'Truth' is there in what the Media present?

This is always debatable. What makes me somewhat suspicious is the fact that they are always claiming that their paper, their programme and their 'special' and 'exclusive' reports are presenting us with the 'Truth'!

I am reminded of the Sun newspaper which under the banner headline, "The Truth", castigated in a defamatory manner the Liverpool supporters after the 1989 Hillsborough football disaster. Subsequently, they had to retract what they had written under a new banner headline, "The Real Truth."

And, as I write this, it just so happens that last night's TV programmes included: "The Diana Interview, The Truth Behind the Scandal" and "Page Three: the Naked Truth." Tonight it is "The Truth about Amazon: How it Took Over the World" and tomorrow night we have "Faking It" (who knows, it may get closer to the Truth than the other programmes!!).

But there's more! In the same edition of Radio Times (28 Nov-4 Dec 2020) we have Nick Robinson, who is one of the presenters of the 'Today' programme and also 'Political Thinking', both on Radio 4, writing his 'View from my Sofa' piece. It is headed, "Our Job is to get to the Truth." There's that word again! He tells us how 'having organisations that you trust' is more important than ever in this age of Covid-19 and media misinformation.

We would all say "Amen" to that, even as we wait to discover how Martin Bashir got his BBC interview with Princess Diana - now being investigated by Lord Dyson though some think the Police should be involved.

I must confess I have always had doubts about the profession of Journalism. It seems to me that many journalists (not all) are essentially voyeurs, hanging on the coat-tails of royalty, celebrities and those in power; very good at asking Who? What? When? Where? How? and Why? but having no answers themselves and nothing much of any value to contribute.

Yes, occasionally they may unearth skulduggery in some dark corner, but they appear sometimes as likely to be involved with it as they are to be exposing it. Again, Muggerridge, with 50-years of experience plying his journalistic trade worldwide, has confirmed everything I suspected. (3)

But I do agree wholeheartedly with Nick Robinson when he points out the dangers for those who are always looking for 'conspiracy theories', which I would define as alternative, concocted, untrue versions of what really happened. Popular in Jesus' day (Mt. 28:11-15) they have stood the test of time with lots of them in circulation today covering a whole range of issues. However, as Nick says, "If we live life thinking that everything is a conspiracy, we're worse off. We end up hating our neighbours, suspecting authority and not trusting people." I must beware of falling into this trap myself!

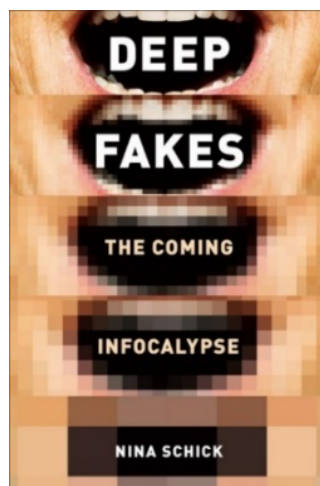
When Seeing is not Believing

Perhaps even more troubling than any media technology hitherto devised, is the fact that we are now entering the age of 'Deep Fakes'. 'Deep Fakes' are synthetic media in which a person in an existing image, video or film is replaced with someone else's likeness. They can be very difficult to spot and have a high potential to deceive.

These 'Deep Fakes' have already been used in fake news, celebrity pornographic videos, hoaxes, misrepresentations of the views of well-known politicians, and financial fraud.

An example. One pensioner was persuaded to invest £19,000 in a bitcoin scam because Martin Lewis, the well-known TV money expert, 'appeared' in a video to recommend the investment and 'said' profits of £450 per day were possible and that he personally would recompense anyone who lost out on their investment! It was a complete and utter fabrication.

Nina Schick in her book "Deep Fakes: The Coming Infocalypse" reckons that within 5-7 years, 90% of the video content online will be fake, synthetic material generated by artificial intelligence. And anyone who wants to, will be able to have access to the technology and generate their own fake material.



So who will be able to distinguish between the real and the false, and if we can't do that, who and what will we be able to trust?

Personally, I don't find it difficult at all to believe the words of Jesus when he said that one of the key signs of the times before he returns will be the danger of people being deceived.

Watch out, there's an impostor about! (See Mt. 24:4,5,11,24).

Indeed, Stephen Cottrell, in his piece in the Radio Times, points out the dangers now of “social media and the fake news that often goes with it” leading us into “mistrust and cynicism”, and that, “most alarming of all, there seems to be no common understanding of what is true or who can be trusted.” He also writes, “Truth itself, seems to have become a commodity, bought by the highest bidder.”

The Use, Misuse and Abuse of Words

Nowadays, quite a lot of discussion and debate in the media, it seems to me, has become toxic, especially on social media. Anyone who doesn't agree with me has to be 'cancelled', 'no-platformed', or otherwise 'air-brushed out'.

I agree with Rowan Atkinson when he writes: “It's important that we're exposed to a wide spectrum of opinion, but what we have now is the digital equivalent of the medieval mob roaming the streets looking for someone to burn.” (4)

We live now in the days of what is described as “The Outrage Industry” which is defined as: -

“Efforts to provoke emotional responses (e.g. anger, fear, moral indignation) from the audience through the use of over-generalisations, sensationalism, misleading or inaccurate information and the belittling ridicule of opponents.

It sidesteps the nuances of complex issues in favour of melodrama, exaggeration, mockery and hyperbolic forecasts of impending doom. There is often a competitive element to it.” (5)

Even as Christians we can fall into this trap, so perhaps it is time to remember these words: ***“When you tell the truth, justice is done, but lies lead to injustice. Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal.” (Prov. 12:17&18 G.N.B.)***

Questions: If you had a son or daughter who wished to enter the world of the media today (one of the most popular areas of study) either as a journalist, BBC producer or similar, would you encourage them? How can a Christian act as salt and light in an environment where there is such an apparent gulf between the reality and truth of Christ on the one hand, and the fantasy world of the media on the other?

Jesus: The One who is the Way to the Father and the One in whom all Truth, Reality & Grace Live

Christ is the image ('eikon') of the invisible God (Col.1:15) and, to go back to something I mentioned earlier, he too must be seen **through** and not just **with**, the eye. To just see Jesus **with** the eye is only to see his humanity; to see him **through** the eye is to see him as he really is, Divine/Human.

Jesus claims, not only to reveal truth and to speak the truth, but also to **be** the truth, the reality; truth in a Person.

He is also the one who says, "I am the Way, follow me." This is different, for example, to Muhammad, who in Islam is spoken of as a 'Sign'. Muhammad is the one who points the way to Allah, he is not the way himself. It is also different to the 8-fold path in Buddhism where the Buddha says "That is the path to enlightenment and to end suffering, follow that 'Middle Way'."

Jesus is not the imagined or the apparent truth but the **actual truth**. His truth is based on logic, reason and empirical evidence. He is both objective and subjective reality; he spoke of what he knew and we also can know the truth and knowing that truth will bring us freedom.



He is the Word/Logos that became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He, literally, spoke for himself, even as people wondered at the gracious words that fell from his lips.

Indeed, whenever Jesus spoke, he was never merely giving his opinion but was always declaring **authoritative truth** ~ "You have heard it said, but **I** say to you...". This was what marked him out as being different from all those around him and caused such amazement: -

"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Mt. 7:28&29)

And Jesus' truth, because it is God's truth, is **everlasting truth**. Unlike human 'truth' which can change and vacillate, Jesus' truth never changes and therefore remains the rock on which we are to build our lives. And his words continue to speak to us today with that same ring of truth. As we live with Christ, by him, for him and in him, we are reborn and enter into the reality/truth of God's Kingdom and God's purposes.

"We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image ('eikona') with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor.3:18).

And anyone who has seen Jesus, through and not just with the eye, has also seen the Father.

Some conclusions:

~ There is no doubt that God is using some modern media technology to spread His Word. Christian TV stations, radio stations, missions like Trans World Radio and Feba etc. have been around for a long time. 'Digital Mission' has increased during the pandemic and is set to increase further, though what 'Digital Discipleship' will look like, remains to be seen.

~ Although modern media does have the capacity to inform, educate and entertain us, and be a means of spreading the gospel, it also has the capacity to distort truth and deceive. This is having a damaging effect in terms of communication and relationships throughout society.

~ The overuse of social media especially, is adversely affecting the physical and psychological health of our young people in particular. Physical effects include everything from simple eye-strain, to sleeplessness and being overweight. And the negative psychological impact is considerable.

Psychologists have known for some time that depression (still on the increase in the general population and spreading more and more in adolescents and children) is often linked to the amount of 'screen time' a young person is having. And the depressive effect of social media for young people is also linked to whether he/she is actively engaging with it or merely trolling through social media in a passive way – the latter being apparently worse than the former in terms of its depressive effect.

We need to see this as a wake-up call, but, sadly, marketing and peer-pressure usually triumph over truth and reality.

~ In this day and age we also need to keep asking the question that Pilate put to Jesus, “What is truth?”, because young people especially, no longer define truth in an objective way. Their ‘truth’ is purely subjective and is defined by what they, as individuals, are experiencing. Truth for them is not about meaning or morality, but is reduced to personal preference and the exercise of freedom, influence and power.

~ As Christians however, we believe that God has revealed His actual, authoritative and everlasting truth in His Word and supremely in His Son.

~ Finally, we should, in this pandemic storm and like the sailors of old, lash ourselves to the mast of the ship, discerning and rejecting any siren voices from the mass media, or elsewhere, which could draw us away from Christ and onto the rocks, making shipwreck of our faith.



Jesus Himself is the supreme antidote to fantasy and the Master of Reality; through Him the distinction between fantasy and reality becomes clear; He remains the Uncreated and the Pure Incarnational Truth.

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- (1) Malcolm Muggeridge, ‘Christ and the Media’, Regent College Publishing, 2003.
- (2) Walter Brueggemann, ‘Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks’, Eerdmans, 2014.
- (3) Malcolm Muggeridge, ‘Chronicles of Wasted Time’, Regent College Publishing, 2006.
- (4) Rowan Atkinson, ‘View from my sofa’, Radio Times 9-15 January 2021.
- (5) J.M. Berry & S. Sobieraj, ‘The Outrage Industry’, Oxford University Press, 2014.