Discerning Truth in a Sea of Lies

by Rolaant McKenzie

November 26, 2023

The Running Man is a 1987 science fiction action film set in a future dystopian United States several years after a worldwide economic collapse, where food, natural resources, and energy are in short supply, causing widespread, desperate poverty. The formerly free country has been transformed into a totalitarian police state, divided into paramilitary zones, that rules with an iron hand. The government monitors and censors all media, art, literature, and communications. All dissent is quickly and brutally crushed.

The government pacifies the population through violent, gladiatorial-style television shows. The most popular is *The Running Man*, a game show where criminals (runners) must complete navigation of a grueling obstacle course while avoiding being killed by armed mercenaries (stalkers). Runners are promised a full pardon, a large sum of money, and a life of freedom and ease in Hawaii should they succeed.

Captain Ben Richards command a helicopter gunship that patrols California airspace.

While flying over Bakersfield, he observed a food riot involving approximately 1,500 unarmed people. Base command ordered Richards to eliminate the rioters, but he refused, not wishing to fire on helpless, starving people. He was subdued by his colleagues, and the second in command carried out the orders. Sixty men, women, and children were killed, and many more were injured.

The government, using artificial intelligence (AI) video generation technology, created footage of the event showing Richards callously disobeying orders not to fire on the rioters. It appeared so real that only someone who witnessed the actual events would know it was false. This footage was played on the evening news to blame Richards for the massacre, resulting in his being sent to a prison labor camp.

Eighteen months later, Richards escaped the prison camp and sought refuge at his younger brother's apartment, only to discover that a woman named Amber Mendez lived there. She told him that his brother was arrested and sent to a re-education camp. Richards took Mendez hostage in order to use her security travel pass to escape to Hawaii, but he was captured when she alerted airport security.

Later that evening, Mendez, back at her apartment, noticed a news report stating that Richards shot and killed several people at the airport. Once again, convincing footage was

shown of his bloody rampage as he tried to escape. But Mendez, being a witness to what actually happened, knew the report and video were not true.

Richards was forced to be a runner in *The Running Man*, but with help from Mendez and several others, he was able to access the television network's satellite link and broadcast to the nation the actual footage of the Bakersfield massacre, proving his innocence. Richards revealed to the nation, before the network was taken down, the government's lies through manipulated AI images and video footage. The film ended with the hope that the government's ability to deceive and maintain its control through manipulated media propaganda would be greatly diminished, and the people would be encouraged to move toward restoring a free society.

Unfortunately, as in *The Running Man*, powerful government and corporate entities are not above using manipulated video to influence the minds of the people to support certain agendas that enhance their power and control over them.

In the first week of October 2019, President Donald Trump ordered a withdrawal of U.S. forces out of northern Syria. Concerned about the prospect of diminished U.S. war involvement cutting into their lucrative profits and geopolitical goals, the military-industrial complex sought to use their mass media servants to turn public opinion toward increased military intervention in Syria, even though it risked a wider and more dangerous regional conflict.

About a week later, ABC News, under the banner "Slaughter in Syria," aired shocking footage allegedly showing a fierce attack against Kurdish civilians in a Syrian border town by the Turkish military. The footage was meant to promote the narrative that the Kurds, U.S. allies against the Islamic State (ISIS), were unjustly being abandoned to destruction and that more intervention on their behalf was necessary to save them from the atrocities supposedly being committed against

them.

However, the artillery bombardment, fiery explosions, and tracer bullets turned out to be edited video from the night shoot finale of the Machine Gun Shoot and Military Gun Show a few years earlier at the Knob Creek Gun Range in West Point, Kentucky. Fortunately, independent news researchers caught the deception and destroyed the false narrative that could have led to disastrous consequences.

Since then, the ability to use AI technology to create convincing synthetic media content to portray things that never happened (known as *deepfakes*) has only increased in sophistication, making it almost impossible to detect with the human eye. This has caused widespread concern that creating fake histories, videos, or audio could be used to propagandize, manipulate, embarrass, or falsely incriminate people.

This was highlighted in October 2023 at Westfield High School in New Jersey, where some male students used AI image generators to create and share fake nude pictures of female classmates. Some of the girls targeted expressed fears that the images, in addition to compromising their safety, may reappear sometime in the future and damage them socially, academically, or professionally.

We are continually surrounded by messages coming at us from government, corporate, individual, and other sources. The availability and growing use of AI media fabrication technologies has made determining what is real and what is fake a daunting task. How do we discern truth in an ocean of lies?

When Jesus was asked by His disciples about the time of the end, the first thing He told them was to be careful that no one deceived them (Matthew 24). Deception would be a key characteristic of the end times (Matthew 24:24; 1 Timothy

4:1).

During the ascendance of King David, the sons of Issachar, gifted by God with wisdom, were commended for their discernment of the times and the proper course Israel should take (1 Chronicles 12:32). At the beginning of his reign, King Solomon prayed to the Lord for the ability to discern between good and evil, between what was true and what was false, and God was pleased to not only answer his prayer but also make him the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:6-14).

When Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, He told them that the Father was pleased to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to anyone who asked Him (Luke 11:1-13). He also told them that the Holy Spirit of truth would grant them the discernment to know truth from falsehood and things to come (John 16:13-15).

The antidote to being led astray by the deceptions of our time is to repent, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and receive the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. God generously grants discernment to those who trust in Him (James 1:5-8).

Jesus is the ark of truth that protects all who trust in Him from being overwhelmed by a sea of lies, no matter how strong, pervasive, or sophisticated (1 John 4:1-6).

E-Mail Rolaant McKenzie: rolaant@gospeloutreach.net

Website: http://www.gospeloutreach.net/