

The BBC recently presented a program on *Deep Fake* technology that MIT faculty are working on. The hope is that they can reveal how easily *Deep Fakes* can dupe us, as well as show how these lies can be recognized and revealed. Surely, the brave new world we are entering requires the latter. The MIT faculty use the Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin moon landing as the fake. Imagine a world where the moon landing occurred, but instead of the triumphal return of the two astronauts, the lunar module was destroyed upon the landing. The two men, in this scenario, are stranded. They will die on the lunar surface. In real life, President Richard Nixon's staff anticipated this terrible possibility, and William Safire wrote one of the most memorable speeches never given. (You can read his powerful speech at the end of this reflection, and you can watch a short synopsis of the MIT project [here](#).)

I was struck by this *Deep Fake* conundrum and what it might mean for religion and the way that we understand the intersection of faith and life. On the one hand, one could argue that religion has offered a *Deep Fake* throughout the millennia, as God is portrayed in any number of ways, justifying any number of actions by humans, for any number of dubious reasons. All the wars, hypocrisy, corruption, and extremism that humans wield in the name of God is rather hard to stomach. However, on the other hand, religion has also, and at the same time, been the inspiration for the grandest ideals, the most telling sacrifices, and the unparalleled beauty of art that the human head, heart, and soul has created.

How do we know what we believe is right? How do we know this is true? And how do we sustain such belief in the midst of the chaos and confusion of the world that surrounds us?

Perhaps, we aren't supposed to have concrete proof, though nor are we supposed to justify *Deep Fakes* that prey on the vulnerable and naive among us. We say that faith is, by its very nature, a stepping out into the world not fully knowing. . . but trusting.

Which is the place that I return to again and again. Faith is relationship over time that builds trust. Faith does not answer all of our questions. Faith does not prevent the tragedies of life from encroaching upon our lives. Faith does not shield us from the vicissitudes of life. Rather, faith is the living into a deeper reality that impacts our lives, those whom we love, the larger human community, and the created world we inhabit. It focuses our attention on the higher ideals, sacrifice, and beauty of life. Living in that ebb and flow, we give thanks for the gift of grace that embraces us, and we double down on exposing the lies that fray the bonds of our social fabric, compromise the most vulnerable among us, drive a wedge between people, and make us harsher and coarser so that mercy and justice, grace and forgiveness become nigh impossible.

While some think of faith as an act of putting one's head in the sand, perhaps faith is the very thing that allows us the courage, strength, and hope to see the world as it truly is and to keep on acting in ways to preserve the very best of our life together.

Here is Safire's speech that thankfully was never given:

Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace. These brave men, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, know that there is no hope for their recovery. But they also know that there is hope for mankind in their sacrifice.

These two men are laying down their lives in mankind's most noble goal: the search for truth and understanding. They will be mourned by their families and friends; they will be mourned by their nation; they will be mourned by the people of the world; they will be mourned by a Mother Earth that dared send two of her sons into the unknown.

In their exploration, they stirred the people of the world to feel as one; in their sacrifice, they bind more tightly the brotherhood of man. In ancient days, men looked at stars and saw their heroes in the constellations. In modern times, we do much the same, but our heroes are epic men of flesh and blood. Others will follow, and surely find their way home. Man's search will not be denied. But these men were the first, and they will remain the foremost in our hearts.

For every human being who looks up at the moon in the nights to come will know that there is some corner of another world that is forever mankind.