

Cameron Trimble—When Absurdities Become Atrocities

We are living in a time when the line between truth and falsehood has grown dangerously thin. Absurd claims fill the airwaves, mostly from the President of the US and his sidekick, Elon Musk. Once they are repeated enough times, they start to sound almost reasonable. People who might otherwise be kind, thoughtful, and compassionate find themselves swept up in ideologies that, when played out, lead to real harm.

History reminds us that this is not new. The seeds of injustice are often planted by repeated untruths. Lies about who belongs and who doesn't. Lies about who deserves compassion and who should be feared. Lies that turn neighbors into enemies and justify cruelty in the name of "order" or "security" or "efficiency."

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul offered a stark warning: *"Do not be blown about by every wind of doctrine, by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming."* (Ephesians 4:14) The winds of deceit are strong right now, and it takes real spiritual grounding to resist being pulled off course.

We see the consequences of absurdities believed. In the United States, we are being told that we need to drastically cut the size of the federal government and fire thousands of people because it costs too much. But the cost of the federal government has not increased since the 1950s as a percentage of GDP. What has happened is that we gave massive tax cuts to corporations and billionaires, which robs "we the people" of fair funding for the common good.

Last week we heard Musk claim that DOGE saved some \$16 billion in government contracts. Almost half came from a single \$8 billion contract with ICE — but it was actually for \$8 *million*, not \$8 billion.

The US House of Representatives is now taking steps to limit voting rights and strip vulnerable people of access to Medicaid support.

The US President regularly demonizes women, African Americans, and the LGBT+ community. He accused Haitian immigrants of eating people's pets. He promoted violent rhetoric, threatening to shoot protesters, and then led his followers to commit an insurrection against the US Capital. Voltaire said, "*He who can persuade you to believe absurdities can persuade you to commit atrocities.*" Violence becomes justified as "necessary" to maintain power.

It's heartbreaking, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

But here's the thing: just as absurdities spread, so does integrity. Just as fear multiplies, so does love. Every time we refuse to accept false narratives—every time we choose understanding over outrage, complexity over simplicity, and connection over division—we push back against the tide. We become witnesses to what is real, and in doing so, we protect not just ourselves, but those most vulnerable to the harm absurdities can unleash.

George Orwell once wrote, "*In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.*" In this moment, that might look like asking hard questions, fact-checking the stories we hear, and refusing to demonize those with whom we disagree. It might look like standing up for someone being scapegoated or simply choosing not to pass along an inflammatory headline without verifying its source.

The absurdities will continue, but they don't have to win. We can anchor ourselves in truth, in love, in the hard but holy work of staying awake. And when we do, we become part of the resistance to the atrocities absurdity so often births.

Let's help each other stay awake.