

Hope & Despair in a Time of Trump: Reading the Signs of Our Times

By the Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox



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Theology should begin with reading the signs of the times. ~ Father M.D. Chenu

It only takes a glance at the headlines to see that the signs of our times are not pretty. The news is not pleasant. We are living in Dark Times, a collective dark night. But as spiritual people, stepping into our birthright as mystics, prophets, and spiritual warriors, we still need to read the signs of our times—especially now. And to *pray* the news; not just watch the news—while also resisting getting addicted to the news.

There is a saying among French leftists: “The hour calls for optimism; we’ll save pessimism for better times.” Pessimism in a time like ours is a luxury we cannot afford. We need, amid so much darkness and fear, to continue to draw on the wellsprings of awe, wonder, creativity—the *via positiva* and *via creativa*—we all share as mystics.

A “dark Knight” seems to be leading the way into our collective dark night with crazy tweets, alarming lapses in common sense and attention, and rank conflicts of interest (for example, he owns stock with the energy companies that are now sending their pipeline across sacred waters of the Lakota people and endangering 17 million Americans’ water supply). He is aided and abetted by a cabal of climate deniers, misogynists, racists, homophobes, and white supremacists dwelling in the White House as immediate advisors, cabinet appointees, press spokespeople, and support staff, all of whom seem to be conscience challenged just like their boss.

All the more reason for us to gather together in sacred space to “altar the world.” To me, this powerful phrase, coined by the [Creation Spirituality Communities](#) leadership, means to re-sacralize the world. Consider this message that came to me in a dream a number of years ago: “There is only one thing wrong with the human race today.... you have forgotten the sense of the sacred.”

¹ This essay is adapted from a keynote speech given by Matthew Fox at the Creation Spirituality Communities gathering of 1/28/17, in Berkeley, CA.

Obviously, the heart of Creation Spirituality is to re-envision all of creation as holy; as sacred; and to do our politics, economics, education, religion from that starting point. Another name for seeing all of creation as sacred is “Original Blessing.”

Consider, for example, the issue of the sacredness of water and those standing up for it at Standing Rock. This is more than a movement; it is an *archetype* of the struggle we are in as a people, now and for years to come! Consider the prayers, the nonviolence, the courage and hard work that are at its core. My Lakota friend Buck Ghosthorse used to say: “Do you want to know how sacred water is? Go without it for three days.” Yes, we have proof about the sacredness of water. And it is endangered not only for the Lakota people but for 17 million others who depend on the Missouri River for their drink, their cooking, their washing, their bathing of their children and babies and their own bodies. Let the priests of Wall Street and Savage Capitalism know that *you cannot drink gold* or cook with it or wash yourself with it.

Creation Spirituality is about sustainable wisdom—that is why it is so deeply ecumenical: so broad and ancient a consensus in all our religious traditions consists about the sacredness of creation.² The very earliest traditions of Christianity (found in Paul and in the Gospel of Thomas) teach of the Cosmic Christ.³ This ancient teaching is all about the holiness of all beings. It is paralleled in the Buddhist teaching of the Buddha Nature and in Judaism’s teaching of the Image of God that every being holds. All these traditions are teaching about the sacredness of creation, and therefore the sacredness of water.

- So where do we go from here, how do we navigate this dark night? First, to feel it deeply. Let it happen and wash over us and bathe us in its starkness and darkness. Do not run from the pain. Be with it. Grieve it. In this way, we pray the news.
- Second, analyze the causes of how we got here (see below).
- Third, practice the joy of life, the *via positiva* and the *via creativa*, which bring back joy in life. Remember humor along the way. And listen to the poet Derrick Walcott who, in his acceptance speech for the Nobel prize for his poetry in 1992, uttered these powerful words: “The fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world in spite of history.”⁴ This is

² Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths* (NY: Jeremy Tarcher, 2000), chapter two, pages 26-49 on the sacredness of creation that all religious traditions champion.

³ Bishop Marc Andrus and Matthew Fox, *Stations of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco, CA: Tayen Lane Publishing 2016); and Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988).

⁴ Derrick Wolcot, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory” 7 December 1992, Nobel.org, The Official Website of the Nobel Prize <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/walcott-lecture.html>

the fate of all art, all truth and search for truth: we must keep our love of the world, our love of life alive in spite of current history and those who make current headlines.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Our current situation is *not* just about the dark knight or one individual. This man is just the result of many other goings-on in our recent history. Furthermore, the rise of the Right is not just happening in America today. Look at Brexit in England; Le Pen in France; parallel movements in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Holland, etc. The rise of the right is a sign of the times.

About nine years ago, when G.W. Bush was president, I heard an amazing story from my friend Aesha Clotey who with her husband Kokomon, a drummer from Ghana, lives and works in West Oakland. Years ago, she and Kokomon took over a crack house there and turned it into a home and a welcoming place for children in the neighborhood where, among other practices, they would have regular drumming gatherings for adults. She said to me one day: "There are Germans who come and drum with us on Friday nights." I said: "I didn't know there was a German community in Oakland." "Oh, no!" she replied. "These people fly in from Germany regularly to drum with us." "Really?" I responded. "What is that all about?" She replied: "These people believe that America today is very much what Germany was in the 1930's and they are scared and don't know what to say or do about it. So they just fly in to be with us and drum with us in a neighborhood that represents the poor and neglected." So we can see that the fascism that is arising under Steve Bannon and his president-pawn has been in the making for some time in America. It is not new; it is just more out in the open. There has been a creeping fascism on the rise in America for some time.

A recent article in Quartz Media, entitled: "The US has been downgraded to a 'flawed democracy,' but not just because of Trump" informs us of a scientific study conducted over nine years. America's downgrade puts it at 21 in world rankings, below Japan and even with Italy. The US has been "teetering on the brink of becoming a flawed democracy" for years, the report says—even before the 2016 election. The country's institutions were battling a "legitimacy crisis" for years. It is in this context that Trump succeeded: "By tapping a deep strain of political disaffection with the functioning of democracy, Mr. Trump became a beneficiary of the

low esteem in which US voters hold their government, elected representatives and political parties, but he was not responsible for a problem that has had a long gestation.”⁵

The article also points out that the decline in public trust in institutions helps explain UK’s Brexit vote and the rise of populist movements around the world. The study recognizes that about half of the world’s population live in some sort of democracy but only about 5% live in a “full democracy.” America is not that. “Democracy is in trouble in the West, in the mature democracies of western Europe and the US, which are no longer obvious beacons for those striving for democracy in the nondemocratic world,” the report says.⁶

I offer a list here of some of the elements that have been compromising our democracy in the US for some time. It is not meant to be complete but I think it is somewhat inclusive and accurate.

Citizens United

The obscene Supreme Court decision that “corporations are people” and that corporations and wealthy individuals can pour untold amounts of money into all our elections (often without revealing their source) is a blasphemy to anyone who wants to believe individuals are images of God and to anyone who wants to sustain a democracy of the people, by the people and for the people.

Hate radio

This virulent form of infotainment has been raging unabated for decades. A friend of mine drove across country a few years ago and was amazed at the number of places where no NPR stations could be found, but Rush Limbaugh and the many radio jocks he has sired were everywhere on the air, spewing their hate (it is true that the movement “Flush Rush” has dug into some of his ratings and sponsorships of late and his program is less influential than it was. But it has perhaps already accomplished its purpose—it has rendered hate ok and even fashionable in civic discourse.).

Hate television

Building on the foundation established by hate radio is of course Rupert Murdoch’s Fox News, a television version of Rush.

⁵ Eshe Nelson, “The US has been downgraded to a “flawed democracy,” but not just because of Trump,” Quartz, 25 January 2017, Quartz Media LLC, <<https://qz.com/894362/america-has-been-downgraded-to-a-flawed-democracy-but-not-because-of-trump-economist-intelligence-unit-says/>>

⁶ Ibid.

Birther lies & race baiting

The media practically gave Donald Trump, perhaps the most visible spokesperson of the birther movement, a free pass for years and certainly during the presidential election cycle (as it did for many of his other antics). Birther lies were all about race—Obama was born in Kenya, we are told (and presumably should return there). It is not so big a jump from the Tea Party and birther movement to ensconcing the leader of the Breitbart news that trumpeted the birther lies incessantly into a special place in the White House. Stephen Bannon, a self-proclaimed white supremacist, now advises the president and even made himself a member of the National Security team. His influence is such that many knowledgeable people say he is the de facto president. I will consider Bannon and his “theofascism” in another essay.⁷

The rage of the Tea Party

We all witnessed the hysterical response of the Tea Party to the Affordable Care Act several summers ago, and history has recorded how this extreme offshoot of the Republican Party has waged its war within that party and beyond and guaranteed that any moderate Republicans were “tea-partied,” i.e. challenged from the right. This resulted in fewer and fewer Republican legislators being willing to work with Democrats across the aisle.

Authoritarianism and fundamentalism in religions

Far from being restricted to Islam, fundamentalist trends are alive and festering in the world’s religions, including Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity. I have treated both in my books, *A New Reformation* and *The Pope’s War*, with special attention to Catholicism since I was a member of that tradition for the first 54 years of my life. For 34 years Catholics the world over were at the mercy of a new inquisition: a war waged on theologians (of which I was just one of 109 who were silenced or expelled or denounced for doing our job) and on base communities and liberation theology and creation spirituality. Pope Francis has tried to reverse that trend, but the extreme right-wing groups such as Opus Dei and Legion of Christ and others that rose to prominence under the papacies of JP II and Benedict XVI will not go quietly into the night (in fact, an Opus Dei archbishop is now second in charge of the American Bishops Conference and is in line to be number one in a year or two).⁸ Stephen Bannon, Trump’s right hand man, is very much a part of that retro Catholic movement, allied as he is with their new leader, Cardinal Burke.

⁷ Damon Linker, “Trump’s Theofascist,” *The Week*, 10 February 2017, The Week Publications Inc. <<http://theweek.com/articles/679058/trumps-theofascist?yptr=yahoo>>

⁸ Matthew Fox, *The Pope’s War: Why Ratzinger’s Secret Crusade Has Imperiled the Church and How It Can Be Saved* (NY: Sterling Ethos, 2011)

Exploitation of 9/11 and selling of Fear by media AND politicians.

Fear and apocalyptic oversell has come to dominate much of political discourse in America and, as in the Patriot Act, can seriously erode civil liberties we have taken for granted for centuries. Thomas Aquinas warned that fear is such a strong emotion in humans that when we get overtaken by it all compassion goes out the window. Community and civility pay a dear price when the political-media culture starts running on fear.

"Savage Capitalism" (Pope Francis' words)

Pope Francis, in a blistering address on his way to a soup kitchen, spoke out against "a savage capitalism that has taught the logic of profit at any cost, of giving in order to get, of exploitation without thinking of people... and we see the results in the crisis we are experiencing."⁹ We can see this mind-set spreading steadily through our culture...

- *In Wall Street and its attacks on Main Street.* An absence of safeguards on Wall Street against the greed and excess of the banksters, draining the resources of the middle class and Main Street, produced the recession/depression of eight years ago. Indeed, Main Street bailed out Wall Street but who would know? Wall Street profits continue unabated while Main Street struggles to survive. One of Obama's biggest mistakes as president was that his administration and Justice Department never prosecuted the banksters. This gross omission had lots to do with the anger on Main Street that launched the popularity of candidate Trump. Main Street is still suffering from this neglect. Why have we seen practically no bankers or Wall Street rip-off-artists go to jail?
- *In the media itself.* Consider how the president of CBS justified the billions of dollars of free air time he and other media moguls devoted to Trump during the campaign, as well as how very, very little fact checking they did on his lies, and indeed the media's very refusal to use the word 'lie.' Said this well-heeled media hierarch: "[Trump] may be bad for America but he is good for our bottom line." Isn't this treason? To put one's company ahead of one's country? To sell one's country for personal and corporate profit?

The malpractice of media was everywhere in evidence during the campaign. Clinton's e-mails were held equivalent to Trump's lies, though the two were never of the same

⁹ Naomi O'Leary, reporter, and Michael Roddy, editor, "Pope criticizes 'Savage Capitalism' on visit to food kitchen," Reuters, 21 May 2013 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-capitalism-idUSBRE94K12K20130521>>

order. The unprecedented act of major TV broadcasters showing political rallies of Trump (as opposed to seeking policy declarations, which were few and far between). The screaming announcements in the media about FBI investigations of Clinton with barely a noise about the FBI investigations of Trump and his Russian connections, some of them at the very top of his campaign. All of this is part of the Savage Capitalism that is killing democracy in America.

- *In Trump's cabinet.*

Naomi Klein comments:

The key figures populating Donald Trump's cabinet are not only ultra-rich—they are individuals who made their money knowingly causing harm to the most vulnerable people on this planet, and to the planet itself. It appears to be some sort of job requirement....

There's junk-banker Steve Munchin, Trump's pick for Treasury secretary, whose lawless 'foreclosure machine' kicked tens of thousands of people out of their homes.

And from junk mortgages to junk food, there's Trump's pick for labor secretary, Andrew Puzder....And moving from junk food to junk science, there is Trump's pick for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson. As an executive and then CEO of Exxon, his company bankrolled and amplified garbage science and lobbied fiercely against meaningful international climate action behind the scenes....Stolen homes. Stolen wages. Stolen cultures and countries. All immoral. All extremely profitable.¹⁰

- *In the two-party political system.* There is also the profound malpractice by both political parties in failing to respond to the dismantling of democratic institutions, media included. Democrats neglected to address working peoples' issues, Main Street issues, sufficiently (though Bernie Sanders did try his best). Still, I have up to this time heard barely a squeak out of the Republican leaders of Congress about the lies emanating from the new White House, the scapegoating of Muslims, the interference of a foreign government (Putin's Russia) in our election, and much more. It seems Republicans up to now have been content to create a Faustian bargain with Trump & Co. in exchange for getting their way to take health insurance away from twenty million Americans, gut the

¹⁰ Naomi Klein, "Trump's Crony Cabinet May Look Strong, but They Are Scared," The Nation, 26 January 2017, The Nation Company LLC <<https://www.thenation.com/article/trumps-crony-cabinet-is-full-of-scared-losers>>

Dodd-Frank bill that protects consumers, and ravage Mother Earth while denying science and climate change altogether. We will see how that ends, won't we?

THE COMMON THREAD: CONTROL

What all the appeals to fear hold in common is a compulsion and ideology of Control. Fear of the Feminine lies at the heart of the diatribes against Planned Parenthood, contraception and even abortion. (One can be against abortion and still allow for the law to allow it. What is the alternative? Still more loss of life, that of mothers not ready for motherhood, carrying fetuses that cannot survive, or that were conceived through rape or incest. Good morality and good law are not always the same thing. That is Ethics 101).

The war on women and women's bodies is a sign of patriarchy at its worst (raw reptilian brain at work); therefore, fascism. And the marriage of fundamentalism and fascism. They are kissing cousins. They represent patriarchy unabated. As Ralph Abraham, who is one of the founders of chaos theory, pointed out in his important book, *Chaos, Gaia, Eros*, in the ancient times the goddess of Chaos was honored and integrated into culture. But when patriarchy took over around 4500 BC, the myths switched and now Chaos became an enemy. Consider the myth of Murdoc killing Tiamet. Now men considered it their right and responsibility to put Control first. This patriarchal attitude was buttressed by religion with its quest for orthodoxy and, beginning in the seventeenth century by science. But in the 1960s, when science developed chaos theory, it rediscovered chaos in nature, with its vital role in weather systems, in imperfect elliptical movement of planets and more. But notice: The key to fundamentalism is *the need to control*. To control the feminine; to control creativity which, as Jung observed, arises "from the realm of the mothers."

Mussolini defined his form of fascism as the "marriage of government and industry." Henry Wallace, vice presidential candidate in 1940, talked about the danger of American fascism in this way:

A fascist is one whose lust for money or power is combined with such an intensity of intolerance toward those of other races, parties, classes, religions, cultures, regions or nations as to make him ruthless in his use of deceit or violence to attain his ends.¹¹

¹¹ Henry Wallace, Progressive Breakfast, Nov 8, 2016.

George Lakoff offers his analysis of what is behind both fascism and fundamentalism in his article, "The Women's Marches And The Politics Of Care—The Best Response To Trump's Inaugural Address."¹² Says Lakoff:

America was founded on the idea that citizens care about their fellow citizens, that they contribute through their government to provide resources for the benefit and fulfillment and that Democracy is more than voting. Democracy and citizenship require us to care about each other. ... [Trump's inaugural speech] intended to turn America into a version of himself: Trump first is to become America first. Trump's interests are to become America's interests. Trump's lack of empathy, his lack of care about others, is to become America's lack of empathy, America's lack of care about others. Trump's view of worth as money is to become America's view of worth as money.

In his inaugural address, Trump appealed to the "forgotten people." Who are these people? Lakoff continues:

He's talking to his base, talking to angry white males who felt uncomfortable in a country with a black President. He's talking to people who want to blame immigrants, women, the LGBTQ community and people of color for everything they don't like. If he can keep their anger focused on innocent people it will take them a while to notice that Wall Street is (once again) pillaging our nation.¹³

Is this not the dark art of scapegoating raising its head once again?

Why does Trump represent "the antithesis of care"? Lakoff traces this lack of empathy to Trump's view of the Father (in his earlier writings on fundamentalism Lakoff has made the identical points. He considers the core teaching of fundamentalism to be the elevating of a Punitive Father God to the status of worship. Such a God is vengeful and coercive, judgmental and lacking in any appreciation of the Divine Feminine). Says Lakoff:

Trump is a textbook example of Strict Father Morality. In a Strict Father family, the father holds ultimate authority. Father knows best. He gets his authority from the claim to know right from wrong, and what he says is by definition always right. His word is law and needs to be swiftly

¹² George Lakoff, "The Women's Marches and The Politics of Care—The Best Response to Trump's Inaugural Address," 22 January 2017 <<https://georgelakoff.com/2017/01/22/the-womens-marches-and-the-politics-of-care-the-best-response-to-trumps-inaugural-address/>>

¹³ Ibid.

*enforced through strength—swift painful punishment. Even a show of disrespect deserves to be punished.*¹⁴

In this paradigm, Lakoff says that people who are not prosperous are people who lack discipline—thus they are deserving of their poverty. “The poor are poor because they’re lazy and so it’s their own fault. Responsibility is individual responsibility. There is no social responsibility.” Moreover, this logic applies to all of nature, which imposes a natural moral hierarchy. It goes like this:

*God above man, man above nature (it’s here for us to plunder), the strong above the weak, the rich above the poor, employers above employees, adults above children, Western culture above nonwestern culture, America above other countries. Then the hierarchy extends naturally to men above women, whites above nonwhites, Christians above non-Christians, straights above gays.*¹⁵

THE EMERGENCE OF EVIL

Evil is emerging on a grand scale. It is time it entered fully into our discussions and debates. Evil is, according to Deepak Chopra, the Number One spiritual issue of our time. In his new forward to my book on evil, *Sins of the Spirit, Blessings of the Flesh: Transforming Evil in Soul and Society*, he writes:

*In addressing sin and evil, Fox’s book faces the single greatest obstacle of spirituality in the 21st century. The human race escaped the mass horrors of the previous century by the skin of its teeth, only to find that Satan couldn’t be put back in his bottle. Across the entire spectrum of religion, the pall of terror and atrocities is undeniable. The modern loss of faith can’t be wished away, and as millions walk away from organized religion, wondering where God was during the Holocaust or 9/11 or Abu Ghraib, the satanic side of human nature seems more intractable than ever.*¹⁶

We are talking about the evils of denial; of lies and dishonesty—of “alternative facts,” a term invented by President Trump’s front person; of power for power’s sake; of hatred and sparking of hatred and scapegoating—toward Muslims, immigrants, black presidents, women, etc.

We are also talking about bullying—which always accompanies fascism and authoritarianism and advanced patriarchy.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Matthew Fox, *Sins of the Spirit, Blessings of the Flesh: Transforming Evil in Soul and Society* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2016), xiii.

As a Roman Catholic, I watched fascism grow in the government of the Roman Catholic church in my life time. Catholics know a lot about fascism—consider the twentieth century history of Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, and Austria. And consider personalities such as Hitler (a Catholic who was never excommunicated) and the popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The latter gave us a coup d’eglise, as I point out in my book *The Pope’s War*. And the present administration is serving up a coup’detat.

Bullying is part of fascism. “Bullies go for admiration, for status, for dominance,” comments Dutch sociologist Rene Veenstra.¹⁷ In writing my book on Cardinal Ratzinger I was indeed driven to investigate the subject of bullying, for he was a bully both in his role as chief inquisitor and in his role as Pope. In the process, I learned that bullies are in fact cowards on the inside. To compensate, they need a pack around them to carry out their deepest needs.

William Astore writes about Donald Trump as a “bullyboy” (and Stephen Bannon is an important part of his supporting pack, I might add). Astore writes:

It’s no secret that Donald J. Trump takes pleasure in bullying people he sees as weak and vulnerable. It’s all out in the open. He’s mocked the disabled. Boasted of grabbing pussy whenever he desires. Called for torture. Suggested that terrorists’ families should be murdered. All this, and much more, seems to have won him admiration in certain quarters in this country.

Why? Because increasing Americans are submerged in a violent cesspool of our own making....He has a knack for inflaming and exploiting America’s collective dark side.¹⁸

Astore believes Trump has detected America’s spiritual dark spot. Centuries ago theologian Thomas Aquinas observed that a politician must know more about the human soul than a doctor knows about the human body. Hitler knew the wounded German soul of the 1930’s very well and found ways to exploit those wounds of resentment and loss. Trump also intuits the wounded soul of many Americans from Main Street. Says Astore: “Think of Trump as more symptom than cause, the outward manifestation of an inner spiritual disease that continues to eat away at the country’s societal matrix.” He suggests that in previous times Americans looked up to the superhero Superman who “fought without irony for truth, justice, and the

¹⁷ Fox, *The Pope’s War*, 12. See also 165-168.

¹⁸ William Astore, “Tomgram: William Astore, A Violent Cesspool of Our Own Making,” [TomDispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176235/tomgram%3A_william_astore%2C_a_violent_cesspool_of_our_own_making/#more), 26 January 2017, The Nation Institute
<http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176235/tomgram%3A_william_astore%2C_a_violent_cesspool_of_our_own_making/#more>

American way. And his alter ego, of course, was mild-mannered Clark Kent, a reporter no less.”

But today Trump is like the Dark Knight of Batman, “a product of Gotham City.”¹⁹

Rabbi Arthur Waskow also addresses the bullying by Donald Trump and his team.

Lying about the Inaugural crowds served two Trumpian purposes: It expressed his own internally driven hyper-narcissism, his inability to believe that he could ever be second-best; and strategically, since it was couched in an assertion that the mainstream media were lying, it served his political purpose of keeping his supporters contemptuous of those media and dependent on him alone for The Truth. The personality structure of a bully, a narcissist, and a sociopath is brilliantly translated into a radically top-down, anti-democratic policy system set forth in the Inaugural Address and in the makeup of a Cabinet filled with Billionaires and Bigots.²⁰

A globalism of the 1% is well underway and very advanced. People asleep; people mesmerized by Silicon Valley gadgets; people addicted to TV, sports, money-making, etc. And of course people merely struggling to survive. But for all it is time to wake up!

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Now – what to do? How to do it?

First: Wake Up. Says the 15th-century mystic from India, Kabir: “You have been asleep for millions and millions of years. Why not wake up this morning?”

Second: Act Up.

The women’s marches were excellent examples of waking up and acting up. How many reading this attended a women’s march the day after the inauguration? Poet Rafael Jesus Gonzales put it this way in a recent public letter following on the women’s march in Berkeley.

We must be very grateful for the women’s marches in the United States, throughout the Americas, throughout the world January 21, 2017, the day after the inauguration of the 45th president of the United States, in resistance to the fascism that menaces us all. Thank you, thank you, our sisters, for your womanhood, your power, your grace. Let us hope that your actions make patent the very essence of what must be our revolution against the patriarchy of millennia

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Rabbi Arthur Waskow, “What an extraordinary week! And now what?” The Shalom Report, 23 January 2017, [TheShalomcenter.org < https://theshalomcenter.org/content/what-extraordinary-week-and-now-what >](https://theshalomcenter.org/content/what-extraordinary-week-and-now-what)

that has brought us to this juncture, a patriarchy that has wounded us all and distressed the Earth itself to the point where her very ability to bear and sustain life as we know it is at stake.

Perhaps we should be grateful to the 45th U.S. president, embodied caricature of the masculine, wounded, distorted, and perverted by a toxic patriarchy, to terrify us from our nightmare.

Thank you and please, our sisters; come into your power and bring in the age of the healer, for the age of the warrior has not served us well and must come to an end. Please and thank you, brothers, for honoring women and liberating the feminine within ourselves. It is a matter of women's liberation and of men's liberation as well from a patriarchy that maims us all. We are all liberated together or none of us are. The world and the Earth depend upon it.²¹

A toxic masculine has indeed run and dominated the world for long enough. It has invaded the souls of (some) women as well as men. It puts the reptilian brain ahead of the mammalian, compassionate brain. We can do much better. (I've tried to lay out a map in my book on what constitutes a healthy or sacred masculine. *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors for Awakening the Sacred Masculine* ends with two chapters on what a true "sacred marriage" of the Divine Feminine and Sacred Masculine would look like.)²² The march, inspired and invented and led by women, is a good start to generating a new era—one that moves beyond both fundamentalism and fascism and a dark and overly familiar patriarchy. Lots of inner and outer work awaits us, however.

The return of the Divine Feminine is our grounding, our "sustainable wisdom" (which is always feminine not only in the Bible but around the world in other traditions as well.) The Creation Spirituality tradition is full of the Divine Feminine, which can be found in Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Thomas Merton, Black Madonna, Father Bede Griffiths, and Rachel Carson among others!

Accompanying the Divine feminine is the Via Positiva: joy, smiles and laughter and love of children and music and art and nature are part of the pleasure of life! In short, Eros is integral to the Divine Feminine! "This is wisdom, to love life," says the Bible's Book of Wisdom. Thus, wisdom and Eros are interchangeable concepts. We need to take Eros back from patriarchy's efforts to 1) disavow it and 2) make money on it, turning it into pornography.

²¹ Personal Correspondence, Jan 23, 2017.

²² Matthew Fox, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine* (Novato, Ca: New World Library, 2008).

Values of compassion and caring over power and aggression are alternatives to patriarchy as well. Partnership, not powership. Power with, not power over. Dancing Sara's circle, not climbing Jacob's ladder.

A feminist view of the world is about a love of the whole! The entire Cosmos. Consider the work of Rachel Carson who is often credited with launching the ecological consciousness with her book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. Feminism and the large view of interdependence, the web of life (Hildegard's terminology)—this was Carson's principle contribution to awakening our consciousness. Consider the latest teaching from cosmology that barely made the news due to the inflamed noise around Donald Trump during the campaign—we are part of a universe of two trillion galaxies. Think of that—two trillion galaxies to love! The sacred temples of our bodies, our earth, our universe are all part of two trillion galaxies! We could use a good dose of news about the universe to counterbalance the narcissism that reigns in our public discourse.

Thomas Berry puts it this way: "The small self of the individual reaches its completion in the Great Self of the universe" ... but our religions and cultural institutions are not there yet. Cosmology is a medicine for our narcissism as a species, our anthropocentrism that shows through so much of our economics, politics, media, education and religion still. It is a link to our first chakras—which need feeding and need to ground us. But we have our work cut out for us, as Berry warns: "To move from this abiding spatial context of personal identity to a sense of identity with an emergent universe is a transition that has, even now, not been accomplished in any comprehensive manner by any of the world's spiritual traditions."²³

The Woman's March was created by women and led by women. Let women lead and feminist consciousness lead! In both women *and* men. The Divine Feminine and the Sacred Masculine. Let us live out our common vocation to live on the edge (*sur la marge*) twixt Mysticism (love of life and contemplation and silence) and Prophecy (urgency to stand up and Say No) in so many ways. A revolution is afoot. Join it in any ways you can. Dance on the edge! Prepare yourself! Study! Consider the timeliness of the new University called the Fox Institute for Creation Spirituality (FICS) being started up this year in Boulder, Colorado where that tradition can be studied in depth. Deepen! Practice (Thich Naht Hanh—"don't just do something—sit there")!

The "Indivisible" movement is also instructing people in the power of waking up and acting up together, for example by attending legislative gatherings and making their voices heard.²⁴ It is already, we are told, more powerful than the Tea Party with far more adherents because the

²³ Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (NY: Bell Tower, 1999), xxvi.

²⁴ Indivisible USA <<https://www.indivisible.us>>

values being defended are those of the majority of Americans (who in fact did not vote for Trump for president).²⁵ It is a time for the fifth chakra, the prophetic voice that our throats represent, to make noise. All prophets make noise. But to do it creatively and non-violently is important. And not just showing up at legislators' events but at their offices and by getting on line and by writing letters to newspapers and radio and television stations and their sponsors and by calling in to radio talk shows and more.

Naomi Klein summarizes our situation in the following manner — and there is some good news hidden among the bad. She believes that the backdrop for Trump's rise to power was that

our movements were starting to win. I'm not saying that they were strong enough. They weren't. I'm not saying we were united enough. We weren't. But something was most definitely shifting. And rather than risk the possibility of further progress, this gang of fossil-fuel mouthpieces, junk-food peddlers, and predatory lenders have come together to take over the government and protect their ill-gotten wealth.

Let us be clear: This is not a peaceful transition of power. It's a corporate takeover. The interests that have long-since paid off both major parties to do their bidding have decided they are tired of playing the game...So now they are cutting out the middleman and doing what every top dog does when they want something done right — they are doing it themselves. Exxon for secretary of state. Hardee's for secretary of labor. General Dynamics for secretary of defense. And the Goldman Sachs for pretty much everything that's left.

But here lies the hope:

The reason the mask has fallen off, and we now are witnessing undisguised corporate rule is not because these corporations felt all-powerful; it's because they were panicked. Moreover, a majority of Americans did not vote for Trump.... The Democratic Party establishment did not think campaigning on tangible improvements to people's lives was important....They thought they could run on fear of Trump, and it didn't work.

Here's the good news: All this makes Donald Trump incredibly vulnerable....This administration is going to come after everyone at once. There are reports of a shock-and-awe budget that will cut \$10 trillion over 10 years, taking a chainsaw to everything from violence-against-women programs, to arts programs, to supports for renewable energy, to community policing. It's clear

²⁵ Frank Vyan Walton, "Indivisible is already more powerful than the Tea Party was," Daily Kos, 7 February 2017, Kos Media LLC ≤ <http://www.dailykos.com/stories/2017/2/7/1631104/-Indivisible-is-already-more-powerful-than-the-Tea-Party-was>>

that they think this blitzkrieg strategy will overwhelm us. But they may be surprised—it could well unite us in common cause. And if the scale of the women’s marches is any indication, we are off to a good start.²⁶

It seems the Via Transformativa, the struggle for Justice and Caring and Compassion, is alive and well. The battle has been joined. Let no one sit on the sidelines. If one believes in democracy or justice or compassion it is time for all hands on deck. If, as David Orr puts it, “hope is a verb with the sleeves rolled up,” then hope will be proportionate to the work and passion we put into bringing democracy back again. Standing up and speaking out is key; pressuring our representatives and signing on to become a representative oneself is key. Citizenship means action from a deep place, not just a place of action/reaction.

This is what prophets and mystics do. They say No in order to pave the way for the good news of their Yes.

²⁶ Klein, op. cit.