

SOME THOUGHTS ON THIS MOST DIFFICULT OF WEEKS

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Like many people who believe in our right to bodily autonomy I have been deeply depressed since the court overturned Roe. Evangelicals, for the most part, are glad about gaining control over women's bodily autonomy. They are as equally happy about the widespread depression so many of us are feeling. This is not new, history is filled with examples of fundamentalist christians happily forcing their beliefs on others, even to the point of death. In fact, killing or imprisoning unbelievers has always been one way of forcibly converting them or in any event getting rid of those who believe differently.

Despite what far too many believe, this particular aspect of christianity, that is, its commitment to violence against those who think differently, is baked in to the religion. The christian bible contains multiple passages demanding violence against those who believe differently. And there are always those who take those exhortations very seriously. As always, at least at first, it falls on women the hardest. Then it spreads outward until all are affected. Nothing is going to change this truth; it's why this sort of thing recurs with such horrible regularity in human history.

There are many passages in the bible that pertain to this, I will share a couple and a few comments of dominionists about the "unreached" and pagans that I have found online.

This one quote is from deuteronomy 13:6-18 New American Standard Bible - NASB 1995:

If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you. "If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known), then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from

His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

This next one is from 1 John 4:6 (New Living Translation):

But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

This is from Galatians 1:8-9 (King James Version):

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

And the always popular Exodus 22:18 (King James Version):

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

This next piece is from a website, the Sword and Staff:

The church has already come against Paganism before. Christendom was built upon its corpse, and its gold and silver were plundered like the gold and silver of Egypt. The same thing happened with Rome just a few centuries after the death of the Apostles. That's the pattern of history. The City of God always comes from the corpse of the Beast. . . . I suspect there will be a New Christendom rising from the corpse of Neo-paganism at some point down the road.

This next piece is from an article: "Brazil court upholds ban on missionaries trying to contact isolated indigenous tribes" by Fernanda Wenzel, October 6, 2021.

"The culture of our people is also weakened because certain practices are forbidden (by the missionaries), like traditional medicine," Eliesio Marubo said.

"The relationship with the territory also changes. Before, we used to move around a lot, but the missionaries want us to stay in one place only."

"It is a cultural destruction," anthropologist Aparecida Vilaca said of the mission's presence in indigenous preserves. Vilaca witnessed the effects of missionary groups on an Indigenous community in Rondonia, also in the Amazon region. "They do a very deep process of humiliation of the traditional practices, by saying their dances and beliefs are things of the devil," she said. According to Vilaca, these changes in the traditional way of life make the Indigenous people more vulnerable to several economic interests, "The missionaries lead to the settling of the community in the same place, releasing land to farmers and loggers.

We can't forget that these lands are very coveted," she said. [Big business always follows the missionaries and the conversion of Indigenous peoples. Evangelicals and the corporations work very closely together to destroy traditional ways of life.]

As Terrence McCoy in the *Washington Post* comments on the same court case: "[Jesus, according to evangelicals, has commanded that his followers] "make disciples of all nations. . . . Missionaries call [Indigenous peoples] the "unreached." Few groups, if any, have been as committed to contacting them as American evangelists. . . . They have produced elaborate maps to identify where they live. They have flown planes, purchased helicopters and piloted boats to reach them. Millions of dollars have been pumped into the work."

Despite legal and activist resistance, the evangelicals are still coming. Every time they succeed, the ecological systems that Indigenous peoples have lived in harmony with for millennia are soon stripped of "resources" and made virtually uninhabitable. (Much like the landscapes in developed nations already are; the commons are destroyed and ecosystems begin to spiral out of control as their complex biosphere is stripped away.)

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My depression is not solely because of the destruction of Roe as settled law but about what it portends for our country, for women, for people who believe in bodily autonomy, for people who

believe differently, and most especially people like me (and those indigenous peoples in Brazil). Specifically, non-christians, more specifically animists. Animists were of course the first of christianity's targets millennia ago. For evangelicals, animists are the most ancient and dangerous of their enemies. (Though, of course, animists are closely followed by muslims, atheists, humanists, and anyone who insists on believing differently.)

Over the past six months or so I have been struggling with how to address this in my book *Becoming Vegetalista*. I haven't found it easy to do. In fact, I have been procrastinating turning my notes into the chapter they are intended to be. This isn't a new difficulty. *Vegetalista* continually takes me into territory I would prefer to avoid. This is because, as those of you who have read the early chapters of *Vegetalista* know, it is a book filled with secrets that I have decided to talk about out loud. And one of the most difficult of those secrets has to do with christian hate and violence toward people who believe differently, most especially those of us who follow this most ancient of paths.

The ecstatic animism I am speaking of here is a path that people are called to, not one that is chosen, well, except perhaps in the depths of the soul someplace, a place that the conscious "I" does not easily travel. We are *called* and some deep part of us responds, overpowering the, perhaps, more sensible parts of the self, the parts that understand just what it means to become devotedly animist in the midst of a rationalist and rabidly christian culture. From the beginning it demands a deep excavation of the self and the examination and subsequent reworking of a great many unexamined beliefs and behaviors. It has not been an easy journey for me, quite the contrary.

Vegetalista, while covering a lot of different ground, is at root about visionary

experience, about the moment when an Elder of Earth call a much-flawed human being to this most ancient of spiritual paths. The book goes deep into what happens afterwards, examines in detail what the immersion in powerful sacred experience does to the human psyche, what it takes to recover, and the skills that must be developed to survive this kind of direct contact with the sacred. The state of being such visionary experience generates, from a certain point of view, can be best described as neuro-atypicality on steroids. The world is seen so differently and there is so much access to so many capacities of the human sensory self that it is quite accurate to speak of the person as someone who becomes *Other*. Afterwards, we don't really fit in normal social structures.

Those of us who survive such close contact with the ancient, sacred intelligences of Earth, and not all who have that contact do survive, live somewhere between the forest and the city, neither part of one nor the other. We no longer process sensory inputs the way most other people do. There is a massive amount of synaesthesia as well as experiences that can't quite be explained rationally. That's always a problem of course because the natural tendency of people is to label such states as irrational (i.e., crazy) instead of the more accurate nonrational. The tendency of the rationalist world to stuff those of us who have left the rationalist house back in the box never ends. This pressure does force the development of a number of skills, sophistication in language being one of them. It is necessary not only to counter rationalist assaults but also because one of the functions for *Vegetalistas* in our time is the open discussion of visionary experience and what happens to those of us who experience it. (It is far more common than our culture recognizes but those of us who experience such things tend to hide it. More times than I can count people have told me that talking about even the mildest nonrational

experiences they have had terrifies them; they have an immediate fear that they will be labeled crazy. And this is very common among herbalists. Those who go deep into the Green do have long conversations with the plants and it's not a monologue, it is a *conversation* between two kindred but very different life forms.)

Those of us who experience extended and detailed visionary episodes have a number of things in common. One is that during the encounter certain demands are made for the work that we are to do during this life and more importantly *how* that work must be accomplished. In other words, not only is the future direction of our work revealed but there are certain attributes of character that must be developed and held as essential throughout all the years to come. We are given *imperatives* and they last for the rest of our lives.

Those initial visions are not the culmination (as so many fantasies have it) but merely the beginning of a very long apprenticeship. It is an apprenticeship that lasts for the rest of one's life. Mine has lasted for over fifty years now. And it never gets any easier. The challenges that must be faced are only more difficult, the demands on the self become ever harder. Those of us who experience this kind of thing are forced to travel ever deeper into darkness (of ourselves and the world around us) and face what we find there. We do so in part because we have been called to do it. But we also do it for our people, for Earth, for the plant nations, and for our time. Each generation faces its own unique difficulties and *Vegetalistas* are meant to address them as part of the work they are called to do. In our time, this is particularly urgent, for the difficulties our species now faces are some of the most dangerous and demanding that have occurred in a very long time.

The difference between *Vegetalista* and other spiritual paths is not so much visionary

experience, which is common in many different traditions, but is in fact the plants as essential teachers during the apprenticeship we undergo. They take us as students in the deepest of meaning of that word. The massive influx of teachings that occur during the initial visionary state is foundationally animist but this later immersion in the plant world deepens that particular connection. It returns us to the root of all spiritual traditions, Earth itself.

After the initial visionary experience (which is often generated out of encounters with specific plants or mushrooms), there comes the necessary work of finding balance in multiple realms. Afterward the visionary episodes the young *vegetalista-to-be* lives with one foot in the mundane world and the other in the metaphysical background of the world, that is, in sacred space. In consequence, all sensory modalities are continually taking in not only the normal visual field (for instance) but also the deeper meanings that are in everything we encounter. We see with double vision, as William Blake once put it. (And in fact, every sensory modality is perceiving in this expanded way.) In consequence, the psychological self is disordered, extremely destabilized by the initial visionary episode. (This destabilization is quite often compounded by the usual dysfunctional dynamics in the birth family.) And so, the early years are spent actively struggling to find balance while at the same time re-ordering the internal psychological world. All this takes years of very difficult and focused work. Only when it is completed does the next stage of apprenticeship begin. That is when the Green Nations take the young *Vegetalista* as student.

People have often asked me where I learned my knowledge of plant medicines. When I was much younger and so very shy about all this, I would mumble around the answer or hastily throw out this person's name or that. Sometimes I might mention a tribal native I had worked with for a short time or one of the elder herbalists I was privileged to know. I didn't know how to

tell people then, at least in a way that would make sense, that all my training came from the plants themselves and that a powerful and extensive visionary episode that occurred when I was seventeen began it all. I just didn't know how to say that the plants themselves were the ones who taught me their uses as medicine. For as has always been true, they know their medicine better than any human being ever will.

For me, the medicines that plants create every minute of every day of their life are sacred. They are *communications* filled with meaning. They're not just chemicals as the rationalists would have it. To the rationalists plant chemicals are as devoid of context as their synthetic medicines are. (And because of this they miss the point entirely.) Plant chemicals are linguistic expressions whose development began hundreds of millions of years ago and whose purpose is the modulation of the ecology of this planet – and this includes our own bodies which are, as all things here are, merely a specific incidence of a general condition. Most importantly, we eat meanings when we ingest plant medicines and those meanings tell our bodies how to reformulate themselves. Again, they are *communications*. And when we take them into our bodies we are changed in ways that reductive science has never been able to understand except in the most superficial of ways. Once a plant saves your life, nothing is ever the same again. We are then pulled into a most ancient way of being, a most ancient relationship, not only with the Green Nations but Earth itself.

The Green Nations are my family, my siblings, my mentors, my ancestors, and some of the most demanding teachers I have ever known. It is they who have taught me their uses as medicine. But they have taught me a great deal more than that. (Plants long ago moved from “what's this one good for?” to “What is it wanting me to learn about itself, about Earth, about

who and what I am, about all life on this planet, and about the relationship between all those things?” Plants have many different kinds of medicine in them, it’s just that people get hung up on the simplest and most reductive. We tend to think it is all about us.) Because of this expansion, my life, though difficult, has been one miracle after another. And to be clear here: It has never been a christian miracle, quite the opposite.

Those of you who have read more deeply in my written works, know that I range very far and deeply into matters not generally thought to be “herbal.” This is because the foundation of my world and work has never been “herbal” but something else entirely. It has been Earth and what it means to be human and the responsibilities humans have at this particular time in Earth history. The plants have long been core to this but their medicinal actions, while crucially important, are only one aspect of their nature and their teachings. The “medicinal” actions I speak of here encompass their ability to stop infection or help menstruation or overall immune health but in many respects that is the least of it. That is why so many of my books have ranged so widely.

Among other things, the plants are crucial to understanding worldwide ecosystem destabilization – and no this has nothing to do with “invasive species.” They are integral to the remodulation of the ecosystems of the planet in order to re-create the homeodynamis – homeostasis is a myth – necessary for stabilization. This is something that only the plants are able to do on that large of a scale. But they also demonstrate what functional interrelationship looks like. In other words they have something to teach us about our place here on this planet and the kind of behaviors that are most suited to our survival as a species. Most especially they teach what a healthy climate of mind is and is not. And it is the climate of mind inside us that has led

to the climate problems out there in our world. Plants have a lot to teach us about becoming human and more importantly, humane. I think sometimes that that is the most powerful medicine of any that they possess.

During those initial visionary experiences I was given a glimpse of what Earth is and has always been and as well the part that all organisms that are expressed out of Earth play here, that is, their function. Core to this was the understanding that all things are intelligent and aware and filled with soul. That we live in an animist universe. That we are loved. That we are needed for what we bring. That there is no higher or lower, there is no evolutionary pyramid with us at the top.

There were a great many more things that I was taught then, and I go into all of them in depth in the upcoming chapters of *Vegetalista*. I was also given an imperative to speak about these things during my lifetime, that in fact, it was an essential aspect of the work I was born to do. Further, doing so was crucially important because we really didn't have a lot of time. (To be clear here, for many years I was embarrassingly bad at speaking about these things, which is why I am glad that the internet did not exist when I was young.)

One of the more important insights given then was that, as John Muir once put it, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." I found that nothing in Universe is actually separate from anything else. (This is why discipline boundaries in academia are so dangerous; they maintain the illusion that we exist in a world of nouns, each separate from the other.) But, as my work developed, I found that when I pulled on this thread here, it was attached over there, over and over again. The medicine of plants extends a great deal further than most people, even herbalists, understand. And so my books and teachings

could never be limited to what most people consider, in a rather reductive way, to be “herbal.” It is why, I suppose that Rosemary Gladstar has sometimes referred to me as the philosopher of the herbal world. The plants taught me their medicines, yes, but they also taught me that they are good to think. Perhaps more than anything else they are good to think. And when you learn to think not only like a mountain but like the Green, the world you see is very different indeed.

So, as time passed, I moved always deeper into the Green world and into Earth itself. And if there is one thing that Earth knows far better than humans it is the life/death cycle. As well, to Earth itself, there is no higher or lower. Ecologically, humans hold no especially *important* place here. But then we don't hold an especially *unimportant* place either. We just are – like anything and everything else. Importantly, however, we are still part of the life/death cycle. If there is one fact that humbles the human and our tendency to arrogance it is that there are powers here far stronger than we will ever be. (We forget this at our peril.) One of those is the death/life cycle. Without it, there would be no life at all here. There would be no You, no Me, no Earth, no Thing at all.

So, when it comes to abortion, something I did spend many decades thinking deeply about (for I am human, too, just as you are), I know the complexity that is found there. It is not an easy black and white situation. (And to be clear here, my mother would have aborted me if she could have in that evangelical anti-abortion Kentucky of so long ago. It would have made no difference to me at all. I love this life and I love my body, but I don't seem to have the hysterical fear of death that so many in our culture do. Nor do I feel any great hunger to hold onto every shred of life I can no matter how debilitated I become. The medical system in our country ceased to have anything relevant to say about my life and how I live it a very long time ago.)

In the end, no matter what we do, when it comes to abortion, we come face to face with the death/life cycle and all that it implies. If it is examined closely we immediately come face to face with two competing goods and there is powerful emotion attending to both. But in the end, no matter what anyone believes or doesn't believe, abortions will occur. Either abortion will be illegal and abortions will occur. Or abortion will be legal and abortions will occur. Abortions are not avoidable. Therefore the focus must of necessity shift. Prohibition will never work, it never has, it never will. All it does is cause further problems which are, always, far worse than the problem prohibition was trying to solve. And taking control over bodily autonomy from half the population is very dangerous indeed. It forces half the population to be fertility factories whether they want to be or not. But more than anything, it gives control over bodily autonomy to a radical christian sect. And I believe that allowing that sect the power to determine how the rest of us must live our lives is evil.

At root I don't think there must inevitably be a conflict between those who follow different spiritual paths, but the sect I am speaking of here does in fact think that. And because of my particular spiritual path and the experiences I have had, given that people like me, including many of my ancestors, have been singled out for extermination, well, that makes it personal. It is something I have always been very sensitive to for there is not a day that goes by that I do not read or hear some comment that assumes that christianity, and its strange beliefs, are irremovably interwoven into American life. And among those beliefs is the assumption that other religious forms are somehow not really quite equal, that in fact they are lesser forms and occupy a less protected space in America. It is not so very long ago that the jewish and catholic faiths were actively denigrated and suppressed both in law and in social custom. Animists still struggle for

equal protection under the law and with the current court makeup, it is not going to get better.

I don't particularly like talking about these things out loud. I prefer another way, less direct, less confrontational, something with more humor in it or which at the very least has some jokes about taxonomists in it. But our times are not going to give me the comfort of my preferences. They are going to force each and every one of us to take a stand, sooner or later. And unfortunately it means doing so publically.

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People have sometimes written me, wondering why I have been so strongly vocal about the wokerati in the herbal world. They have asked me the same thing about confronting the phytorationalists and the scientists and the taxonomists. "There's room for all of us," they say. Well, while theoretically that's true, practically it isn't.

A large part of the reason for my continuing commentaries on these subjects is that I believe in bodily autonomy – and that includes the thoughts and beliefs that are inside me. I am not a body and a separate thinking mind with a separate feeling heart and a separate sacred soul. I am not a bunch of parts no matter what reductive scientists or christians believe. There is, inside me, no body/mind split, no body/spirit split, no sacred/profane split. The thoughts and beliefs I have I have come to over the past half century of asking myself questions that, in order to be fully human, I have had to answer. *Not as others would have me answer them but as I would answer them.* Some of those questions have taken me over forty years to answer. Some I have not yet answered but as my death approaches I begin to get glimmers.

Inside me there is this mycelial network extending outward in all directions. At every node it is connected to something that often appears unrelated to the rationalist or surface eye. (This is why science as it is currently known will never find what it is looking for but only destroy it by dissecting the world into its parts for personal glory and profit.) I have tried to show in my work how Earth works. From the bottom upward, never top down. (Top down is always, in the end, an evil thing for it can only maintain its position by becoming ever more totalitarian in its pursuit of control.) Men and women are not so very different to me, their reproductive systems are simply morphed to deal with different ecological functions. And humans are not any different to me than the plants, whose reproductive systems are the root of the ones we ourselves have inside us. So, when I look at a woman, I see something far different than most people do. I see life itself, Earth morphed into specific form to accomplish specific ecological function. **And to be clear here that includes a lot more than being a baby factory because a totalitarian christian sect has decided that's all they are.** One of the greatest errors of the neo-Darwinists has always been that the only function of the genome is to reproduce itself. All that selfish gene nonsense . . . it fits all too well into eugenics and christian totalitarianism. I oppose it just as strongly as I do monotheism. Neither are foundational to our successful habitation of Earth or of ourselves. In fact, quite the opposite. You see, bodily autonomy, choice itself, is foundational to life on this planet. The plants have bodily autonomy, they choose, they think, they plan, they create, they have offspring, yes, but sometimes they don't. They *choose*. And the functioning of every ecosystem on this planet is built around their ability to choose.

There is a reason that western medicine has been primarily male for so long and there is a reason that herbalism primarily from gatherings of women. And there is a reason that the neo-

herbal movement came out of the 1960s, for that is the moment in human history when the powerful neurogenetics (hallucinogens) began once more to move through the human world. We who were touched by them, changed by them, began to look with different eyes at what we were being told we could and could not do. We believed in our bodily autonomy, our right to ingest plants of whatever sort for whatever reason we wished. And what we found as we embraced that right to choose was a deeper connection to Earth as it really is, not as we were being told it is. We found a deeper connection to what real spirituality is rather than what the dominant religions were telling us it is. A trust of the individual to think, to reason, to choose was once more loose in the world. And this very much included women, in fact, it was oriented around women in very important ways. Earth is not female, nor is it male. It is both, simultaneously. There is a balance; there is no women have to do this, women have to do that, women are this, women are that. Both bring necessary qualities to the ecosystems of this planet. Both are equally important in the plant world and to plant medicines. It is not a fucking competition. Making it so is anti-life, no matter who does it.

So, yes, I, like so many people in this country, have been seriously depressed since the Roe decision came down. But not just about Roe. Overthrowing Roe is just the beginning of what we are facing. So, to grasp the nettle more firmly and to be even more blunt:

All of us have to come to terms with the fact that a totalitarian sect in this country has been working to take control over it and every person in it for a very long time now. They have been beat back several times in our history (the Constitution and the first amendment was one such effort) but except during the actual creation of our country no one has truly attempted to come to terms with the problem. A significant part of the problem we face is that those who are

forcing these things upon us are not christians in the way that most people think of christians. The Clarence Thomas's and Amy Coney Barret's, the dominionists, that is, hate Mr. Rogers, they hate Jimmy Carter, and they hate all forms of christianity other than their own. They are old testament christians. They believe in conversion by the sword and death to those who do not believe as they do, death to those who will not convert. They have been a core part of the christian world since the christian world began. (And this is something I have been dreading writing about in *Vegetalista*. It is a huge can of worms but one that all animists and those called to become *Vegetalista* inevitably have to deal with.)

All this sounds over the top, doesn't it? Conspiracy-laden even. I wish that was all it was. But, it isn't. Dominionism has always been a force within christianity (just as it has been within islam). They haven't been hiding. It's just that very few people have wanted to see them for what they are. It conflicts with too many of our cherished beliefs. About how we want the world to be, how we want people to be, about our country, about the nature of evil, and about our own tenuous hold on a way of life that does not include religious war.

I don't really care what that sect of 30 million to 60 million people really believe. I do care that they want everyone else to believe it. I care very much that they are willing to subvert the entire structure of our government and society in order to force people to live under their system of thought and enforced behavior. They are the enemies of everything I believe in and hold sacred, including the sanctity of life itself, including everything that I was taught during those visions so long ago, including everything that the Green Nations have taught me, including everything that Earth itself has taught me over the past 55 years.

Those of us who speak for Earth and the Green Nations and for life itself understand that

this particular christian sect is the enemy of life, irrespective of their slogans. They are the enemy of Earth. They *want* climate breakdown. They *want* the end of days. And they are doing their best to hurry them along. Environmentalism, to the dominionists, marks the beginnings of an animist re-awakening. And, of course, it is. They have attacked Gaia theory even more forcefully (as has their powerful protestant sect, the rationalists). They see nothing wrong in clear cutting Earth itself. These are the ones who cut down the sacred groves long ago; they are ones who cut them down now. It is they that send in missionaries into isolated animist tribes in the Amazon, destroying their way of life, and opening a wedge for the loggers and corporations who follow soon afterwards. It is past time that these things be spoken of out loud.

Finding the way out of my current depression has been difficult. And certainly the flaccid articles in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* only make plain how soon they and so many others will just begin to go along to get along. I don't hold any hope for my liberal tribe or my herbal tribe to stand forcefully before the storm that is now breaking upon us. Trigger warnings tend to pale when confronted by real triggers, especially when there is no overarching parental figure to appeal to for help. Microaggressions fade into insignificance when real aggressions take their place. But the courage to take a stand is just as rare as it has always been, whether in 1933 or 2022. We either find a way to work together or else we will fall separately. One by one by one.

For most people, it is far easier to believe that sense will suddenly prevail. People thought that in 1933, just as they are thinking it now. But it didn't prevail in 1933 and it won't prevail now. Sense does not suddenly prevail, it comes only after long struggle and the willingness to stand up and say "No, you may not do this."

Sense did not prevail during the massive evangelical christian awakenings that have

previously occurred in this country nor during the laws they forced on Americans afterwards. Prohibition came from them, so did the endless drug war, so did the allopathic control over health care and the outlawing of herbal medicines. We are still struggling with the after effects of all of those dominionists movements and there are more being put in place even as I write these words.

Sense is not going to prevail.

The system, just as it did in 1933 in Germany will go along to get along. Most people, however liberal or conservative they are, will go along to get along. When this kind of thing happens, it only stops when so many people get sick of it that they speak up and insist that it stop. Sometimes it results in the kind of war that Germany pulled the world into after 1933. Other times, the end is not so extreme. Nevertheless, there are always millions of lives lost and destroyed and faith in a sensible system, well, it just doesn't come back for a very long time, if ever.

It is far easier to think that sense will prevail than it is to look inside our own trembling, frail, human self and find the courage to do what needs to be done. To truly *see* what is occurring and have the courage to say it out loud when it will mean losing friends of many decades, social position, financial security. (I know this, for I have lost those things merely from posting "when the woke mob came for the herbalists." What we face now is far more severe and so will the blowback be.)

It is and has always been the moderates among us, of which I am one, who have allowed these things to happen. It has been clear since Reagan that the fanatic evangelicals were being unleashed in order for the GOP to get and retain power. The more support they were given, the

more fanatical they became until their plans for turning America into a theocracy were openly stated, were proclaimed ever more loudly.

This is not an aberration. It is not a few cranks from the margins. It is what they truly believe and intend to do. Moderate christians have refused to speak out for decades, refused to talk about the toxin in their midst and by so doing have allowed it to grow and spread. We on the left have done the same with the woke toxin in our midst. *Truthfully*: any movement that has utopian objectives can and will become totalitarian.

Among other things, I am a social democrat, the first in my family, and probably the last. I am very progressive, very liberal. Yet it has been very hard for me to admit that it is the left and its utopian drives that kill hundreds of millions, it is not the right. The left gives rise to Pol Pot and the Cultural Revolution and Stalinist purges, not the right. The right still kills but not at that magnitude. Not normally anyway. Not unless they unleash utopianists to obtain and keep power. It is important to remember here that christianity when it first arose was a leftist movement. And it still possesses its utopianist core. It is more than willing to force the entire world to adhere to its beliefs in order to create that utopia. And they will never stop trying to do so.

And so . . . my depression.

Depression, contrary to what most authorities proclaim, is the result of a conflict between the direction you are going in (and wish to continue in, unimpeded) and, for want of a better phrase, an outside force. It is the moment when your plans are disrupted, but in a particular way. And, importantly, depression is an evolutionary innovation of long standing. (Despite knowing this, I don't particularly like experiencing it.)

Depression has happened when I am trying to remodel part of my house. The house has

certain realities to it and as I try to impose my wants on it, it resists over and over again, until, depressed, I stop what I am doing and begin to look and think more deeply. Depression has happened when I am going along being one kind of person but that particular person has been disregarding the needs that many other parts of me have. Their resentment builds up and up and up until they create such a powerful depression that it overwhelms the part that just wants to keep on doing what it is doing. Depression happens when the external world begins forcing itself on my life, forcing me to adhere to its demands for behaving in a certain kind of way. And the depression gets worse and worse until it forces me to stop and think more deeply and reassess.

Depression is always a communication that deeper thinking is necessary, that there is a problem, that it needs to be addressed or things will get worse. *It is a demand to become aware.* It means that there is a problem, that the problem must be identified, and that the problem has to be addressed in order for forward motion to once again occur. Sometimes the problem is in me (on my insistence on doing something that is not really functional or healthy) and sometimes the problem is outside me (in this instance, a totalitarian imposition by a theocratic christian sect).

The answer, for me anyway, has never been a little pill that allows me to continue on as I have been for far too long. We are far past the stage where rationalist chemicals will help us deal with the problems that now face us. If you wish to see the face of what our world will be like if we remain inactive, it is that of Clarence Thomas. As yet, he has not completely revealed that face to the world, but he will. With the achievement of every step he has been working toward all these years, another aspect of his visage is revealed – as it has been after the Roe decision. It is the face of totalitarianism and a theocratic christianity that will have all us on our knees in the end.

Truly resolving the depression I have been struggling with, I have found, necessitates seeing what is right in front of me for what it is, telling its secrets out loud, and no longer accepting that this kind of christianity has anything to do with Mr. Rogers or Jimmy Carter or Christ himself. It means an end to dialogue, for the dominionists are using dialogue only to gain what they wish, which is ultimately an end to any possibility of dialogue and the imposition of a theocratic state that we all must kneel at the feet of.

And so, I began reading Chris Hedges again. I began remembering all the years I spent delving into christianity and its writings, all the times I spent in monasteries, a;; the talking I did with christian scholars and devout believers of every kind and sort. I recalled all the years I studied the history of the church and how it came to be what it is and what it did to get here.

I spent all those years in deep contemplation and study because I had been damaged by evangelical christianity in my childhood and I needed to understand the waters in which I had been submerged – the waters that nearly all of us still swim in whether we wish to or not. I needed to understand why they would have hurt me or anyone in the ways that they did and continue to do. I needed to understand their thinking and their motivations and their particular psychoses. In part this is because it is necessary to the work I am meant to do. It is important to speak of these things clearly and out loud for they are still factors in the damage to our Earth and to each and every life form there is. Christianity may become what its adherents keep saying it is at its core (and isn't) but it won't be that until they are willing to address the toxin that has always been a part of christianity and find a way to remove it permanently.

There are large numbers of people who understand what I am speaking of here and who oppose what is happening. They are fighting against it as they have always done. Knowing I am

not alone in this helps my depression. Identifying the actual problem helps my depression. Gearing up to fight the underlying problem (which is absolutely not as simple as the overturning of Roe v Wade) helps my depression. Most of all, as has always been true in dysfunctional families, telling the secrets out loud helps my depression.

It may seem odd that saying these things is a form of herbalism. But it is. We who have become People of the Plant, Bearers of Green Speech, have a responsibility to speak out. We also have a responsibility to deal with the toxins in our own midst, for those toxins have the same kind of utopianistic roots as dominionist christianity. We have a responsibility to understand what it truly means to directly encounter the evil that always resides deep inside utopian movements. American medicine is at its core utopian. (We will one day cure all disease and you will live forever and never have to fear death. Just let us be completely in charge and it will happen.) Christianity at its core is utopian. (If all people believe this way, satan will be overcome. Anyone who opposes what we do is doing satan's work.)

The plants, the Green world, well, they are not utopian. They are something else again. Those of us who carry the Green within us have a duty to understand that. To understand that plants are the people's medicine, that they are renewable, ecologically sound, and free to anyone who wishes to grow and love them and to be loved by them in turn.

We have two roads in front of us. One is the road of life, one is the road of death. The dominionists have done a good job confusing people about this and about which road is which. But when people take the human and separate it from Earth, see it as an isolated phenomenon with no relation to anything outside the human, the conversation is distorted from the beginning. It is immediately untrue. What is true is that we have emerged from Earth, we are, in fact, Earth

itself, merely morphed into a particular form to fulfill particular ecological function. We are just part of what is, not the apex or crown of creation. Knowing all these things has helped me, I hope they might help you, at least a little bit. I am still afraid, afraid of what is coming, of what the dominionists intend for all of us. But I am no longer depressed. I am angry. And I can no longer keep silent about who and what they are or what they intend for this Earth I love, this country I love, or my people.

In veriditas veritas

The Gila Wilderness, June 2022.

