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October 25, 2014: In Our Dark Time

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Title: In Our Dark Time

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10/25/2014--On Friday, October 10, 2014, the New York Times reported that Republican Party strategists had hit upon an overall theme for the fall Congressional elections: that theme would be, All is Dismal. The newspaper story reported that "Darkness is enveloping American politics." Threats are everywhere—the Ebola virus, Muslim militants, porous borders, an incompetent Secret Service—and the government is unable to protect us. As a strategy for winning elections, this Republican Party approach might be effective. After all, a Democratic President is in charge. But such a theme cannot be easily cabined to just one election. The article also points out that "A sense that the country is dangerously off track is an increasingly popular topic of conversation in conservative media." And, I would add, not just in conservative media. But if that is the case, an election is a laughable response to such a momentous happening and the Republican Party is obviously an accomplice in what is wrong. As Robert Gibbs, a former spokesperson for President Obama puts it in the article, "It will be interesting to see...if they can convince people that they aren't part of that dysfunction." Undoubtedly, the Republicans are pointing to a current national mood. But I would put all this differently. Things are falling apart. That is where we should start. Two more stories: The Republicans, assuming they will win the off-year elections by controlling both Houses of Congress, gave out details on some policies they will adopt. There was nothing much there. So, aside from the fact that President Obama will veto serious changes anyway, the Republicans have nothing to propose. (And what would the Democrats propose—higher taxes on the rich? More spending on roads?) Then, of course, there is the school shooting in Washington state. A legal gun, so background checks would not have stopped this one. (But they might stop the next one). Why do these things happen? I can tell you simply. If you believe in a senseless world, senseless things will tend to happen. This will be true both because worse things will happen and because the things that do happen will not make sense. If you live in a world without hope, then when bad things happen, you will be paralyzed. Does this sound like I'm saying, so go back to church? But lots of people go to church now. We have to ask the question seriously: what is reality all about? And if the answer really is, it is all a big accident and has no meaning and humanity is alone and must make its own meaning, then we will just have to live with all this. If it's the truth, it's the truth. But, if it is not necessarily the truth, if somehow reality has a direction, then we have to hold on to that and stop calling it irrational. Just because religion is over-literal in its depictions of God and spirits, doesn't mean it is all wrong.