



# The Left Hand of God

*Michael Lerner*

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The unholy alliance of the Political Right and the Religious Right threatens to destroy the America we love. It also threatens to generate a popular aversion to God and religion by identifying religious values with a pro-war, pro-business, pro-rich, anti-science, and anti-environmental stance.

Over the past few decades, the Republicans have achieved political dominance by forging a union with the Religious Right. This marriage has provided a sanctimonious veneer for policies that have helped the rich get richer while ignoring the needs of the middle class and the poor, dismantling environmental and civil liberties protections, and seeking global domination. The Right champions the materialism and ruthless selfishness promoted by unrestrained capitalism and then laments the moral crises of family instability and loneliness experienced by people who bring these commercial values into their homes and personal lives. In response, the Religious Right offers insular communities for the faithful and a culture that blames liberals, activist judges, homosexuals, independent women, and all secular people for the moral and spiritual emptiness so many Americans experience.

Yet, however distorted both the Right's analysis and its solutions to America's spiritual crisis may be, it wins allegiance by addressing the human hunger for a life with some higher purpose. The Left, by contrast, remains largely tone-deaf to the spiritual needs of the American people. It is the yearning for meaning in life, not just the desire for money or power, that lies at the core of American politics.

Addressing the central mystery of contemporary politics -- why so many Americans vote against their own economic interests -- *The Left Hand of God* provides an invaluable, timely, and blunt critique of the current state of faith in government. Lerner challenges the Left to give up its deeply held fear of religion and to distinguish between a domination-oriented, Right-Hand-of-God tradition and a more compassionate and hope-oriented Left-Hand-of-God worldview. Further, Lerner describes the ways that Democrats have misunderstood and alienated significant parts of their potential constituency. To succeed again, Lerner argues, the Democratic Party must rethink its relationship to God, champion a progressive spiritual vision, reject the old bottom line that promotes the globalization of selfishness, and deal head-on with the very real spiritual crisis that many Americans experience every day.

Lerner presents a vision that incorporates and then goes far beyond contemporary liberal and progressive politics. He argues for a new bottom line in our economy, schools, and government. This is a fundamentally fresh approach, one that takes spiritual needs seriously in our economic and political lives. Presenting an eight-point progressive spiritual covenant with America, Lerner provides a blueprint for how the Democratic Party can effectively challenge the Right and position itself to win the White House and Congress. By appealing to religious, secular, and spiritual but not necessarily religious people, *The Left Hand of God* blazes a trail that could change our world and reclaim America from the Religious Right.

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