

What could the world be like?

Guest Commentary
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Family: All families have economic, spiritual and emotional support. Working adults have family or personal leave time to take care of family needs as they arise, including the birth or adoption of a child. All types of loving, committed families are respected and nourished, whether the family includes one parent or two, heterosexual or homosexual, biological, adopted or no children. All children are reared by loving, committed adults. Every effort is made to eliminate the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and adults. In other words, society values families by providing real support to help actual families be as healthy and strong as possible.

Personal responsibility: Individuals take personal responsibility for their own choices and resist blaming other people or society for failures or tragedies of their own making or of unavoidable circumstances. People honor each other as equal human beings struggling to make the most of life on our common celestial home. People are not categorized by race, ethnicity, religion, etc., to rationalize hostility toward those outside the "in" group.

Public officials campaign, legislate and live by an ethic of love, caring, kindness and generosity, and they reject all forms of financial influence, corruption and secretive, self-serving agendas. Elections are publicly funded, money does not equal free speech and money/power does not make right. Political issues and policies are actively debated without demonizing the opposition.

Social responsibility: Poverty, hunger, health care, peace, a sustainable environment, and government budgets are considered moral issues. What are now called "entitlement" and "social programs" are understood as community and social efforts to care for each other in times of need and desperation. Assistance is offered with respect and dignity for the recipient while not enabling dysfunctional dependency. Economic policies value the contributions of "ordinary" people and do not disproportionately favor the powerful, the cunning and the profiteer.

National policies support a global economy that is sensitive to the needs of all people on the planet and to the environment. National security is enhanced by contributing to the security and well-being of all people. The United States commits itself to a Global Marshall Plan to eliminate poverty, hunger and lack of education throughout the world.

Education: Public schools emphasize developing imagination, creativity and critical thinking, including time for the arts and non-directive play. Children are taught the values of cooperation, compassion, concern for the natural world, and commitment to solving human problems and living a meaningful life. Education prepares children to be active citizens and not just human capital in the labor market.

Health care: Every American citizen has adequate, affordable health care that emphasizes

prevention and includes physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of human functioning. Comprehensive sex education and contraception are readily available to all sexually mature individuals making unwanted pregnancies and abortion rare, safe and legal. Restricting health care options as a moral punishment is understood to be immoral.

Environment: People stop thinking that humans are superior to the rest of creation with an ordained right to dominate and exploit the Earth and its resources and instead recognize that humans are part of a complex, interdependent natural system that is facing profound challenges. Politicians and government officials understand that environmental issues are long term and worldwide and require planning and action far beyond anyone's limited term in office and beyond our national borders. As perhaps the most intelligent and certainly the most powerful species on earth, humans assume responsibility for the well-being of our planet.

Our nation leads the world by embracing a vision of a healthy, sustainable environment, including ratifying and implementing international environmental agreements, strengthening and enforcing the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, encouraging a safe, healthy food supply, developing renewable sources of energy, protecting our natural resources, and reducing our impact on global warming.

Foreign policy and national security: Our nation pursues a strategy of generosity because the strategy of achieving peace through war has not worked. We strengthen reformers and democratic forces in other countries by improving the well-being of ordinary people rather than attacking other countries and eliminating or enriching dictators. We develop far more friends and fewer enemies throughout the world because our foreign policy is motivated by caring and compassion for other human beings rather than advancing the economic exploitation by corporations.

Separation of church, state and science: Government is kept out of religion, religion out of government and both out of science. While it is not possible nor desirable to exclude values from public policies, society resists domination by any particular religious ideology. To respect and safeguard freedom of all religious and non-religious beliefs, diverse spiritual views are protected, especially minority views. Public policy is shaped by serious discussions of meaning and values without resorting to the conceited view that only one religion or ideology has all the right answers.

Science is independent of religion, state, and corporate agendas. Science and religion seek answers to different questions, and, therefore, when either infringes on the other, both are corrupted. Science is designed to test assumptions to determine verifiable facts. That process must be trustworthy and should never be tainted by political self-interest or corporate profit motives.

This new moral vision may seem utopian and unachievable. Yet, all monumental human advances have seemed impossible until they were accomplished. As Margaret Mead said, "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." Read Michael Lerner's book *The Left Hand of God* and join the Network of Spiritual Progressives at www.spiritualprogressives.org/.]www.spiritualprogressives.org.

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