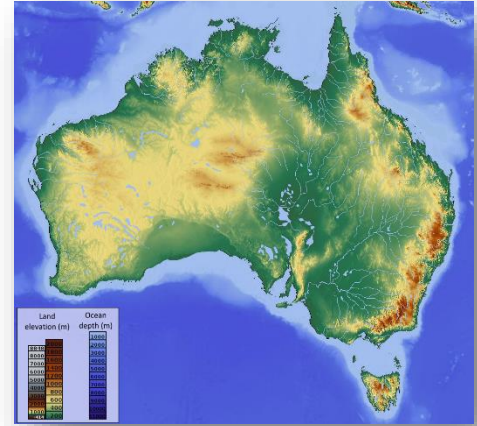


## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

May 10, 2016

Well it's another primary Tuesday, and the craziness goes on. Jill and I have nearly given up hope, and are looking for property in Australia.

While I'm kidding about Australia (for today), I have nearly been reduced to Samuel's prayer for the nation when they had abandoned God's plan for their leadership: "*As for me, I will certainly not sin against the LORD by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right*" (1 Samuel 12:23).



And I did see an appeal in *Christianity Today* that offers some avenues for prayer and action. It's called "An Appeal to Christians in the United States":

*The statement—"An Appeal to Christians in the United States"—reflects a growing alarm that our country is entering a very dangerous period in which some political leaders and some media are directly challenging our most fundamental Christian convictions.*

*Current public fearfulness tempts us all to clannish behaviors and reactions, losing touch with the compassion of God in Christ that defines Christianity. Moving toward a presidential election, it is important for Christians to ground their address to public issues in core theological understandings. The statement that follows is consequently a theological affirmation.*

### **AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIANS IN THE UNITED STATES**

*We the undersigned are deeply concerned that in the current political climate many politicians and many in the media are calling on Christian voters to abandon our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to turn from His call to discipleship. We appeal to all of us who are seeking to be faithful followers of Jesus to reject such calls, to reaffirm our Christian commitments, and to seek to be agents of God's justice and reconciliation in the world.*

*A fundamental conviction of Christian faith is that God is sovereign over our lives, over all nations, and over the course of human history. When we abandon that faith we surrender to fear on the one hand and to pride on the other. Both pervasive fear and overweening pride violate our commitment to the lordship of Christ.*

*Because of fear we too easily caricature or condemn those who are different from us. Politicians and too many in the media stereotype African Americans, Asian Americans, people from Hispanic background and followers of Islam. If we follow their lead, we slander our neighbors and blaspheme against the one God of all peoples. We resist such stereotypes and pledge to work for laws and practices that honor the dignity of all people.*

*Because of fear we have armed ourselves beyond all reason and beyond reasonable restrictions. Politicians and too many in the media rush to stigmatize mentally disturbed people as if they were the source of all violence, promoting the illusion that more assault weapons in our homes and in our public places will make us safe. If we follow their lead and believe their illusions, we will not only live in the midst of growing violence but will also abandon our commitment to the Prince of Peace. **We resist such illusions and pledge that we will seek to limit the proliferation of guns in the U.S.***





On a somewhat related subject, do you recognize the image to the left? That is the Arabic letter “n,” or “noon,” and ن stands for “Nasara” or “Nazarenes,” a pejorative Arabic word for Christians. ISIL terrorists put this letter on Christian houses as an indication that its residents are to be

executed. That’s the Bad News, and I invite you to pray for the beleaguered followers of Jesus who happen to live in the lands where the Bible was born.<sup>1</sup>



On a happier note, what follows is a similar document to the “Appeal” above. Known as *The Marrakesh Declaration*, this is a global *Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities*, and is an appeal to Muslims and to Muslim nations to exercise religious freedom and tolerance around the world:

***In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate<sup>2</sup>***



*Executive Summary of the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities*

25th-27th January 2016

*WHEREAS, conditions in various parts of the Muslim World have deteriorated dangerously due to the use of violence and armed struggle as a tool for settling conflicts and imposing one's point of view;*

*WHEREAS, this situation has also weakened the authority of legitimate governments and enabled criminal groups to issue edicts attributed to Islam, but which, in fact, alarmingly distort its fundamental principles and goals in ways that have seriously harmed the population as a whole;*

*WHEREAS, this year marks the 1,400th anniversary of the Charter of Medina, a constitutional contract between the Prophet Muhammad, God's peace and blessings be upon him, and the people of Medina, which guaranteed the religious liberty of all, regardless of faith;*

*WHEREAS, hundreds of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organizations,*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/383493/christian-genocide-symbolized-one-letter-christine-sisto>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/index.html>



*as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, gathered in Marrakesh on this date to reaffirm the principles of the Charter of Medina at a major conference;*

*WHEREAS, this conference was held under the auspices of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI of Morocco, and organized jointly by the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs in the Kingdom of Morocco and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies based in the United Arab Emirates;*

*AND NOTING the gravity of this situation afflicting Muslims as well as peoples of other faiths throughout the world, and after thorough deliberation and discussion, the convened Muslim scholars and intellectuals:*

*DECLARE HEREBY our firm commitment to the principles articulated in the Charter of Medina, whose provisions contained a number of the principles of constitutional contractual citizenship, such as freedom of movement, property ownership, mutual solidarity and defense, as well as principles of justice and equality before the law; and that,*

*The objectives of the Charter of Medina provide a suitable framework for national constitutions in countries with Muslim majorities, and the United Nations Charter and related documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are in harmony with the Charter of Medina, including consideration for public order.*

*NOTING FURTHER that deep reflection upon the various crises afflicting humanity underscores the inevitable and urgent need for cooperation among all religious groups, we AFFIRM HEREBY that such cooperation must be based on a "Common Word," requiring that such cooperation must go beyond mutual tolerance and respect, to providing full protection for the rights and liberties to all religious groups in a civilized manner that eschews coercion, bias, and arrogance.*

***BASED ON ALL OF THE ABOVE, we hereby:***

*Call upon Muslim scholars and intellectuals around the world to develop a jurisprudence of the concept of "citizenship" which is inclusive of diverse groups. Such jurisprudence shall be rooted in Islamic tradition and principles and mindful of global changes.*

*Urge Muslim educational institutions and authorities to conduct a courageous review of educational curricula that addresses honestly and effectively any material that instigates aggression and extremism, leads to war and chaos, and results in the destruction of our shared societies;*

*Call upon politicians and decision makers to take the political and legal steps necessary to establish a constitutional contractual relationship among its citizens, and to support all formulations and initiatives that aim to fortify relations and understanding among the various religious groups in the Muslim World;*

*Call upon the educated, artistic, and creative members of our societies, as well as organizations of civil society, to establish a broad movement for the just treatment of religious minorities in Muslim countries and to raise awareness as to their rights, and to work together to ensure the success of these efforts.*

*Call upon the various religious groups bound by the same national fabric to address their mutual state of selective amnesia that blocks memories of centuries of joint and shared living on the same land; we call upon them to rebuild the past by reviving this tradition of conviviality, and restoring our shared trust that has been eroded by extremists using acts of terror and aggression;*



*Call upon representatives of the various religions, sects and denominations to confront all forms of religious bigotry, vilification, and denigration of what people hold sacred, as well as all speech that promote hatred and bigotry;  
AND FINALLY,*

*AFFIRM that it is unconscionable to employ religion for the purpose of aggressing upon the rights of religious minorities in Muslim countries.*

*Marrakesh  
January 2016 ,27th*

