

A Framework for Preparing A Christian-Center Call to Unity & Action: THE MENLO DECLARATION

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1 Introduction

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

~ John 1:17 (NKJV)

There is a palpable weariness among Americans, and among American Christians, with the polarized, partisan, and bitter *ad hominem* attacks that pervade American politics. The art of principled and practical compromise has largely been replaced by metaphors of battle and conquest, and opportunistic power plays. The polarization of left and right can be described as coalescing around either **grace** or **truth** (respectively), and these myopic unbalanced stances lead not only to gridlock in public policy, but to drastically incomplete solutions to our social issues. (There’s a lot of alliteration in this paragraph. I don’t know if you meant to do this, but there are a lot of “p” sounds. This can be a good rhetorical device.) You’ve made a lot of assertions in this opening paragraph; which is ok, but sometimes it’s a good idea to have a well-placed example that illustrates those assertions. Also, use standard paper formatting (continuous paragraphs with indentation for this kind of research paper)—Problem (partisan politics)

As a specific example, note how the Left’s typical approach to poverty is very “grace” oriented--while addressing the structural contributions to poverty, such as poor access to healthcare or employment, there is little, if any emphasis on individual responsibility and the need to develop the character required to OVERCOME difficulty. The Right, conversely, employs a strong emphasis on personal virtue (“truth-telling” to the individual), while virtually disregarding the structural components of poverty.

The faults of the extreme Christian Right and Left have been well discussed in print, including David P. Gushee’s *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center*¹ as well as James D. Hunter’s *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*.² A brief summary of the faults of these positions includes the following:

Figure 1 - A Summary of the Failures of the Christian Left and Right

Failures of the Left	Failures of the Right
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to directly address the morality of homosexuality and abortion • Failure to address the limitations of pacifism and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrow moral agenda that often excludes poverty and environmental stewardship • A zeal to uncritically support national engagement

¹ Gushee, D. P. *The Future Of Faith In American Politics: The Public Witness Of The Evangelical Center*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008. Print.

² Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 106. Print.

the possible need for Just War	in foreign wars
• Political partisanship (over-identification with the Democratic Party)	• Political partisanship (over-identification with the Republican Party)
• Little or no emphasis on personal responsibility as part of their solutions	• Failure to seriously consider social structures' influence on poverty
• Open hostility and anger towards the Right	• Open hostility towards ideological opponents.

However, for at least the last decade, Christian leaders, especially from what is known as the “Evangelical Left”, have initiated and proposed a scripturally based move away from the poles to what is now referred to as the “Evangelical Center,” or what could also be called the “Christian Center.”

Perhaps the most visible and influential personality in the Christian Center movement is Jim Wallis, author of *God's Politics*³ and *The Great Awakening*.⁴ He has captured the sentiments expressed above well by writing:

As the limitations of the current political options have become more apparent and as their ideological rigidity blocks social cooperation and political solutions, I have become ever more convinced of the need for another way. And one seems to be emerging. We see a new kind of politics growing around the country. It is socially “conservative” or traditional on matters of personal behavior and responsibility, rooted in strong moral values that include the sanctity of human life, and deeply committed to the crucial bonds of family. At the same time, it is also strongly populist with regard to economic fairness and justice, quite communitarian in its sense of social responsibility, deeply committed to environmental care, and increasingly antiwar in its stance toward foreign policy. At the heart of this new (and very old) option is the integral link between personal ethics and social justice, and the refusal to separate the two.⁵

The history and contributions of left and right Christian camps, as well as the goals and priorities of the emerging Christian center position, have been well described in Wallis’ books, as well as Gushee’s and Hunter’s volumes mentioned above.

However, the question of a concise and clear call to Christians to meet in this center has yet to be completely answered. This paper purposes to create the framework for the writing of such a call in the form of a formal declaration, tentatively entitled *The Menlo Declaration*. Daniel, while I get the heart of this introduction, it is a bit muddled. In an introduction of this type, you need to clarify some of your terms. I know what you are talking about, but you need to distinguish between three rights and lefts (political, Christian, and evangelical). Your introduction goes back and forth between the three interchangeably.

³ Wallis, Jim. *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

⁴ Wallis, Jim. *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith & Politics In A Post-Religious Right America*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

⁵ Wallis, 2008, 99.

2 The Genesis and Goals of this Effort

A primary motivating factor for this document was the author's disappointment with the *Manhattan Declaration*. In comparison to other recent declarations, it fell short of representing the breadth and spirit of gentleness required of a Christian affirmation. Specifically, while it may be praised on its concise review of history and the three goals it does proclaim, it may be criticized on the following points:

- **It is very short on scriptural referents** – in fact, it contains only one reference, to Acts 4, which it does not include, but only refers to
- **It is copiously sprinkled with perhaps technically correct, yet hyperbolic negative value judgments** – terms such as “culture of death, “the cheapening of life...now metastasized”, “license to kill”, “the corrupt and degrading notion” may serve as sharp rejoinders to awaken apathetic congregants who already agree with the priorities stated, but it may also turn away moderates who would be otherwise willing to join.
- **It does not reflect the full spectrum of scriptural, historic and current Christian concerns** – missing from it are any serious mention of creation care, poverty, or access to health care. You might want to say what the three issues are that the Manhattan Declaration addresses.

Therefore, this document, crafted in Menlo Park, CA (hence the Declaration's name), has the following scope and goals:

1. To suggest a format for such a declaration
2. To propose principles for limiting scope, especially with respect to issues and methods that cause division among Christians (and the general populace).
3. To forge a complete, balanced list of *Biblical Goals* which will form the backbone of the proposed *Menlo Declaration*.

3 The Form and Content of Declarations

Religious declarations in modern history principally come in two forms, sometimes combined into one document. The first are *creedal* statements, such as the recent *Christian Manifesto*,⁶ that often mirror the traditional creeds such as the *Nicene* or *Apostle's* creeds.⁷ However, more typically, declarations,

⁶ George, Timothy, Os Guinness, and et al. "Evangelical Manifesto." An Evangelical Manifesto. N.p., Mar 2009. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/manifesto.php>>.

⁷ "Christian Creeds." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 20 May 2012. Web. 25 May 2012.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_creeds>. Don't cite Wikipedia—Its not considered a scholarly source.

even if preceded by a creed, primarily contain *statements of belief* and *calls to action* regarding specific social problems that the declaration's issuers want to address publicly.

Modern declarations in this vein include the seminal *Barmen Declaration*,⁸ written by the confessing church in Nazi Germany, as well as the right-leaning *Manhattan Declaration*,⁹ the right-to-center Lausanne Committee's *Cape Town Commitment*,¹⁰ the Christian Action Network's *Franschhoek Declaration*,¹¹ addressing African Christian goals, and the National Evangelical Association's centrist *For the Health of the Nation*.¹² (Be careful in labeling these declarations "centrist/right-to-center" etc... unless you are going to give a reason why you are making this judgment.)

A review of these shows that there is no universally accepted standard for such documents, which gives rise to some questions – can some best practices be distilled from them? What formats and elements can be chosen to (a) define a clear Christian position on issues, and (b) provide a clear and appealing call to action? This paper argues to answer those questions with the format shown below in **Figure 2**:

Figure 2 - Structure for a Declaration

1. First Goal Category
 - 1.1. First Goal
 - 1.1.1. Declarations Regarding the Goal
 - 1.1.1.1. We affirm that [Biblical convictions, principles, paradigms, master story]
 - 1.1.1.2. We deny that [Biblical convictions, principles, paradigms, master story]
 - 1.1.2. Attitudes and Actions
 - 1.1.2.1. Individual
 - 1.1.2.1.1. Perspective or action to be adopted
 - 1.1.2.2. Voluntary Associations
 - 1.1.2.3. The Church

⁸ "Theological Declaration of Barmen." World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church, May 1934. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://www.warc.ch/pc/20th/>>.

⁹ George, Timothy, Robert George, and Chuck Colson. "Manhattan Declaration: A Call Of Christian Conscience." The Manhattan Declaration. Manhattan Declaration Inc., 20 Nov 2009. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://manhattandeclaration.org/the-declaration/read.asp>>.

¹⁰ "The Capetown Commitment." The Lausanne Movement.. The Lausanne Movement., 2011. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html>>.

¹¹ "The Franschhoek Declaration." Christian Action. Africa Christian Action, 03 July 2007. Web. 25 May 2012. <[http://www.christianaction.org.za/articles/Draft Franschhoek Declaration.htm](http://www.christianaction.org.za/articles/Draft%20Franschhoek%20Declaration.htm)>.

¹² "For the Health of the Nation." . National Association of Evangelicals, 2009. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://www.nae.net/government-relations/for-the-health-of-the-nation>>.

1.1.2.4. Public Policy

1.2. Second Goal ...

2. Second Goal Category...

The components of the outline in **Figure 2** above are defined thusly:

1. **Categories** are *positive categorical goals* for the issues to be addressed.
2. **Goals** are the positive, specific goal declarations that reflect the positive solutions to an *individual issue* being addressed
3. **Declarations** are *statements about nature of the issue, and the Scriptural principles that apply*. The format of the Declarations should be that of *affirmation* or *denial*.
4. **Attitudes and Actions** are *responses or actions to be taken*. The format and content of these should describe suggested measures for *the individual, voluntary organizations, the church, and/or civil government* to take.

4 Principles for Reducing Disagreement

The good news about forging a *Christian* consensus on the issues is that, by definition, all involved hold to the Bible as a primary authority. This leads to our first guiding, as well as limiting principle:

Guiding Principle 1 The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures form the **primary** authority and guide to forging a list of **primary** issues, principles, and actions to be pursued.

Such an approach should lead to a relatively non-controversial list of high-level priorities and social issues to focus on among Christians. However, due to different opinions regarding biblical *means* to solving those issues, forging an agreed-upon list of concomitant *actions* and *public policy goals* is a bit more difficult, and has likely kept many from the Left and Right from preparing a full set of biblical goals.

For example, the Christian Left has downplayed or ignored the moral problem of abortion because they disagree with the Right's public policy efforts to *ban* abortion, and they wrestle with the mother's rights to self-determination and conscience, items which the Right has failed to significantly consider or address. (One-sentence paragraph)

Similarly, the Right has been largely silent on care of the environment because in the past, left-leaning "environmentalists" seemed to approach creation care in an idolatrous (nature worshipping),¹³ unscientific (politically driven) and knee-jerk fashion (no reasoned priorities), along with making the

¹³ Gushee, 250

errors of exaggerating of data and being deaf to the related economic and human health concerns of some environmental efforts.^{14,15}

Even currently, many on the Right who highly value care of the environment withhold their participation due to the left's seemingly uncritical acceptance of global warming claims, foibles, and tactics.

Regardless of our opinions on the validity of human-caused global climate change, its controversial character is a good example of the type of wrangling that is caused when commitments are made to controversial or incompletely vetted issues. This leads to the second principle held forth to circumscribe the issues discussed:

Guiding Principle 2 Highly controversial modern scientific claims must be omitted until such time as there is more substantial agreement among Christians

As an important note, this principle states "agreement among *Christians*" not "agreement among *scientists*." This distinction emphasizes that scientific consensus is not always to be trusted, especially by thinking and morally educated people, because of: This is a slippery slope because we could say the same thing about biblical interpretation.

- the historic unreliability of modern scientific 'unanimity' on controversial issues, which are often more politically than empirically driven.^{16,17}
- the growing retraction rate of previously 'unanimous' conclusions, scientific papers and the claims therein.¹⁸
- modern secular science's history of ignoring the important moral implications of new technologies, which sometimes come into conflict with Christian morality, such as the efforts of American eugenics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,¹⁹ or perhaps even the use of nuclear weaponry to end World War II. Such incidences serve as a reminder that scientific 'consensus' is not always what is ethically right.

¹⁴ Seavey, Todd. "THE DDT BAN TURNS 30 — Millions Dead of Malaria Because of Ban, More Deaths Likely." . American Council on Science and Health, 01 Jun 2001. Web. 29 May 2012.

<http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsid.442/healthissue_detail.asp>.

¹⁵ Munasinghe, Mohan. "Economic, social, and environmental elements of development." The Encyclopedia of Earth.

Munasinghe Institute for Sustainable Development, 23 Sep 2008. Web. 29 May 2012.

<http://www.eoearth.org/article/Economic,_social,_and_environmental_elements_of_development>.

¹⁶ "Politicization Of Science In The United States ." Union for Reformed Judaism. Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, Nov 2009. Web. 25 May 2012. <http://urj.org/about/union/governance/reso//?syspage=article&item_id=1943>.

¹⁷ . "The Politicization of Science Is Undermining the Credibility of Academia." . CATO Institute, 10Feb 2011. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/politicization-science-is-undermining-credibility-academia>>.

¹⁸ Zimmer, Carl. "A Sharp Rise in Retractions Prompts Calls for Reform." . New York Times, 16 Apr 2012. Web. 25 May 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/science/rise-in-scientific-journal-retractions-prompts-calls-for-reform.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all>.

¹⁹ . "Eugenics in the United States." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 10 May 2012. Web. 25 May 2012.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics_in_the_United_States>.

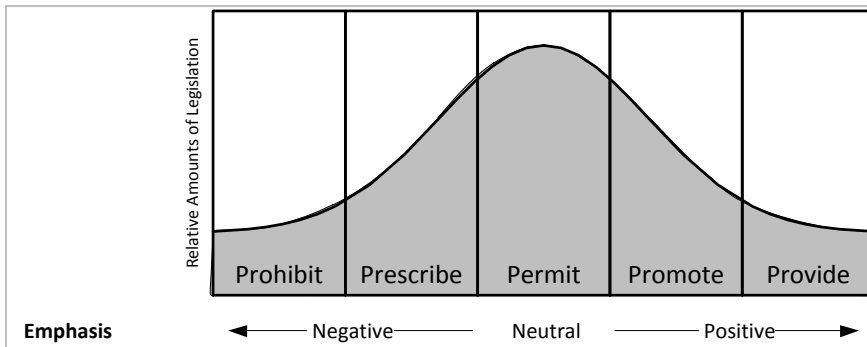
- contemporary mistrust of science, which has grown especially among conservatives.²⁰ If we intend to win them to the center, we must be sensitive to their misgivings in order to gain their trust and participation.

²⁰ Gauchata, Gordon. "Politicization of Science in the Public Sphere A Study of Public Trust in the United States, 1974 to 2010." . *American Sociological Review*, Apr 2012. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://asr.sagepub.com/content/77/2/167.abstract>>.

5 A Specific Proportionality Proposal for Public Policy Types

Regarding public policy specifically, I propose that a method is needed to *quantitatively* balance and proportion the various types of public policy actions. With that in mind, the following spectrum of public policy types are proposed, and superimposed over them is a normal curve which, it is argued, reflects the most effective relative emphasis, which should be pursued by Christians.

Figure 3 - The Functions of Government Over a Normal Curve



Briefly, the five types of public policy efforts, listed from most negative to most positive are:

1. **Prohibition** – legislation *prohibiting* various actions, such as murder or theft
2. **Prescription** – legislation *regulating* various actions, such as alcohol or product labeling
3. **Permission** – no legislation proffered, government remains *neutral*
4. **Promotion** – legislation *incentivizing* various actions, such as home ownership or savings through tax incentives or low cost loans
5. **Provision** – legislation *redistributing* money to provide services

The Menlo Declaration makes the assumption that a distribution across a normal curve represents an effective, if not optimal balance of these types - a significant, unsubstantiated assumption, we know, but it is helpful for understanding the formulation of the third, and perhaps most circumscribing guiding principle:

Guiding Principle 3 In order to minimize disagreement, and to reduce the negative social repercussions of 'legislative strong-arming,' we must focus less on the tail-end public policy actions (prohibition and provision) and more on the 'softer' policies of prescription and promotion.

There is a second, less speculative and simpler reason for abandoning or severely reducing our more forcible public policy goals – these 'strong-arm tactics' violate the spirit of Christ, who asks us to serve in meekness rather than by using the coercive power of the state. This latter approach demonstrates what James Hunter calls the "basic intent and desire to dominate, control, or rule."²¹ He decries this approach, writing:

²¹ Hunter 106

*Our times amply demonstrate that it is far easier to force one's will on others through legal and political means or to threaten to do so than it is to persuade them or negotiate compromise with them.*²²

A third, merely practical reason is the simple evidence of the public's distaste for the strong-arm legislative tactics and rhetoric of the 'culture wars,' quite visible in the growing ranks of newly minted Independents leaving both the Left and the Right.²³

6 Specific Sacrifices Suggested for both Sides

Restating the guiding and limiting principles enumerated above, in order to create a meaningful, principled centrist list of Christian priorities, we should:

1. Re-establish our ethical norms and priorities from a close examination of scripture.^{24,25}
2. Avoid taking public policy stands on issues that are highly charged and surrounded with potentially politicized science.
3. Reduce or eliminate our "hard" public policy efforts, characterized as *prohibition* or *provision*, and focus on *promotion* and *prescription* (incentives and regulations).

Below are some of the possible applications of the three principles above to contemporary issues, and adjustments they might suggest for both Left and Right.

6.1 Setting Goals Using the Balance of Scripture

CHANGES FOR THE LEFT

Abortion - Despite emphasizing help for the poor and helpless, as well as being pro-life with regard to capital punishment, the left has been surprisingly soft-spoken on the morality of the killing of the unborn. Out of a presumed desire to protect the rights of the helpless pregnant women, they have somehow not resolved to help the arguably more vulnerable person in the unwanted pregnancy debacle – the unborn child. ***Christians ought to advocate for the right to life of the unborn, and more forcibly inculcate the moral and practical toll of abortion. Actually, if you are going to prescribe changes, you should prescribe them for both sides. The Right needs to change on this issue as well. They need to acknowledge the role that sexuality and procreation has played in the marginalization of women***

CHANGES FOR THE RIGHT

²² Hunter 107

²³ "Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology ." Pew Research Center. N.p., 04 May 2011. Web. 25 May 2012. <<http://www.people-press.org/2011/05/04/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology/>>.

²⁴ Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision Of The New Testament, Community, Cross, New Creation : A Contemporary Introduction To New Testament Ethics*. HarperOne, 1998.

²⁵ Stassen, G. H., and D. P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus In Contemporary Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

While a complete survey of Scriptural ethical priorities is outside the scope of this paper, both Hayes and Stassen, as well as many others, have done a fairly complete surveys on this topic, which can inform our final declaration. (not bold and needs to be footnoted)

War – From a complete examination of the New Testament and the way of Jesus, we see that Jesus consistently eschewed Zealotry and violence, and in his inaugural address on the Mount, he described citizens of his kingdom as ‘peacemakers’ (Matthew 5:9). Rather than seeing this as idle sentiment or pleasant inapplicable hyperbole or metaphor, we should assume that part of discipleship is learning to actually *be* a person who makes peace. We also read at least twice in the Apostle Paul’s letters, directives towards making peace a priority (Romans 12:18, 14:19).

This is not to argue for pacifism, but rather, making peace a priority, and war an actual last resort. As Stassen and Gushee write:

War is so destructive that we need an ethic of prevention, an ethic of initiatives that government are obligated to take in order to prevent war and make peace. We need a positive theology of peacemaking.²⁶ Again, this is a short enough quotation to include it in the body of the text and not as a bloc quotation.

Put plainly, Christians need to disengage from universal support of international wars and put energies towards preventative peacemaking. This is a nice sentence.

Again, I want to add changes for the left: that last resort is so last resort that they end up pacifists. That there may be legitimate national interests that need to be protected and preserved (maybe not as many as the right defines)

CHANGES FOR LEFT AND RIGHT

Poverty – While the Left has done well to identify the structural causes of poverty, the arguably more important factor of personal responsibility and industry is often ignored and derided as “blaming the victim.” The Right has made the equal and opposite error – emphasizing only individual responsibility to the exclusion of admitting structural injustice.

Scripturally speaking, Christians ought to attack both causes of poverty, but perhaps especially emphasize personal accountability, since we presume the gospel to be able to transform the individual and create virtue. This approach is not blaming the victim, as much as it is empowering them with the belief that their effort can make a difference. Ron Sider summarizes the dual approach well:

Both unjust social structures and bad moral choices together create social problems. Solutions, therefore, require both inner, moral, spiritual change and outer, socioeconomic, structural change.²⁷

6.2 Stepping Back from Controversial Science

Controversial stances based on scientific reasoning need closer inspection by all involved, and in the interest of unity of mind and effort, we ought to table commitment to a specific stance on such issues,

²⁶ Stassen 169.

²⁷ Ronald J. Sider. *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America* (p. 26). Kindle Edition.

at least as far as a call to a common set of goals is concerned. ***Individual Christians have the right and responsibility to obey their own consciences in questionable matters (Romans 14), but we should not include such controversies in our common declarations.***

CHANGES FOR THE LEFT

Anthropogenic Climate Change - Due to the continued political and scientific controversies over man-made global climate change, we ought to refuse to make this a primary plank of Christian creation care. Instead, we ought to focus on reducing known and uncontroversial pollutants and environmental destruction.

CHANGES FOR THE RIGHT

Creationism - There is perhaps no more controversial subject in science than the debate over Darwinian origins of life and humanity, versus the Creation story. While many Christians feel strongly about the scientific and theological merit of Creationism, we should omit this as a central plank of a call to unity.

6.3 Stepping Back from Coercive Public Policy

Perhaps the most difficult step required for unity and effectiveness is found in the need to step back from forceful public policy strong-arming in order to return to a position of influence and education (“education” is a term of the left—because the left defines social issues as a lack of knowledge). It is not that all efforts to ban or provide via redistribution are necessarily bad, but rather, that they display a lack of ability or faith to change the hearts and minds, and are often a cheap resort to the politics of power. That’s quite an all-encompassing statement that needs a bit of support.

It may take a lot of convincing to bring the Right and Left poles to agreement on this point, since both have devoted much time and resources to these methods of “social change.” Nevertheless, the fruits of peace, as well as permanent change may result from taking this long view of social transformation.

CHANGES FOR THE LEFT

Poverty – Coercion from the left takes the form of mandatory taxes for the purpose of redistribution into social programs. While admittedly, individuals and the Church have not and perhaps cannot have the resources for eradicating poverty, we (who’s the “we” here—are you identifying yourself here?) are not advocating no government involvement – just a retreat from redistribution (*Provision* in our graph above) to *promotion* – incentivizing individuals and voluntary organizations to help the poor become self-sufficient members of the community.

In reality, it also seems that redistribution actually does not work – it often shifts poverty from one group to the other because it often fails to enable individuals in becoming *independent* and *self-sufficient*. (*self-sufficient is quite an “individualistic” term—who is self-sufficient? We all participate in a community that shapes us in certain directions, brings out different characteristics in our personality, etc...)*

Racism – Despite arguable Biblical support for such things as generational reparations, support for monetary restitution for African American descendants of slaves, as well as the ‘reverse discrimination’

of racial quotas in hiring and education need to be omitted, and examined for (a) their *effectiveness* in resolving current issues, (b) their justness *towards* those who 'unknowingly benefit' from the injustices of the past, and (c) their role in *increasing* racial tension rather than resolving it.

CHANGES FOR THE RIGHT

Abortion – Christians on both sides of the political divide agree that abortion is a bad thing, but those on the right seek to make it illegal. However, following our third guideline, perhaps Christians should *NOT* seek to make it illegal, but seek through other means to make it something rarely demanded.

Admittedly, Christians on the Right already make a sizable effort in non-legislative approaches to reducing abortion, including supporting and staffing Crisis Pregnancy Centers. However, perhaps more can be done to support adoption and pregnancy prevention in the effort to reduce teen pregnancy and abortion, rather than wrangling in the courts. 'Novel' new approaches such as encouraging people to buck the American trend of late marriage (typically done for financial and educational achievement), may hold promise in reducing abortion and unwanted pregnancies.^{28,29}

Immigration – Nowhere is the conservative pension for 'truth over grace' more egregiously evident than in the immigration debate. Calls against all forms of 'amnesty for illegals' are common, as are calls for mass deportation. However, not only are we perhaps violating Biblical commands to be kind and hospitable to the foreigner in taking these positions, we may also be making a Pharisaical error in being punitive rather than restorative. The application of our third principle might lead to this conclusion: that ***we abandon public policy measures that criminalize employers and immigrants who have not broken any other laws besides journeying here to make a life for their families. We ought to focus on welcoming them through immigration reform, pathways to citizenship, and work visas.***

CHANGES FOR LEFT AND RIGHT

Probably THE most controversial issue in modern public policy is that concerning LGBT marriage. Both Left and Right could make adjustments in their approach using all three guidelines we have outlined. However, regarding withdrawing from hard public policy, the following changes are suggested:

For the Left, it must be **noted** that even some more moderate to liberal Christians have **noted** that the univocal testimony of the scriptures are that homosexuality is a sin and against nature.³⁰ In light of this, and the controversial and inconclusive nature of the science of homosexual origins, we should NOT push to legitimize homosexual marriage, nor ordain them in our churches.³¹

The Christian Right is largely perceived by outsiders as hateful to the LGBT community, in large part due to our approach, not merely our stand on the sinfulness of it. We must reconsider our methods of

²⁸ Mohler, Albert, auth. "The Value of Marrying Young." Focus on the Family Radio. N.p., 2011. web. 29 May 2012. <<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/radio.aspx?ID={0B272AD9-18FF-4DDF-ADC2-FAD996A8EAF4}>>.

²⁹ Watters, Candice. "Good Reasons to Marry Young." Boundless. Focus on the Family, 25 Mar 2010. Web. 29 May. 2012. <<http://www.boundless.org/2005/answers/a0002250.cfm>>.

³⁰ Hays, 394

³¹ Hays, 399-403

support, care, and outreach to the LGBT community, and address their concerns for legal rights, even if we do not intend to redefine marriage in public policy.³²

7 CONCLUSION

The above suggested changes are, of course, merely a partial list of adjustments that can be proposed using our guidelines. A fuller list of issues, adjustments, and final positions could form the basis of a much longer work. That work could take the form of an annotated declaration.

As a final contribution towards the creation of such a complete declaration, the following outline is proposed. It is our (??—who is the “our”) hope that this Declaration can actually be written.

8 An Outline for the Menlo Declaration

The following is an outline, with the first section completed in a draft format, as an example. This foundation, along with the ideas provided above, should prepare the way for a complete “Menlo Declaration.”

For the common good of society, as Christian Christians (??), we affirm the following priorities, goals, and proposed attitudes, and we personally commit to the specific actions recommended in the following declaration.

1 THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

1.1 Pursuing Peace instead of War

1.1.1 Declarations

- 1.1.1.1 We **affirm** that all people would prefer to live in a state of peace, rather than war, and that this state is to be preferred (Ps. 34:14, Rom. 12:18, Heb 12:14)
- 1.1.1.2 We **affirm** that war should always be seen a last resort in conflict, and that if war is pursued, it should follow the principles of Just War Theory.
- 1.1.1.3 We **affirm** that both Just War and pacifism are possible valid interpretations of Christian theology, and each individual must obey their own conscience in which he ascribes to.
- 1.1.1.4 We **affirm** that proactive peacemaking, such as being kind, but not naïve, with respect to our enemies, is preferred to conflict and war, and can be prioritized and participated in by all regardless of their position on Just War or pacifism. (Mt. 5:9, Mt. 5:43-48)
- 1.1.1.5 We **affirm** that being kind to enemies does not mean we allow them to abuse or take advantage of us. Love can also kindly confront with the truth.
- 1.1.1.6 We **affirm** that we must not neglect our duties to our own families, community, and country when endeavoring to help others. We must first honor our primary commitments.

1.1.2 Attitudes and Actions

1.1.2.1 Individual

³² Blankenhorn, David, and Jonathan Rauch. "A Reconciliation on Gay Marriage ." New York Times. 21 Feb 2009: n. page. Web. 29 May. 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/22/opinion/22rauch.html?_r=1>.

This thoughtful article proposes the most meaningful and workable compromise on this issue which will not resolve without a compromise.

- 1.1.2.1.1 I **commit** to loving my enemies, praying for them, making regular gestures of kindness towards them, and wishing them well in my heart.
- 1.1.2.1.2 I **commit** to protecting my family and community from violent threats, acknowledging that loving my enemies does not include allowing them to hurt others.
- 1.1.2.2 Voluntary Associations
 - 1.1.2.2.1 We **commit** to doing good to all who need help, including our most troubled and destructive citizens, starting in our own communities.
- 1.1.2.3 The Church
 - 1.1.2.3.1 We **commit** to praying for our enemies, and admitting that we are battling against evil philosophies and powers, not people.
 - 1.1.2.3.2 We **commit** to addressing our ideological opponents with respect, gentleness, and kind honesty.
 - 1.1.2.3.3 We **commit** to understanding and fairly representing the ideas of our ideological opponents, rather than using mere caricatures or treating them as a negative monolith.
 - 1.1.2.3.4 We **commit** to focusing on understanding the needs and claims of our ideological opponents, and attempting to understand and resolve the differences between our ideas and resulting methods, rather than merely judging their motives as bad.
 - 1.1.2.3.5 We **commit** to the prioritizing practices of *Just Peacemaking*, rather than waiting for wars to develop.³³
- 1.1.2.4 Public Policy
 - 1.1.2.4.1 We **commit** to international public policies that see armed conflict as a last resort as per Just War principles.³⁴
 - 1.1.2.4.2 We **commit** to international public policies that aim to positively support the freedom and prosperity of all nations, including the provision of emergency aid when we can afford it as a nation.
- 1.2 Reducing Abortion
- 1.3 Ending Capital Punishment
- 2 HEALTH AND LONGEVITY
 - 2.1 Protecting the Environment
 - 2.2 Reducing Teen Pregnancy
 - 2.3 Reducing Obesity
 - 2.4 Increasing Literacy
 - 2.5 Ensuring Access to Healthcare
- 3 ECONOMIC SECURITY
 - 3.1 Reducing Poverty
 - 3.2 Reducing Personal And National Debts
- 4 HUMAN RIGHTS

³³ . "Just Peacemaking." Just Peacemaking Initiative. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 May 2012. <<http://justpeacemaking.blogspot.com/p/just-peacemaking.html>>.

³⁴ Stassen, G. H., and D. P. Gushee 158-164.

- 4.1 Racism
- 4.2 Immigrants
- 4.3 Children
- 4.4 The Unborn
- 4.5 The Disabled
- 4.6 LGBT
- 4.7 Prisoners

5 RELIGIOUS AND PUBLIC FREEDOMS

- 5.1 Protecting the freedom of religious and critical speech
- 5.2 Protecting the freedom of conscience in medicine

6 ETERNAL SECURITY AND HOPE

- 6.1 Reviving a Service Emphases
- 6.2 Pursuing Deeper Discipleship
- 6.3 Pursuing Evangelism

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Daniel,

It is obvious that you put quite a lot of thought into this paper. You drift toward systematizing (this paper has layers of systems) which can be helpful as categories. I do think that the paper would have been stronger if you would have made your argument with less charts and lists in the body of the texts and with more prose. It felt a bit too choppy the way it is (and needed quite a few format changes). At times it seemed like you made assertions that were not backed up by research (I tried to note a few places). As I read along, I also wanted you to stake out some of the middle ground between the two poles that the church could focus on as they pursued disparate political agendas based on their interpretations of Scripture. As you started to give texture to a "Menlo Declaration" your paper became more nuanced and interesting.

On a personal note—you definitely have a passion for ideas and the ability to do research. So there may be further education in the future. The only advice that I can give toward that end is to resist the temptation to drift into another topic until you've completed the project you have worked on. It is a fine skill to develop to be able to say "no" to an idea or to postpone chasing it down until you have the time and space to devote to it.

Paper Grade 92 B+

Final Grade A-