

Call to Action on the Nuclear Weapons Danger

*“The warhorse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save” — Psalm 33*

Today our leaders are renewing nuclear production activities and upgrading nuclear testing facilities. They are invigorating arsenals that should be left to decay. Our country cannot rightly seek to halt the spread of nuclear weapons while at the same time developing new weapons capabilities of our own. As these dangerous weapons spread to North Korea and beyond, and as terrorists seek to acquire them, we must realize that we have made a deadly mistake. It is time to break faith with nuclear weapons once and for all. Nuclear weapons merit unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation. The 30,000 nuclear weapons around the globe have more than 100,000 times the explosive power of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These are doomsday arms — genocidal, ecocidal, and suicidal.

It is our belief that only God has the authority to end all life on the planet; all we have is the power, and it is past time to surrender it. To live in a world within minutes of possible annihilation is to defy God’s will, not to do God’s will.

When the cold war ended, many thought the nuclear danger had ended with it. It did not, and now, having assumed a more sinister shape, it is mounting again. Scores of admirals and generals from many countries have come to believe that nuclear weapons *invite* far more than they deter catastrophic conflict. They agree that the possession of nuclear weapons by some states is the strongest incentive for other states to acquire them. They are also painfully aware that nuclear weapons, while most useful to terrorists, are utterly useless against them. Consequently, these leaders now advocate, as do we, the abolition of all nuclear arsenals. As General Lee Butler declared five years ago, “A world free of the threat of nuclear weapons is necessarily a world devoid of nuclear weapons.”¹

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was a grand design struck in 1970. Since that time, over 180 non-nuclear countries have promised to forego nuclear weapons provided the nuclear powers abolished theirs. In other words — and this is crucial — *non-proliferation was, from the beginning, inextricably linked to nuclear disarmament*. But instead of honoring their obligations under Article VI of the treaty, the nuclear powers have substituted a double standard for the single one intended. For 35 years, they have practiced nuclear apartheid, arrogating to themselves the right to build, deploy, and threaten to use nuclear weapons, while policing the rest of the world against their production.

We call on all members of America’s religious communities, as a testament of our common faith, to join Faithful Security, and to take action immediately to break faith with nuclear weapons. The first step to eliminate nuclear weapons is to demand that the U.S. government lead the way for the global abolition of nuclear weapons by immediately making a plan for how to freeze, lock down, reduce, and eliminate nuclear weapons in a step-by-step process with ever increasing verification. Fellow believers, we know how often justice appears a weary way off, peace a little further. But if we give up on justice, if we give up on peace, we give up on God. So let us resolve to labor mightily for what we pray for fervently, confident in the poet’s contention that “we are only undefeated because we go on trying” and in the vision of the prophet that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.”

God bless you all.

Call to Action initiated by Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr., 2005

To get involved, visit Faithful Security at www.faithfulsecurity.org

¹ General Lee Butler, paper read at the State of the World Forum convened by the Mikhail Gorbachev Foundation, San Francisco, California, October 2-6, 1996.