

**Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
Working Together to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons**

**An Inquiry
by Howard W. Hallman**

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Draft 2.3: Comments Invited

This is an inquiry about how three major monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – can work together for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

SUMMARY

My thesis is that these three religions have much in common and could speak together on this issue. Among them there is a broad consensus that nuclear weapons should never be used because of harm to God's creation: massive loss of human lives and disastrous destruction of the environment. Although some believe that it is acceptable for a nation to possess nuclear weapons as a deterrent against nuclear attack or an overwhelming conventional attack from another nation, many insist that it is time to go beyond deterrence and seek the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

Religious leaders and organizations have made the case for nuclear disarmament since the first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima 68 years ago. Although some arms control agreements have been entered into, the globe is still awash with nuclear weapons. It is time for top religious leaders from the three faiths to join together to say unequivocally that this has gone on too long and to demand that the nations of Earth take prompt and decisive action to rid the world of all nuclear weapons.

INTERFAITH ACTION

It is appropriate to seek interfaith action because the last 50 years has seen a variety of efforts to improve relationships among the three Abrahamic faiths. For instance, in 1965 the Second Vatican Council adopted a conciliatory Declaration on the Relationship of the Christian Church and Non-Christian Religions, promulgated by Pope Paul VI as *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Age"). This led to establishment of two Vatican commissions on relations with Jews and Muslims. The World Council of Churches has engaged in similar interfaith relationships. In 2006 and 2007 the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbis of Israel issued a pair of joint declarations aimed at achieving greater understanding and mutual respect. There are other efforts that can be built upon.

A Common Word. In this spirit in 2007 138 Muslim scholars addressed "A Common Word between Us and You" to Pope Benedict XVI, patriarchs of Orthodox Churches, leaders of large Christian denominations, and other Christian leaders. They could have easily included

Jewish leaders as well. **The common word is “love of the One God, and love of the neighbor.”** They explained:

Of God’s Unity, God says in the Holy Qur’an: *Say, He is God, the One! / God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all!* (Al-Ikhlās, 121-2). Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur’an: *So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote himself to Him with a complete devotional* (Muzzammil, 73:8). Of the necessity of love for the neighbor, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: *None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself.*

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One./ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment./ and the second, like it is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)

Jesus, of course, was quoting Torah with its sacred Shema, derived from the first word:

Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.
Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

The passage continues:

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

In Torah the second commandment comes at the end of a long series of negative injunctions on what not to do to other people: don't defraud, steal, revile the deaf, cause the blind to stumble, render an unjust judgment, slander, hate in your heart, take vengeance, bear a grudge. The passage concludes with:

...but you must love your neighbor as yourself. (Leviticus 19:18)

The three religions elaborate on the two commandments with guidance for worship and codes of conduct for personal relationships. In this manner religion becomes a way of life for individual believers.

Religion also takes institutional form as an organized body of believers, sometimes but not always with territorial identity. Expanding religions may themselves have territorial ambitions. Or they become involved with states that are in conflict with other states. In that manner religious bodies are required to take a position on issues of war and peace.

ATTITUDES TOWARD WAR AND PEACE

For all three monotheistic faiths peace is the preferred object, but all three give consideration to when war is allowed.

Judaism

In summing up the Jewish tradition on war and peace, Rabbi Maurice Lamm indicates:

In truth, no disquisition on Jewish morality could be complete without recognizing the relentless search for peace that characterizes the history of the Jews. The prophetic denunciations of war are household expressions, and the longing for peace for tens of generations. The Talmud is replete with the preachments against the folly of war and the bearing and production of arms. The Talmud not only repudiates future wars, it has all but spiritualized the very real military heroes of the Biblical past, and has transformed reputed physical prowess into religious qualities....

But this drive for peace is not the sole consideration in Jewish thought. Although God is referred to as Shalom, "Peace," He is also called *Ish Milchamah*, the "God of War."...For despite all the yearnings for peace, neither the Prophets nor the Sages of the Talmud were pacifists. If war is reprehensible, an unjust peace is immoral.¹

That being the case, Jewish thought has focused on when war can be waged and how war can be fought. Professor Reuven Kimelman explains:

Classical Jewish teachings distinguished between "mandatory wars" and "discretionary wars." Mandatory wars (*milhemet mitzvah/hovah*) refer to biblically commanded wars. Discretionary wars (*milhemet reshut*) are wars undertaken at the discretion of the Sanhedrin or a duly constituted representative body.

It is generally agreed that there are three types of mandatory wars, such as (1) Joshua's war of conquest against the seven Canaanite nations; (2) wars against Amalek;² and (3) a defensive war against an already launched attack. It is also generally agreed that an expansionary war undertaken to enhance the political prestige of the government or to secure economic gain is clearly discretionary.³

There is widespread consensus that the right to national self-defense is as much a moral right as is self-preservation....[Furthermore] a preemptive strike against an enemy who is preparing for attack, even though it has not yet gone beyond its borders, is sufficiently similar to a defensive counterattack to be considered "mandatory."⁴

On the issue of how wars ought to be fought, *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust* presents five regulations drawn from the Bible (Deuteronomy 20), the Talmud (e.g. Sotah 23a-24b), and the codes (particularly those of Maimonides).

¹ Rabbi Maurice Lamm, "Red or Dead: An Attempt at Formulating a Jewish Attitude" (1962) in *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust: A Jewish Response*, pp. 5-6. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983.

² Amalek was the tribe that persistently attacked the children of Israel during their forty years in the desert after leaving Egypt.

³ Reuven Kimelman, "A Jewish Understanding of War and Its Limits" in *Confronting Omnicide: Jewish Reflections on Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Jason Aronson, Inc., 1991. p. 82.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 84

First, we are mandated never to allow force to become an end in itself. It must only be used as a means of achieving peace.

Second, before a battle was launched, an opportunity had to be given in the clearest terms for the opposing side to choose peace.

Third, there was a special concern for the lives of the non-combatants. An opportunity for escape must be provided.

Fourth, the war could not be waged in such a manner so as to destroy God's creation (i.e., the Earth and its capability to sustain life).

Fifth, before every battle, the "Priest Anointed for Battle" had to read to the soldiers the rules and regulations of war (the Jewish equivalent to the Geneva Convention).⁵

Christianity

In his classic book *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*⁶ Roland H. Bainton identifies three approaches: pacifism, just war, and crusades. He overlooked a fourth approach that lacks a popular name, the attitude of the Eastern Orthodox Church that war is inherently evil though sometimes necessary.

Pacifism. As Bainton acknowledges, "The early Church was pacifist to the time of Constantine."⁷ Pacifism isn't a biblical term but rather came into use in the 19th century. It is not to be confused with "passivism", doing nothing. But rather pacifism features responding to aggression positively with love and other expressions of non-violent action.

The instructor is of course Jesus of Nazareth who made the Two Great Commandments a centerpiece of his mission to bring the good news of God's kingdom. To "love your neighbor" he added "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NSRV). His teaching which the King James Version Matthew translated "that ye resist not evil" (5:39a) is more properly stated "don't react violently against one who is evil" in the Scholars Version. When struck on the right cheek, he taught, turn the other also (Matthew 5:39b). Ask forgiveness for those who trespass against you otherwise you can't expect your heavenly father to forgive you (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). (An ancient Jewish teaching, observed to this day at Yom Kippur.) When arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus didn't fight back. When Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's slave with a sword, Jesus admonished him, "Put back your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:51-52). As he hung from the cross, crucified by the Romans, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Peter and the other disciples learned their lesson well and never fought back in spite of severe persecution. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, prayed "Lord do not hold this sin against them" just before he was stoned to death (Acts 7:60). The Apostle Paul in his letter to the

⁵ *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust*, pp. 8-13

⁶ Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*. Abingdon Press, 1960.

⁷ Op. cit., p. 14

Romans quoted Proverbs 25:21, “if your enemies are hungry feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to eat”. He continued, “Do not over be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:20-21). Although in the next verse he wrote “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1), this was before he was arrested by Roman officials and still had faith in Roman justice. In practice Paul, Peter, and the other disciples were practitioners of civil disobedience. For doing so, Paul was imprisoned frequently, five times received forty lashes minus one, three times beaten by rods, once received a stoning (II Corinthians 4:12-13), and eventually was beheaded by the Romans. He and other apostles accepted Peter’s explanation, “We must obey God rather than human authority” (Acts 5:29).

This set the stage for the early Christian church, which was largely pacifist for 300 years. Although some Christians may have served in the Roman army, most did not. They refused to bow before the Roman emperor and Roman gods and pledge allegiance to the Roman state. As a result, they experienced considerable persecution. As this occurred, they did their best to follow Jesus’ teaching about forgiveness and love for enemy.

However, this changed when Roman Emperor Constantine, who reigned from 306 to 337 CE, became a Christian convert, allowed Christians to practice their faith without persecution, supported the church financially, built basilicas, appointed Christians to high office, and convened an ecumenical council at Nicaea to settle doctrinal disputes. With this close association of church and state, pacifism receded as the dominant doctrine. However, it continued in religious orders, most notably with Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), and among other Catholic clergy and laity. It gained expression as three peace churches formed: Mennonites in 1540s, Society of Friends (Quakers) around 1650, and Church of the Brethren in 1708. Pacifists are found today in many Protestant denominations.

Just War. As Church and state became closer together, the issue arose of when it was justifiable for the state to go to war. Taking the lead, Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo, started with the idea that in a sinful world it is necessary to prevent aggression against innocent victims. Drawing ideas from Roman moral law and Bishop Ambrose of Milan (340-397), Augustine developed criteria on when it is permissible to go to war and on conduct in the course of war. This was further developed by other theologians, notably Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

In outline the just war principles are as follows:⁸

Jus ad Bellum. Why and when recourse to war is permissible.

- a) Just cause, such as to protect innocent life, to preserve conditions necessary for decent human existence, and to secure basic human rights.
- b) Competent authority. War must be declared by those with responsibility for public order.
- c) Comparative justice. No state should act on the basis that it has “absolute justice” on its side.
- d) Right intention. War can be legitimately intended only for a just cause. During conflict, peace and reconciliation must be pursued.

⁸ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*. 1983. pp. 28-34

- e) Last resort only when all peaceful alternatives have been exhausted.
- f) Probability of success. Prevent irrational resort to force or hopeless resistance when the outcome of either will clearly be disproportionate or futile.

Jus in Bello. Conduct of war.

- a) Proportionality. Damage inflicted and costs incurred by war must be proportionate to the good of taking up arms.
- b) Discrimination. The lives of innocent persons may never be taken directly.

To this day the Roman Catholic Church adheres to the just war doctrine. As Protestant Churches split off, some of them, such as the Lutherans, retained just war principles. Others made modifications without becoming wholly pacifist.

Crusades. With the Crusades of the 11th to 13th centuries, the Roman Catholic Church's approach to war took a different turn. It was military action initiated by the Church itself. The major goal was to assure free access to Jerusalem which had been under the control of a succession of Muslim rulers since 636 C.E. Lesser crusades campaigned against pagans and heretics in Western Europe.

The First Crusade, proclaimed by Pope Urban II in 1095, set the tone. Kings and nobles from Western Europe raised funds and recruited soldiers, especially from the peasantry who lacked military discipline. On the way to Jerusalem they pillaged cities. They laid siege to Antioch, stormed the city, massacred Muslim inhabitants. The same occurred when they entered Jerusalem in July 1099, killed thousands of Muslim and Jewish civilians, and destroyed mosques. To maintain control crusaders created four states in the region including the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Muslims fought back. In 1187 forces of Saladin, sultan of Egypt and Syria, recaptured Jerusalem. The Third Crusade (1189-1192) led to a truce which gave Christians access to holy sites. The Fourth Crusade (1202-04), aimed to regain control of Jerusalem, never reached the city and instead directed its efforts to conquering and occupying Constantinople, the seat of the Eastern Orthodox Church which had split from the Latin Church in 1054. Other crusades ensued until the fall of Acre, the last Christian stronghold, in 1291.

In recent years some scholars have tried to reverse the bad image of the Crusades by arguing that it was a defensive war seeking to regain lost territory taken by the Muslims and therefore just. However, the vandalism of the crusaders was far disproportional to objectives sought, and the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians violated basic just war standards. Indeed Pope John Paul II twice expressed sorrow for the destruction of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade.

Eastern Orthodox. Within Christendom the just war theory never caught on in the east as it did in the west. As the Eastern Orthodox Church divided from Rome it adopted its own approach to war and peace. This occurred, as Fr. Philip LeMasters explains, where "The dominant experience of Orthodoxy is within empires and nations where the church had a definite and subservient relationship with the ruling political powers." He writes:

Orthodoxy's distinctive stance on peace, war and violence does not view war as unambiguously good or holy. Orthodoxy has neither a crusade ethic nor an explicit just war theory. Instead, the church tolerates war as an inevitable, tragic necessity for the protection of the innocent and the vindication of justice. The canons of the church suggest a period of repentance for those who have killed in war, which indicates both that taking life is spiritually damaging and that bloodshed falls short of Christ's normative way of non-resistant, non-violent love. Peacemaking is the common vocation of all Christians, but the pursuit of peace in a corrupt world at times inevitably requires the use of force. In such circumstances, the church provides spiritual therapy for healing from the damaging effects of taking life. In every Divine Liturgy, the church prays for the peace of the world and all its inhabitants, and participates in the heavenly banquet of the kingdom to which all – soldier and pacifist alike – are invited.⁹

Although Protestant denominations aren't in the direct lineage of Eastern Orthodoxy, some of them take a similar regretful-but-sometimes-necessary approach to war. Within their membership they recognize both conscientious objectors and those who participate.

Just Peace. In the last 25 years a new emphasis has developed within Protestantism that seeks to go beyond the pacifism-just war debate, promotes conflict prevention and resolution, and makes a stronger connection between peace and justice.

In the 1990s Professor Glenn Stassen from Fuller Theological Seminary and other scholars developed a *The Just Peacemaking Paradigm* with focus upon nonviolent direct action, threat reduction, conflict resolution, human rights, just economics, and strengthened international cooperation.¹⁰

In the next decade the World Council of Churches developed *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* that makes justice the inseparable companion of peace. "Nonviolent resistance is central to the Way of Just Peace." So are efforts to transform conflict. Even so, "There are extreme circumstances where, as the last resort and the lesser evil, the lawful use of armed forces may become necessary in order to protect vulnerable groups or people exposed to imminent lethal threats." This would be an expression of the "responsibility to protect", including "just policing". But this would exclude other justifications of the use of military power. Just Peace also emphasizes caring for creation.¹¹

Islam

In an essay as a part of a Muslim-Christian study on the nuclear weapons danger,¹² Jamal Badawi and Muzammil H. Siddiqi describe Qur'anic foundations of the ethics of peace and war.

⁹ Fr. Philip LeMasters, "Orthodox Perspectives on Peace, War and Violence" in *Ecumenical Review*, March 2011. Also, <http://www.incommunion.org/2011/03/31/orthodox-perspectives-on-peace-war-and-violence/>

¹⁰ *The Just Peacemaking Paradigm*. <http://justpeacemaking.org/the-practices/>

¹¹ World Council of Churches, *An Ecumenical Call for Just Peace*.

¹² Jamal Badawi and Muzammil H. Siddiqi, "Ethics of Peace and War in Islam: An Islamic Perspective on the Nuclear Weapons Danger" in *Muslim-Christian Study and Action Guide on the Nuclear Weapons Danger*, pp. 21-27. The Muslim-Christian Initiative on the Nuclear Weapons Danger, 2005

1. Faith in the one universal God (Allah in Arabic), who is the Creator, Sustainer, and Cherisher of all.
2. Unity and universality of the core message of all prophets, which is peace in submission to Allah, and peace and harmony with Allah's creation.
3. Universal human dignity attaches directly to the state of being human, irrespective of a person's chosen belief.
4. Universal justice embraces all, including those who harbor hatred toward Muslims.
5. Universal human fellowship.
6. Acceptance of plurality in human societies.
7. Prohibition of compulsion in faith.
8. Universal mercy.
9. Universal peaceful coexistence as the norm in relating to other human beings.
10. Peaceful dialogue, especially with "People of the Book" [Jews and Christians].

The authors insist that the Qur'anic Arabic term *jihad* is not holy war. They say, "Even when the Qur'an speaks about defensive war, it never glorifies fighting itself or calls it holy."¹³ Summarizing the ethics of war in Islam, they indicate that "War is a limited enterprise in Islam. It is to be avoided whenever possible and must be restricted to defense against aggressors." They point out:¹⁴

Specific *shari'ah* rules govern who may call for war and when and how it may be waged.

War may only be declared by legitimate authority after consulting with scholars of Islamic law. Its purpose can only be the removal of aggression and oppression. War may not be undertaken to convert others to Islam, to increase one's wealth and power, to subjugate and dominate other people or to possess their resources, or to frighten or terrorize others.

Hadith [teachings of Prophet Muhammad] and subsequent religious jurisprudence clearly indicate that during a war, fighting can only be directed against parties immediately participating in the conflict. Noncombatants must not be harmed. Women, children, elderly, and religious people must be given special care and consideration. Animals must not be killed. Agricultural land must not be destroyed. Water, air, and other life resources must not be poisoned or polluted. The dead must not be mutilated or burned by fire. War must stop as soon as the enemy inclines to peace. Negotiations should be held, and whatever agreements and treaties are signed must be observed.

Summary

Thus, we find many common features in the attitude toward war by the three major monotheistic faiths. Christianity has the strongest pacifist tradition, but the majority of Christians today are in denominations that follow just war principles or accept war as sometimes necessary. They perceive war as last resort primarily for defensive purposes and protection of innocent lives with a commitment to avoid harm to noncombatants. These same ideas are found in Jewish and Islamic approaches to war. Peace is the preferred alternative but war may be justified under certain circumstances.

¹³ Op. cit., p. 24

¹⁴ Op. cit., p. 25

ATTITUDES TOWARD NUCLEAR WEAPONS

These attitudes toward war carry over into approaches to nuclear weapons. Since the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, persons and organizations within the three monotheist faiths have expressed their views on the development, possession, and possible use of nuclear weapons. As we examine a sampling of views, we can note that there is considerable commonality.

Jewish Perspective

In 1962 when the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was accelerating, Rabbi Maurice Lamm of the Floral Park Jewish Center in New York wrote an article “‘RED OR DEAD?’ An Attempt at Formulating a Jewish Attitude”.¹⁵ Working with the distinction between obligatory wars and optional wars, he concluded that as a matter of self-defense it was obligatory to oppose the quest of the Soviet Union to gain world domination with Communism. That was because Communism violates the basic moral principles of Judaism and Israel would cease to exist as a nation if the Soviet Union ruled the world. Therefore, the expansionist Soviet Union must be opposed with nuclear weapons even if it resulted in a nuclear war that destroyed life on earth. Thus, it would be preferable to be dead than red.

In a rejoinder Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, who later became the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, took up the issue of self-defense. He noted that the Torah and teaching of rabbis allow slaying an attacker to save one's own life (Exodus 22.1 [22.2 in RSVP]; Rashi on BT Sanhedrin 72a). But the defender would not be entitled to forestall the attack at the cost of both lives, such as by blowing up the house. He comments:

In view of this vital limitation of the law of self-defense, it would appear that a defensive war likely to endanger the survival of the attacking and the defending nations alike, if not the entire human race, can never be justified. On the assumption, then, that the choice posed by a threatened attack would be either complete destruction or surrender, only the second may be morally vindicated.¹⁶

Neither rabbi, of course, wanted the world to face that choice of red or dead. Rabbi Lamm favored nuclear deterrence which so far had prevented nuclear war. He wrote, “Constant negotiation between the atomic powers must continue in order to probe new possibilities of peacefully settling the differences between East and West.”¹⁷

Twenty years later when the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified again, the Commission on Social Action of Reformed Judaism took up this issue in a report *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust: A Jewish Response* (1983) edited by Rabbi David Saperstein. The report reviews the five regulations of war, drawn from the *halacha* (Jewish law) and listed above: force not an end in itself, opportunity for the opponent to choose peace, concern for lives of non-combatants, waged so as not to destroy God's creation, before

¹⁵ *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*. Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring 1962), pp. 165-209. Published by Rabbinical Council of America.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177

ever battle reading the rules and regulations of war. As applied to an optional war, the report concludes:

Clearly the speed with which nuclear war could happen, the distance over which it is fought and the virtual absence of opportunity to use human judgements to regulate the war once the missiles are launched mitigate against the ability of any nation to fight a “humane” nuclear war. From this brief view of the *halachic* stipulations on war, it is evident that nuclear war would violate almost every rule and regulation and would thereby be impermissible.”¹⁸

The report then cites a number of rabbis to show that “The weight of the Jewish tradition is clearly arrayed against the *use* of nuclear weapons.” But what about the current nuclear build-up and stockpiling? “Under what circumstances is *possession* of nuclear weapons per se, permissible or prohibited?” In answering the report draws upon the *halachic* concept of *geder* (fence) “that some things are prohibited not because they are evil in and of themselves but because they might lead to evil things.” Rabbi Saul Berman applied this reasoning to stockpiling nuclear weapons which “will likely lead to consequences which will violate Jewish law.” As Rabbi Jakobovits wrote in his 1962 article, “Once the recourse to atomic warfare, even in self defense (retaliation), is eliminated, the *threat* of resorting to it when attacked (deterrent) would naturally have to be abandoned. A threat is effective, and can be justified, only as the possibility to carry it out exists.”¹⁹

This being the case, *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust* devotes considerable attention to ways of ending the nuclear arms race, such as freeze on production and deployment of nuclear weapons and other methods of nuclear arms control and reduction.

This issue was taken up again in 1991 in a book entitled *Confronting Omnicide: Jewish Reflections on Weapons of Mass Destruction*,²⁰ edited by Daniel Landes. Fifteen essays offer diverse points of view but have a common concern that God’s creation would be at risk in nuclear war. Pinchas Peli from Ben Gurion University, Be’er Sheva, Israel writes:

As to the universal threat of destruction of the world through the weapons of mass destruction, the view of Torah is crystal clear: The world created by God was meant for life; it was give over to Man to rule, to preserve and cultivate, and not to destroy and mutilate.

Translating this into practice, he continues:

One is not allowed to willingly destroy any created being. This prohibition is known in the Halakhah as *bal tash’hit* – Do not destroy. The rabbis, of course, derive this prohibition from Scripture: “When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down” (Deuteronomy 20:10).²¹

¹⁸ *Preventing the Nuclear Holocaust: A Jewish Response*. Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983. p. 13

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34

²⁰ *Confronting Omnicide: Jewish Reflections on Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73

In another essay Professor David Novak picks up this theme and cites rabbinic tradition over the centuries in support of the prohibition of wanton destruction. He concludes: “The evil of nuclear war, which cannot be justified by any of the usual criteria of temporary destruction for the sake of ultimate victory, is to be emphasized continually.” He adds, “It seems that bilateral, not unilateral disarmament is what is required.”²²

In an essay on “Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear War” Professor Walter S. Wurzbarger believes that “the actual use of nuclear weapons must be ruled out, for it is inconceivable to sanction the very extinction of the human race.” But one-sided renunciation of their use “would rule out any possibility of defense or deterrence against adversaries who threaten nuclear aggression.” Therefore, “we have no choice but to continue to rely on the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter nuclear aggression.” But that choice is fraught with moral problems and must be considered a lesser evil. It would be better to gain universal acceptance of a “no first use pledge.”²³

Although the much of the background for discussion about nuclear weapons is the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union with their enormous arsenals, Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons also enters into the picture. In his book *Israel and the Bomb* Avner Cohen describes Israel’s approach as nuclear opacity – “a situation in which a state’s nuclear capability has not been acknowledged, but is recognized in a way that influences other nation’s perceptions and actions.”²⁴ In his second book *The Worst-Kept Secret* he uses the Hebrew term *amimut* with connotation of both opacity and ambiguity to describe this approach.²⁵ Although the Israeli government has never officially admitted that it has nuclear weapons, enough information has become available to estimate that Israel possesses approximately 80 nuclear weapons.²⁶

Because of *amimut* the Israeli government has never publicly articulated its rationale for acquiring nuclear weapons. In fact there is a prohibition against public discussion of nuclear issues, a ban “rigidly enforce by Israeli military censorship (the Censora), which bans any reference to Israeli’s nuclear weapons in the Israeli media.”²⁷ However, one can project that the policy emphasizes deterrence as a matter of self-defense to prevent an existential threat to Israel. Some Jewish writers consider this legitimate in the present political situation. Others raise a note of caution that actual use would be disastrous. (More on this in later discussion on whether nuclear weapons are usable.)

Christian Perspective

Protestant. After the first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945 the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America asked a commission of theologians to

²² Ibid, p. 115

²³ Ibid., pp. 224-233.

²⁴ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1998. p. 2

²⁵ Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret*. Columbia University Press, 2010. p. xxxii.

²⁶ Federation of American Scientists, *Status of World’s Nuclear Forces*.

<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html>

²⁷ Ibid, p. xxix

formulate a response. In February 1946 the commission issued a report entitled *Atomic Warfare and Christian Faith* that began with an action of contrition:

As American Christians, we are deeply penitent for the irresponsible use already made of the atomic bomb. We are agreed that, whatever be one's judgment of the ethics of war in principle, the surprise bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible. They repeated in a ghastly form the indiscriminate slaughter of non-combatants that has become familiar during World War II. They were released without specific warning, under conditions which virtually assured the deaths of 100,000 civilians.²⁸

The theologians urged that all manufacture of atomic bombs be stopped, pending the development of international controls and called upon the United States "to affirm publicly, with suitable guarantees, that it will under no circumstances be the first to use atomic weapons in any possible future war."²⁹

Four years later another commission of theologians appointed by the Federal Council of Churches in report on *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction* came to the opposite conclusion. They noted: "Today, two great dangers threaten mankind, the danger that totalitarian tyranny may be extended over the world and the danger of global war."³⁰ The tyranny they feared was Soviet Communism which by 1950 had taken control of Eastern Europe and was moving aggressively in other parts of the world. What became known as the Cold War was underway. The report therefore insisted:

For as long as the existing situation holds, for the United States to abandon its atomic weapons or to give the impression that they would not be used, would leave the non-communist world with totally inadequate defense. For Christians to advocate such a policy would be to share responsibility for the worldwide tyranny that might result.³¹

The Commission found it difficult to draw an absolute line between types of weapons. "If, as we have felt bound to acknowledge, certain key industrial targets are inescapably involved in modern war, we find no moral distinction between destroying them with tons of T.N.T. or by fire as compared with an atomic bomb." However, "Christian conscience guides us to restraint from destruction not essential to our total objectives."³²

In 1950 the Federal Council of Churches reorganized as the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC). In years that followed the NCC put aside conditional acceptance of nuclear weapons in some circumstances and became a staunch advocate of their elimination. This history is narrated in a resolution "Nuclear Disarmament: The Time is Now", adopted by NCC General Assembly in 2009, that stated:

²⁸ A Commission of Theologians, "Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith" in *Facing War, Waging Peace* edited by Harold L. Lunker. Friendship Press, 1988. p. 303.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 305

³⁰ Report of a Special Commission, "The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction" in *Facing War, Waging Peace*. p. 317.

³¹ Ibid., p. 321

³² Ibid., p. 320, 321.

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, declared that He had come to bring "abundant life" to humanity. Nuclear weapons, which have the capacity to destroy entire cities and nations, and, indeed, all life on earth, represent the diametric opposite to this. In fact, the only thing that they are capable of producing is "abundant death." The time has arrived to eliminate all of them, before they eliminate all of us. Be it therefore resolved that the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. hereby recommits itself to the total worldwide eradication of nuclear weapons.³³

Over the years the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the U.S. has also expressed its concern about nuclear weapons. Recognizing that "within the membership are those who are committed to peace through strength and those who renounce the use of force as a matter of conscience", NAE has nevertheless favored arms control agreements to scale back the nuclear arms race. In "Nuclear Weapons 2011" NAE laid out a course that included re-examining the moral and ethical basis for the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, maintaining the taboo against nuclear use, achieving verified mutual reductions in current nuclear stockpiles, and continuing dialogue on the effects of possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons.³⁴

Elsewhere in NATO countries the Conference of European Churches and its Church and Society Commission have been active on nuclear disarmament issues, favoring a world free of nuclear weapons and specifically advocating the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.³⁵ In the United Kingdom many denominations support nuclear disarmament, expressed specifically in opposition to building a new trident submarine. Although the Church of England has tended to defer to the government on continuation of minimal nuclear deterrence, Dr. Rowan Williams, 104th Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in Nagasaki, Japan in September 2009, said of nuclear weapons:

They are necessarily indiscriminate; that is, they will always kill the innocent. They destroy the living environment; they have long-term effects on every aspect of the material and organic world....To work for a world free from nuclear arms is to work for the sake of that moral and human dignity."³⁶

In 1976 the Canadian Council of Churches established Project Plowshares as its vehicle to build peace and prevent war, and promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict. Developing support for the elimination of nuclear weapons has been a major focus.³⁷

On the world stage the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its First Assembly in 1948 condemned nuclear weapons for their "widespread and indiscriminate destruction" and as "sin against God". A resolution indicated that "The production and deployment of nuclear weapons, as well as their use, constitute a crime against humanity." The Second Assembly in 1954 called for "The prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction; including atomic and hydrogen bombs, with provision for international inspection and control, such as would safeguard the security of

³³ <http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/2009/nuclear-disarm.php>

³⁴ National Association of Evangelicals, *Nuclear Weapons 2011*. <http://www.nae.net/nuclearweapons2011>

³⁵ <http://csc.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=844>

³⁶ <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1011/archbishop-of-canterbury-backs-efforts-for-a-world-free-of-nuclear-arms>

³⁷ <http://ploughshares.ca/programs/nuclear-weapons/>

all nations, together with the drastic reduction of other armaments.”³⁸ WCC opposition to nuclear weapons continued over the years. The Ninth Assembly in 2006 adopted a “Minute on Elimination of Nuclear Arms”, noting that “Existing WCC policy urges all states to meet their treaty obligations to reduce and then destroy nuclear arsenals with adequate verification.” Furthermore, “Churches must prevail upon governments until they recognize the incontrovertible immorality of nuclear weapons.” The Tenth Assembly in November 2013 recommended that governments “*Negotiate and establish* a ban on the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law.”³⁹

Among Protestant denominations the United Methodist Council of Bishops in 1986 took up the nuclear weapons in a foundation document *In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace*.⁴⁰ They chose the title because God’s creation “is under attack...from the darkening shadows of threatening nuclear winter” that would occur with all-out nuclear war. It is “a crisis that threatens to assault not only the whole human family but planet earth itself.” Given this situation, the bishops in a pastoral letter stated,

Therefore, we say a clear and unconditional *No* to nuclear war and any use of nuclear weapons. We conclude that nuclear deterrence is a position that cannot receive the church’s blessing.⁴¹

For moving toward a nuclear-free world they recommended four measures: (1) comprehensive test ban to inaugurate a nuclear freeze; (2) consolidated of existing treaties and phased reductions; (3) bans on space weapons; and (4) no-first-use agreement.⁴²

The 1988 United Methodist General Conference, the official governing body, endorsed *In Defense of Creation*” and in following quadrennial meetings supported concrete steps toward a world free of nuclear weapons. A 2004 resolution described the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as “morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt” because “nuclear weapons hold innocent people hostage for political and military purposes.”⁴³

In the last thirty years all of the “mainline” Protestant churches and the historic peace churches in the United States have taken strong stands against the use of nuclear weapons and have support policies leading to the elimination.

Orthodox. Orthodox Churches from many nations are members of the World Council of Churches and in that sense support WCC policies on nuclear weapons. They also speak for themselves in their own countries. In the United States branches of the Orthodox Church – Russian, Greek, and others -- have joined interfaith initiatives for the elimination of nuclear

³⁸ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*. Harper & Brothers, 1955. p. 146

³⁹ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace>

⁴⁰ United Methodist Council of Bishops, *In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace*. Nashville: Graded Press, 1986.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 92

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 74-78.

⁴³ *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2008*. p.889.

weapons. In Russia Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, speaking in 2007 in Sarov, the center of Russia's nuclear weapons industry, indicated that Russia required nuclear arms to enable it to remain a sovereign state during the Cold War. That is because of the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, he said, the Church favors a world without nuclear weapons.⁴⁴

Roman Catholic. In the Roman Catholic Church popes have spoken against the use of nuclear weapons since the first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima. Pope Pius XII (pope from 1939 to 1958) in his 1954 Easter message demanded "the effective proscription and banishment of atomic...warfare," calling the arms race a "costly relationship of mutual terror."⁴⁵ Pope John XXIII(1958-1963) in his 1963 papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* called for the cessation of the arms race, noting:

The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control.⁴⁶

Gaudium et Spes ("Joy and Hope"), a pastoral constitution coming out of the Second Vatican Council and promulgated by Pope Paul IV (1963-1978) in 1965, stated:

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.

However, the document noted that some "scientific weapons" are amassed for retaliation and therefore serve as a "deterrent to possible enemy attack". But this "is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace, nor is the so-called balance resulting from this race a sure and authentic peace." A better way is to "labor to put an end at last to the arms race, and to make a true beginning of disarmament, not unilaterally indeed, but proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement, and backed up by true and workable safeguards."⁴⁷

When Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) spoke in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall in February 1981 he called on "heads of state and of government and those who hold political and economic power" to pledge ourselves "that war will never be tolerated or sought as a means of resolving differences; let us promise our fellow human beings that we will work untiringly for

⁴⁴ <http://www.aoiusa.org/blog/patriarch-kirill-russia-needs-nuclear-weapons/>;
<http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/2009/09/sarov-nuclear-center-saved-world-from-world-war-iii-patriarch-kirill-believes/>

⁴⁵ <http://manfullyalive.com/2013/07/nuclear-weapons-pius-xii/> A blog by John Rogers.

⁴⁶ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html ¶112

⁴⁷ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html ¶80-81

disarmament and the banishing of all nuclear weapons.⁴⁸ When he spoke to the United Nations General Assembly in June 1982 he stated:

The teaching of the Catholic Church in this area has been clear and consistent. It has deplored the arms race, called nonetheless for mutual progressive and verifiable reduction of armaments as well as greater safeguards against possible misuse of these weapons. It has done so while urging that the independence, freedom and legitimate security of each and every nation be respected.

In current conditions "deterrence" based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion.

Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013) in a message on World Day of Peace 2006 indicated:

In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all - whether those governments which openly or secretly possess nuclear arms, or those planning to acquire them - agree to change their course by clear and firm decisions, and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament.⁴⁹

When the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty convened, he encouraged initiatives to "seek progressive disarmament and the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination from the planet".⁵⁰

With this decades-long support for nuclear disarmament the Holy See has become impatient with the lack of progress toward this objective. This was shown in an address by Archbishop Francis Chullikat, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, in Kansas City, Missouri in 2011. He said:

The Holy See has never countenanced nuclear deterrence as a permanent measure, nor does it today when it is evident that nuclear deterrence drives the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament.... Nuclear deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. It maintains an unacceptable hegemony over non-nuclear development for the poorest half of the world's population. It is a fundamental obstacle to achieving a new age of global security.

He noted that the Catholic Church had embraced a 1996 decision of the International Court of Justice calling for "negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". He reiterated the Holy See's support "for transparent, verifiable, global and irreversible nuclear disarmament and for addressing seriously the issues of nuclear strategic arms, the tactical ones and their means of delivery."⁵¹

⁴⁸ http://atomicbombmuseum.org/6_5.shtml

⁴⁹ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051213_xxxix-world-day-peace_en.html

⁵⁰ To be added.

⁵¹ <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/archbishop-chullikatt-s-address-on-the-nuclear-question>

In the United States in the early 1980s the National Conference of Catholic Bishops undertook an in-depth study of war and peace with special attention to nuclear weapons. Working from the moral principles of the just-war tradition, they indicated:

- Every nation has a right and duty to defend itself against unjust aggression.
- Offensive war of any kind is morally unjustifiable.
- The intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong.
- Even defensive response to unjust attack can cause destruction which violates the principle of proportionality, going far beyond the limits of legitimate defense.⁵²

Applying these principles to nuclear weapons, the U.S. Catholic bishops spoke against initiation of nuclear war and against any use of nuclear weapons to destroy population centers or other predominantly civilian targets even in retaliatory action. They opposed initiation of nuclear war and expressed skepticism of even a limited nuclear war. Following the leadership of Pope John Paul II, they accepted “a strictly conditional moral acceptance of deterrence” but not adequate as a long-term basis for peace.”⁵³

Over the years the U.S. Catholic bishops have retained their strong interest in nuclear disarmament. In 2010 Cardinal Francis George, then President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote:

The horribly destructive capacity of nuclear arms makes them disproportionate and indiscriminate weapons that endanger human life and dignity like no other armaments. Their use as a weapon of war is rejected in Church teaching based on just war norms. Although we cannot anticipate every step on the path humanity must walk, we can point with moral clarity to a destination that moves beyond deterrence to a world free of the nuclear threat.

For this to happen “the Church urges that nuclear deterrence be replaced with concrete measures of disarmament based on dialogue and multilateral negotiations.”⁵⁴

Islamic Perspective

“A Common Word”, the report addressed by Muslim scholars to Christian leaders, notes that Christians and Muslims together make up more than 55 percent of the world’s population. They then observe:

If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace. With the terrible weaponry of the modern world; with Muslims and Christians intertwined everywhere as never before, no side can unilaterally win a conflict between more than half of the world’s

⁵² National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*. 1983. p. iii.

⁵³ Ibid, pp. v-vi.

⁵⁴ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/nuclear-weapons/petition-to-change-nuclear-policy.cfm>

inhabitants. Thus our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world itself is at stake.⁵⁵

Six powerful reasons for Muslims to oppose the production, deployment, and use of nuclear weapons are offered by Jamal Badawi and Muzammil H. Siddiqi in their essay published by the Muslim-Christian Initiative on the Nuclear Weapons Danger.⁵⁶

- (1) They represent a serious threat to peace, while peace is a central theme of Islam.
- (2) They are brutal and merciless, and thus violate the Qur'anic description of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as "*mercy to all the worlds.*"
- (3) They are contrary to Islam's promotion of human fellowship.
- (4) Nuclear weapons do not fall with the scope of legitimate self-defense....Not only do they not discriminate between combatants and noncombatants, but the great majority of victims are likely to be noncombatants....Repelling aggression is permissible in Islam, but only with the minimum cost of life and property. Nuclear weapons cause destruction of the environment that lasts for hundreds, if not thousands of years.
- (5) Nuclear weapons research and production waste a huge amount of resources.
- (6) While the argument for nuclear deterrence is not un-Islamic in principle, and while such deterrence apparently did work during the Cold War, there is no guarantee that it will work in the future. Nor is there any guarantee that nuclear weapons will not fall into the hands of non-state actors.

The authors continue:

Considering all of these points, we must conclude that is *harâm* (forbidden) to deploy nuclear weapons. The *sharî'ah* of Allah could never approve such weapons. According to the principles of Islamic law, there should instead be a universal ban on their development and possession. No criteria exist that allow some states to maintain nuclear weapons while others are denied them.

In applying such beliefs Iran Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on a number of occasions has said that possession and use of nuclear weapons are contrary to Islamic law. In 2005 Iran communicated to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Ayatollah Khamenei had issued a *fatwa* [religious edict] that "the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islamic law." In a letter to the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Khamenei wrote: "We consider the use of such weapons as *haram* (religiously forbidden) and believe that it is everyone's duty to make efforts to secure humanity against this great disaster." In an address on August 30, 2012 at the 16th Non-Aligned Summit in Tehran he stated:

⁵⁵ *A Common Word Between Us and You*. Fifth Anniversary Edition. Amman, Jordan. The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought. pp. 72-73. Accessible through www.acommonword.com

⁵⁶ Jamal Badawi and Muzammil H. Siddiqi, "Ethics of Peace and War in Islam: An Islamic Perspective on the Nuclear Weapons Danger" in *Muslim-Christian Study and Action Guide on the Nuclear Weapons Danger*, pp. 26-27. The Muslim-Christian Initiative on the Nuclear Weapons Danger, 2005

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of “Middle East free of nuclear weapons” and we are committed to it. This does not mean forgoing our right to peaceful use of nuclear power and production of nuclear fuel. On the basis of international laws, peaceful use of nuclear energy is a right of every country.... Our motto is: “Nuclear energy for all and nuclear weapons for none.”⁵⁷

Some analysts observe that Ayatollah Khamenei sometimes speaks of “production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons” and sometimes only “use”. They speculate that this implies that Iran might want to produce nuclear weapons as a deterrent, but there have been no public statements using deterrence language. Such clarification might occur during ongoing negotiations about Iran’s nuclear capability.

(Note: I would like to receive further information about the Islamic perspective on nuclear weapons.)

Perspectives of Other Religions

Although this report focuses primarily on the views of Judaism, Christianity, and Muslim, we can note that other religions have expressed their concerns about nuclear weapons.

The Parliament of the World’s Religions, which convenes every five years, seeks “to cultivate harmony among the world’s religions and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding in order to achieve a just and peaceful world.”⁵⁸ At their 1999 gathering in Cape Town, South Africa they adopted “A Moral Call to Eliminate the Threat of Nuclear Weapons” which read:

The threat and use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with civilized norms, standards of morality and humanitarian law which prohibit the use of inhumane weapons and those with indiscriminate effects. We say that a peace based on terror, a peace based upon threats of inflicting annihilation and genocide upon whole populations, is a peace that is morally corrupting.

Founded in 1970, Religions for Peace is “committed to leading efforts to advance effective multi-religious cooperation for peace on global, regional, national and local levels.”⁵⁹ In November 2011 the International Executive Committee stated:

We believe that international law is essential to the maintenance of peace among nations. Nuclear weapons by their very nature cannot comply with fundamental rules of international humanitarian law forbidding the infliction of indiscriminate and disproportionate harm. We agree with those who assert that the threat as well as the use of nuclear weapons is barred by

⁵⁷ Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, “Supreme Leader’s Inaugural Speech at the 16th Non-Aligned Summit,” *Iranian Students’ News Agency*, August 30, 2012, <http://isna.ir/en/news/91060905090/Supreme-Leader-s-Inaugural-Speech-at-the>.

⁵⁸ <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=1&sn=1>

⁵⁹ <http://www.rfp.org/vision-history/vision/>

international law. We furthermore agree with those who assert that the unlawfulness of the threat and use of nuclear weapons calls into serious question the lawfulness of their possession by any state or non-state actor.

Accordingly, Religious for Peace supports the development of a universal nuclear weapons convention for all states. To further this objective in September 2013 they issued *Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities*. The guide includes statements on nuclear weapons from the perspective of Daoism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sufism.⁶⁰

Soka Gakkai International, (SGI) is a lay movement within Nichiren Buddhism, whose members integrate Buddhist practices into their daily lives. They also express an interest in peace and disarmament, human rights and sustainable development.⁶¹ Daisaku Ikeda, SGI president, in a 2014 Peace Proposal offered a proposal for a world free of nuclear weapons.⁶²

Summary

In reviewing Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives on nuclear weapons we find many common features.

There is a broad consensus that use of nuclear weapons would be morally wrong because of the harm to large numbers of non-combatants and the environment. Widespread use would be disastrous for humankind and the planet Earth. A small minority believes that limited nuclear war might be acceptable as a final measure for national defense, but most maintain that nuclear weapons are so powerful and indiscriminate that even limited use would be wrong. Although not part of our previous discussion, there are also some in the faith community who believe that nuclear war would be acceptable as an eschatological event prior to the final day of judgment and commencement of a messianic era.

Among the three faiths there has been some acceptance of development, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons as a measure of deterrence for self-defense in order to dissuade other nations from nuclear or conventional attack. However, a growing number reject nuclear deterrence because of the immorality of in effect holding civilian population hostage. Some deterrence adherents believe if deterrence fails and a nation is attacked, nuclear weapons should not be used in retaliation.

There is widespread support for negotiation of arms control agreements and for unilateral actions to reduce nuclear arsenals.

Although not discussed in previous sections, many voices in the faith community observe that the nuclear arms race is a waste of resources and that funds could be better spent for measures that improve human and community welfare.

⁶⁰ <http://www.baselpeaceoffice.org/article/nuclear-abolition-resource-religious-communities-launched-un>, pp. 26-31

⁶¹ <http://www.sgi.org/news/peace/>

⁶² <http://www.sgi.org/sgi-president/proposals/peace/peace-proposal-2014.html>

Paralleling the faith community, numerous persons and organizations in the civic sector have advocated nuclear disarmament. So have public officials from states not possessing nuclear weapons. Military officers, especially those in retirement, have made the case. Even governments of nuclear weapon states have agreed to limitation on nuclear weapons through arms control agreements.

Nevertheless, the accumulative advocacy of religious leaders, scientists, physicians, generals, admirals, civil society activists, and others for the global elimination of nuclear weapons has failed to get us near this goal. To succeed we need to combine our advocacy in some kind of grand alliance.

I'll return to this idea later, but first I want to offer my understanding of the challenge we face.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Global Inventory

There are various estimates of the size of the global nuclear arsenal. For our purposes data from the American Federation of Scientists offer the follow overview:

World Nuclear Forces, 2013⁶³	
Russia	8,500
United States	7,700
France	300
China	250
United Kingdom	225
Israel	80
Pakistan	100-120
India	90-110
North Korea	<10
Total	~~17,300

Legacy of Fear

Initially the theory of strategic warfare was a major factor leading to development of the first atomic weapons. Then fear became a predominant influence in their spread.

In the history of war airplanes came into use during World War I, primarily in support of land battles. Then during the 1920s and '30s the idea emerged that air power could be used to strike the enemy's homeland -- military bases, factories, rail lines, communication centers, even cities -- in order to reduce fighting capacity and demoralize the population. This was called strategic bombing.

⁶³ <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html>

Nazi Germany applied this theory during World War II. After forcing France to surrender in June 1940 Germany turned its attention to destroying British air power in preparation for invading England. Lacking complete success, Germany began bombing factories and London itself as an application of strategic bombing. The Royal Air Force responded with attacks on German industry, Ruhr River dams, and German cities. The U.S. Air Force joined this endeavor. In September 1944 Germany started launching V-2 liquid-fueled rockets against London and other British cities.

During this period there were rumors that German scientists were trying to develop an atomic bomb. Fear that Germany might acquire such a weapon was a major factor in the decision of the United States to produce its own atomic bomb.

Actual use of the U.S. bombs against Japan was an application of strategic bombing. As the war in the Pacific progressed, the United States gained control of islands that were within flying range of Japan by B-29 bombers. In January 1945 the U.S. Air Force embarked on a campaign that firebombed 67 Japanese cities including an attack on Tokyo on a single night that killed an estimated 100,000 people and destroyed 16 square miles. When the atomic bomb became available, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was from a military viewpoint an extension of strategic bombing by a more efficient means.

Thereafter, U.S. possession of nuclear weapons led to a chain of events in which fear was a major factor as other nations developed their own nuclear weapons.

- Fear of U.S. nuclear weapons led the Soviet Union to acquire its own.
- In response the United States developed the more powerful H-bomb and began espousing the doctrine of nuclear deterrence.
- Fear of Soviet expansion into Western Europe led to the formation of NATO in 1949 and then deployment of nuclear weapons to counter perceived Soviet conventional superiority.
- The United Kingdom, having partnered with the United States in atom bomb research, produced its own to provide independent deterrent of Soviet nuclear weapons.
- Likewise France wanted its own independent nuclear arsenal to deter the Soviets.
- China feared both the U.S. and Soviet arsenals and therefore initiated its own program.
- India, having fought a border war with China in 1962, embarked upon nuclear weapons development out of fear of China's nukes.
- Fear of India motivated Pakistan to develop nuclear weapons.
- Fear of surrounding heavily armed Arab states led Israel to join the nuclear weapons fraternity.
- Fear of Israeli and U.S. nukes was a major factor in Iraq's aborted quest for nuclear weapons and the possibility that Iran is developing nuclear weapons capability.
- North Korea in its standoff with South Korea, an American ally, fears U.S. nuclear weapons available under the doctrine of extended deterrence and therefore wants its own arsenal as a counter deterrent.
- In Europe Russia retains a sizable arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons out of fear of NATO conventional superiority in the post-Soviet era. The United States retains 200 nuclear gravity bombs in six European countries.

In this manner responding to fear has been a major cause of nuclear proliferation.

To be sure states acquiring nuclear weapons perceive other possible purposes: a means of intimidation; a way to win a war when confronted with superior conventional forces; a mark of power and prestige in the family of nations. Joseph Gerson in *Empire and the Bomb*⁶⁴ describes how the United States has used threats of nuclear attack in a quest for world domination. Other nations have also used nuclear threats, some veiled, some open, against adversaries. Nevertheless, none of these threats were carried out.

Because fear has been a major factor in the spread of nuclear weapons dealing with these fears must be part of the quest for global nuclear disarmament.

Useless Weapons

This quest can be aided by realization that after 68 years since the first atomic bomb was exploded experience has shown that nuclear weapons have no legitimate utility in warfare. They are too powerful with too many harmful side effects for battlefield use. Their capability to destroy whole cities goes far beyond the bounds of human decency and proper moral conduct. Extensive use would have disastrous effects on global climate and crop production. Therefore, an international taboo has developed against use of nuclear weapons.

This isn't a theoretical conclusion. It's a judgment made on the basis of sixty years of practical experience. Just look at the record.

Since the atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, U.S. political and military leaders have found no use for nuclear weapons in warfare. In the Korean War Presidents Truman and Eisenhower accepted stalemate rather than use nuclear weapons. In Vietnam Presidents Johnson and Nixon rejected the use of nuclear weapons in a war that was headed for U.S. defeat. President George H. W. Bush found that they weren't needed in the Gulf War. His son, President George W. Bush, found that they weren't necessary to defeat Saddam Hussein and had no utility in dealing with insurgents in Iraq and al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Nuclear weapons had no relevance in numerous small U.S. military engagements in Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, and elsewhere. If the U.S. should go to war with Iran or North Korea (God forbid), their uselessness in combat would be rediscovered. Nuclear weapons have no use in subduing terrorists hidden in caves and scattered in villages and urban neighborhoods.

A number of U.S. military leaders have confirmed that nuclear weapons have no use for warfare. For instance, when Admiral Noel Gayler became commander-in-chief of all U.S. forces in the Pacific, a command that extended from the Bering Strait to the Middle East, he concluded that there was no sensible military use for nuclear weapons whether "strategic", "tactical", weapons at sea or weapons in space. Beyond his command he believed that in the European sector there would be no advantage in initiative use of nuclear weapons to defend Europe against a conventional attack. He presented his viewpoint to his superiors in the Pentagon but to no avail. After his retirement in 1976 he became a public advocate of nuclear disarmament.

⁶⁴ London: Pluto Press, 2007

After General Colin Powell completed his term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989-1993) he noted that in none of the 28 military crises during his watch, including invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf War, did nuclear weapons have a potential use. He recalled that nuclear weapons had no utility in the Vietnam War.

Other U.S. retired military leaders have offered similar testimony. Many have signed public statements calling for nuclear disarmament.

Other nuclear weapon states have likewise discovered the uselessness of nuclear weapons in combat. In suffering defeat in Afghanistan the Soviet Union realized their lack of utility, nor did they have any role in the two Chechen wars. Nuclear-armed China has found that none of its external and internal military engagements since it acquired nuclear weapons in the 1960s have warranted their use. The United Kingdom, France, Israel,⁶⁵ India, and Pakistan have also so far found no legitimate use for nuclear weapons for the same basic reason. Their power is far disproportional to military objectives.

This experience so overwhelmingly demonstrates the uselessness of nuclear weapons that the burden of proof is upon those who claim they have a useful military role. All that remains is nuclear weapons as a deterrent of adversaries using their nuclear weapons.

Theft from Humanity

Beyond their disutility nuclear weapons generate a huge economic drain on the resources of the possessor states, estimated to total \$105 billion annually, as follows⁶⁶:

	In billions, 2011
United States	\$61.3
Russia	14.8
China	7.6
France	6.0
United Kingdom	5.5
India	4.9
Israel	1.9
Pakistan	2.2
North Korea	<u>.7</u>
	\$104.9

In moral sense these expenditures constitute a theft from humanity. This term comes from President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1953 address, "The Chance for Peace" in which he said:

Every gun made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in a final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are clothed.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ For the Israel experience, see Avner Cohen's *The Worst Kept Secret*, p. 81.

⁶⁶ <http://www.globalzero.org/get-the-facts/cost-of-nukes> with link to PDF report.

So important are these words to Eisenhower's legacy that they are engraved on the wall of his tomb in Abilene, Kansas.⁶⁸

United States. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the costs of the Obama Administration's plans for nuclear forces will total \$355 billion between 2014 and 2023, that is, an average of \$35.5 billion a year.

Of that total, \$296 billion represents CBO's projection of the amounts budgeted for strategic and tactical nuclear delivery systems (\$136 billion over 10 years); for nuclear weapons, DOE's nuclear weapons enterprise, and SSBN [ballistic missile submarine] nuclear reactors (\$105 billion over 10 years); and for nuclear command, control, communications, and early-warning systems (\$56 billion over 10 years). The remaining \$59 billion of the total represents CBO's estimate of the additional costs that will ensue over the coming decade, beyond the budgeted amounts, if the nuclear programs experience cost growth at the same average rate that similar programs have experienced in the past.⁶⁹

Alternative expenditures. There are numerous ways to redirect the resources wasted on nuclear weapons to activities that are far more beneficial to humankind. For instance, the World Bank indicates that additional foreign aid of between \$40-\$60 billion a year is required to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.⁷⁰ [Other examples to be added.]

WAYS TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

If nuclear weapons are so wasteful, have no military utility, and their only value is to deter other nuclear weapons, the rationale course would be to eliminate all of them throughout the world so that there is nothing left to deter. This is indeed possible though not easy because old habits are hard to change and because nukes are embedded in regional disputes that need to be resolved simultaneously.

There are three approaches to nuclear disarmament: unilateral action, a global nuclear weapons convention, or a series of agreements accompanied by regional dispute resolution. I believe that there are elements of each that deserve the support of the faith community.

Unilateral Disarmament

Nuclear weapon states can act on their own to reduce their nuclear arsenals and can undertake mutual initiatives without negotiating reduction treaties.

⁶⁷ "The Chance for Peace". Address of April 16, 1953. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9819>

⁶⁸ <http://usa-c2c.com/eisreview.html>

⁶⁹ <http://www.cbo.gov/publication/44968>. Also see "Trimming the Bloated Nuclear Weapons Budget" from Arms Control Association at <https://www.armscontrol.org/issuebriefs/Trimming-the-Bloated-Nuclear-Weapons-Budget>; and, *The Trillion Dollar Nuclear Triad: US Strategic Modernization over the Next Thirty Years* from James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at http://cns.miis.edu/trillion_dollar_nuclear_triad/index.htm

⁷⁰ www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/mdgassessment.pdf

This occurred in the early 1990s through presidential nuclear initiatives of President George H.W. Bush to

- withdraw to the United States all ground-launched short-range weapons deployed overseas and destroy them along with existing U.S. stockpiles of the same weapons; and
- cease deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on surface ships, attack submarines, and land-based naval aircraft during “normal circumstances.” Implicitly, the United States reserved the right to redeploy these arms in a crisis.

In response Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev made a commitment to:

- eliminate all nuclear artillery munitions, nuclear warheads for tactical missiles, and nuclear mines;
- remove all tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships and multipurpose submarines. These weapons would be stored in central storage sites along with all nuclear arms assigned to land-based naval aircraft; and
- separate nuclear warheads from air defense missiles and put the warheads in central storage. A “portion” would be destroyed.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991 Russian President Boris Yeltsin continued these initiatives.⁷¹

A strong case can be made for the possessors of nuclear weapons to extend unilateral action to elimination of their entire nuclear arsenals. This was the recommendation of Paul Nitze (1907-2004), long considered a defense hawk, near the end of his long career. Writing in the New York Times in 1999, he stated:

I see no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons. To maintain them is costly and adds nothing to our security.

I can think of no circumstances under which it would be wise for the United States to use nuclear weapons, even in retaliation for their prior use against us. What, for example, would our targets be? It is impossible to conceive of a target that could be hit without large-scale destruction of many innocent people.⁷²

Instead Nitze believed that the United States had sufficient conventional firepower to meet any military need. He indicated that if a rogue state or an unstable state had nuclear weapons and threatened to use them, their nuclear arsenal could be destroyed through preemptive attack by conventional means.

Because I am a pacifist, I’m not supportive of a conventional attack or even the threat of one. But non-pacifists can make the case that the United States has more than sufficient conventional weaponry to deter North Korea or Iran, for example, from making any use of nuclear weapons.

⁷¹ <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/pniglance>

⁷² <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/28/opinion/a-threat-mostly-to-ourselves.html>

Suppose the United States took Nitze's advice and closed down its nuclear arsenal unilaterally? What harm could come? The U.S. would no longer engage Russia with the threat of mutually assured destruction. With the loss of nuclear deterrent the United States would be vulnerable to long-range attack by Russian missiles. But why would Russia want to attack? They have no capacity to invade the United States. While some terrorists might want to kill millions capriciously, such action is far beyond the self-interest and the basic humanity of the Russians, no matter how annoying President Putin may seem to be. Nor does Russia even have the capability of conquering Western Europe as was once feared.

In worst case scenario, suppose North Korea wanted to attack South Korea or Japan with nuclear weapons. Because the United States as an ally of both has sufficient conventional weaponry to destroy North Korean industries and even its cities, there is sufficient deterrence without nukes. Likewise if a nuclear-armed Iran attacked U.S. allies in the Middle East, the United States could make an overwhelming conventional response, as Paul Nitze indicated. Nuclear-armed United Kingdom, France, and Israel offer no threat to the United States. Nor do India and Pakistan.

The same argument can be made in reverse for Russia. If the Russians closed their nuclear arsenal, they would not be endangered from attack and invasion by the United States because the U.S. has no self-interest in initiating such an endeavor. Nor would Russia risk attack by the relative small nuclear arsenals of the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel.

Certainly the United Kingdom and France could dispense with their nuclear weapons with no risk of harm. Although they may conceive that their arsenal functions as a reserve deterrent to Russia beyond what the United States provides, the risk of Russian attack is virtually zero. Some say that their arsenal is a matter of national pride and also secures their position as permanent members of the UN Security Council. But I believe that their national greatness derives not from their nukes but rather from their magnificent languages, literature, art, architecture, and contributions to science.

China's arsenal is too small to serve as a deterrent to the United States or Russia. In any dispute China has over borders with Russia and India and in confrontation over sea rights and off-shore territories, nuclear weapons are irrelevant.

Long-standing disputes between India and Pakistan cannot be resolved through use of nuclear weapons. I believe that either side could give up its nukes without risk though mutual disarmament is certainly preferred.

Of all the nuclear powers Israel feels the most endangered. But as cited earlier, Avner Cohen has shown that the Israel nuclear arsenal has no practical use. Furthermore, Israel has sufficient conventional forces to repel any likely combined attack by enemy forces.

Thus, I believe that unilateral disarmament by any or all of the nuclear powers is not only idealistic but could also occur without endangering their national security. Indeed some unilateral initiatives for nuclear arms reduction have already occurred, as previously described.

I also recognize that large scale unilateral nuclear disarmament is probably not political feasible in most of these states. It could occur most easily in the United Kingdom, France, and China which are the least involved in adversarial relationships with other nuclear states or surrounding nations.

I believe that the faith community should make its prophetic voice heard in making the case for unilateral initiatives to rid the world of nuclear weapons while at the same time working for achievement of other approaches.

Nuclear Weapons Convention

A second approach would be adoption of a nuclear weapons convention functioning as a multilateral treaty to outlaw all nuclear weapons. It would be similar to treaties outlawing biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel mines, and cluster bombs.

This would be in keeping with the Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1970) that requires that "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament." In 1996 the International Court of Justice interpreted this article to mean that "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." In that same year the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution called upon all countries to fulfill this obligation "by commencing multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention."

This led to drafting of a model nuclear weapons convention (NWC) by international experts. As explained by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), under such a treaty

- all States would be prohibited from pursuing or participating in the "development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons."
- Those States that possess nuclear weapons would be obligated to destroy their nuclear arsenals in a series of phases. These five phases would progress as follows:
 - taking nuclear weapons off alert,
 - removing weapons from deployment,
 - removing nuclear warheads,
 - removing and disfiguring the "pits" and
 - placing the fissile material under international control.
- Under the model convention, delivery vehicles would also have to be destroyed or converted to a non-nuclear capability.
- In addition, the NWC would prohibit the production of weapons-usable fissile material.

- The States Parties would also establish an Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that would be tasked with verification, ensuring compliance, decision-making, and providing a forum for consultation and cooperation among all State Parties.⁷³

According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), 146 nations have expressed support for negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. They include China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea, but not the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and Israel.⁷⁴

In addition to ICAN many other nongovernmental organizations support a nuclear weapons convention, including Abolition 2000, International Network of Engineers and Scientists Against Proliferation, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Mayors for Peace, Reaching Critical Will (a project of the International League for Peace and Freedom), and organizations within various countries.

The Secretary General of the United Nations has supported the idea of a nuclear weapons convention. In 2012 the UN General Assembly decided to “establish an open-ended working group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons.”⁷⁵ The group met in Geneva in 2013 between March and August with the contribution of international organizations and the civil society. The group considered a wide range of issues but did not establish a framework for negotiating a nuclear weapons convention.⁷⁶

But as long as the United States and Russia refuse to support negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention, little progress is likely. Nevertheless, **I believe that the faith community should lend its support for achievement of a nuclear weapons convention even while working for short-term goals. As a starter the Holy See as a sovereign state has already expressed its support for a nuclear weapons convention.**

Negotiated Steps

The third approach to nuclear disarmament is negotiation of treaties on particular aspects of the global nuclear arsenal. This has been the practice of the last fifty years, producing eleven major treaties related to nuclear weapons testing, nonproliferation, and reduction of deployed weapons.⁷⁷ There have also been parallel unilateral initiatives of nuclear arms reduction.

Along these lines the 2000 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) formulated Thirteen Practical Steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to move toward nuclear disarmament.⁷⁸ This includes a call for “An unequivocal undertaking by the

⁷³ <http://lcnw.org/mnwc/>

⁷⁴ www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/nwcguide2012.pdf

⁷⁵ <http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/%28httpPages%29/160EB2DDE30CCE6BC1257B10003A81A9?OpenDocument>

⁷⁶ <http://www.unog.ch/oewg-ndn>

⁷⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_disarmament

⁷⁸ <http://www.acronym.org.uk/official-and-govt-documents/2000-npt-review-conference-final-document-13-steps> .

nuclear-weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.” Several of the recommended steps remain valid as part of an action agenda for the faith community, including:

- Ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
- Moratorium on nuclear weapons test explosions.
- Negotiation of a verifiable treaty banning production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.
- Further reductions of strategic offensive weapons beyond the START agreements.
- Further reduction of non-strategic weapons based upon unilateral initiatives.
- Concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems [described by some persons as “de-alerting”].

Also valid are some basic principles articulated by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, such as:

- Irreversibility of nuclear arms control and reduction measures.
- Undiminished security for all throughout the reduction process.
- Increased transparency by nuclear weapons states with regard to their nuclear weapons capability.
- A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in national security policies.

A number of organizations have offered their own plans for step-by-step elimination of nuclear weapons. Among them Global Zero, an international movement for a world without nuclear weapons, has laid out a multi-year action plan that would have four phases to be completed in 2030.⁷⁹ It would begin with bilateral agreements between the United States and Russia, then bring in other nations possessing nuclear weapons working toward a Global Zero Accord by 2023.

I agree with the goal, but I believe that the pace is much too slow. It would retain the outmoded, cold war doctrine of nuclear deterrence for another 15+ years though with gradually lowered numbers of nuclear weapons. The plan has no provision for taking nuclear weapons off high alert. There is no provision for halting the costly development of new versions of nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles.

The world can and should do better to rid the world of these useless though dangerous weapons at a much faster pace. **The global faith community**, organized as I will discuss in the next section, **should lead the way in advocacy of a step-by-step approach.** In doing so it is necessary to take into consideration the fears that have driven the nuclear arms race and also the regional setting of the states possessing nuclear weapons.

United States and Russia. The place to start is with the United States and Russia, which between them possess 90 percent of the global nuclear arsenal. Each side fears a long-distance attack by the other by accident, design, or action of a rogue officer. That is why they retain the cold war policy of mutually assured destruction (MAD). But neither side has any legitimate military use for their nuclear arsenal other than deterrence.

⁷⁹ <http://www.globalzero.org/get-the-facts/GZAP>

The challenge is for them to find ways to get to zero safely. Although I lack enough detailed knowledge of the composition of their nuclear forces to be able to present a comprehensive plan on how to proceed, I can offer a broad outline.

I did this four years ago when I laid out my approach in a somewhat whimsical article that presented a dream fantasy telling about an imaginary conversation I had with President Barak Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev, then titular head of Russia.⁸⁰ I told them about my mother and her friend who every summer would buy a bushel of peaches together for canning and freezing. They would divide them two at a time to assure that each got a fair share of the better peaches and that each got an equal amount.

This establishes the principle of equality, applicable to the more complex process of nuclear arms reduction along with the principles of undiminished security and irreversibility articulated by the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The five phases of nuclear weapons elimination specified in the model nuclear weapons convention, described earlier, can provide a useful guide for bilateral action.

- 1) Taking nuclear weapons off alert (referred to by some as “reducing the operational status”). Bruce Blair has described methods that could be used.⁸¹ A report from the Russian Academy of Sciences discusses various approaches.⁸² There could happen in a balance manner with mutual monitoring of the process or by bringing in international observers. Some experts believe that this could be accomplished in a year or two.
- 2) Removing weapons from deployment. This could begin as weapons are de-alerted.
- 3) Removing nuclear warheads. An international verification team would be useful.
- 4) Removing and disfiguring the “pits”.
- 5) Placing the fissile material under international control.

To help the faith community along in advocating this step-by-step approach it would be useful for some experts to lay out a roadmap to zero, showing which weapons, where, and when they would be taken out of service while maintaining equality and undiminished security throughout the reduction process. Perhaps some organization could sponsor a competition among experts with a cash reward for the best practicable plan.

I believe that the United States and Russia could safely undertake this step-by-step approach by themselves regardless of what other nuclear weapons states do. As I have argued previously, none of the other nuclear weapons states pose any threat to the U.S. or Russia even if the two completely closed their nuclear arsenals. It would, of course, be preferable for the United Kingdom, France, and China to enter into this process as the level of the U.S. and Russian arsenals reached 200 or so warheads and to join them in the march to zero.

⁸⁰ http://www.mupwj.org/us_russia_disarmament_dream_scenario.htm

⁸¹ http://media.hoover.org/documents/Drell_Goodby_Schultz_Reykjavik_Revisited_25.pdf

⁸² <http://ieer.org/resource//de-alerting-russian-and-us-nuclear-weapons/>

As to regional issues, the nuclear weapons competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, now Russia, has always had a relationship to matters of European security. Earlier NATO believed it needed nuclear weapons to deal with Soviet conventional superiority. Now Russia perceives NATO conventional superiority and wants to keep tactical nuclear weapons in reserve. The Baltic republics and Poland, NATO members closest to Russia, note that the bulk of the Red Army is based in the northwest sector of Russia. Russia sees NATO conducting military exercises relatively close by and is aware that the United States has 200 nuclear gravity bombs at airbases in Europe. Although neither side has the capability of conducting a massive attack on the other and seems to have no intent, measures of European disarmament need to accompany bilateral nuclear arms reduction by the United States and Russia.

Another issue to deal with is missile defense. At the Reykjavik summit meeting between President Reagan and President Gorbachev in 1986 the matter of missile defense stood in the way of reaching an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons by 2000. Gorbachev wanted the United States to shut down its strategic defensive initiative (SDI) because he feared that the U.S. might break off the reduction process and use the defensive shield to attack the Soviet Union. Reagan refused to give up strategic defense. It turned out that they both misjudged the potential of SDI because it never succeeded in providing a workable defense. Twenty-seven years later Russia doesn't want the United States to deploy a missile defense system in Central Europe for what the U.S. claims is an effort to defend against Iranian missiles because it might reduce the effectiveness of Russian ballistic missiles. It's an issue that must be considered in nuclear weapons negotiations.

United Kingdom. The Nuclear Treat Initiative (NTI) estimates that the United Kingdom has fewer than 180 nuclear warheads in service after progressive reduction of its nuclear stockpile.⁸³ They are based on four ballistic missile submarines that are on patrol one at a time under a continuous-at-sea deterrence policy. Because two of the submarines are scheduled to be retired in 2024, building a replacement is under debate with considerable opposition. Facing no existential threat, the United Kingdom could close down its nuclear arsenal on its own, perhaps as the United States and Russia reach 200 to 300 warheads apiece in active service. Or this could occur in conjunction with a multi-national treaty.

France. The French nuclear arsenal totals approximately 300 warheads that are carried on four nuclear-armed submarines, three land-based air squadrons and one squadron on an aircraft carrier that also carries air-to-land missiles. According to NTI,

France's nuclear weapons doctrine is based on the policy of dissuasion (an equivalent of deterrence), which states that an attack on France's vital interests would bring about a nuclear response in the form of unacceptable damage....Exactly what constitutes France's national interest is slightly ambiguous, but analysts generally describe it as including the free exercise of sovereignty, national territorial integrity, and the integrity of its overseas territories. Nevertheless, France maintains a degree of calculated ambiguity regarding its vital interests.⁸⁴

⁸³ <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/united-kingdom/>

⁸⁴ <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/france/nuclear/>

My view is that France faces no threat sufficiently grave to call for the use of nuclear weapons and could prudently join other nations on the road to zero, perhaps like the U.K. as the U.S. and Russia reach the 200 warhead level.

China. NTI relies upon the estimate of the U.S. Department of Defense that China has approximately 130 to 195 nuclear capable ballistic missiles based on land and on submarines, but only a fraction of these have sufficient range to reach the United States. For many years China had a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons and an official pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states. However, the phrase “no first use” did not appear in China’s 2013 Defense White Paper. According to NTI, “China’s current nuclear posture focuses on survivability and maintaining a second-strike capability.”⁸⁵ Therefore, as the Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals reach lower numbers, China could safely dismantle its nuclear arsenal as part of a global process.

Israel. Of all the possessors of nuclear weapons, regional issues loom largest with Israel’s nuclear arsenal. Accordingly if Israel is to join the procession to zero nuclear weapons, it will be necessary to resolve major issues of conflict in the Middle East. They include the need for an effective peace process among the nations there, recognition of Israel by its neighbors as a legitimate sovereign state, establishment of viable Palestinian state, assured security for Israel, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to Iran. This could lead to creation of a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East, including the closing of Israel’s nuclear arsenal.

India and Pakistan. India’s and Pakistan’s nuclear arsenals, estimated at approximately 100 nuclear weapons apiece, have relevance mainly to long-standing disputes between these two nations, especially the status of Kashmir. They are another pair of nations badly in need of mediation and reconciliation. Because how to accomplish this is beyond the scope of this report I will only note that their nuclear weapons are not a threat to any other nation as long as India and Pakistan keep nuclear devices and fissile material out of the hands of terrorists.

North Korea. According to NTI, “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has an active nuclear weapons program and tested nuclear explosive devices in 2006, 2009, and 2013. It is also capable of enriching uranium and producing weapons-grade plutonium.”⁸⁶ In an effort to end North Korea’s nuclear weapons program Six Party Talks involving China, the United States, North and South Korea, Japan, and Russia have been occurring off and on since 2003 without success.⁸⁷ Combinations of sanctions and incentives have also been utilized. Meanwhile, North Korea has continued its nuclear operations and tested intermediate and long-range missiles. It is important to continue this challenging endeavor as part of a global program of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. But no matter how difficult to deal with, North Korea is mostly like to discover how useless nuclear weapons are because any use could result in a devastating response with conventional weapons sufficient to destroy North Korea’s industrial base, its transportation system, and its military forces without even nuclear weapons brought into use. Therefore, the combination of negotiation, sanctions, and incentives should continued to be pursued.

⁸⁵ <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/china/>

⁸⁶ <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/north-korea/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/six-party-talks-north-koreas-nuclear-program/p13593>

Iran. Intense negotiations are now underway between Iran and the United States, Russia, France, United Kingdom, China, and Germany to assure that Iran's advanced nuclear program is used only for peaceful purposes and does not produce nuclear weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is also involved. This is supplemented by strong economic sanctions.⁸⁸ The latest round of negotiations seems to be producing results, but difficult issues remain unresolved. It remains to be seen whether Ayatollah Khamenei's statement that "the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islamic law" will be put into practice. But as challenging negotiations are, this route is far superior to the alternative of a military attack that could have disastrous effects on the entire Middle East.

Relation to nuclear weapons convention. This step-by-step approach doesn't displace the need for a nuclear weapons convention with a total ban on nuclear weapons. Indeed the willingness of the United States and Russia to embark upon the road to zero may make a convention possible. Anyway a convention is likely to incorporate step-by-step reductions. Also arms reduction agreements do not preclude nuclear weapon states from undertaking individual initiatives.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

And so we see that it is possible to envision a roadway leading to the global elimination of nuclear weapons. As I have documented in previous sections, it is a goal long advocated by numerous religious organizations, beginning soon after the first atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Also in the fall of 1945 physicists who had worked for the Manhattan Project that produced the first bombs started the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to inform the public of the dangers of these new weapons. Subsequently other scientists, physicians, engineers, lawyers, mayors, parliamentarians, and millions from the civic sector have organized in support of nuclear disarmament. Non-nuclear states have joined together to press possessor states to eliminate their nuclear weapons.

Religious leaders have issued numerous statements and held news conferences. So have scientists, physicians, retired military leaders, retired top governmental officials, and many others. Parliamentarians have enacted resolutions. Citizen organizations have staged huge rallies, organized grassroots campaigns, appeared at international conferences. Celebrities have spoken out.

Yet altogether we have failed to rid the world of nuclear weapons. We have allowed heads of state, military leaders, laboratories and factories that produce nuclear weapons, military theorists, politicians, and others to prey upon our fears and to block efforts of nuclear abolition. We have not mobilized the total strength that we have to force necessary changes in public policy.

⁸⁸ <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/iran/>

But we cannot give up. And so I inquire? Is not this the time to come together stronger than ever before, to speak truth to power and insist that that nuclear arms race has gone on far too long, that it must be brought to an end? Could the global religious community – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and others – lead the way by expressing their mutual recognition of the moral evil of the use of nuclear weapons and by offering a united voice calling for nuclear abolition?

For instance, there could be an interfaith statement making this demand and signed by Pope Francis, the heads of the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance, Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, other international Christian leaders, and Jewish and Muslim representatives? For the latter I need guidance on who they are and how to bring them into such a coalition. Such an international statement could have co-signers in the United States, United Kingdom, France, and elsewhere.

There could be follow up by interfaith delegations representing the principal signers who would call upon President Obama and President Putin and demand that they agree to start down the road to total nuclear disarmament. These leaders are key because between them the United States and Russia possess 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. This demand could be backed up with one or more plans on how to accomplish this objective. (Earlier I asked for help from experts to prepare such plans.)

In President Obama at least this delegation would have a sympathetic listener because in Prague in April 2009 he made a “commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”⁸⁹ However, his quest for even modest steps in this direction has been blocked by Republicans in the U.S. Congress. This is ironic because every Republican president since the end of World War II has supported or signed nuclear arms control treaties with Republican support in the Senate. But now because of partisan division congressional Republicans oppose disarmament measures presented by Democratic presidents.

Therefore, the interfaith delegation could go from the White House to Capitol Hill and meet with the Speaker of the House, House Minority Leader, Senate Majority Leader, and Senate Minority Leader to discuss not only arms control but also excessive funding for nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles.

For further follow up at the state level Catholic, United Methodist, and Episcopal bishops, their counterparts in other denominations, evangelical clergy, and Jewish and Muslim leaders could call upon Republican senators to seek their support for nuclear arms control agreements. They could talk with U.S. representatives on the need to shift spending away from nuclear weapons to crucial social needs. This could be accompanied by grassroots campaigns to increase public pressure for changes in policy.

In other nations, such as the United Kingdom and France, similar actions by religious leaders could take place, both making demands upon national leaders and grassroots efforts.

To gain maximum strength the faith community needs to work closely with civic sector organizations and non-nuclear states in a global movement to eliminate nuclear weapons. This

⁸⁹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/05/obama-prague-speech-on-nu_n_183219.html

can build on the momentum of a pair of international conferences focused on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, hosted by Norway in 2013⁹⁰ and Mexico in 2014⁹¹, with a third scheduled for Austria in 2015. Participants have included representatives of 146 states, several United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and civic sector organizations.

Together we can rid Earth of nuclear weapons, which waste resources and threaten catastrophic consequences.

A model for this challenging effort is Jesus' story about a widow who kept coming before a judge, asking, "Give me justice in this case against my adversary." For a while the judge refused, but he finally gave into her plea.⁹² In our case the adversary is the global nuclear arsenal which endangers the entire planet. We need the widow's persistence in bothering the earthly rulers who control this arsenal until they yield to our demands for abolition.

One other area where the faith community could work together is the Middle East where Israel is nuclear armed and Iran may have nuclear ambitions. As I have indicated, this is a complex situation involving need for acceptance of Israel by Arab neighbors, creating a viable Palestine state, assuring Israel's security, settling inter-communal disputes, and preventing Iran from producing nuclear weapons.

Here I would refer back to "A Common Word" cited at the beginning of this inquiry that identifies love of God and love of neighbor as the commonality of the three monotheistic faiths. Worshipping the same God, Jews, Muslims, and Christians can put into practice love for neighbor as they live in close proximity by finding ways to achieve reconciliation and enduring peace with justice.

⁹⁰ http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/humanitarian-efforts/humimpact_2013.html?id=708603

⁹¹ <http://www.sre.gob.mx/en/index.php/humanimpact-nayarit-2014>

⁹² Luke 18:1-8

Appendix A

Status of World Nuclear Forces, 2013

Country	Operational Strategic	Operational Nonstrategic	Reserve/Nondeployed	Military Stockpile	Total Inventory
Russia	1,800 ^a	0 ^b	2,700 ^c	4,500	8,500 ^d
United States	1,950 ^e	200 ^f	2,500 ^g	4,650	7,700 ^h
France	290	n.a.	? ⁱ	300	300
China	0 ^j	? ^j	180	250	250 ^j
United Kingdom	160 ^k	n.a.	65	225	225 ^k
Israel	0	n.a.	80	80	80 ^l
Pakistan	0	n.a.	100-120	100-120	100-120 ^m
India	0	n.a.	90-110	90-110	90-110 ⁿ
North Korea	0	n.a.	<10	<10	<10 ^o
Total:^p	~4,200	~200	~5,800	~10,200	~17,300

* All numbers are approximate estimates and further described in the [Nuclear Notebook](#) in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and the nuclear appendix in the [SIPRI Yearbook](#). See also [status and 10-year projection](#) of U.S. and Russian forces. Additional reports are published on the [FAS Strategic Security Blog](#). Unlike those publications, this table is updated continuously as new information becomes available. Current update: **2013**.

^a This number is higher than the aggregate data under the New START treaty because this table also counts bomber weapons at bomber bases as deployed. [Detailed overview of Russian forces is here](#).

^b All are declared to be in central storage. Several thousand retired non-strategic warheads are awaiting dismantlement.

^c Includes all non-strategic warheads, strategic warheads assigned to delivery systems in overhaul, and most bomber weapons.

^d In addition to the 4,500 in the military stockpile, 4,000 retired warheads are estimated to be awaiting dismantlement. Details are scarce, but we estimate that Russia is dismantling approximately 1,000 retired warheads per year.

^e This number is higher than the aggregate data released under the New START data because this table also counts bomber weapons on bomber bases as deployed. [See here for analysis of aggregate data](#).

^f Some 160-200 B61 bombs are deployed in Europe at six bases in five countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Turkey). For details, [see here](#) and [here](#).

^g Non-deployed reserve includes an estimated 2,200 strategic and 300 non-strategic warheads in central storage. Some 260 nonstrategic W80-0 warheads for the Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile (TLAM/N) have been retired.

^h In addition to the nearly 4,650 warheads in the military stockpile, approximately 3,000 retired warheads are awaiting dismantlement. In addition, more than 15,000 plutonium cores (pits) and some 5,000 Canned Assemblies (secondaries) from dismantled warheads are in storage at the Pantex Plant in Texas and Y-12 plant in Tennessee. For detailed overview of U.S. forces, [see here](#).

ⁱ France has stated that it has no reserve, but it probably has a small inventory of spare warheads. For an update of the French nuclear posture, see [this article](#).

^j China is thought to have "[several hundred warheads](#)," far less than the 1,600-3,000 that have been suggested by some. None of the warheads are thought to be fully deployed but kept in storage under central control. The existence of a Chinese non-strategic nuclear arsenal is uncertain. The Chinese arsenal is increasing with production of new warheads for DF-31/31A and JL-2 missiles. [Detailed overview of Chinese forces is here](#).

^k Of these "operationally available" warheads, "up to 48 warheads" are on patrol at any given time. The number of "operational missiles" on each sub will be reduced to "no more than eight" with 40 warheads in the next few years. By the mid-2020s, the stockpile will be reduced to "not more than 180." [Detailed overview of British forces is here](#).

^l Although Israel has produced enough plutonium for 100-200 warheads, the number of delivery platforms and estimates made by the U.S. intelligence community suggest that the stockpile might include approximately 80 warheads. [Detailed overview of Israeli forces is here](#).

^m The U.S. intelligence community estimates that Pakistan has produced 90-110 warheads. None of these are thought to be deployed but kept in central storage, most in the southern parts of the country. More warheads are in production. [Detailed overview here](#).

ⁿ Indian nuclear warheads are not deployed but in central storage. More warheads are in production. [Detailed overview of Indian forces is here](#).

^o Despite two North Korean nuclear tests, there is no publicly available evidence that North Korea has operationalized its nuclear weapons capability. A 2009 [world survey](#) by the U.S. Air Force National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) does not credit any of North Korea's ballistic missiles with nuclear capability.

^p Numbers may not add up due to rounding and uncertainty about the operational status of the four lesser nuclear weapons states and the uncertainty about the size of the total inventories of three of the five initial nuclear powers.

The information available for each country varies greatly, ranging from the most transparent nuclear weapons state (United States) to the most opaque (North Korea). Accordingly, while the estimate for the United States is based on "real" numbers, the estimates for several of the other nuclear weapon states are highly uncertain.

Source: Federation of American Scientists

<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html>