

THE PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

A Social Document of the
ULCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Statement of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1960

1960: Minutes, 22nd Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 797-98, 1036.

We believe that the great technological advances of the nuclear-space age hold great promise for the future of civilization at the same time that they pose the possibility of its destruction. We believe that these new dimensions of knowledge and power have developed under the sovereignty of God Who continues to rule over men and nations. In the light of His redeeming act in Jesus Christ we hold that it is His loving will that this new potential be used in the service of justice, freedom and peace, and that it is the responsibility of Christians to make every effort to guard against its destructive employment and to harness it for the general enhancement of the life of all mankind.

We recognize that, because of the pervasiveness of sin, war is always a threat; but we do not believe that it is therefore inevitable. Hence Christians are constrained by the love of God in Christ to join with others in working for the abolition of war and for the extension of peace, justice and freedom among the nations. In this process we must oppose and seek to overcome all forms of totalitarianism which deny the nature and destiny of man as revealed in Jesus Christ.

We urge the governments of the United States and Canada to wage peace and seek the prevention of war simultaneously by (a) assisting the economically underprivileged nations of the world to attain higher standards of living; (b) consolidating and extending their ties with free nations; (c) engaging with other governments in peaceful competition where important differences exist and in peaceful cooperation where fundamental principle is not compromised. We urge the governments of the United States and Canada to support and strengthen the United Nations and its agencies. There is particular need to encourage the development of the rule of law as well as provisions to insure international security in a manner compatible with the security needs and vital interests of all nations.

We reaffirm that though conscientious objection to military service is rejected as normative for the church's political ethic, it should be respected and protected as a vocational choice for individual Christians. (Minutes of 12th Biennial Convention of ULCA, p. 138).

We recognize that armaments are today a basic element in international diplomacy. Their possession in peace may serve to deter aggression. Their use in war for purposes

of defense maybe justified as a necessary evil in a sinful world. Under no circumstances can aggressive or preventive wars be sanctioned. Armaments, both their possession and use, have always been fraught with hazards, but they have now reached a destructive capacity which, if fully utilized, could engulf the nations in a holocaust of mutual annihilation. We are therefore convinced that the decision to have recourse to arms must be determined by the extent to which justice and freedom may be advanced. No nation is justified in the use of weapons of such magnitude as would result in the total destruction of human life. At the same time we recognize that the dilemma posed by the availability of these weapons can be resolved in abstraction only at grave risk. We are persuaded that this dilemma will remain a burden of mankind through the foreseeable future and that decisions must be made humbly and responsibly as each new situation arises. The dangers inherent in the nuclear-space age will be decreased in proportion to the effectiveness of agreements for the cessation of nuclear weapons testing and the reduction of national armaments under international inspection and control.

We call upon the governments of the United States and other nuclear powers to persist in the efforts to arrive at effective multilateral agreements on the cessation of all kinds of nuclear weapons testing with provision for adequate inspection and control. Toward this end we believe that a moratorium on testing should be continued until every opportunity to secure such effective agreements has been utilized. We advocate this position not only because hazards to health will thereby be kept at a minimum but also because agreement on the cessation of testing could serve to allay suspicion and provide an international experience in inspection and control which are deemed essential to the regulation and reduction of armaments in a manner that will not endanger the security of any nation.

Recognizing that an open-ended armaments race poses grave peril for ourselves and all nations, we urge the governments of the United States and Canada to engage in untiring search for new and viable forms of arms limitations and control. We believe that this requires dealing realistically with the unsolved problems of the cold war. Any approach should therefore include efforts directed at relaxation on international tensions and settlement of political problems, and calls for the readiness for step-by-step progress and patience with limited achievement.