

As Millions Arm Themselves...

WHAT'S YOUR SOURCE OF PROTECTION?

by Donald D. Schroeder

Here's the way to security from crime and violence—without guns!

HANDGUN sales are soaring in the United States. And many are rushing out to buy shortened shotguns or rapid-fire rifles for self-defense. Others are learning martial arts such as judo, karate or kung fu.

People around the world are astounded to see millions in the United States arming themselves out of frustration that government isn't able to do anything about rising crime.

Pollsters find more and more American citizens saying, "I have to rely on myself. I can't depend on government to protect me!"

What is the cause of such fear-evoking crime and violence? And why are governments often unable to protect their citizens?

Crime, Gun-control Dilemma

A flood of weaponry, military and civilian, is flowing in many nations. Almost anyone with enough money can buy a gun, if not legally then illegally.

The rapid proliferation of personal arms for self-defense and



DAN CONNOLLY—LIAISON

other purposes is creating an enormous dilemma. Frequently, guns are falling into emotionally unstable hands. Or into the hands of criminals or terrorist organizations.

Weapons loaded for self-protection against criminals frequently end up being used to settle heated family or social arguments. Or end up being mistakenly or accidentally discharged, killing or maiming family members, innocent intruders or children. Or end up being

stolen from homes by robbers, strengthening the arsenal of the criminal world.

In the United States, the frequent use of arms by criminals, and gun violence by others, has led one group of alarmed citizens and lawmakers to demand more vigorous gun controls. Equally vigorous and vociferous are efforts by citizens and lawmakers to protect private ownership and purchasing of guns. Gun control in the United States is an emotional issue.

On one side of the debate, gun controllers believe there must be stricter gun controls—some even say gun prohibition—if society is to reduce the abuse of guns, accidents and the chance of weapons falling into unstable or criminal hands. They

interpret the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment* to apply only to the support of a state militia, not the right of everyone to possess arms free of government regulation.

On the other side are antigun-control groups. They fear that any restrictions on gun ownership or

* The Second Amendment states: "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

Role of Cultural Attitudes in Violence

Strict gun-control laws alone will not greatly reduce violent crime rates in nations plagued by them. The greatest determinants of whether or not a society will be plagued by violent crime are its social and cultural attitudes and crime-detering institutions.

The United States has a high gun-possession rate and also a high gun-crime rate. But there are nations that, per capita, have even higher gun-possession rates among citizenry—Switzerland and Israel, for example. Yet these nations experience low gun-related citizen crime compared to the United States. There are nations with extremely strict gun-possession laws—such as Mexico and other Latin American nations—that

experience high armed crime and homicide rates.

The level of violent crime and the weapons used varies significantly among different nations, regions and ethnic groups. The type of weapon and situations where they are used have strong relevance to the attitudes and traditions of individual peoples or regions in coping with problems.

The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution allows American citizenry possession of firearms. From its beginning the U.S. developed a strong tradition of man and boy with gun associated with patriotism, self-reliance, manly skills and defense of home and country. Strict gun controls strike many Americans who identify with this tradition as

an attack on admirable qualities in American life.

Many foreigners, however, look on in amazement at U.S. infatuation and glorification of guns. American folklore, television, movies and novels idolize both heroes and villains who reduce problems to the simple “solution” of blazing guns. Yet nations everywhere take pride in their own traditions of violence.

Many crimes of violence do not involve guns, but fists, blunt instruments or knives. Eliminating guns without eliminating the attitudes that cause crime and violence and without providing strong deterrents by swift-moving justice, would mean many would try

illegally to obtain various deadly weapons to protect themselves. Organized crime and unscrupulous dealers are ready to cater to any illicit demand.

If snub-nosed pistols and revolvers are banned, long-barreled weapons will be cut down—and they are even more deadly substitutes.

If domestic gun production is halted, smuggling will begin, and anyone familiar with a lathe or a few handyman tools can make a serviceable weapon.

Only the reestablishment of the government of God over the earth will force mankind to face repentance and turn from the violent ways that now afflict society. It will take that kind of force before the majority learn to live in peace and service to fellowman.

laws forcing registration of weapons or ammunition, open the door for eventual government confiscation of arms. From guns they derive personal pleasure in hunting and target shooting, or depend upon them for self-defense of their lives and property.

Many in this latter group believe an armed populace is the only way citizens can deter crime and government tyranny. They insist the Second Amendment guarantees all noncriminal citizens a right to keep and bear arms. And they believe strict gun-control laws are not only unenforceable without stepping on other constitutional rights, but such laws do not deter criminals who don't obey laws.

Some, of course, take positions somewhere between extreme views on either side in the gun-control debate. Many feel only handguns, because they are so concealable and deadly, must be strictly controlled, but not long guns. The way people feel about gun control depends upon their *confidence* in human government and in government's ability to control crime and violence.

Yet the issues that have pro-

duced the gun-control debate—soaring crime and lack of confidence in government—are the very issues almost no one is facing or providing solutions to.

Of course not! For most persons do not understand the root cause of criminal and violent human behavior. And what must be done to deter criminal and injurious human behavior.

It's What's Behind the Gun

The existence of guns, per se, is not the primary cause of violence or criminal behavior. But wrong values, attitudes and wrong character in human beings are!

When you mix wrong human attitudes and wrong character with easy access to guns, gun violence will inevitably increase.

The big issue that needs to be answered to solve the growing personal security crisis is the right way citizens should be living and treating one another. And how government should treat violations of law so others will be deterred from repeating crimes.

When a society achieves right ways of living, the criminally and

violence-minded, not law-abiding citizens, will live in fear. And law-abiding citizens will have confidence that their government and society will protect them.

The Creator, through the pages of the Bible, reveals the real causes of crime and violence. But humans, for the most part, have rejected the way that leads to peace in the streets and in the home!

Cause Is Spiritual

You've heard the phrase, “He's in a bad spirit today!” There is a “father” of that bad spirit—just as there is a father of every evil and criminal attitude.

Your Bible reveals that the real father of that bad spirit long ago rebelled against the government and laws of God.

The Creator originally gave him rulership over the earth. But he allowed lust, greed and competition to rule his mind. He decided to become an aggressor and conquer God's throne. He wanted to take control of the universe for himself.

The first archcriminal had his name changed from Light-bringer (Lucifer, in Latin) to Satan, mean-

ing "adversary." The numerous angels that followed him in his rebellion were thrust back down to earth and became demons (Rev. 12:9).

Few today realize that Satan and his evil host have swayed all humanity with wrong attitudes and with clever deceptions.

Many don't believe Satan exists. But Jesus Christ said Satan is the father of murder and lies (John 8:44). He is the author of violence, lawlessness and criminality.

But how did man first become subject to Satan's attitudes and deception?

Beginning of Human Violence

God created mankind for an awesome purpose. In Genesis 1, verse 26, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle . . . and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (RAV).

God commanded the first man, Adam, in the garden of Eden, to "tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). Adam was given the opportunity to submit to the government of God and replace Satan as ruler over the earth. By building right character, which included proper administration of his environment, Adam could qualify for earth's rulership in God's government.

But the first man, Adam, and his wife Eve failed the test. They yielded to doubting attitudes and false reasoning implanted in their minds by Satan. They decided to experiment to find truth. They chose to disbelieve their Maker.

For their rebellion the first humans were driven from the garden of Eden. They and their progeny were permitted—since that is what they wanted to do—to experiment with and develop their own governments and ways of living and to experience the results.

Cain, Adam and Eve's first son, allowed evil and violent attitudes to develop in his character. God warned him to *resist* (Gen. 4:6-7). But Cain chose not to. He soon rose up and killed his brother Abel, because he (Cain) was "of the wicked one" (I John 3:12).

After this, human beings went their own ways, farther and farther

from God and his ways. The results? Endless wars, strife, violence, fear and suffering! Nations armed themselves with ever more sophisticated weapons to protect themselves from, or to threaten, other nations.

Yet God did not leave mankind ignorant of right government and right ways of living.

Birth of a Remarkable Nation

From a deceived and corrupt world God called a special nation, ancient Israel. Israel was to be a holy nation, unique among nations. God gave that people the opportunity to be an example of the abundance and peace a nation could receive if



OWEN FRANKEN—SYGMA

subject to the government and laws of God.

God promised ancient Israel, "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them . . . I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid . . . and the sword [warfare] will not go through your land" (Lev. 26:3, 6, RAV).

But in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, the Creator warned the nation that if they would not be diligent to keep his laws, "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. . . . Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life" (verses 16, 66).

Grasp it! Fear of crime and violence is the result of nations refus-

ing to diligently do what God commands!

God commanded ancient Israel to obey the Ten Commandments. That basic law is a dynamic spiritual law codified for mankind. It reveals how to have right relationships with God and fellowman. God's basic law teaches love and respect. It forbids dishonoring parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, lust and greed. Violation of these laws brings automatic penalties.

Jesus Christ said God's laws could be summed up as follows: " "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." " Jesus was quoting out of the law given to God's chosen nation, Israel (see Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

God revealed to ancient Israel many laws and statutes against various criminal acts. God pronounced judgments against bribery and perversion of judgment among appointed officials. He forbade corruption and abuse of public trust. These laws are cataloged in the first five books of Scripture.

These laws were to be taught *diligently* to succeeding generations so they, too, could be blessed by obeying them.

Responsibility for Right Instruction

God placed major responsibility for teaching right values and attitudes on the family unit (Deut. 6:7).

That means teaching, first and foremost, by parental example.

It is the breakdown of this critical responsibility that is the first link in a chain of causes that lead to violent attitudes and criminal behavior. But parents are not the only bulwark against criminal and violent attitudes.

It was the responsibility of constituted authority, *not individuals*, to render swift-moving judgment and justice in any case of criminal behavior (Deut. 13:11, 17:13, 19:20).

God commanded swift justice against evildoers because criminal attitudes, if unrepented of and allowed to persist, threaten the

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safety and security of everyone.

Today, many criminals do not believe they will be caught or severely punished for their acts. They not only do not fear God, but they do not fear or respect the human-instituted laws of their own society. Many lawbreakers have friends or parents who condone or cover up for their crimes.

Many don't fear to break laws against criminal behavior because law enforcement systems have become so enfeebled that criminals feel they can beat the courts or get off lightly if they are caught.

Notice God's instruction in ancient Israel for cases where one stole another person's property. It was not, as is frequent today, a small fine, a prison sentence or plea bargaining. Instead, depending on the circumstances, the offender was to work to restore to the owner *severalfold* the value or quantity of goods he stole (Exodus 22). Under that administration it paid to earn, not steal, what one wanted.

And if an individual attacked another person in a fit of rage and injured him with a weapon or fists, the offender "shall pay for the loss of [the victim's] time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed"—that is, the offender had to pay the victim's health recovery costs (Ex. 21:18-19, AV).

And in such a community where godly living and deep respect of law is the rule, criminals would soon have no place to hide. No one would protect them or cover up for them. Organized crime couldn't gain a toehold and make profits. Citizens and government would work hand in hand to swiftly deal with lawbreakers.

Crime and violence soar in society when individuals are willing to tolerate permissive values or violence in themselves or others. It soars when governments and criminal justice systems become corrupt and permissive.

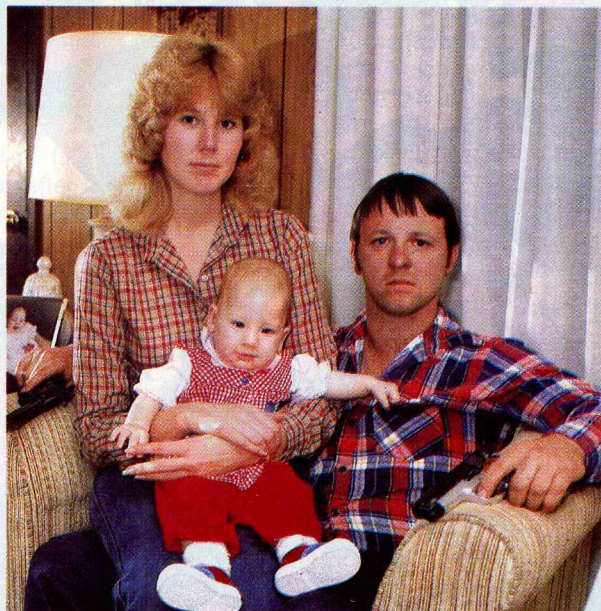
"Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"

(Eccl. 8:11, RAV).

The apostle Paul taught Christians that though the nations do not live under God's government, God has ordained human government for this age as the constituted authority against criminals and lawbreakers.

The major reasons crime soars and humans lose trust in government are that governments often are prevented from swiftly punishing criminal behavior, or authorities become corrupt or oppress law-abiding citizens.

Ancient Israel repeatedly disobeyed God's laws. The Scriptures record the tragic social and national results. More and more nations are reaping the same consequences.



RANDY TAYLOR—SYGMA

Your Protection?

Most of mankind today live the way they think is right. They make their own laws. Society has all kinds of ideas of how people should cope with crime.

Millions take up guns and other destructive weapons for self-defense because that is the only source of protection they believe they can have confidence in.

But what defense against personal attacks of crime and violence does a person have who fears and obeys God?

Did Christ teach those who would obey him to take into their own hands the weapons to "blow others away" in a blaze of gunfire?

Christ said, "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).

Many assume the Christianity that Christ preached makes Christians defenseless in a world filled with crime and violence. They totally fail to grasp the divine help, blessings and protection God can heap on those who obey God and trust him in times of trouble.

Even those who profess to be Christians often scoff at the idea of divine protection. They practice a religion "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (II Tim. 3:5).

But God is real! His *power* to intervene on behalf of those who fear and obey him is *real!*

Christ recognized that we live in a world threatened daily by the possibility of crime and violence. He lived in a world like that. So did the early apostles and Christians whom he commanded to pray daily, "Deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13, AV).

Can God deliver those who ask for his daily care and protection? "... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment," answers the apostle in II Peter 2:9 (RAV).

God's power to intervene on our behalf is not limited—except by the quality of one's faith and obedience.

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (I John 3:22, RAV).

Please do not misunderstand! God expects us to be wise and avoid the potential for crime and evil whenever possible. Often it's only a matter of using common sense and of staying out of trouble-ridden areas. Our free booklet *Crime Can Be Stopped . . . Here's How* explains how to reduce your chances of becoming a victim of criminal activity.

Are you doing your part? Do you have God's special help and protection? Are you doing what is pleasing in his sight? □