

In the aftermath of the Joker Massacre at the Dark Knight screening in Colorado, (20 July 2012) some sought to blame firearms. Yet evil does not reside in cold metal inanimate objects. Evil comes from human hearts. Far more to the point would be to ask what role Hollywood has played in glamourizing evil, portraying extremely sadistic violence and desensitising youth to cruelty. An excellent resource that exposes this is the *Death by Entertainment* DVD by Jeremiah Films.

Are Firearms for Self-Defence Permissible?

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever." 1 Timothy 5:8

Fathers and husbands are required by Almighty God to provide for their families. This includes not only providing food, housing, clothing, education, medical care, love, discipleship and spiritual guidance, but also protection. Of what worth is all the other provision if one does not provide protection as well? Anyone who fails to provide for their family has denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever. In fact, those who refuse to protect their young are worse than an animal. What animal will not fight to protect its offspring? God has equipped every one of His creatures with some weapons - whether horns, claws, teeth, talons, stings, and hooves for fight or flight. Why would humans alone be excluded from self-defence?

Our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that: ***"He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."***
Luke 22:36

The Law of God is clear. ***"If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed."***
Exodus 22:2

The Law of God establishes the basic right of self-defence. Any person is justified in defending himself, or his family, whenever they are attacked or their lives are endangered. Any weapon is permissible for use in self-defence. The Law of God does not say that the homeowner is guilty if he uses a sword, but innocent if he uses a club. The issue is not one of weapons, but the right and duty of self-defence.

Faith and Action

We should not be too quick to judge and condemn others for doing what the Bible commands them to do - to take reasonable precautions for self-defence and for the protection of their families. Yes, of course, our primary weapons are the Bible, prayer, faith and persuasion. Just as our primary spiritual food is the Word of God. But that does not stop us planting seeds, harvesting crops, shopping and preparing food!

Christians must be balanced and we need to recognise that sin comes from the heart of man (Mark 7:21-23). There is no point blaming a tool, a cold metal inanimate object, for the evil in men's hearts.

Pacifism is in defiance of historic Christian teaching. The 39 Articles, the Foundational Statement of the Church of England, states clearly in Article 37: "*It is lawful for Christian men to carry weapons.*"

The Westminster Catechism, considered the finest expression of Biblical teaching, states under the 6th Commandment that the prohibition against murder requires as our duty: "*All careful studies and lawful endeavours to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting, by just defence, against violence, protecting and defending the innocent.*" (Q135).

"Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked." Proverbs 25:26

Liberty Teeth

The first president of America, George Washington, declared: "*Firearms stand next in importance to the Constitution itself. They are the American people's liberty teeth and keystone under independence. To secure peace, security and happiness, the rifle and the pistol are equally indispensable. The very atmosphere of firearms everywhere restrains evil interference. They deserve a place of honour with all that is good.*"

Switzerland's Strategy for Survival

If you want peace, prepare for war. Peace is achieved through superior firepower. This sums up the Swiss attitude towards peace and freedom. The land of William Tell, Ulrich Zwingli, William Farel and John Calvin, with its deep mistrust of central governments, its abiding love for God's Word and for life and liberty, remain a bastion of freedom through armed neutrality.

"The nation will continue to exist only if it is strong enough to defend itself." "We have a small army, yes, but it is made strong by our traditions." General Guisan in his book: "Our People and its Army"

asserted that military defence has two essential components - moral force and material force. A young man at his Confirmation received a sword and could not marry unless he possessed a Bible and a firearm. The local assemblies of lawmakers each carried a sword as a symbol of liberty when they gathered for legislation. Days of military recruitment were festivals with processions, flags and music. Being capable of military service is a physical certificate of health. The warrior spirit exhibits itself in the arts, literature and architecture. The army is the incarnation of the federal republic. The people are the army, the army is the people. The army provides education for citizenship. "

We owe it to our ancestors, always appreciate freedom and independence... It is better to die than to live in slavery!"

The Swiss Shooting Federation (SSV) was formed in 1824: *"To the promotion and perfection of the art of sharpshooting, an art beautiful in itself and of the highest importance for the defence of the Confederation."*

Shooting festivals became one of the most important unifying activities in the community. It has always been Switzerland's high level of military preparedness, as a nation of sharpshooters on skis, that has proved an effective deterrent to would-be aggressors.

Switzerland is the only European nation which has proclaimed that, in the event of an invasion, any announcement of surrender is to be regarded as enemy propaganda, that every soldier must fight to the last cartridge, and then with the bayonet. Their published and openly proclaimed military strategy is to make any invader pay a severe penalty for violating their neutrality. The standing order is: Keep fighting. No surrender. No retreat. Fight to the last bullet and blade.

Foundations for Freedom

To limit a person's access to lethal weapons is to limit his ability for self and family defence.

Weapons control interferes with our basic right and responsibility for self-defence. Ultimately gun control can deprive you of your right to life. The right of citizens to use lethal force to defend themselves is a great deterrent against thieves and attackers.

Those who choose not to have firearms still benefit from those who do. Even if only one in twenty people are armed, it still acts as a restraint on potential attackers who are not certain who is armed, and who is not. The deterrent value of armed citizens against crime cannot be overestimated.

"Do not be afraid of them, remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses." Nehemiah 4:14

From these, and many other, passages of Scripture (including Numbers 32:20; Judges 5:8; 1 Samuel 13:19-22), we can see that a man is responsible to be armed and prepared to protect his household.

"A righteous man who falters before the wicked is like a murky spring and a polluted well." Proverbs 25:26

The Deadly Deception of Pacifism

When these Scriptural principles are ignored the results can be tragic:

The Christians at the Elim Mission Station in Rhodesia were such convinced pacifists, that even within a few kilometres of Marxist Mozambique during a vicious war, they refused to be armed. They had neither fence, nor dogs to protect them. They refused to allow the security forces to station some guards for their protection. When communist terrorists visited Elim, the missionaries provided them with food and medical supplies.

On one fateful night, 23 June 1978, ZANLA terrorists of Robert Mugabe herded the nine

missionaries and four children onto one of the fields. In front of the parents, they hacked the children to death. Then, in front of the husbands, they raped and tortured the women to death. Finally, they brutally murdered the men. Yet, so effectively had their pacifist beliefs neutralised them, that there was no attempt at resistance. The men stood by and watched ruthless terrorists butcher and abuse their loved ones.

In November 1987 a similar massacre took place at New Adams farm in Zimbabwe. Their sincere belief in pacifism disarmed the 16 precious Christians and made them helpless victims to a frightful slaughter.

English Legal Tradition

English legal tradition has always recognised the right of free citizens to possess and carry weapons for self-defence. King Alfred the Great (871 - 899) laid the foundation for English law. The Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 formed the preamble for these laws. While abuses, such as disturbing a meeting by drawing a sword, were prohibited - the basic right to bear arms was entrenched.

The laws of King Cnut (1020 - 1023) declared self-defence to not only be a right, but a duty. Those who failed to assist a person under attack were to be fined. Similarly, anyone who "*illegally disarms a man*" were to be fined.

The *Magna Carta* of 1215, the first written restriction on the powers of government, and the grandfather of all Bills of Rights, guaranteed the right of all free men to bear arms.

The English Declaration of Rights of 1689 recognised "*the right of having and using arms for self preservation and defence.*" Other free states entrenched this right to obtain, own, carry and use weapons for self defence, including most notably the United States of America and its Bill of Rights. So important and basic was this considered by the American Founding Fathers that they placed it in the Second Amendment - straight after religious freedom!

If these foundational principles for freedom seem extreme, or outdated, then consider recent

history:

Rwanda was a Gun Free Zone

On 6 April 1994, one of the most dreadful campaigns of mass murder was unleashed upon the Tutsi people of Rwanda. In just over 6 weeks more people were killed with machetes and clubs than had died from atomic weapons in all of history. The MRND Hutu government of Rwanda instigated, organised and launched the systematic slaughter of the Christian Tutsi minority after enforcing a rigorous gun control. As the population had been previously disarmed, they were helpless to defend themselves against the state which now had a monopoly of weapons. Over 800,000 Tutsi Christians were murdered.

The confiscation of weapons made the massacres possible - by disarming the targeted victims. The holocaust in Rwanda again confirmed that limiting the ability of law-abiding citizens to defend themselves and their families is an open invitation to criminals to attack the innocent.

Gun Control Precedes Genocide

The genocides perpetrated upon the Christian Armenians in Ottoman Turkey from 1915 - 1917 were preceded by gun control and gun confiscation. The massacres of millions of Christians by communists in the Soviet Union were preceded by gun control and gun confiscation. The massacres in Europe from 1939 - 1945; in Red China from 1949 - 1976; in Uganda from 1971 - 1979; in Cambodia from 1975 - 1979; and in Rwanda in 1994 – all were preceded by gun control legislation, which effectively disarmed the targeted victims.

The Greatest Killer

A gun free sticker would not have helped these people, because the greatest threat to life is not from firearm accidents, nor even from criminals. The greatest killer in the 20th Century was secular governments who had disarmed their own citizens. Approximately 160 million people were killed by their own governments, in over 40 communist states, just in the 20th Century alone. These were not foreigners killed by invading armies during times of war, these were citizens killed by their own governments in times of peace.

Tyrants Prefer Unarmed Victims

Gun control deprives potential victims of their best means of protection. A free people need to be armed. Disarmed people can be easily exploited and oppressed. If a government does not

trust its citizens with weapons, then the citizens cannot trust the government with power. A government that fears its people is itself to be feared. No government should ever have a monopoly of force or weaponry.

Deal with the Murderer

The underlying arguments for gun control seem to be that the availability of weapons causes crime. But this has not been the Biblical position. Genesis 4 records the first murder when Cain killed Abel. God's response was not to ban rocks, knives, clubs, or whatever murder weapon may have been used, but to banish the murderer. It is the murderer's heart that is the problem, not the weapon used.

In Genesis 9:5-6, God instituted capital punishment for murder. "***Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.***"

This death penalty for murder was repeatedly restated (Exodus 21:12-15; Leviticus 24:17-22; Numbers 35:33; Matthew 5:17-18; Acts 25:11; Romans 13:1-4; Revelation 13:10).

However, nowhere does the Bible advocate weapons control. The Bible does record the control of weapons by the Amalekites and the Philistines (Judges 5:8 and 1 Samuel 13:19-22) but it condemns these restrictions on individual defence as a pagan attempt to centralise excessive power.

A Bad Workman Blames his Tool

If firearms caused crime, then Switzerland would be a violent, lawless country, because every citizen has weapons of war stored in his home. Yet, despite having millions of military type rifles, and a great many other firearms and weapons of war, in private homes, overall firearm abuse is so low as to be insignificant. Switzerland has the lowest burglary and murder rate in the industrialised world. How many mass murders take place in gun shops, on shooting ranges, or in police stations, where firearms abound?

Also, in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, when tens of millions of soldiers returned to their homes, with millions of surplus firearms sold on the open market (the South African government were selling .303 rifles for just R2 each), and hundreds of thousands of captured souvenir weapons, there was actually a sharp decline of violent crime in the USA, Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

However, later, with the advent of "*the permissive society*", and as church attendance decreased, along with the explosion of the drug culture and the sexual revolution - then violent crime increased. Clearly, guns do not cause crime. People in rebellion against the Laws of God cause crime and violence.

Gun Free is No Guarantee

Nevertheless, we in South Africa have an organisation called Gun Free South Africa which regularly claims that: "*a person who uses a firearm in self-defence is more likely to be shot than someone who does not*" and "*the cases of people attacked and robbed of their guns - and often shot with their own guns - far outnumbered occasions when somebody successfully defends themselves with a gun*" (

!" (*Loaded Issues*

, GFSA leaflet). The same leaflet asserts that criminals are more likely to attack armed victims!

Criminals Prefer Unarmed Victims

These incredible assertions are decisively refuted by the facts. A US Department of Justice report on a *Survey of Incarcerated Felons* found that the greatest deterrent to crime is armed citizens. 60% of convicts agreed that they would never attempt to rob a victim if they thought that he or she might be armed. 74% declared that their greatest fear was being shot by a victim. 57% stated that they feared armed citizens more than police. Every year, armed citizens legally shoot four times more criminals than do policemen.

Crime Control

An American study, *Crime Control* by Gary Kleck, reported that a million times a year US citizens use firearms to defend themselves against criminals and to prevent a crime (2,740 times a day). In 98% of these cases, the mere brandishing of the firearm proved sufficient to deter the attacker. Only in 2% of the cases did the citizen find it necessary to kill, or wound, the criminal. Gary Kleck began his studies as a gun control advocate, yet, after his research, became convinced that it was counterproductive. He now opposes government interference in the rights of citizens to obtain and use firearms for self-defence.

A Rapist's Nightmare

A US Justice Department study of more than 32,000 rapes or attempted rapes, found that the

best protection against rape is for a woman to be armed. When a potential victim of rape was armed with a firearm, or a knife, only 3% of the attempted rapes succeeded (*Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Rape Victimization*).

Resistance Increases Chances of Survival

A South African study, by John Mann of SAGA, researched 206 cases of armed private defence (not including police or military personnel) in the Gauteng area. In summary he calculated: 677 attackers to 246 defenders/victims; 81% of attackers had weapons, 71% had firearms. 36% of the attackers were killed, or arrested, by the defenders. 64% of the attackers fled. Only four armed defenders/victims died (confrontational survival rate of 31 to 1). No bystanders/innocent parties were injured by actions taken by the defenders. In his conclusion, Mann observed: Potential victims can expect multiple attackers. When an intended victim has used a firearm in defence, four out of ten attackers were killed, or arrested; six out of ten attackers ran away. When an armed victim resists, their chances of surviving the attack are increased by 31 times (3,100%).

More Guns - Less Crime

John Lott of the University of Chicago law school conducted an exhaustive study on the relation of firearm ownership to crime. His 18 years of thorough research of all the data, for over 3,000 counties of the United States, was published under the title: "*More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws.*"

Lott's scholarly study exposes the falsehood and folly of many Gun Free SA guestimates, claims and assertions. For example, the GFSA claim that most people are killed by a friend, family member, or someone they know. The often quoted statistic is that 58% of murder victims are killed by an acquaintance. What most people do not realise is that this so-called "*acquaintance murder*"

category includes gang members killing other gang members, drug buyers killing drug pushers, taxi drivers being killed by customers they picked up for the first time, prostitutes and their clients and so on.

Zero Tolerance

The vast majority of murders are not committed by previously law-abiding citizens. 90% of adult murderers have had previous criminals records as adults. It was this fact that led the New York Police Commissioner to institute the successful *Zero Tolerance* campaign that dramatically decreased the incidences of crime in New York City. They observed that serious violent crime

was committed by people who had committed a wide variety of minor crimes first. To counteract this early contempt for the law, New York police now deal severely with all breaches of the law - to instill an early respect of the law and for the rights of others.

Concealed Carry Deters Crime

John Lott documented in his comprehensive study that states with the largest increases in gun ownership also have the largest decreases in violent crime. Those states that allow adults to carry concealed handguns have seen a consistent annual decrease in murders, rapes and robberies. As more people obtain concealed carry permits there is a greater decline in violent crime rates. This he attributes to the fact that criminals are deterred by higher penalties and the most significant deterrent for a criminal is the possibility of being shot by a victim. Lott also documented that each additional woman carrying a concealed handgun reduces the murder rate for women by about three to four times more than an additional man carrying a concealed handgun reduces the murder rate for men.

Violence Predates Firearms

Gun Free South Africa advocates imaginatively promote the "*dream... of a country where there are no guns.*" The suggestion that violence would magically decrease if we could only have gun control reveals an ignorance of both history and human nature. Of course, history records that violence was prevalent prior to the invention of firearms in the 15th Century! Attila the Hun, Ginges Khan and Shaka Zulu managed to kill millions of people without firearms.

The Sharp and Blunt Facts

In fact, contrary to the impression created by GFSA, most murders in South Africa do not involve firearms at all. Knives and other sharp objects and clubs are used to murder more South Africans than firearms do. Does GFSA suggest we ban all knives, sticks and rocks?

E-TV Debate

This was very humorously demonstrated during a TV debate that I took part in with a judge who supported GFSA. The interview took place downtown at the E-TV studios in Cape Town. The judge, answering the question as to how he got involved in supporting Gun Free South Africa, said that he had been involved in dealing with the brutal Bains Kloof murder some years ago. It was a terrible, gruesome murder he said. "*Although it didn't actually involve firearms*" he noted, in fact, the terrible way in which they were suffocated in plastic bags made him wonder whether it wouldn't have been more merciful had they been murdered by firearms. Nevertheless, he

realised that "
something had to be done"
to outlaw firearms!

The Big Question

On another TV interview on SABC 2, *The Big Question*, I was debating Rev. Alan Storey of Gun Free South Africa. When the interviewer asked me to justify my position I quoted a number of Scripture verses mandating self-defence and family defence. The interviewer turned to Alan Storey and said "
Well, Peter has quoted a number of Scripture verses in support of his position. What verses from the Bible can you quote to support Gun Free South Africa's position?"

Rev. Storey spluttered and stammered. "*Well, actually, there aren't any*" he admitted. "*But, not everything in the Bible is Biblical!*"

As the studio audience exploded in laughter, he added: "
Well, what I mean is not everything in the Bible is Christian!"

There was even more laughter and I responded: "
What kind of theology is this?"

Sometimes one's opponents in a debate destroy their own arguments more effectively than you can do yourself.

Some people do use firearms for evil purposes, but far more people use firearms for defensive purposes - to prevent crimes from being committed.

Children Injured by Guns

On another occasion, I was debating two Gun Free South Africa advocates in Cape Town in a public meeting. Dr. Van As, of the Red Cross Children's Hospital, called for tougher gun laws because he was sick and tired of treating children wounded and crippled by gunfire. This was the first time that I had heard this argument, so, in trying to understand the situation, I asked him: "*How many of these children are gang members or criminals that were shot by police, or in self-defence, by victims of their crimes?*" His answer was: "*All of them!*"

Later, upon investigation, I found out that only four patients a month at the Red Cross Children's Hospital were gunshot victims, and almost all of those were from illegal guns in the hands of gangsters. Numerous of the patients were actually gang members themselves.

The Main Causes of Injury to Children

It does not seem logical to disarm licensed firearm owners when they are not even the problem. But further research revealed that the vast majority of casualties admitted to the Red Cross Children's Hospital that year were for falls (2,338 cases), motor vehicle accidents (1,030), burns (532), assault with blunt or sharp instruments (208), and poisoning (744). Even dog bites (91) were more numerous than firearm wounds (50) for that year.

Vastly more children die each year from bicycle accidents, car accidents and drownings than from firearms. Children are 1,450% more likely to die of a car accident than from a firearm. Should we outlaw all motor vehicles?

During the height of the Gun Free South Africa campaign I wrote the following letter styled on GFSA arguments, which was published in a number of newspapers in the country:

Car Free South Africa

Everyday the newspapers, the radio and television carry stories of yet more South Africans killed, or maimed, by one of the most dangerous weapons that the state allows our private citizens to possess.

Children are mown down in front their schools and homes, and others are orphaned, when their parents fall victims to these same instruments of death. Doctors in emergency units in hospitals countrywide are daily inundated with victims. Last year there were 511,605 incidents involving these lethal devices. In these incidents 7,260 lost their lives, 21,265 sustained major trauma, and a further 52,097 were fortunate to escape with only minor injuries.□

Everyday too, the media reports yet more of these dangerous devices stolen from their rightful owners by criminals. Many of these are subsequently used in the commission of robberies, cash-in-transit heists, hijackings and murders. The number of unlicensed or in-illegal-possession is impossible to estimate. Even those in the possession of law-abiding citizens have led to lethal accidents.□

All too often we read of children that use their parent's vehicle to show off and, who through unfamiliarity, lack of training, or negligence, kill themselves, their brothers or their friends.

It can be argued that law-abiding citizens derive pleasure from these lethal implements and that many people are collectors that own them for their aesthetic appeal, or as investments. Others require them in the course of their daily work, or involved in one of the many sports that use them. Yet, despite the rising death toll, and injuries, caused by these lethal weapons on our streets, and the horrific and graphic images that assault us daily in the media, the numbers of vehicles in the hands of South Africans continues to increase.

The proliferation of these lethal devices should be of major concern to all citizens, yet figures show that last year 859,752 new licences were issued in South Africa. Data on the number of vehicles in the hands of police and other government departments are less readily available. Each year, more people are killed by motor vehicles in South Africa than by firearms. **Should we outlaw all cars?**

Improve Safety Features

No, the solution to the horrific carnage on the roads is not to ban motor vehicles, but to improve safety features in vehicles, to educate drivers, promote the use of seat belts, and severely punish drunken or reckless driving. As with motor vehicles, it would not be right to erode everyone's rights, or to take away everyone's freedom, because of the criminal activities and carelessness of some.

Doctors Kill More People than Firearms Do

Actually, vastly more people die of medical malpractice each year than from firearms. The American Medical Association recognised that 93,000 patients die each year due to medical malpractice by doctors. Another 110,000 patients die from unforeseen reactions to prescribed medicines. We can also add the number of babies killed by doctors through abortion. Approximately 80,000 babies are killed by abortion, legally, with taxpayers money, in South Africa alone, each year. In the light of the fact that doctors kill more people each year than firearms do, it seems very hypocritical for any medical officer to blame a cold, metal inanimate object, a tool, for the evil that some people do.

Armed Citizens Save Lives

However, we recognise that doctors save more lives than they take. That is exactly the same for motor vehicles and firearms. Transport carries life-giving food and medicines to those who most need it, and patients to hospitals where they will be treated. Everyday countless crimes are prevented, hundreds of potential victims are protected, and many tragedies are averted, by armed citizens. Armed citizens save lives, but unarmed citizens all too often become helpless victims.

When three PLO terrorists opened fire on a cafe in Jerusalem, they were promptly shot by armed bystanders. The one wounded, surviving, terrorist was recorded as complaining: "*We were never told that the civilians in Israel were armed!*"

It is every man's duty to be armed and prepared to protect the innocent and to defend the defenceless. May God enable us to be fast and accurate.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially those of his household, he has denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever." 1 Timothy 5:8

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