

Understanding Violence and Alienation

It is a basic concept of Exodus that we are concerned with a Theoretical Task and a Practical Task. In our meetings the Theoretical Task is practiced in the Rites and the Deep Talk and Study Paper discussions. The Practical Task is borne out in the Problem Grid and Group Projects (corporate tasks) and the elements of the Contract and completing a Life-Line (individual tasks). Below are some excerpts that highlight these two themes followed by a scriptural point of view on the topic. ¹

THEORETICAL

“We understand only vaguely the effect that technology can have on the consciousness of a person, but it is clear that the possession of guns can radically change personality. Glenn Gray remarks that, as an officer in the Army, he did not feel dressed when he went out without his pistol strapped to his belt...”

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“Charles Fairweather, the teen-ager who went on a rampage in Nebraska and murdered eleven people said: ‘I love guns, they give me a feeling of power like nothing else.’”

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“The symbol of the gun as a phallus and its relation to sex is well known. Both are long and slim, both eject a substance that can radically change the person into whom it is directed. Hence the gun has become...a symbol par excellence of masculine power.”

From: *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* by Rollo May

PRACTICAL

“I was driving down the street in my car, when I saw three men that I had known when I was in prison. I didn’t know they were out and hadn’t seen them in five years. I rolled down the window to say hello. They asked if I could give them a ride to the train station. We were all glad to see each other again. We only went a few blocks when I realized that they were all heavily armed. They were showing each other their guns—I didn’t know what to do. I had a good job, a family, and hadn’t, in a long time, thought about being around any trouble. I didn’t know what to do. I sure didn’t want to back to prison”

Source *Unknown*

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¹ The introductory paragraph is added for context by Gordon W Brown (2025). The defining quotations were selected by Rev. Edwin M. Muller and presented as a Study Paper.

“Outside life has worsened so during his prison years that he feels he needs a pistol to visit safely his mother’s block with its youthful criminals, yet he does not carry one for fear of being returned to prison.”

New York Times

BIBLICAL

“Balaam said to the donkey, ‘Because you made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!’”

Numbers 22:29

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“Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all who live by the sword shall die by the sword.’”

Matthew 26:64