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SECOND & FLUME

by **Melissa Daugherty**

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JC & the real WMDs

God and guns. I've yet to figure out how so many people have convinced themselves that they go together. It's delusional.

Indeed, Jesus followers are kidding themselves if they think that their beloved peace-loving proselytizer—the guy who broke bread with the poor and healed the sick—would condone people arming themselves with murder weapons. I'm talking about the semi-automatic rifles that were used to slaughter little children at a Uvalde, Texas, school on May 24 and the mostly elderly Black shoppers gunned down at a Buffalo, N.Y., grocery store just 10 days earlier.

If the son of God were around today, one can be certain that those recent heinous events would give new meaning to the phrase "Jesus wept." I'm also sure he'd be quite pissed off.

Remember the biblical parable of the money changers and shopkeepers who'd set up at the Temple? Jesus overturned their tables and chairs and drove them out with a whip, and that was because they were using his Father's house as a market.

Now think what his righteous anger would look like had he walked into the National Rifle Association's annual convention, a gathering that took place in Houston, just three days after 21 people, including 19 children, were massacred at the rural Texas elementary school. The former president of the United States attended that event, read the names of the Uvalde shooting victims, and shortly thereafter danced on stage as though it wasn't a big deal that some of the dead kids were so disfigured that authorities had to identify them through DNA.

What a disgusting, shameful scene in a country in which a large portion of its residents care more about their purported right to own these killing machines—America's real weapons of mass destruction—than they do the safety of children. This was not always the case.

I grew up in a family with many hunters, mostly men but even a few women. I never winced around their deer rifles, shotguns and the occasional pistol. Back then, gun ownership was about camaraderie, marksmanship and food, not about stockpiling military arms. Personal protection was way down on the list of reasons to have a firearm, and nobody wielded semi-automatic rifles.

But in recent years, many of those same Jesus-loving family members have gone on WMD buying sprees. Unsurprisingly, the height of their spending occurred after Barack Obama was elected president. When I asked one of the men in my family about it, he told me he was sure that the new administration would come for all guns.

Others used the Second Amendment as justification, cherry-picking the part about a state's "well-regulated militia," which they've bastardized and taken to mean applies to them. It doesn't. In fact, there is nothing in the U.S. Constitution that gives individuals a right to own assault rifles.

Furthermore, it's a fantasy to think they could stand up to a government with the largest weapons cache in the world. Not unlike how a fourth-grader doesn't stand a chance against an armed psychopath. I walk my 10-year-old to his classroom every morning. The scary truth: No fence, metal detector or security guard is a sufficient barrier to someone who's armed with WMDs. As we saw in Uvalde, not even cops can contain the threat.

What we really need is for the government to ban assault weapons and create programs to buy back the 20 million already in circulation. The problem is that too many politicians are owned by the gun lobby. We can't count on them to help, nor can we rely on Jesus. Nope, we'll have to fix this mess the old-fashioned way: Vote the jackwagons out.

Melissa Daugherty is editor-at-large for the Chico News & Review