

# GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERIES



First Presbyterian  
Church of Charlotte

October 29, 2023

A dark blue silhouette of a city skyline is positioned at the top of the page. It features several buildings of varying heights and shapes, including a prominent tall, pointed tower on the right side. The background is a light blue gradient.

# Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler, Jr.

Associate Professor of Bible and  
Director, Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation  
Union Presbyterian Seminary

# Bible and the 2nd Amendment



*Competing Claims for the Christian Church*

# Two Biblical Trajectories for Love of Others

- ❖ Love in relation to God (Gen 1:26-27; 9:6; Gen 18-19; Jud 19; Mt 25:31-46; 1 Jn 4:7-21)
  
- ❖ Love in relation to self (Lev 19:18b; Golden Rule Mt 7:12; Lk 6:3; Greater Love Jn 15:13)

# Mic 4:3-4

- ❖ 3 He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall ***beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;***
- ❖ 4 but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

# 10 Commandments

- ❖ Ex. 20:13 You shall not murder.a
- ❖ Deut. 5:17 You shall not murder.a
- ❖ This is the basis of our ability to relate to YHWH our God
  - ❖ Taking of human life viewed as problematic
  - ❖ Can be translated “murder” or “kill” presenting ambiguity (taking of human life viewed a problem)
  - ❖ Does not offer an exception for “self-defense” or even “war”

# Thus

- ❖ Evident goal for Judeo Christian Community is a world without violence
- ❖ Weapons of war (destruction) will become implements of agriculture (production)
- ❖ End to weaponry is the ideal towards which we drive
- ❖ Evident in the work of two prophets' visions of Messianic expectation

# The Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America

❖ **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**.



# Exegesis of the 2nd Amendment

# Problems with Grammar/Syntax of 2nd Amendment

- ❖ This is a horrible sentence formed of **poor grammar and failing punctuation (syntax)**
- ❖ Is a militia a necessity for our nation when we have 5 standing, well funded, and well staffed branches of military service and a plethora of local, state, and federal police agencies?
- ❖ Further the Amendment contains competing ideas
  - ❖ The notion of a “well regulated militia” suggests that there will be a **regulatory organ**, while “not be infringed” suggest **no regulation**
- ❖ One statement implies government control and the other implies an un-infringed right. This Amendment is **internally contradictory**

# Problems with the Context of the 2nd Amendment

- ❖ This Amendment was **written during a different period**, with different concerns than those we face today.
- ❖ It was written in the year 1791, more than **230 years ago!**
- ❖ When it was written there were only 3,929,214 people in this nation (it was a little more than a **1/100th the size of our nation today**)
- ❖ It was written when much of the country was still yet to be “acquired” from the indigenous Americans and Mexicans...there was active conflict
- ❖ It was written when there were many **more dangerous wild animals** (like bears, mountain lions, wolverines, wolves, bison, coyotes, etc.) actively inhabiting places where people lived
- ❖ It was written when muskets & flintlock pistols that could **only fire at a rate of two to three shots a minute** were the dominant firearms available to the general population
- ❖ It was written when the **military branches of the United States were nascent** and not as well established as they are today so they may have needed a “well regulated militia” to supplement them

# Militias Today

- ❖ Often **militias are the source of the problem**, perpetuating a white supremacist agenda and imperiling our democracy as we saw when:
  - ❖ The Wolverine Watchmen threatened to assassinate Governor Gretchen Whitmer, of Michigan in October of 2020
  - ❖ Or the Proud boys tried to overthrow our democracy and assassinate Speaker Pelosi and Vice President Pence at the U.S. Capitol on Jan 6, 2021
  - ❖ Or the Patriot front were caught in the back of a U-Haul truck on their way to violently disrupt a Pride parade in Idaho in June of 2022

# Who Wrote this Amendment?

- ❖ Perhaps then we will realize that it was **written by the same people that gave us the legalized taking of other peoples' land and the ethnic cleansing and genocide** of the indigenous American population!
- ❖ Then we will realize that this Amendment was given to us by the same people that gave us **legalized slavery** and turned our black and brown ancestors into property who had no rights, who declared them 3/5ths of a human being.
- ❖ Then we will realize that this **Constitutional Amendment was given to us by those people who are the source of many other bad ideas that we have grown to reject** in our contemporary world...so why do we not question the veracity of these 26 words?

# Bible vs. 2nd Amendment

- ❖ The Bible:
  - ❖ Values human life above all creation
  - ❖ Says the way we treat others is how we treat God
  - ❖ Works towards an elimination of weapons
- ❖ The Second Amendment:
  - ❖ Values guns above human life
  - ❖ Is problematic in its text, context, and authorship
  - ❖ Is used as a basis for the proliferation of weapons

# Conclusion

- ❖ As **Christian community we see irreconcilable ends**
- ❖ To choose the Biblical perspective puts us at odds with American gun culture (2020 45,000; 2021 49,000)
- ❖ To be true to our faith commitment we should be circumspect in how we view our 2nd Amendment and the gun culture it produces
- ❖ We are faced with contrast between God's Word and a synthetic and plastic document
- ❖ We have the power (agency) to reconfigure the 2nd Amendment and American culture to make it consonant with God's views