

My New Church – The NkRA?

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Back in 2016 I wrote about the NRA as a kind of alternative church I was thinking about joining. Since then, I never have been too regular a member at the NRA church though I'm giving its new arm a fresh look.

Turns out there's a schism going on with many of the fierier types separating into a new branch: The Neo-Know Nothing Religion of the Armed, or NkRA. How's it different?

Just like 2016 I've read some thought-provoking Facebook posts from friends, family, and acquaintances recently. One even equated assault rifles to hammers as weapons used in killings (496 in 2011) and implied we need to control hammers if we are going to control assault rifles. Another said he packed a handgun in line at grocery stores, so he could protect himself and his neighbors in case a shooter attacked. Another said he's a lion because he carries a gun while the rest of us are lambs.

Many [Knickers I love](#) (Neo-Know Nothing Republicans, an up-and-coming party of many NkRA members) take it up a notch with family posts about President Biden being a pedophile, and a friend or two explaining they might vote for Hitler today if he were running, assuming he supported policies they embrace.

Well, certainly being a lion sounds better than being a lamb, notwithstanding the Christian doctrine I've been following with its images of Jesus as shepherd, lamb; us as His flock, etc. These are crazy times after all, and Christianity seems a bit deficient, especially when one goes to a typical church nowadays where pews are plenty empty. Of course, being a NkRA devotee doesn't mean you can't still go to your old church if you feel like it. In fact, many Knickers still go to church on Easter and Christmas I'm assured.

So, I figure maybe this NkRA denomination just might be a reasonable facsimile for a church; especially since the passion it engenders seems so intense. But can it pass for a religion? Let's see.

What does NkRA dogma entail? It appears to worship the 2nd Amendment of the United States Constitution which gives "the right of the people to keep and bear arms." Which is a constant rallying cry of the old NRA even though it is not particularly good at protecting this right as we regular citizens don't seem to be able to get our hands on: machine guns, silencers, sawed-off shotguns, hand grenades, or Tommy-guns (#1 on my personal wish list), let alone the weapons we will really need if an authoritarian government comes at us; weapons like mortars, howitzers, missiles, tanks, fighter jets, stealth bombers, aircraft carriers, A-bombs, etc. I mean, did the founding fathers really think we could protect ourselves with just AR-15's, SIG Sauers, and Glocks? Oh well. What could they have imagined with the most modern gun in 1791 (the Bill of Rights was implemented in 1791) was the Kentucky long rifle.

Surely repeal of the National Firearms Act, written in the days of Al Capone as police were out-gunned and gangs murdered innocent bystanders indiscriminately, has to be high on the list of this faith-based group.

Moving back to Miami from Connecticut some years back continues to leave me in a surreal position—from a gun control haven to gun rights fanatics. This is really interesting since Connecticut is the original home to so many gun manufacturers. Something about Sandy Hook really turned those folks. But down here there seems to be nary a thought about gun control; a real gun-rights asylum. Even with Parkland - and Orlando - so close, such empathy with gun victims seems very far away, at least when it comes to the “Experts in the Law” who lead our state, which is a great place to worship the 2nd Amendment. Florida seems to be safe from gun restrictions. Gun fans are downright revered down here though there is always more that can be done. We still can’t carry rifles around, unless you’re going fishing as we recently [saw on South Beach](#).

The NkRA also seems to have a new High Priestess in Georgia’s newest Congresswoman, Marjorie Taylor Greene, who makes the old High Priest Wayne LaPierre seem like he’s in another world. Her dogma is a little fuzzy, but definitely ultra-focused on guns as we can surmise from her campaign piece depicting her holding the Squad at gunpoint - and the chasing down of a Parkland kid in the streets of DC. Such energy will be difficult for the NRA to match. It really seems to come down to “more guns are good” and catechisms like “An armed society is a polite society” from gun theologian Robert A. Heinlein; at least I think so as I am still pretty new to this new-fangled faith.

Again, a key advantage of worshipping the 2nd Amendment is how little one has to go to church. Oh, there are gun-shows one can attend but they’re not required, leaving Sundays free. They are sometimes filled with news of the occasional newsworthy shooting like FBI Special Agents Daniel Alfin and Laura Schwartzenberger and other agents just this past week, renewing South Florida’s claim as the scene of the [deadliest FBI shooting in its history](#). The shooting of 6-year-old Chassidy Saunders while attending a children’s birthday party a few weeks ago is already fading into the rearview mirror. NkRA members encourage such forgetfulness even when inconvenienced with 24-hour news coverage from time to time. They seem to be more engaged by footage of past Antifa riots in Portland and Seattle than they are with shootings right across town.

A big draw of the NkRA church is that the costs of membership are far less than tithing. I don’t even own a gun and could still join the NRA for \$30 which included a free knife! Buying guns and ammo can add up but a fully loaded AR-15 can apparently be had for well under a thousand dollars, though shooting it can become habit forming I’m sure.

Like most religions this one is under attack, what with all those Knicker Congresspeople telling me that Biden and the socialists are coming to take away my gun rights, not that I use them much. But it seems awfully important, so these NRA folks keep telling me.

Our fearless leaders remind us that there is no need for gun control as these shootings all boil down to mental health issues. Of course, to my way of thinking a crazy fella *without* a gun is a lot better than a crazy fella *with* a gun, but that kind of thinking doesn’t seem to rile up the crowd.

Everyone knows the only time to talk about gun control is *between* mass shootings - during the interludes of run-of-the-mill daily shootings I guess. Intriguingly, gun control gets no press at the moment. Maybe that’s because the Knickers that mobbed the Capitol left their guns at home? Talk about mass-shooting potential. Maybe next time.

One thing the NkRA has all over the NRA church is its logo. The yellow rattlesnake flag from America's first Revolution – the [Gadsden flag](#) they call it – is so much catchier and already baked into our psyche from history class. The snake might even have it over Christianity's logo: the cross, an image Christians associate with forgiveness, love, and everlasting life. The snake? Think of it as the original Facebook perhaps, spewing misinformation in the Garden. I'm still thinking we might be able to talk the NRA into switching its logo for something much more recognizable and identified with its purpose: an assault rifle and Glock.

In the end, the NRA seems to be about power, politics, gun companies, and most of all, money. Again, not unlike more typical theologies. But with all this talk about its bankruptcy filing it reminds me that few want to go to a poor church. Not sure how much money the NkRA church has though there are plenty of rich Knickers out there.

The NkRA Church does have other ecclesiastical attributes including ceremonial clothes and vestments like camo and polo shirts, places of worship like shooting ranges and gun shops, icons including old muskets and museum pieces. Its liturgy is filled with books and movies of the Wild-West, gangsters and gangstas, and a mythology that surrounds it all. Oh yes, like any religion NkRA disciples have many myths to live by. Most are of questionable voracity, though, as with most religious zealots, opposing empirical evidence to the contrary offers little to their understanding of things. A couple of these myths include:

Myth #1 - Having a citizenry armed to the teeth will defend against a tyrannical government. This looks increasingly unlikely, given the list of weapons we would need. Plus, as noted before, few Knickers brought their guns to the DC riot. Now if that wasn't a time for the Oath Keepers and Three Percenters to bring out their assault rifles they might just as well give it up and spend more quality time with the wife and kids.

Myth #2 - Gun control just doesn't work. This was also apparently refuted at the Capitol riot. Why else would most of the NkRA faithful leave their guns at home? Because they knew they might get shot if they brought guns to DC that fateful day. This must've been hard for them, though many avoided becoming martyrs for the NkRA as a result.

One can only imagine the slaughter at the Capitol - on both sides - if Americans had unfettered access to fully automatic machine guns and hand grenades; or the type of military weapons listed previously. Just a full auto conversion kit for the AR-15 increases their lethality to heights few would reasonably want to see on America's streets. Existing triggers can already put readily available semi-automatics near 500 rounds per minute if you practice even without a bump-stock.

So, upon review, all in all, it appears the NkRA is like a religion in many respects...but with a big missing element. No Messiah/prophet/divine figure. Reverend LaPierre is no Christ-like figure I'm afraid, Trump lost his Twitter handle. Maybe Marjorie is the great NkRA hope.

So perhaps the NkRA can co-opt Jesus, or Buddha, Ganesh, or someone like that.

But the NkRA Church will need to take these deities to another level it would seem.

They need to be packing.

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