

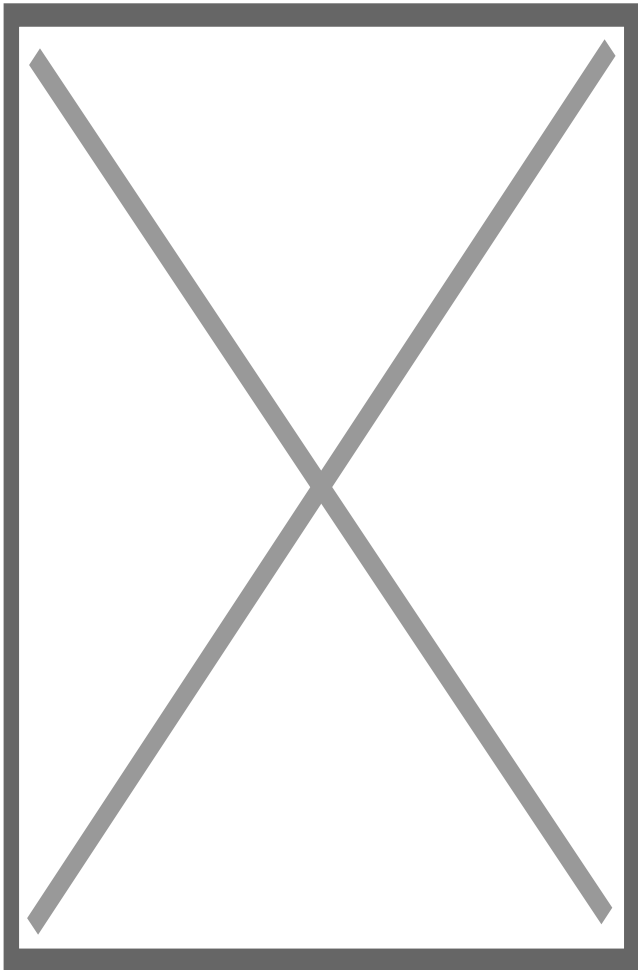
A lethal article of faith

Veteran journalist William Kole sets out to understand White evangelical devotion to the Second Amendment.

by [Keri Ladner](#) in the [January 2026](#) issue

Published on December 18, 2025

In Review



In Guns We Trust

The Unholy Trinity of White Evangelicals, Politics, and Firearms

By William J. Kole

Broadleaf Books

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RW-REPLACE-TOKEN

One of my starkest memories from my years in Scotland is visiting the town of Dunblane, an idyllic community with a stunning cathedral near a serene river. Robert Louis Stevenson spent time at nearby Ben Gunn's Cave (the inspiration for *Treasure Island*), and the surrounding fields with grazing sheep give the impression of a town deeply connected to its roots. Yet everywhere there are monuments to the 1996 event that disrupted peaceful life there: the massacre of 16 five- and six-year-old children and a teacher by a man who entered a school with four legally acquired guns. Almost immediately, Britain implemented tighter gun restrictions, and there have been few mass shootings since.

Other countries have responded to such tragedies with gun restrictions, too. Yet the United States has tended to *loosen* gun laws after mass shootings. Veteran journalist William Kole sets out to understand this paradox in his new book, *In Guns We Trust*. He argues that the source of America's gun violence is a lack of meaningful laws regulating guns, owing overwhelmingly to the way White evangelicals have turned the Second Amendment into an article of faith.

Kole contrasts this attitude with the views of evangelicals in other countries, many of whom reject the very concept of owning weapons created to take the life of another. He also examines how progressive American Christians approach the Second Amendment, gun violence, and gun laws. Kole makes a compelling case that gun-loving White evangelicals are consistent outliers—among American Christians, among Americans generally, and among global evangelicals.

A tinge of cynicism runs throughout the book. Kole points out the hypocrisy of White evangelicals without offering the depth of theological analysis that would make space for nuance. While he does undertake to explain White evangelicals in their own words, he uses extreme examples that, at times, seem like caricatures—such as a group in Alabama who built a shooting range on their church's property and evangelical gunmakers who see a divine mandate in their manufacture of weapons of murder. Evangelicals, even White evangelicals, are not a monolith. If we treat them as such while judging them by their most extreme elements, I fear that our festering divides—and the gun violence that thrives when we fail to address it as a theological problem—will only get worse. Many Christian readers may wonder, as I did: Can we address the problems Kole lays out from a perspective of reconciliation while seeking to better understand the reasons why the overwhelming majority of White evangelicals do, in fact, cling tightly to God and guns?

I do not know. I fear that there is too much anger on both sides of what has never been a binary debate of us versus them. But this is precisely where *In Guns We Trust* shines: Kole reveals who holds the real power in these debates, highlighting the ways in which propaganda from the gun lobby misleads Americans from across the political and theological spectrums.

Kole confronts aphorisms such as “Guns don't kill people; people kill people” (a widely circulated meme after each mass shooting) with the reality that guns are designed for the exclusive purpose of exacting deadly force against which there is little protection. He cites statistics that refute the aphorism, noting that Mississippi (the state with the fewest gun restrictions) has twice as many gun homicides as Haiti, and that Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana each have higher gun violence rates than Mexico. In addition, an individual in distress is much more likely to die by suicide if they have easy access to a gun. Against the gun lobby, Kole demonstrates, we can use data to reasonably posit that much of America's suicide problem is actually a gun access problem.

What can all Americans—White evangelical or not—agree on regarding gun violence? Maybe a starting point is that it needs to stop, and what we are doing is not working—as evidenced by the growing number of mass shootings despite improved intelligence to thwart them. I would add a corollary question after reading Kole's book: How can we come together on this problem instead of letting the gun lobby drive us apart? We will never get there by continuing to insist that “we” are right and “they” are wrong. However, we can find a starting point in Christ's admonition that those who would follow him pursue the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18–19).