



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on February 6, 2013

Ron Paul, Chris Kyle, and Christ

Ron Paul is under fire for a tweet sent from his twitter account regarding the untimely death of Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle, who was allegedly murdered by another veteran whom he was supposedly trying to help deal with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Paul's tweet read: "Chris Kyle's death seems to confirm that 'he who lives by the sword dies by the sword.' Treating PTSD at a firing range doesn't make sense."

Paul is a veteran himself. After he became the subject of criticism, he extended his condolences to Kyle's family and assured his critics that it is not Kyle himself to whom he referred, but "the unconstitutional and unnecessary wars" in which the late SEAL participated.

"Unconstitutional and unnecessary wars have endless unintended consequences," Paul said. "A policy of non-violence, as Christ preached, would have prevented this and similar tragedies."

Some comments are in order here.

First, anyone who knows anything at all about Paul knows that his most recent remarks are not an attempt at backpedaling on his part; Paul is nothing if not a stalwart opponent of what he routinely calls "the Warfare State." As far as he is concerned, there really is no end to the evil that America's incessant warring abroad promises to visit upon *all* affected by it — including and particularly those who engage in it.

Still, *Chris Kyle chose* to become a member of the United States military. *He chose* to become a Navy SEAL. And *he chose* to distinguish himself as the biggest killer in the annals of American military history.

These are not criticisms. They are facts. They are facts that neither a believer in individual liberty, like Paul, nor Kyle, the proud author of *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* — would think to deny. Paul comes dangerously close to playing the "Society made him do it" card when he shifts the focus of his tweet from Kyle to the government.

Second, perhaps Kyle was not mistaken in viewing the 150 lives that he extinguished as a cost that had to be paid for the preservation and wellbeing of his country. Yet perhaps he was so mistaken. That the American *government* selects a group of people as "the enemy" does *not* mean that they pose a threat to *the country*. And when this same government refuses to follow its own Constitution, which requires issuing a formal declaration of war against those who ostensibly pose a vital threat to its interests, there





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is that much more reason for skepticism regarding its claims.

Third, even if Kyle was correct and he acted justly in killing 150 people, the fact remains that he still killed. That is, he did indeed live by the proverbial sword. Those in the police, the military, the secret service, bodyguards, security, and so forth, all live by the sword. There is nothing objectionable about this. Indeed, if the title of his book tells us anything, it tells us that Kyle knew this about himself better than anyone. If one who unabashedly styles himself to the world as “the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history” isn’t also one who “lives by the sword,” then who is?

Yet, presumably, it is precisely because the Kyles of the world occupy the most violent and potentially violent of occupations that so many Americans, especially those on the right, elevate them as heroes. It is because they stand the greatest chance of *dying by the sword* that they are admired and praised.

Finally, that Paul quotes Jesus in connection with the violent death of “the most lethal sniper” to which America has ever given rise strikes this Christian as eminently defensible — intellectually, morally, and religiously.

As was just noted, we all know that police officers in high crime areas and military personnel in combat zones — like Kyle, who served multiple tours of duty over a 10-year period — are more likely than college professors and maintenance men to die in the line of duty.

Morally and religiously, Paul no more speaks out of turn in applying Jesus’ teaching to America’s most lethal sniper than Jesus spoke inappropriately when directing His teaching toward Peter, “the Rock” on which He would build His church. The difference between Peter and Kyle, though, is that while the latter saw himself as killing for his country, Peter was prepared to kill for his *Lord and Savior*.

Another crucial difference is that Peter never killed — and yet Christ still admonished him.

But if Christians aren’t outraged over the fact that Jesus issued this adage to one of His closest friends and disciples, then why is there outrage on their part now that Ron Paul has issued it (posthumously, of course) to the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history?

Ron Paul’s tweet raises a number of questions concerning Christian charity, patriotism, war, and our civic obligations that far too many of us remain unwilling to face.



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