

THE ATHEIST MISSIONARY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS WEBSITE/BLOG IS TO INFORM ATHEISTS AND CONVERT THEISTS. POSTS ON THIS BLOG SHOULD INTEREST THOSE WHO ARE QUESTIONING THEIR FAITH IN IRRATIONAL BELIEF SYSTEMS AND THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY FREED THEMSELVES FROM SUCH SILLINESS.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2009

I hope every parent serving in Afghanistan and Iraq will read this



Let me begin by making a few things perfectly clear:

1. This post is intended to be read by parents who are active military personnel serving (or are scheduled to serve) in Afghanistan or Iraq. If only one person reads this post and decides to

change their course, I would love to hear from them.

2. I have nothing but the utmost respect for soldiers serving in Afghanistan/Iraq and the politicians who made the difficult decision to assign them to their current missions.

3. I understand and respect the reasons why our soldiers have decided to risk their lives in support of a cause which they believe to be worth dying for.

4. I am aware of, and have carefully considered, the fact that my plea may be considered subversive, unpatriotic and playing into the hands of those parties seeking to destabilize Aghanistan & Iraq.

Message to all parent soldiers: You do not have the right to leave your kids without a mother or a father. Think about this and make the toughest decision you will ever make in your life. Do whatever it takes and go home to your families.

I am sick of seeing picture after picture of slain Canadian and American soldiers and hearing their loved ones talk about how much these soldiers loved their kids. If you really love your kids, be there to teach them how to ride their bikes, be there when they're sick, be there to read them books before they go to bed, be there to celebrate their successes, be there to help them cope with their failures, be there to see them graduate and be there to see them get married.

I repeat - you do not have the right to leave your kids without a

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ABOUT ME



THE ATHEIST MISSIONARY

I am a Canadian skeptic dedicated

to the reasoned and peaceful eradication of religion. The purpose of this blog is to provide a home for those who are fed up with the politically correct approach of affording deference to irrational religious beliefs. My hope is that this space will provide a critical but tolerant forum that will inform atheists and convert theists. Religious zealots should have every right to feel threatened by this blog because your supposed monopoly on morality is coming to an end. Imagine no religion what a wonderful world it would be.

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

THE ATHEIST MISSION - WE DON'T NEED A GOD TO BE INSPIRED TO DO GOOD WORKS

The thing that irritates me the most about organized religion is the suggestion that religion is good because it promotes ethically good behavior. Of course, this is nonsense and atheists do not require the carrot of heaven or threat of eternal damnation to lead morally upstanding lives.

In recognition that this atheist mission should concentrate on doing good works as well as creating apostates, I have come up with a modest plan to help some of the world's most unfortunate. If you enjoy this blog and would like to support the atheist mission, I ask you to donate **\$5 US** or more through PayPal and I WILL PERSONALLY MATCH ALL

mother or a father. Do you really think that your presence is essential to the effort in Afghanistan? Of course, it's not. If EVERY parent soldier reported to their superiors tomorrow and conscientiously objected to any further participation (on the grounds that it would be immoral to leave their kids without a parent), do you know what would happen? The Canadian and American governments would have to entice more soldiers without children and probably pay more than they currently pay in order to keep the ranks properly bolstered. Of course, you know that every parent soldier won't heed this call. In fact, you might be the only one ... and the fact that you make this decision might be the difference between your kids growing up with you or not.

You will note that there is nothing in this post relating to whether Canada should be pursuing its present mission in Afghanistan or whether the U.S. should be pursuing its present mission in Iraq. That is because it doesn't matter. In fact, for the sake of argument, let's assume that the missions are well worth the sacrifice of thousands more lives. That still doesn't mean you have to be one of those lives or that you have the right to deprive your children of a parent.

If I have to beg you, I will. Please take a courageous step and go home to your kids. If your comrades and superiors want to brand you as a coward, that's fine.

I am the kind of person who has always tried to live life to the fullest and one thing I never had the chance to do before I had kids was parachute jump. I won't try it now because I consider it an unacceptable risk with three small children at home. It's not that I'm scared. I just think and act differently now than before I had kids. I ask you to do the same.

I am just a dad living in small town Ontario. You and I would probably enjoy having a beer together, watching a hockey game or complaining about how much our kids whine. The only significant difference between us is that I am lucky enough to have a job that doesn't expose me to the kind of risk that your profession has forced you to take for granted. I know that many soldiers reading this will say: "it's easy for you to say" or "you don't know what it's like to be in my shoes" and they would be right. I don't know what it's like and I do know that acting on the decision I am urging you to make won't be easy for you.

As you will see from the title of this blog, I believe it is very unlikely that there is a God. I suppose if you have religious faith, the decision to die for what you believe in is easier than if you don't. However, regardless of what you believe, my point is simply that you owe it to your kids to be there for them. I'll say it again because I can't say it enough - you don't have the right to leave your kids without a Mom or Dad. If the mission is worth pursuing, let those without kids carry the burden - they are ready, willing and able. Go home and hug your kids. They need you.

I urge parents, wives and children of people serving in the Canadian and American military to send this link to their loved ones. I also urge Canadian and American military personnel to send this link to their comrades.

My purpose of this post is not to offend parent soldiers who are currently serving or to offend the memory of parent soldiers who have served valiantly and died in support of causes they believe were worth that ultimate sacrifice. My purpose is very simple:

CONTRIBUTIONS before donating them to the Worldwide Fistula Fund which is the charity which I have designated to receive our second donation. Search the blog for the post entitled "FIRST GOAL ATTAINED!" to hear about the first one. When we manage to raise \$500, we will have enough to pay for a surgery to correct an obstetric fistula in the Third World. Unless you request anonymity, I will be posting the names of all contributors when the contribution is sent to the WFF. Donations can be made by clicking on the Paypal link below:



SITES WHICH I COMMENT TO
MY VISITORS

[God is Imaginary](#)

[Intelligent Design - a "science stopper"](#)

[Pharyngula by PZ Myers](#)

[Proof that there is still a sucker born every minute](#)

[Richard Dawkins.net: A Clear Thinking Oasis](#)

[Stephen Law website/blog](#)

[This is not a joke](#)

[Why won't God heal amputees?](#)

BLOG ARCHIVE

▼ 2009 (80)

▼ March (39)

[Question to Christians - Why do you bother to pray...](#)

[I hope every parent serving in Afghanistan and Ira...](#)

[Scripture warns, if "you did not hate bloodshed, b...](#)

[Theology ... a crying shame](#)

[Update on second fundraising goal ...](#)

[Does atheism necessitate moral nihilism?](#)

[Lucky Lanciano - Proof of Transubstantiation!](#)

[Not for the weak of heart](#)

[My continuing debate with a Christian apologist](#)

[When reason meets delusion](#)

[Debriefing an evening with Peter Singer](#)

somewhere out there is a little boy or girl who just might have a better chance of growing up with a parent who would have died if they had not read this post and ended up agreeing that, despite their personal convictions, they simply do not have the right to deprive their children of a parent. Peace.

POSTED BY THE ATHEIST MISSIONARY AT 10:59 PM 
LABELS: [AFGHANISTAN](#), [IRAQ](#)

14 COMMENTS:

 [Alex](#) said...

"Message to all parent soldiers: You do not have the right to leave your kids without a mother or a father."

Tell that to the couple thousand mothers and fathers who died on 9/11.

We do what we do so that all of our children may live in a better world. You want us to give up that effort in order to buy temporary safety. Sorry - no deal. I understand your concern, and I'm touched by the obvious emotional content of your post, but you won't find any takers amongst our Armed Forces.

Of course, the big problem with your proposition is that the higher-ranking personnel within the military almost invariably have children. We're already strapped for experience due to the cutbacks of a few decades ago - if CF parents were to start following your advice, our military would disintegrate. At the very least, we'd start taking much heavier casualties; the less experienced the commanders, the more likely things are to go wrong.

Oh, and one more thing. I'd appreciate it if you didn't link atheism with anti-war views. I get enough comments about "no atheists in foxholes" without people like you aggravating the situation. Your comment about religious faith making it easier to die is a normal misconception, but it's one that constantly aggravates me. FANATICAL belief may make it easier to die (ie. suicide bombers), but multiple studies have shown that moderately religious people have much more anxiety about death than do atheists. Why should the lack of a magical fairy-world make me afraid of dying?

MARCH 27, 2009 3:18 AM

 [The Atheist Missionary](#) said...

Alex, thanks for your thoughtful comments.

I am lost at your reference to 9/11 and your suggestion that my view is anti-war. Please read the post again. My point is simply that parent soldiers should not enlist in volunteer armies where doing so exposes their children to an unacceptable risk of losing their parent. In fact, I will go so far as to say it is unethical to do so because someone else could do the job.

Your point about higher-ranking personnel is a good one but the suggestion that "our military would disintegrate" if all soldier parents followed my advice is propaganda overkill. As soldiers leave, whatever their rank, they will be replaced. As I note in my post, it may well be that our government will have to pay more to get qualified childless soldiers to do the job. If you honestly believe that military experience would have avoided a significant percentage of the Canadian deaths in Afghanistan (most of which

Peter Singer
Peter Singer - Prominent
atheist appearing in Toro...
The message that the Catholic
Church should be con...
No overstatement - here is
proof that Roman Cathol...
Texas proposal would clear
the way for Bible Colle...
FIRST GOAL ATTAINED!
Random acts of kindness ...
and not because the Bi...
The proposed saint who
wanted an operation
without...
Mom ... why is the Bible such
a nasty book?
Good in the world
Evil in the World
They will teach you how the
world was re-filled af...
The Lure of Lourdes
Back to the atheist basics
Hume on Miracles
Misconceptions about
athesists
Start spreading the news ...
Proof that there is a God?
A Jew reads the Bible afresh
This is not a joke
Sunday Morning
This is hilarious
Richard Dawkins' lecture
drew several thousand
at ...
Response from a
fundamentalist to the
thought expe...
Another thought experiment
for fundamentalist Chri...
"You Have No Expiration
Date"
He must be an atheist
Alan Watts describes Jesus as
a "freak"
Why are Bible thumpers so
threatened by Dawkins?
On location from East
Lansing

► February (30)

► January (11)

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BOOKS

[How Are We To Live? Ethics In An Age of Self-Interest](#)

[Letter to a Christian Nation](#)

[Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence](#)

[The Ancestor's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Evolution](#)

[The End of Faith: Religion, Terror](#)

have ben attributable to improvised explosive devices), you are simply mistaken. I readily admit to less knowledge about the situation on the ground in Iraq.

I am not saying that these missions are not worthy causes. What I am saying is that preserving the lives of parents is a worthier cause.

If you are suggesting that I should not be writing about this issue in a forum which is primarily dedicated to atheism, I must respectfully disagree. If it weren't for religious irrationality, there would be no need for us to intervene in these theaters.

I am aware of the studies you refer to which suggest that moderately religious people have more anxiety about death than atheists. These findings puzzle me because they are counter-intuitive. The whole basis of most organized religions is the glorious afterlife. The point I was trying to make is that belief in the afterlife should (at least theoretically) make it easier for parent soldiers to risk their lives because they believe they will ultimately be reunited with their families in heaven.

MARCH 27, 2009 6:42 AM

 CKDC said...

I know very little about most things except military history. Nationalism has been and always will be predominant to "God" (in whatever form) as the driving force of war in most of the world, particularly the Western world. Atheists have fought in wars going back to the days of the Spartans. There are soldiers who fight for "God", even in Western countries, but most fight for country; they fight for freedom. Only in the Middle East and a few pockets of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia is "God" an integral part of the war machine and the propaganda that goes with it. In North America, military brass deliberately stay away from such notions even when politicians try to imply that "God" is on our side. I agree with the Western approach, not because I live here or because I like war, but because I think that war if required has a better chance of being objective and rational when "God" is absent from the ideology.

I have currently and have had in the past military relatives with children. My uncle fought in the Korean War (by choice); my grandfather in World War II (you can hardly say by choice); my cousin in the Iraq War (voluntarily). I think no less of them because they put their lives at risk and the future of their children at risk of being without a father. I would personally not make those same choices. And I agree that in some ways it is irresponsible to do so. I disagree that it is unethical or somehow immoral.

I agree that it would be better to be able to fight necessary wars without parents, if that was possible. Surprisingly, however, most military historians will tell you that parents make better soldiers. They tend to be more patient and disciplined.

This post has got me thinking. Good job.

MARCH 27, 2009 9:01 AM

 meinmachine said...

As a soldier, father and fellow atheist
I am a father of 5, a soldier and an atheist. I want you to know that before I begin, because I don't want you to stereotype me to a point where you cannot get where I am coming from.

The End of Faith: Religion, Terror

and the Future of Reason

The God Delusion

The Philosophy Gym: 25 Short
Adventures in Thinking

BLOG CATALOG

BLOG CATALOG

FOLLOWERS

You argue that it is unfair to risk my life at the expense of my children's happiness. Well this is mighty generous of you to care so much for my kids, but I assure you that my place is not huddled with the children under the nice warm blanket of security that my brothers in arms provide.

My place is with my fellow soldiers so that my kids and my fellow citizens can sleep safely in their beds at night. My kids understand my willingness to serve. They are proud of me and need me to be a rough and ready hand on the weapons that provide for our safety.

You may think it wrong to expose my kids to such potential pain and suffering, but my kids know that their freedom and safety are not without a price. They value it more than you apparently, because they actually have to pay for it.

In the end we will all die. The legacy to our children should be more than taking them to a hockey game or putting them through school.

We should be an example of integrity and sacrifice. We should show them that our life is a gift not only to us, but to our family, our country and our species. We should be willing to do our part, to take our place in the line of fire when it counts.

My Grandfather didn't see his kids for 4 years in World War II. His kids new what it was like to worry and suffer through a long period of private pain.

Are we so special now that we cannot bare the pain of sacrifice? Are we so worthy of comfort and security that others must purchase it for us?

An atheist should understand that it is not about serving god or gods it is about serving your family, your country, your species. You should be ashamed of yourself and your cowardly reaction to a greatness you cannot comprehend. Atheism requires strength and courage. You seem to have little of it. Perhaps you should learn from the example of my kids?

MARCH 27, 2009 2:17 PM

 The Atheist Missionary said...

meinmachine, I am not at all ashamed. If my thoughts have caused you to pause and consider the issue, I have accomplished my objective.

I regret that you have determined that my reaction is cowardly. I would prefer to call it pragmatic. You are entitled to your opinion and you express it well - I respectfully disagree. T.A.M.

MARCH 27, 2009 2:51 PM

 Alex said...

"In fact, I will go so far as to say it is unethical to do so because someone else could do the job."

Nonsense. According to that logic, no parent should join the police force. No parents should be firefighters. Or pilots. Or construction workers. And how can you justify DRIVING??

Why don't we just take all the parents, lock them in padded rooms, and not let them out until their children turn 18? Does that sound

like a logical solution to you?

"Your point about higher-ranking personnel is a good one but the suggestion that 'our military would disintegrate' if all soldier parents followed my advice is propaganda overkill"

No, it's the truth. We're already having all sorts of problems due to a lack of experienced personnel. If you want to believe that I'm lying to you because it suits your personal ideological agenda, then feel free. Your belief won't change reality, though.

"If you honestly believe that military experience would have avoided a significant percentage of the Canadian deaths in Afghanistan ... you are simply mistaken"

Talk about armchair quarterbacking! What the hell do you know about military ops?

It's not what I said anyway - the deaths that have occurred were largely unavoidable. However, the level of experience plays a direct role in preventing deaths which ARE avoidable. If we were to follow your advice, we WOULD start taking casualties at a much higher rate. There's no doubt about it.

"If you are suggesting that I should not be writing about this issue in a forum which is primarily dedicated to atheism"

No, I'm saying don't create a direct connection. You implied that our soldiers who happen to believe in Magic Man are more willing to get themselves killed than those who are atheists. That's sheer nonsense. I expect to hear that crud from the religious - I don't need to hear it from atheists, too.

"These findings puzzle me because they are counter-intuitive. The whole basis of most organized religions is the glorious afterlife."

Except that the afterlife may not turn out to be so glorious.

Here's another way to think of it: why do religious people mourn at a funeral? If they're so convinced that their loved one is partying it up with Jesus in the clouds, why the sadness? Why cry? If they truly believed these things, funerals would be a Vegas party with beer and strippers, not a drawn out parade of black suits and weeping women.

Clearly there's a disconnect there, somewhere. Clearly people at all levels do realize that death is not a glorious thing. If they believe in the afterlife, they may be further frightened by the prospect of eternal torture. Or they may start to question their beliefs late in life, leading to doubt and fear of the unknown. We may not know exactly WHY these statistics are what they are, but we can think of several very good possibilities. No matter what the reason, though, it's clear that religion isn't a panacea when it comes to fear of death.

MARCH 27, 2009 3:58 PM

 The Atheist Missionary said...

Alex, my knee-jerk reaction to the comparison between soldiers in a military theater and firefighters was to say it is like comparing apples and oranges. However, not wanting to jump to any conclusions, I took a look at the website for the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation and I was amazed at the number of firefighters who they claim have died in the active line of duty since 2002 (keeping in mind that some of those would be heart

attacks which, of course, is not consolation for their families). After giving this considerable further thought, I think I am still forced to conclude that two wrongs still don't make a right. In other words, a reasonable parent should avoid activities and occupations that offer a high rate of mortality. Darwinian common sense if you like.

How do I justify driving? It's funny that you ask. I recognize that, statistically, it is probably the most hazardous activity that I engage in and I try to keep my highway driving to a minimum (particularly in the winter).

I could not agree more with your comments about the hypocrisy of religions mourning death.

As far as the padded room is concerned, I think that would be my kids' preference (and mine) to having me come home in a flag draped coffin.

MARCH 27, 2009 8:10 PM

 "Religion is Poison" Chairman Mao said...

All good intentions aside, this post was truly unnecessary. Life and death is much more than being alive, it is how we choose to live, serve our community and be an example of character to our children, even in death. Perhaps you don't see logic in that. Hopefully your extreme opinion here will lead to a valuable life lesson.

MARCH 27, 2009 8:14 PM

 The Atheist Missionary said...

Mao, I guess necessity is in the eye of the beholder. I certainly can't disagree with your observation about the importance of how we choose to live our lives. I do see the logic in that. I just think if you choose to have kids (and many do not), you forfeit the right to make unacceptable risks with your life. You and I just differ on what constitutes an unacceptable risk.

MARCH 27, 2009 8:46 PM

 Alex said...

"In other words, a reasonable parent should avoid activities and occupations that offer a high rate of mortality."

You're entitled to your opinion, of course. Just don't expect anyone else to share it.

"Darwinian common sense if you like."

No way, you're not blaming Darwin for this one!

There's nothing "Darwinian" about avoiding risks. We've evolved to take huge risks, to do stupid things, and to sacrifice our lives for people we care about. Such behavioral traits clearly have a positive effect on the propagation of genes, and for very good, easily explained reasons. You are essentially asking us to go *against* our natural (evolved) impulses, by refusing to protect our children when there is a chance that we may die. It's the exact opposite of "Darwinian common sense".

"As far as the padded room is concerned, I think that would be my kids' preference (and mine) to having me come home in a flag

draped coffin."

I don't want to sound insulting, but, if that's really true, then I feel sorry for you and your family. Life is nothing without freedom. I'd rather die a free man than live a life of protective imprisonment. Life is meaningless if you cannot use it for your own ends.

MARCH 28, 2009 7:49 AM

 The Atheist Missionary said...

Alex, your comments are prefaced on the assumption that parent soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are risking their lives to protect their children. I'm sorry but I'm not drinking that Kool-Aid. This is not World War II. What we have are legions of janitor's sons and daughters giving their lives to pursue a war against terror when we all know **this is a war than can't be won** (our Canadian Prime Minister has admitted so publicly).

I want to expand on what I mean by "janitor's sons and daughters" because I do not want to offend. What I mean by that phrase is that there is a disproportionate percentage of people from lower income and lower educated demographic groups attracted to positions in the military. That is a fact. While the media plays up the Pat Tillmans of the world, the simple fact of the matter is that most of those who are losing their lives are doing so because they ended up in the wrong job. Many (but not all, I admit) would prefer to be working on oil rigs or in other well paying blue collar professions if they had the opportunity.

Both the U.S. and Canadian governments are both staging withdrawals from these theaters. Do you really think anything will be different in either of these countries 10 or 20 years from now? If you do, you are not only gullible - but ignorant of the historical realities in these regions.

MARCH 28, 2009 10:05 AM

 CKDC said...

President Obama has now announced that the United States will "do whatever it takes" to win the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States has learned nothing since Vietnam. Doing whatever it takes to win means political change. The government in Afghanistan is a joke. The government in Pakistan is more than a joke - it is a terror-friendly harbour for the Taliban, Osama Bin Laden and every other nutbar in the world west of North Korea. The war against the Taliban cannot be won unless and until Afghanistan and Pakistan themselves decide that the terrorists must be eradicated. I doubt that will ever happen.

MARCH 28, 2009 12:22 PM

 Alex said...

"What we have are legions of janitor's sons and daughters giving their lives to pursue a war against terror when we all know this is a war than can't be won"

Excuse me?

So much for your lies about not being anti-war. And it's real nice of you to put your absurd biases about our military out in the open, for everyone to see. Janitors sons and daughters. Right. My parents each pull in about 100k a year. Trust me, sweeping floors doesn't pay quite that much.

"our Canadian Prime Minister has admitted so publicly"

No, that's not what he said, and if you believe that crap then you certainly are drinking the coolaid.

"What I mean by that phrase is that there is a disproportionate percentage of people from lower income and lower educated demographic groups attracted to positions in the military. That is a fact."

You're an idiot. The military statistically has a higher education level than the general population, and they tend to come from middle-class families. Check your facts before sounding off. You're starting to sound like "Jhohn Kearnrey" in the last US election.

And by the way, fuck you for being such a dishonest prick. You should have had the guts, right from the beginning, to admit that you don't give a damn about the military or the effort we're putting in overseas. All you care about is your own political ideology, and your smug sense of superiority. Don't you dare hide behind this "I support the troops, so bring them home" bullshit.

MARCH 29, 2009 5:05 AM

 Alex said...

Oh, and one more thing:

"Many (but not all, I admit) would prefer to be working on oil rigs or in other well paying blue collar professions if they had the opportunity"

Complete and utter bullshit. The oil business in Alberta is booming, and the biggest hold-back is the lack of manpower. They'll take anyone just about now. Yet 3 of my co-workers are guys who, 2 years ago, were working in the oil fields. Some of the others left jobs in construction, policing, accounting, and accounting. One of them is a successful landlord who owns 5 properties, and makes as much money renting them out as he gets from working for the military. As for me, I used to work in IT, pulling in 75k a year, before I decided to join the military. I only make two thirds of that, now. So once again: check your facts. Your biases are based on fiction.

MARCH 29, 2009 5:11 AM

POST A COMMENT

