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“A Knight of the Mind” — Dawkins, Darwin, and the Battle of Worldviews

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The Times [London] is out with an article headline that reads, “Dawkins Slaps Creationists into the Primordial Soup.” Now that grabs your attention.

Dawkins, pleased to be known as “Darwin’s Rotweiler,” has been given a new three-part television series in Britain, known as “Dawkins on Darwin.” The British press is fawning in its applause, and Dawkins appears to be in rare form.

As reporter Kate Muir gushes:

Richard Dawkins is that rare specimen, a public intellectual, a knight of the mind who goes into battle against the ignorance and foolhardiness of the populace. Unlike the French, who worship their public intellectuals, giving them pet names such as les intellos, and airing them regularly on serious television and in print, the British like to shove academics into a musty corner, or laugh at them. This was not always the case: the Victorians, with their public lectures and royal societies, gloried in debate and celebrated the thrills of fresh knowledge.

That is a fairly representative understanding of the elite media. Those who do not accept the Gospel according to Darwin (or Dawkins) are simply ignorant, invincibly ignorant perhaps, and Dawkins is thus “a knight of the mind” who battles ignorance.

That approach is a blatant attempt to dismiss all debate over Darwinism or evolutionary theory. The methodology is simple to grasp — just reclassify all opposition to evolution as ignorance and establish evolutionary theory as the only acceptable worldview. Muir paints Dawkins as an apostle for atheism, rescuing the public from ignorance. “In these barren, thoughtless times, Dawkins gives people something substantial to chew on,” she writes. “His audience is surprisingly grateful, and also relieved to see someone slapping creationists about and tossing them into the primordial soup, as well as explaining atheism positively.”

This is the approach Dawkins himself admits taking, as Muir reports:

Dawkins says that natural selection is “the most important idea to occur to the human mind”, the slow change of species over millions of ideas disproving the religious theory of intelligent design by God.

That we are still trying to sell evolution to a large part of the public bothers him. “It is weird in many ways that natural selection is still debated,” he says. “But it is not debated by anyone who knows anything about it.” Indeed, Dawkins refuses to share a stage with creationists. “I don’t like giving them the oxygen of respectability, the feeling that if they’re up on a platform debating with a scientist, there must be real disagreement. One side of the debate is wholly ignorant. It would be as though you knew nothing of physics and were passionately arguing against Einstein’s theory of relativity.

At this point Dawkins is characteristically helpful in exposing the real worldview of evolution. In his words, evolution

disproves “the religious theory of intelligent design by God.”

In other words, Dawkins has as little respect for “theistic evolutionists” as he has for creationists. The theistic evolutionists believe themselves to have escaped the hatred of the Darwinists by trying to have it both ways. Dawkins will not allow that. His Darwinism allows for no intelligent design at all, and yet that is the very core of what is called “theistic evolution.” The claim is that God “used” the process of evolution to create the cosmos, and living organisms in particular. The claim is extended to the human being with the argument that God intended the process of evolution to lead to this special creature.

Dawkins sees through all that, and dismisses the idea of any divine intelligence whatsoever. Any design violates the basic principle and mechanism of evolution.

He also sees something of equal importance — that Christianity has no coherence without the biblical doctrine of creation. As Muir explains:

For Dawkins, there is a tree of life; not the one featuring Adam and Eve, but the one tantalisingly sketched by Darwin with the two words “I think” written above, showing how different species branch slowly off from each other over millions of years, until fish are on one branch, and apes on the opposite. If creationism falls, so, logically for Dawkins, does the rest of religion piled upon it.

This is another basic point of agreement. If the biblical doctrine of creation falls, the entire storyline of the Bible falls apart. The very essence of theological liberalism is to discard what the modern world finds offensive and save what parts of the Christian message can be preserved or salvaged. Dawkins understands what many theological liberals do not — that there is no way to save any coherent form of Christian truth without the biblical doctrine of creation. Those who would abandon the biblical account of creation undermine the entire Christian truth claim.

It shouldn’t require a “knight of the mind” to see that.

