

***Richard Dawkins response to Johann Hari's Independent article: Charles as President? Not in my name (Fri Nov 21, 2008)***

<http://richarddawkins.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=64293>

Admittedly of purely British interest, this is a superb article. I would add only three points to Johann Hari's attack on this ridiculous man:

1. With respect to Dan Dennett's distinction between believers, and believers in belief, Charles is the worst of both worlds. He is himself a Christian, but at the same time he passionately believes in belief in Islam. He wants to change the title of 'Defender of the Faith' (an old slogan, which at least has the merit of being anti-Catholic) to 'Defender of Faith' (meaning that any religious faith is better than none, with the subtext, which everybody in Britain will instantly understand, that Islam is especially to be favoured).
2. A revealing anecdote, to supplement Hari's account of how Charles Windsor's delusions are reinforced by sycophantic courtiers. A friend and colleague of mine was seconded into the civil service to head an important government agency, where his scientific expertise was put to good use. On one occasion, he met Prince Charles at a drinks party and the Prince promptly launched into an attack on his agency. The details don't matter here, it could have been homeopathy or GM crops or any of half a dozen bees in the Royal bonnet. The point is that my friend, as he is well qualified to do, mildly remonstrated along the lines of, "With respect, Sir, I think you'll find you are mistaken. The facts are . . ." Without another word, the Prince simply turned on his heel and walked away. An equerry immediately approached my colleague, a very distinguished scientist and Fellow of the Royal Society, and said, "One doesn't disagree with the Prince."
3. Hari wants the Prince to continue to speak rubbish, in order to hasten the end of the Monarchy. He's probably right. Others have suggested that, when the present Queen dies, the succession should 'skip a generation'. But this would be a cop-out. The whole point of a hereditary monarchy is that you can't opt out when it suits your convenience; that would be like cherry-picking the Bible for good moral principles and leaving out the bad bits while still claiming you get your morals from it. Either Charles becomes king, or we abolish the whole rotten system. To put it another way, if you are going to allow yourself to say that, because Prince William would obviously make a better King than Charles, we should simply have him instead, you have sold the pass. You can't just ask whether William would be better than Charles. You now have to ask who would be the best head of state in the whole country. And that means a proper election, in which William and Charles would, of course, be free to stand.

Richard