

It has not been a great week for Richard Dawkins. A series of authors, who previously have been supportive, are now distancing themselves from the extreme nature of his views. On Thursday, two books were published that challenge his conclusion that "faith is one of the world's great evils" that should be "stamped out". If these books had been written by evangelicals, then there would be no real surprise. We have already had Alister McGrath's *The Dawkins Delusion*, and more recently David Robertson's *The Dawkins Letters*, both of which successfully demolish Dawkins' arguments. However, the significance of the books published this week is that they have been written by those who normally are on Dawkins' side.

John Cornwell is director of the Science and Human Dimension Project at Jesus College, Cambridge. He described Dawkins' *The Ancestor's Tale* (published in 2004) as "fabulous in many ways...with something to amaze on every page, it will be a hard book for non-scientists to put down." However, this week he published *Darwin's Angel: An Angelic Riposte to the God Delusion*. In it he expresses his "deep disagreement" with Dawkins, in particular in relation to the way in which Dawkins "demonises" and "depersonalises" religious believers. In fact, when the two clashed on the [Today programme this week](#) Dawkins [came off worse](#), and only survived by appearing to retract his previous positions saying that of course he now thinks religious people should remain part of society.

John Humphrys, the master of the early morning political interview, has also attacked Dawkins [this week](#). In his *In God We Doubt*, he takes to task the "militant atheists", such as Dawkins, for having a certainty regarding God's non-existence that is simply unjustified. He writes, "We should not – we must not – be browbeaten by arrogant atheists and meekly accept their "deluded" label. They are no more capable of understanding this most profound mystery than a small child making his first awe-inspiring discoveries." Now, Humphrys is far from accepting Christianity. He makes it clear that he denies the divinity and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But that makes the fact that he has raised his head above the parapet to attack Dawkins *et al* even more telling.

The relevance of all this is not that we would agree with everything these authors have said. Rather, the significance of these books is that though Dawkins may be popular, even those who are sympathetic to his basic position think he has gone way too far in his anti-God polemic. Amongst the serious commentators, Dawkins is rapidly losing support, and this is a point that might be worth making if we spend time with any of his disciples this weekend.

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