

SECULAR LITMUS TEST FOR NIH APPOINTEE?

Francis Collins, President Obama's pick to head the National Institutes of Health, is the former director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, and was an excellent administrator. He is also evangelical. *Science* magazine does not exaggerate when it said, "some are concerned about his outspoken Christian faith."

Among those concerned are outspoken atheists Jerry A. Coyne of the Univ. of Chicago, anthropologist Eric Michael Johnson, Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker and the Univ. of Minnesota's PZ Myers.

Coyne gave Collins high marks as an administrator, but that's not enough. "Certainly, private expressions of faith are absolutely fine, but Collins has chosen to make his views public..." Similarly, Johnson said, "I don't doubt Collins's skills as a scientist or as an administrator," but notes nonetheless that his religion "makes some researchers uncomfortable."

Pinker was not bothered by Collins being "a devout Christian," but he did object to his alleged "public advocacy," offering that he does not want "an atheist-litmus-test for science administrators." In fact, when President Bush's Council on Bioethics had several Catholics on it, Pinker accused the president of seeking to impose "a Catholic agenda on a secular democracy." In other words, Pinker is no stranger to intolerance.

Myers, of course, is most well known for desecrating a consecrated Host. It would take something miraculous for believers to take him seriously.

This may not be a blacklist, but we Catholics have some advice

for our atheist friends: be careful of placing yourself in the
near occasion of sin.