

SECULAR LITMUS TEST FOR NIH APPOINTEE?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the reaction to President Barack Obama's recent pick of Francis Collins to head the National Institutes of Health:

Francis Collins is the former director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, and by all accounts he was an excellent administrator. He is also an evangelical. *Science* magazine does not exaggerate when it says that "some are concerned about his outspoken Christian faith." Among those concerned are Univ. of Chicago outspoken atheist Jerry A. Coyne, outspoken atheist anthropologist Eric Michael Johnson, Harvard psychologist and outspoken atheist Steven Pinker and the Univ. of Minnesota's outspoken atheist, PZ Myers.

Coyne gives 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..." In other words, it's okay by him if Collins limits his religious expression to praying at home—just don't talk about it in public. Similarly, Johnson says, "I don't doubt Collins's skills as a scientist or as an administrator," but notes nonetheless that his religion "makes some researchers uncomfortable." Yes, and some researchers are uncomfortable working with atheists.

Pinker is not bothered by Collins being "a devout Christian," but he does object to his alleged "public advocacy," offering that he does not want "an atheist-litmus-test for science administrators." One is immediately reminded of Richard Nixon saying he is not a "crook," or Bill Clinton saying he never had sex with "that woman." 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. Furthermore, his subjectivism undercuts his scientific credibility.

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

So they don't like Collins' beliefs. This may not be a blacklist, but we Catholics have some advice for our atheist buddies: be careful of placing yourself in the near occasion of sin.