

A Word from Woody. . .
“Meet Dr. Fauci’s Boss”

Most Americans know the name Dr. Anthony Fauci. We have COVID-19 to thank for that. We have been in constant need of news briefs from this director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. However, a household name has hardly been his boss, Dr. Francis Collins. But he should be on the tip of every American’s tongue, especially the Christian’s.

Dr. Collins, 70, could be called a scientist’s scientist. He has a Ph.D. in chemistry from Yale University, and a M.D. from the University of North Carolina. He has done research on the human genome which helped find the genetic misspellings that cause such diseases as cystic fibrosis and Huntington’s disease. He was the head of the Human Genome Project which revealed in 2000 the genome’s sequencing. He is currently the head of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and, hence, Dr. Fauci’s boss. Moreover, his role in the NIH has made him one of the prime movers in developing the COVID vaccines, as a recent article devoted to him in *Time* magazine (February 15-28, 2021, pp. 34-41) makes clear. But perhaps most of all, Dr. Collins is a *Christian*.

He was not, however, of that worldview for his early adult life. He shares his life’s story in his fascinating 2006 book, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. He was raised by parents who met in graduate school at Yale University in 1931, and they raised Dr. Collins and his three brothers to be free thinkers with a love for knowledge but little interest in God. By the time he got to college and graduate school he found himself an agnostic and eventually an atheist. While in medical school, he found his atheism, however, shaken, as he explains, “when an older woman, suffering daily from severe untreatable angina, asked me what I believed. It was a fair question; we had discussed many other important issues of life and death, and she had shared her own strong Christian beliefs with me. I felt my face flush as I stammered out the words, ‘I’m not really sure.’ Her obvious surprise brought into sharp relief a predicament that I had been running away from for nearly all of my twenty-six years. I had never really seriously considered the evidence for and against belief” (*ibid.*, p. 20).

He decided to research world religions, and was unsettled and unconvinced. Eventually he visited a Methodist minister who lived near him and share his struggle. The minister got a small book off his shelf and recommended it

to him—C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. The Lord used this book's argument for a moral law, which is a universal part of humanity, to bring him to faith, along with other arguments. Later in *The Language of God* he also argues, "The Big Bang cries out for a divine explanation. It forces the conclusion that nature had a defined beginning. I cannot see how nature could have created itself. Only a supernatural force that is outside of space and time could have done that" (p. 67).

In his book he also argues strongly for theistic evolution as the way in which God created the world. He does not adhere to Creationism or Intelligent Design. However, he is convinced that removing God from this process is flawed thinking. "The comparison of a chimp and human sequences, interesting as it is, does not tell us what it means to be human. In my view, DNA sequence alone, even if accompanied by a vast trove of data on biological function, will never explain certain special human attributes such as the knowledge of the Moral Law and the universal search for God. Freeing God from the burden of special acts of creation does not remove Him as the source of the things that make humanity special, and of the universe itself. It merely shows us something of how He operates" (*ibid.*, pp. 140-141).

Despite the gravity of the suffering from the COVID pandemic, Collins's faith in God has remained strong. In the *Time* magazine article (p. 41) he shares, "As a Christian I don't have to explain to God that suffering is a terrible thing because the God I worship suffered on a cross".

We should thank the Lord for putting people like Dr. Collins in such high places of authority. He has used his talents to bless others in such a way that reminds of Jesus' words, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded" (Luke 12:48b). May the Lord use him not only to relieve human suffering through medical advances, but also to reconcile humanity to a God who loves them, died for them, and rose again for them.

Love in Christ,

Woody