

# Obama to nominate prominent Christian geneticist to head NIH

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WASHINGTON (ABP) — The White House announced July 8 that President Obama would tap a prominent Christian geneticist who is one of the world's most famous thinkers on the relationship between religion and science to a top government post.

Obama announced that he would nominate Francis Collins to head the National Institutes of Health.

“My administration is committed to promoting scientific integrity and pioneering scientific research and I am confident that Dr. Francis Collins will lead the NIH to achieve these goals,” Obama said, in the statement announcing the appointment. “Dr. Collins is one of the top scientists in the world, and his groundbreaking work has changed the very ways we consider our health and examine disease.”



Francis Collins (PHOTO/Pew Forum  
on Religion & Public Life)

Collins led the decade-long effort to map the human genome that culminated in 2003. An evangelical, he has written and spoken extensively about his view that Christian and other kinds of religious faith and modern science need not be in tension.

He has debated atheist thinkers over whether science and religious faith are inherently in conflict. However, he has also rejected young-Earth creationism and its close ideological cousin, the intelligent-design movement.

“I think I would also say intelligent design is not only bad science; it’s questionable theology,” Collins said, in a recent [discussion](#) with journalists sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. “It implies that God was an underachiever and started this evolutionary process and then realized it wasn’t going to quite work and had to keep stepping in all along the way to fix it. That seems like a limitation of God’s omniscience.”

He describes himself as a believer in “theistic evolution,” in which God created the universe billions of years ago with the parameters precisely set to allow all current life forms, including human life, to emerge and evolve.

In his 2006 book, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Collins detailed his struggles with the idea of religious faith as a young scientist and physician. He eventually left agnosticism and atheism for Christianity after examining classic philosophical and scientific questions.

In the Pew Forum discussion, he described his understanding of how the world came to be succinctly. “God, who is not limited in space or time, created this universe 13.7 billion years ago with its parameters precisely tuned — that fine-tuning argument — to allow the development of complexity over long periods of time,” he said. “That plan included the mechanism of evolution to create this marvelous diversity of living things

on our planet and to include ourselves, human beings. Evolution, in the fullness of time, prepared these big-brained creatures, but that's probably not all we are from the perspective of a believer."

Collins is a native of Virginia and holds the bachelor of science degree from the University of Virginia, a Ph.D. in chemistry from Yale University and an M.D. from the University of North Carolina.

*-Robert Marus is managing editor and Washington bureau chief for Associated Baptist Press.*