

Book Reviews

Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (Free Press, 2006). Reviewed by Al Reynolds.

Several new books by scientists criticize all religion as flawed. But here we see a scientist with a worldwide reputation explaining his Christian faith. Francis Collins is the Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, one of the two organizations that completed the first sequencing of the human genome. He holds impeccable scientific credentials: a medical degree as well as a Ph.D. in physics. His title, “The Language of God,” is taken from words spoken by President Clinton, when he announced the success of the Human Genome Project with Dr Collins by his side, “Today we are learning the language by which God created life.”

Collins came to his faith by an unusual route. He grew up in a non-religious family and he recalls thinking “Don’t go there” when a religious issue came up. But as a medical student caring for patients in North Carolina, he was amazed by the courage and peace shown by many who faced frightening prospects of pain or death. “If [religion] is a psychological crutch,” he thought, “it must be a very powerful one.” He asked a Methodist pastor for advice and was directed to read *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. He found to his amazement that Lewis, a highly respected scholar at Oxford University, had also been an atheist who had found a powerful faith in Christ. His questions were answered effectively by Lewis. He could feel the presence of a God who wanted a loving relationship with

people, and saw this in Jesus Christ most clearly. He made a personal commitment and is holding to it firmly, now making presentations around the nation to share his views.

He is swimming in the waters of thought with Darwin and Jerry Falwell, with evolutionists and fundamentalists, with strongly held views of every stripe. Reviews criticize his book from every side—“He’s too liberal” is heard along with “He bases too many of his views on the Bible.” No matter what he says, someone will disagree. He discussed the issues with Richard Dawkins, sometimes called “Darwin’s Rottweiler,” in *Time* Magazine on November 2, 2006. That shows he is able to adequately debate his interpretations with a very tough opponent.

The author discusses “options” in the interplay between faith in God versus trust in science, specifically “Atheism and Agnosticism, when Science trumps Faith;” “Creationism, when Faith trumps Science;” “Intelligent Design, when Science needs Divine help;” and what he calls “BioLogos,” his own understanding of Science and Faith in harmony. Collins has his own views on several issues that do not agree closely with any one school of thought, and thus he occasionally made my eyebrows go up. But it just reminds us that no author is guaranteed to get it all right, that we should look to God for light rather than to fallible human beings.

A good read for those with scientific concerns.