

# Admission of function

JUNKING SLURS ABOUT 'JUNK DNA'

by Marvin Olasky

→ July 11 is the 10th anniversary of the publication of theistic evolutionist Francis Collins' *The Language of God*, which became a *New York Times* bestseller largely because of Collins' reputation as director of the National Human Genome Research Institute. That book, in turn, helped Collins gain new fans and a nomination from Barack Obama to head the National Institutes of Health.

Confirmed by the Senate, Collins has been in that position ever since, and I'm glad he's there. But his book, and a talk about it I heard Collins give in New York, also displayed what Collins now admits was arrogance. Collins claimed on page 136 that huge chunks of our genome are "littered" with ancient repetitive elements (AREs), so that "roughly 45

percent of the human genome [is] made up of such genetic flotsam and jetsam." In his talk he claimed the existence of "junk DNA" was proof that man and mice had a common ancestor, because God would not have created man with useless genes.

Last year, though, speaking at the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference in San Francisco, Collins threw in the towel: "In terms of junk DNA, we don't use that term anymore because I think it was pretty much a case of hubris to imagine that we could dispense with any part of the genome, as if we knew enough to say it wasn't functional. ... Most of the genome that we used to think was there for spacer turns out to be doing stuff."

Good for Collins—and maybe he'll go on to deal



Collins

with other times scientists feel sorry for God as they look at His purportedly poor design. For example, evolutionists use the retina of the eye as evidence against creation, because nerve endings are at the front rather than at the back, which at first glance seems better placement. Yet, as Lee Spetner explains in *The Evolution Revolution* (Judaica Press, 2014), physiologists now see front placement as the best one for "ingeniously designed light collectors."

The list of needed retractions should include what you probably learned

in high school about apparently purposeless human vestigial organs. Robert Wiedersheim's 1895 list of 86 has shrunk, as almost all of them have proved to have functions. For example, the most famous vestigial organ—the vermiform appendix—is a crucial storage place for benign bacteria that repopulate the gut when diarrhea strikes. The appendix can be a life-saver.

I haven't seen Richard Dawkins recant his 2009 statement: "What pseudogenes [often labeled as junk DNA] are useful for is embarrassing creationists. It stretches even their creative ingenuity to make up a convincing reason why an intelligent designer should have created a pseudogene—a gene that does absolutely nothing and gives every appearance of being a super-annuated version of a gene that used to do something."

Why? Maybe so when we look at the work of God's fingers, from the moon and stars to the way He has knit together our inward parts, we bow our heads in awe. Maybe to embarrass evolutionists.

## BOOKMARKS

Cristóbal Krusen's *They Were Christians* (Baker, 2016) has readable chapter biographies of notables including Dag Hammarskjöld, Frederick Douglass, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky; and *Philosophy in Seven Sentences* by Douglas Groothuis (IVP, 2016) introduces readers to seven philosophers.

The war against Darwin dissenters continues, as Jerry Bergman documents in *Silencing the Darwin Skeptics* (Leafcutter, 2016). Thomas Frank's



*Listen, Liberal* (Henry Holt, 2016) attacks the Democratic Party from the left. If your high-school student says he's a socialist, Gerald Grafe's *The Root of All Money* (CreateSpace, 2015) could serve as an antidote. —M.O.