

# And God Said: Let there be Evolution!

Steve Henn

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## Questions for the Parishioner Who Wants Me To Join the Knights of Columbus

As in Ohio? Or the discoverer  
of the already-inhabited Americas?  
“Knights of Leif Ericson”—your rivals?  
Or Knights of the Bering Strait Landbridge Crossers?  
Be honest: are you guys one of those  
dirty old mens’ organizations, like the Shriners?  
Who ask twentysomething lady bartenders if  
they’re wearing any underwear? Are you  
wearing any underwear? How would you like me  
to react if you say “no”? If I admit  
I doubt, stand up at a club meeting,  
proclaim that ticking tenets off a list  
until I’m fully Orthodox is an insane,  
Orwellian even, approach to religion,  
would you excommunicate me  
from the club? Could you, even—  
from the Church? Should I fear you,  
your secret handshakes, your jesusfish drawn  
with sidewalk chalk on the tip of your cane,  
a sign of devotion and solidarity  
for co-conspirators? Have I been reading  
too much Dan Brown? Hey, shouldn’t child molesting  
priests have their nuts cut off? What about  
those get-ups you guys wear during masses  
that are apparently special occasions, the plumed hats,  
the sabers and faux-British dress up tops?  
If I join, do I get to wear one? All the time?  
Do you get to joust? If I offer up  
all my valor and bravery in Wednesday night  
church pick up hoops to a Fair Lady,  
let’s say someone in the Knights Ladies Auxiliary,  
let’s say your wife, in the medieval way  
of chivalry and courtly love, given that it would be  
platonic, idealized, nonsexual, do you think  
the Bishop would have a problem with that?  
Would you?

## Letter to a student, just before the Census, 2010

*“Our Government can learn anything about us  
with just simply getting our full name and social security number”*

*- from a student essay*

Ah, Lisa, but do they know how the light in your eyes  
turns on when your boyfriend squeezes you  
on the loveseat? Do they understand why  
you left school immediately when you learned  
your sister was having her baby? So what  
if they can track my credit card usage,  
draw data from grocery card swipes.  
Am I the sum of my purchases? Are you?  
Does the fact that your mother had to apply  
for Medicaid to push you into this world  
in a well-lit room peopled with surgical masks  
mean you'll be cooking meth by age 16? If  
they know you're Methodist, do they really know  
what you think of God? Is your grade  
in Statistics and Probability proportionate  
to how much of Him or Her or It  
you think is possible, is real? Does your race,  
gender, hair color, height, weight, level of education,  
life expectancy and lifetime taxes paid  
equal every part of you?  
Lisa, in essence, are you not immeasurable?

## The Guy Who Heard the Call

They ran a story in the South Bend Trib  
about a guy standing 6 hours daily in 10 degree weather  
on a busy streetcorner waving around a Ziploc-wrapped  
King James Bible at cars because

God told him to. Listen, you don't have to preach  
to convince me God's ways are not Man's ways,  
His/Her/Its Will a mystery wrapped in a conundrum  
topped with Tobasco chased with Pepto—but  
if this is God's marketing plan

He really oughta hire a p.r. firm!

Is it a solo decision? The Almighty longly leaning  
from on High into the ear of an unemployed truck driver  
in Arctic Indiana, commanding *not here, not here, not here,*  
*now stop. This be the place.*

*Get out the Word. Start shouting.* I have to believe  
this is the work of a committee, because  
all the worst decisions are made by committees  
and for all we know God is not really a "Him" but  
a committee, which would make anthrax, terrorism,  
and Alfonso Soriano's contract that much more understandable

—as Heavenly missives, anyway, as mysteries,  
workings within workings, some flunkie angel go-fer  
who fetches coffee for the Omniscient Collective  
sent down to whisper in that poor man's ear:

*Now get out your book. Wave it around. Smile. They want you  
to look like you're having fun... and/or batshit crazy.*

God usually speaks to us in more subtle ways these days, unless  
you're Pat Robertson, whose back yard is all lit up with the Burning Bushes  
he'd like to toss the gays into, but let's assume momentarily  
the voice the man heard was The Voice, not just a fragment  
of the spiraling monologue we all carry in our heads—would you respond,  
"Here I am, Lord. I have heard You calling." Or would it be,  
"I'm not the one, Lord. I'd rather burn in Hell than suffer out in this cold."

## What a Drag It Was That One Time When the Emperor from *Star Wars* Showed Up at Our Labor Day Barbecue

And we're all "it's not a costume party, dude"  
and he's all "soon you will see that it is you  
who are mistaken—about a *great many things!*"  
and we're all "suit yourself. You want a beer?"  
and he's all "it is I who allowed the rebel spies  
to learn the location of the Death Star!"  
and we're all "Ummmm...so it's pretty much  
burgers and brats, you're not vegetarian,  
are you?" and he's all  
"a brat would do quite nicely, thank you"  
and we're all "do you prefer kinda charred  
or a little red in the middle—we can't help it,  
Mike's on the grill, he's an idiot"  
and he's all "soon you will come to know the True Power  
of the Dark Side!" and we're all  
"ok! charred it is!" and then after he eats  
we're all "wanna play some Cornhole?"  
and he's all "your friends will not survive!"  
and we're all "you sound like Dave—he always talks smack  
then throws a hissyfit when he loses" and then Dave's all  
"I'm not with you, wrinkly old man.  
I'm not pairing up with you." and the emperor's all  
"then *you will die!*" and he starts shooting lightning bolts  
out of his fingers at Dave until Tiny—  
you know Tiny? he's like 6'6", 280—  
he picks up the emperor from behind and *throws* him  
a sinkhole opens up, he *falls in*—yeah. weird. cosmic.—  
like some Force that controls the universe wanted  
to be rid of him—he hollered as he fell,  
it sounded like a long way,  
we didn't even hear him hit bottom—  
then we called Nipsco, there was a gas line  
exposed, and somebody's gotta clean *that* up,  
but it wasn't gonna be me.