

**Third Epistle of Peter:
You Can Sleep When You're Dead But Please Shower Beforehand As We Have A Fairly Strict
Personal Hygiene Policy Up Here**

Dear Jesus,

My mom says I get to go to Heaven when I'm dead because we're Baptist but Herbie Rosenthal has to go to Hell because she says he's too 'faggy' and she also says that Mr. Muggles has to go to Hell because he's a dog, but he's a good dog, mostly. She says that the Bible says who gets to go to Hell and who gets to go to Heaven because the Bible is The Word Of God. But why do you have to put people in Hell even when they're not bad?

*I love you,
Jimmy Appleby*

To: Jimmy Appleby, of Destin, Florida, who petitioned the Lord through letter and included a batch of double-chocolate brownies that his mother made.

From: Simon Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, Guardian of the Pearly Gates of Heaven and Collector of the Mail while our Lord and Savior is on holiday.

Here's the thing, Jimmy: the Bible is meant to be instructive, not instructions. It was to hold you folks over just until you figured life out on your own.

We didn't think We'd actually have to spell this out and certainly never expected your kind to last so long with such a penchant for beating on each other, but humans are persistent little beasts. That whole 'survival bug' is a bit confusing to Us as it really is quite nice up here.

Look, the Big Book was meant as a user's manual for the inhabitants of a freshly created world. Surviving Welter and Waste For Dummies. Take all that seven days slash six thousand years since the moment of Creation hogwash. We tried telling a culture with no concept of physics or geology or any real science, for that matter, that it took an allegedly all-powerful deity four and a half billion years to create the world. Blank, dirty-faced stares. They just weren't ready, so We simplified a smidge.

If God's Elect couldn't count it without removing their sandals, they weren't having it. Took them millennia of scrabbling about in muck and grime to come up with fire (they were so proud of that one); so, We fibbed. We made it up. In much the same way you'll likely tell your own snot-nosed offspring that babies are delivered by

some improbable bird-bee alliance just to get them to stop with the why? why? why? and avoid any awkward talk of nether regions.

We've tried to straighten the record, but the line seems a bit garbled. Like intercom at Grand Central, everyone acts as though the muffled message is clean and clear, yet all miss the train anyhow. Wrong platform; wrong time.

Wandering. Confused. Refusing a glance at the map but praying for directions.

Don't bother. We won't answer. When every call is a request for smiting, you'd stop picking up, too. We outsourced Customer Service to the folks Downstairs in the 1400's when those silly Iberians started that whole Inquisition For Christ™ madness. It's a wonder We got through the Crusades. And a wonder your forbearers did, as well. They really do get a kick out of petty prayers down there, but given their proclivity for mischief, you're better off solving your own problems.

While we're on the subject of smiting requests: no one likes a tattle. We judge by the ledger of a man, not how much dirt he's willing to spill. We're not the FBI and we're not impressed. We know what he did. We know what they did. And we know all about the leaves Mr. Thompson dumps on your crabby grass each autumn, Jimmy. We don't have cable up here and there's only so much PBS one can watch. So, we watch you and your neighbors. We really do see when you touch yourself; you should see the faces your kind make when they think no one is watching. And you will. Seriously, keep it up. That shit is funny. The Metatron does spot on impersonations. Sometimes He likes to wait at the Gates and put on a show. Boy, do you folks go beet.

In the interest of saving oodles of time, let me clear a few things up: All dogs do go to Heaven. Except Chihuahuas. Fuck them. They really are abominations. This is more personal preference than Commandment, but as long as I man the Gates, those frigid freaks can convulse to their hearts' content in Purgatory with the Televangelists. File with Complaints, if you like, but I head that department, as well.

Frankly, We're disappointed, but I'm not going to chastise. Some of the standard Sunday school syllabus is spot on.

But, really, no shellfish? No pork? We're pretty sure some high priest was having a laugh. Or allergic. We wouldn't waste the scant space of text and time We had to convey the secrets of the universe to a nascent civilization in culinary commentary. Jurisdiction over no-whites-after-Labor-Day nonsense goes to Stewart and her craft-making minions.

No benevolent demiurge would ban both lobster *and* bacon. The fifth commandment is challenge enough, it seems (though it's pretty much a no-brainer, in Our opinion) and yet We'd slather on superficial technicalities?

We're not high school English teachers. We prefer simplicity. Moses came up with the Big Ten after spending a night burning bushes. I'll let you ponder what sort of bush it was on your own. Hint: that hippy Jesus lit it up every day.

And all that man laying with another man balderdash, of which your mother seems so fond? Couldn't care less. Most of us are pretty gay up here. Have you ever seen a peacock or any of the other unnecessarily fabulous oviparous males? Darwin's pet theory had nothing to do with that.

Your mother says the Bible is the Word of God, does she? She misremembers heads of state and your father forgets anniversaries. Yet, somehow, she wholeheartedly believes that a story passed on orally for thousands of years and re-translated unendingly is magically static, miraculously context-free and entirely untainted in the retelling?

I suppose it isn't so far-fetched. I remember when I was five years old, Uncle Nedric's oft-repeated-when-inebriated saga of the 'biggest darn catfish y'ever did see'. Razor-sharp fish-fangs left him scarred for life and bottom-feeder flesh fed his family a fortnight. I believed it all.

When I was five.

Turns out the lake was a puddle; the fish nonexistent. And OP Ned was so full of it he wept feces.

Peace,
Simon Peter
Gatekeeper, &c

P.S. Tell your mother that the brownies were delicious. I thought they might spoil while el Christo was away. Hope you don't mind.