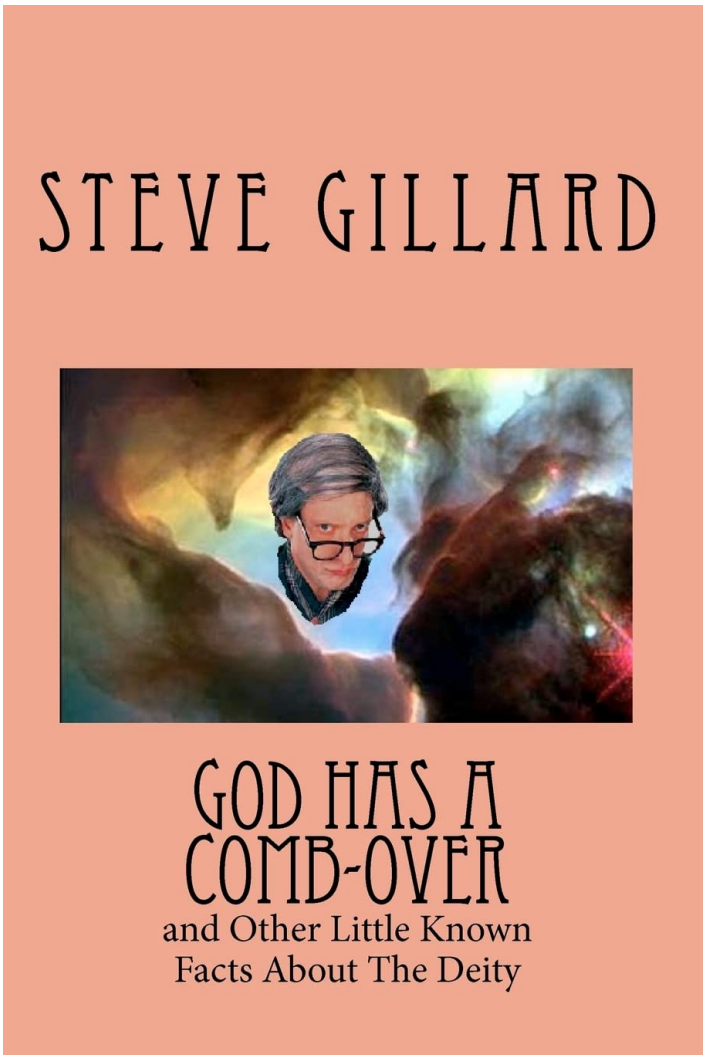

The Re-Write

Preamble

Sometime in the wayback, (2005-ish), I started writing a novel that I self-published in 2009. I was trying to "Be Like Tom" Robbins, my literary deity, (R.I.P. - 7.22.1932 - 2.9.2025).

Here's how *God Has a Comb-Over* is described on Amazon:

Philip 'Flipper' McCann, 60-year old former attorney disbarred for Testifying Under the Influence of Intoxicants, meets God - and The Deity has a dork-do. Redemption may be possible, even in Flipper's current lifetime, with the help of his friends, including a Superior Court Judge, a Native American shaman and pub owner, a lovely landlord who likes him in spite of himself, and a plethora of combed-over divine assistants. Ribaldary and cosmic forces hookup for a seriocomic tour-de-farce.

It's now seventeen years since publication and I would give (almost) anything to be able to remove the book from Amazon. The best I

can do is have it described as "Out-of-Print."

Apparently complete removal is not an option, one reason being that Amazon still has used copies floating around. I just bought what was advertised as *The Only Available Copy.* I can only hope.

My views on all things "God" are much different now.

I no longer have a bone to pick with the Almighty, no snotty yen to poke fun at an imagined exalted Being, fear of Whom is peddled as *the beginning of wisdom.*

For the last decade or so I've been gorging my spiritual appetite on books and articles and YouTube podcast videos about what are called *STEs* (Spiritually Transformative Experiences), especially the ones called Near Death Experiences. *NDEs*.

I now believe our grinning Maker wants only to bear hug every single one of us and offers, free of charge - no down payment of Fear - overwhelming unconditional Love, without Judgment of any kind.

We're given the gift of as many lifetimes on Earth (or elsewhere) as we desire, in order to have experiences that reveal the innate Divinity of our Souls and allow us to create our own ways to spread the Love around and bring Heaven to Earth (or elsewhere).

So, while I believe our Maker has a delightful sense of humor - just look around - I no longer want to poke fun at His/Her/Its Being.

Instead, I'm going to keep the same title and cover, but re-write the whole darn novel.

This time it'll be about the God Who doesn't have a comb-over, but Who *does* have a big forever crush on you and me and All That Is.

Steve Gillard
April 2, 2026 (The day after All Fools Day. Perfect.)

1.

"Sir, you are accused of writing a piece of comic fiction that ridicules, vilifies, and otherwise slanders your Heavenly Father.

"You irreverently and sacrilegiously titled this piece of malevolent nonsense *God Has a Comb-Over.*

"You gave it a cover with a picture of a scowling bald man, with what's left of the hair on one side of his head grown out long and combed over to make a mockery of a full head of hair.

"The actual writing is amateurish and juvenile, but successful in its efforts to blaspheme your Creator.

"Sir, what do you have to say in your defense?"

I am being addressed by a Light Being standing at one end of a table that stands below a platform with a white throne, occupied by another much brighter Light Being I assume to be … God.

(I should explain that although I can see these *beings* as glowing human-shaped forms, I can't see facial features. I have the sense it's the closest they're willing to come to appearing human, and it's just for my benefit, so I have the feeling I'm hearing and talking to *someone.*)

My accuser is the prosecutor in this judicial arrangement.

Sitting on my right is Jesus, acting as my defense attorney.

I look over at him, expecting some idea of how to answer the question, but he only holds out a palm, suggesting it's my turn to speak.

I rise, head bowed.

* * * * *

Let's back up a few hours and I'll give you a hasty review of how I came to be standing before the White Throne Judgment, awaiting a final decision as to my eternal mailing address.

Unless Jesus comes up with something - I grew up assuming he was my Savior, for cryin' out loud - it looks like I may be getting my Amazon orders delivered to whatever the zip code is for Hell.

As a child, I was taught that the King James Version of the Bible contains God's actual words, dictated to scribes chosen to create those sixty-six books that comprise the Lord's Leather-Bound Library.

I was told that the whole Easter thing is about Jesus dying instead of me, in order to pay for my multitude of aberrations from the instructions given in that KJV Bible.

Maybe I misunderstood, even though I was once a Sunday School teacher at North Seattle Assembly of God, the church I grew up in.

The church where I met my ex-wife, Martina.

The church that taught that having a sleep-over with anyone other than your husband is a felony violation of the Seventh Commandment, even if your secret bedmate is the assistant pastor. And your husband's best friend. Go figure.

We divorced (no kids) just before I dropped out of Northwest University College of Ministry, the seminary where I was studying to be the next assistant pastor when my pal took over the top spot.

* * * * *

It could be I committed an unforgivable sin when I figured out the easiest way to stop my heart beating, without a mess, and move on to the Afterlife, where I hoped for mercy.

No, I'm not going to fill in those blanks here. If you're curious, call the *Suicide Hotline*, like I should have done.

* * * * *

Now let's get back to my heavenly guilty plea and find out what my sentence will be.

By the way, my name is Philip "Flipper" McCann.

2.

"All rise," says the Light Being who is serving as Clerk of this Afterlife Court.

(I only offed myself an hour or so ago. I guess the first stop for us when we croak is a courtroom.

After all, *the Bible says,*

". . . it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27)

Jesus stands and motions for me to get up off my ass. I do.

The Light Being whom I've assumed is God rises as well, and I feel the eyes I can't see piercing my own.

Then all heaven breaks loose.

First, God holds his arms out and says,

"Welcome Home, Flipper! Welcome Home."

Then Jesus turns and wraps *his* arms around me, pulling me in so close I can hardly breathe.

(I've been a bit surprised through all this that I'm still a human, with lungs and lips and so forth.)

"We're so glad to have you back here, Flipper," he says. "Though you'll see, in a few minutes, that you checked out a bit early.

"You may want to think about going back.

"But right now, . . . *let's party!"*

"Wait," I say. "What's this courtroom drama all about?"

Suddenly the courtroom is filled with other Light Beings, sitting where the audience would sit, maybe a hundred or so.

But these beings are more human-like, just *glowier*.

I start recognizing them.

Friends, family members, other folks whom I knew when they were still alive. My favorite Grampa, Jack, is waving at me from a few rows back. They're all looking at me and applauding.

But mostly they're laughing.

Somewhere a speaker is playing my favorite indie rock band, *Walk the Moon,* doing my favorite of their songs, *Shut Up and Dance.*

Sure enough, for the next half-hour, the courtroom is a dance hall, and when we're not boogieing, we're talking to each other, over the music.

If I wasn't having so much fun, I'd be dripping joy out my eyes.

* * * * *

Then, the courtroom and the crowd disappear and I'm sitting at a table in my favorite Seattle coffee shop, the Squirrel, on Queen Anne Hill, a few blocks from my undergrad *alma mater*, Seattle Pacific University.

But I'm not alone.

Jesus is sitting across from me, along with Grampa Jack, who was waving at me a moment ago, and my gleefully wicked Aunt Zelda, who died when I was still in grade school, one on either side of me.

"What the ….?" I say, looking around the table with my eyes stuck in stunned position.

"Sorry, Flipper," Jesus says, laughing. "Not sorry."

"You'll understand more in a few minutes, after we've talked for awhile, but let's just say we were all pranking you.

"Sort of a way for God to have a little fun with you, the same way you had fun with him when you wrote *God Has a Comb-Over.*

"He loves that book, by the way.

"It needed a little work, a few more drafts before you published it, but those of us who've read it love it as much as he does.

"But first, it's *showtime!"*

* * * * *

The Squirrel disappears and the four of us are sitting in the front row of the Harvard Exit, my favorite Seattle movie house, up on Capitol Hill.

Then Jesus gets up to go stand at the front of the theater, looking up at the screen, clutching the wireless microphone used by Ben, the guy

who usually introduces movies at the Exit.

Grampa Jack and Aunt Zelda, on either side of me, reach over and grab my hands, one each, smiling as they weave their fingers into mine.

The screen lights up and I see my mother holding a newborn, still in her birthing room at Northshore Healthcare, in Seattle.

I'm feeling her exhaustion and relief, but most of all her teary-eyed joy to be hugging her firstborn. *Me.*

Then scenes begin to roll and my life to unroll, the good, the bad, and that stuff you don't want to step in.

The time I pushed Johnny Henderson off the merry-go-round at the King County Fair, and he needed stitches and a cast for his broken finger.

The Christmas when I gave my favorite comic book to my friend, Danny Hanson, just because I knew how much he loved it.

The year in high school when I kept flirting with Marnie Blake, even though it was an unwelcome embarrassment for her.

That time, at Seattle Pacific, when I worked at the daycare center across the street from the campus, and loved every one of those pre-schoolers.

All seventy-five of my trips around the sun, right up until the moment I did the deed that sent me into the Afterlife Courtroom.

The most unsettling part of this is that not only am *I* re-living that timeline, I feel every scene from the viewpoint of *every other person* in it.

And even though a trip around the sun takes a year, the whole movie seems to last only a few minutes.

The houselights come up and Jesus is looking at me, with a big grin.

"So, Flipper, what do you think? How'd you do?" he says.

"I should be back in that courtroom being sentenced to a few Millennia in Satan's Fire Pit," I say.

This gets a laugh from all three of my companions.

"First of all," Jesus says, "there's no Satan and no Fire Pit.

"The only *Hell* that exists is the one you make for yourself when you see, and feel, the hell you may have created for one of your fellow beings. Or for yourself.

"But the question around those hells is *did you learn that Love is what matters and Love can absorb and heal every hurt created by Fear?*

"That's why you chose to come to this planet, Flipper, as overwhelming as it often is.

"To play the *Love is All There Is* game.

"That, and to remember Who You Really Are.

"A piece of God, a divine fractal of the Eternal Light of Joy and Love and Laughter, a forever Soul who wants nothing more than to experience the expression of Love in every possible way, in every possible place."

There's a flash and we're back at our table in the Squirrel, and Deb, our waitress, is refilling our coffee cups and delivering a plate of the cinnamon rolls the Squirrel is known for.

"Now let's talk about *this,*" Jesus says, and lays a copy of *God Has a Comb-Over* in the center of the table, then grabs a cinnamon roll.

"Yeah," says Aunt Zelda, "did you have to use so many curse words?" She picks up a cinnamon roll of her own.

As if using curse words isn't one of the things I remember most about her. That and how she'd use one hand to hide the middle finger she was raising with the other.

Aunt Zelda and I had our best times when I was over at her place and we could watch TV shows my parents would never have allowed me to see.

She even gave me sips of her whiskey.

"And why that weird title, Flipper?" Grampa Jack says, his criticism belied by his side-eyed smirk.

He takes a cinnamon roll, too, prompting me to grab the last one on the plate before Aunt Zelda does.

"We're just playin' with you, Flipper," Jesus says.

"Like I said before, we love your novel, especially God, even though I know you'll agree it needs some work.

"And, before we get into that, I want to cap our little discussion about your Life Review by saying a couple more things.

"One, there is no Judgment on the Other Side. None. Just a review and a chance to learn. There's nothing but Love, Love, Love.

"Two, there's no punishment, no *karma*, although you may choose to have experiences, in your next go-round here, that put you in circumstances similar to the people you may have hurt, so you can know what they felt, and learn what Love can do.

"But that's up to you, your free will choice. No judgment or punishment involved.

"If you want to call that *karma*, go for it.

"Okay, there's a third thing.

" The *You* that is *you* is *not* your *human* self. It's what animates your human self. *You* are your *Soul*.

"And that Soul is perfect, and right where it needs and wants to be. Exactly.

"That Soul can do no wrong, commit no so-called *sin*. It's done nothing to be forgiven for.

"Like that poet, Rumi, said, speaking of the eternal All That Is, *You are a drop in the Ocean, but you are a drop that contains the entire Ocean.*

"Now, all of that said, why did you think it was funny to give God a comb-over?"

I have a notion the three of them know everything I'm thinking, something I read or heard somewhere, years ago, when I was looking into books and podcasts and whatnot about people who experience what I'm experiencing right now, but go back to their bodies and live to tell about it.

Near Death Experiences. NDEs, they're called.

So I better be truthful.

"At the time I wrote that book I was in a bad place," I say.

"I hated my job, my girlfriend had just left me, and I'd been watching YouTube videos of George Carlin and Ricky Gervais, and some other comics, making fun of worn out ideas about God and religion and Heaven and Hell and so forth.

"I found that picture that ended up on the cover of the novel somewhere online, and the whole idea of a God who behaves like that picture suggests appealed to my pitiful self.

"Once I got started, I couldn't stop.

"I'm not proud of it, and I've tried to take it off Amazon, but the best I've been able to do is take it out of print.

"Used copies are still floating around out there."

"What made you want to take it off Amazon?" Grampa Jack says.

"I heard about another suicide who had an experience like I'm having right now," I say, "and I began wondering if I've had it all wrong.

"After what just happened today, I *know* I've had it wrong."

"So why not re-write the book?" Aunt Zelda says.

"And here's another idea," Grampa Jack says.

"I remember when you used to write poems, in high school.

"You actually won a contest, your senior year."

It's true. Not only that, Mrs. Rydell, my favorite teacher of all time, taught senior English, and she liked my writing enough to let me start a little mimeographed literary journal I called the *Jongleur*.

That's a French word for a troubador, who travels around singing songs, telling stories, playing music, and performing tricks like juggling and acrobatics.

I solicited stories and poems from my fellow students and stuck the *Jongleur* inside the student newspaper, *Fast Times At Lincoln High*, which I also wrote for.

But I haven't written a poem, or much of anything else, in the twenty years since I wrote *God Has a Comb-Over.*

Which seems odd, given I'm a retired High School English teacher. Did I mention that?

"We think you could re-write your novel, and maybe write some poetry," Jesus says, "letting readers know about what you experienced today, about a God who adores them, without condition or judgment."

"Not only that, a God with a sense of humor, who would orchestrate a prank like we just pulled on you," Grampa Jack says. "A God who wants to *play* with them, like I used to play with you when you were a five-year-old bundle of mischief."

"You could finally be that preacher you wanted to be when you were teaching Sunday School," Aunt Zelda says. "Remember that? But preaching the *real* Good News.

"The News that your readers have *nothing* to fear, that death is really just going back Home, until they feel like having another adventure somewhere in the Cosmos."

"What do you think?" Jesus says.

"I think that's easily the goofiest idea I've heard in forever-and-a-day," I say.

"I'll do it."