



Volume 2, Issue 3

# ZWTF

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

## The crime of “spiritualizing.”

**M**artin, do you think I’m unspiritual for believing God’s Word?

Of course not. Why would you ask something like that?

**Because my super-spiritual friends are making me feel unspiritual for believing what God says.**

Give me an example.

**Well, for instance, I believe there will be a literal kingdom on this earth that will be headquartered in Jerusalem.**

And you can cite verses for this belief?

**Sure. Daniel 2:44 describes God setting up this kingdom. Zechariah, chapter fourteen, says that Jehovah will be King over the entire earth and that nations will have to come to Jerusalem to worship.**

What do your spiritual friends have to say about this?

**They look down on me for actually believing this. They just roll their eyes and tell me I need to read the Word spiritually, not literally. One guy, Melvin, says that Jerusalem represents my heart, and that’s where the kingdom is.**

What does Melvin say about Jehovah being king over the earth?”

**He says the earth represents my body and that this is where Jehovah reigns, not on the literal earth.**

Does God always mean “body” when He says “earth?”

**Oh, no. Only when Melvin says He does.**



I see. Haven’t you mentioned before that Melvin has a brother who is also very spiritual?

**You’re thinking of Mayhem.**

That’s him. What does Mayhem say these verses mean?

**Mayhem says that, since Jerusalem means “city of**

peace,” and since peace is a feeling, then Jerusalem represents my soul. He says that since “nations” consist mostly of unbelievers, then “nations coming to Jerusalem to worship” means that unbelievers will be attracted to my peaceful soul.

I see. And what about the earth?

Mayhem says that, since the earth is round, “Jehovah ruling over the earth” means that He’s making us a well-rounded people.

This is very original. Is it true what I hear, that Melvin and Mayhem have a gifted sister, Marvel, who has extraordinary insight into these passages?

**It’s true. Marvel is the most spiritual of them all. God has revealed things to Marvel on her exercise bike that only the truly spiritual can detect.**

Can a plain person such as myself understand them?

**It’s not likely. Here’s what I mean: last Friday, Marvel was on her exercise bike praying and listening to inspirational music. At exactly seven p.m.—seven being the number of perfection—God revealed to her, by the spirit, that Jerusalem is Schenectady, New York.**

Really!

**Yes. But that’s not all. When Marvel got off her bike, a drop of sweat ran down her nose and landed on a Rand McNally road atlas that was on the floor. You’ll never guess where the drop landed.**

Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania?

**No! Schenectady, New York!**

You must be joking.

**I’m not. It was a direct confirmation from God. Then God quickened three passages of Scripture to Marvel’s spirit: Job 27:3, “The spirit of God is in my nostrils,” Genesis 7:24, “And the water prevailed upon the earth,” and Isaiah 29:1, “Observe your feasts on schedule.”**

Wait a minute. I know my unspirituality must be showing terribly here, but I’m not grasping the significance of that last verse.

*Sch-edule. Sch-enectady. Get it? They both start with the same three letters, three being the number of completion.*

Ah! And now Marvel believes that ...

**And now Marvel believes that God’s intention is for us to travel to Schenectady three times a year to observe the Jewish feasts.**

And this leaves stupid old you ...

**This leaves stupid old me believing God meant exactly what He said concerning the earth, the nations, and Jerusalem. Of course, it seems so simplistic and ordinary to believe this way. What is my understanding compared with these other, flashier revelations?**

I’ll admit your belief is not very creative, my friend.

**How does it rank spiritually?**

It’s very spiritual. Believing God is the most spiritual thing a person can do. What troubles me most about Melvin, Mayhem, and Marvel is that, by constantly searching for what they call a “spiritual interpretation” of God’s Word, they are denying that the literal meaning is, in itself, spiritual.



*“Why are you studying Greek words, Philip? I just got a new revelation this morning on my exercise bike.”*

**I thought I was the only person who thought that.**

Look at John 1:29- “Lo! the Lamb of God Which is taking away the sin of the world!” Now, what’s your spiritual interpretation of this?

**I don’t have one. This verse doesn’t need a spiritual interpretation. It’s pretty spiritual already.**

Exactly. This verse, taken as it reads, is quite spiritual enough to keep one soaring in the spirit and praising God for the rest of one’s life. This verse is a fact. There’s no mystery here, no riddle, no hidden meaning. People are surprised to hear that facts are spiritual.

**It's only the spirit of God that can make someone believe a fact.**

Right. That's why I say a fact is spiritual. A "spiritual interpretation," if that's what you want to call it, has nothing to do with a verse having a mystical, hidden meaning. It has a lot to do with believing what's written. Verses like John 1:29 simply need to be believed. And it takes the spirit of God to cause a person to do that.



*"Of course I believe 'All is of God.'  
But what is the spiritual interpretation?"*

#### **Wouldn't First Timothy 4:10 fit this category?**

Yes. "God is the Savior of all mankind." This is one of the simplest statements that can be uttered. A child can understand it. Yet only one Christian out of a million actually believes it. The other nine-hundred and ninety-nine thousand, etcetera, believe in eternal torment. So you can see why I call this a spiritual verse, and why I resent the implication that literal truth lacks spirituality. A verse is spiritual because it takes the spirit of God for a person to believe it, not because its gems lie beneath the surface.

**So you think that Melvin, Mayhem, and Marvel are all wrong?**

Here's where I might surprise you. No, I don't think they're all wrong. The Word of God is multidimensional. I believe rich truths do underlie many a literal fact. But I don't embrace these truths at the expense of the literal fact. That's the mistake. For instance, the life of Joseph is a beautiful picture of Christ. And the lambs and goats of the old divine service, we know, also pictured the Savior. But this doesn't mean that Joseph never lived, or that lambs never died, or that goats were never sent into the wilderness. The Jordan river is a constant type of baptism. But you can also put a boat in it and fish for carp. Egypt typifies the flesh, we all know that. But it's also in

the world atlas under the letter "E."

**So you see deeper meanings beneath the surface, too?**

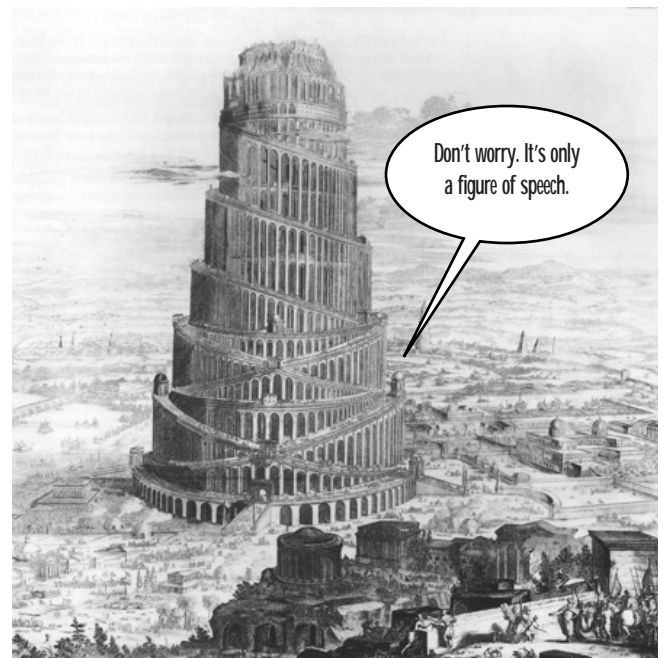
I recently taught a message on how Edom, Moab, and Ammon making war with Jehoshaphat in Second Chronicles, chapter twenty, pictures our sins and shortcomings making war with us. I relish these Scriptural pictures. But not in my wildest dreams would I deny that Edom, Moab, and Ammon were actual countries, or that Jehoshaphat was a real person. This is the mistake of our friends Melvin, Mayhem, and Marvel.

**It seems to me that denying these literal truths can lead to trouble.**

Like a banana peel. To deny these truths is to deny that God is able to say what He means. If God is unable to say what He means, then only those who claim to see beneath the Word can understand Scripture.

**You've probably heard a lot of these things over the years.**

I've heard for years that when God says "days" He means "years," when He says "death" He means "life," when He says "man of lawlessness" He means our "Adamic nature," when He says "Babylon" He means a religious system, and—as we've been discussing—when He says "earth" He means the believer's body. Apparently, God has a difficult time communicating. Those who see these things as literal death, a literal man of lawlessness, a literal city Babylon, and a literal earth, are thought to be stupid, silly, or at least unspiritual.



**But you see these things as both literal *and* picturing other truths?**

I have the best of both worlds. I realize that Babylon figures a religious system. But it's also a literal city that will figure into God's program. To deny that is to deny God's clear revelation to humanity. Certainly, Jerusalem is the figurative center of God within our hearts. But if you'll look at a map, you'll see it's also the literal center of the earth's land mass, from which Christ will literally administer a literal kingdom. Go ahead and say there's a figurative "man of lawlessness" within me. But scan the political horizon for a "dispenser of righteousness" with an evil heart. My "earth" quakes in His presence, to be sure. But keep an eye on the seismographs in San Francisco.

**You've used the word "figurative" several times. What's the deal there?**

Big! These folks who say they are spiritualizing the Word are giving themselves too much credit. What they're doing, in reality, is discovering figures of speech called allegories.

**Can you explain an allegory?**

In an allegory, actual persons in their everyday lives set forth truth. Only one allegory is called that by name in the Scripture. In Galatians 4:22-31, Paul uses Sarah and Hagar to allegorize two covenants: the old and the new.

**So Sarah and Hagar represented the two covenants.**

Right. But don't stop there. Paul then goes on to use another figure of speech known as Metaphor. In verse twenty-five, Paul writes, "Hagar is Mount Sinai." That's a metaphor. A metaphor is an abbreviated simile. Instead of saying that one thing is *like* another—which is a simile—the metaphor boldly insists that it *is* that other.

**So Hagar was not literally mount Sinai.**

Of course not. She only represented it. Otherwise, Moses climbed up her back and received the law somewhere near her scalp.

**So she was spiritual mount Sinai?**

Ah! There's where the mistake is made. Hagar was *not* spiritual Mount Sinai. That would suggest that the literal mountain was not, itself, spiritual. But Exodus 19:23 says that Moses hallowed that mountain. And Exodus 19:20 says that Yahweh Himself descended to it. So Mount Sinai was already spiritual. To say that Hagar is spiritual Mount Sinai is to deny this. It's what I was telling you

people do with the surface truths in God's Word. The Word is already spiritual; nobody's going to spiritualize it. They may find allegories in it, but they won't spiritualize it.

**So what was Hagar?**

Hagar was allegoric and metaphoric mount Sinai. That is, she was *figurative* Mount Sinai.

**That doesn't sound so mystical.**

Precisely! It takes the wind out of the spiritualizers for them to discover that they're merely discovering allegories and metaphors.



"So all this time I've only been discovering allegories."

**So when someone comes up to you shouting, "I've discovered the spiritual meaning of such and such a verse ..."**

I simply tell them, "No, but you've discovered a figure of speech. The spirit made you understand the figure of speech, that's true, but it's the same spirit that has made others grasp the simple pronouncement of First Timothy 4:10. You are no more spiritual than they, my friend. You've not spiritualized the Word at all, for the Word is already spiritual. Rather, the spirit has caused you to understand a figure of speech."

**I bet you're lots of fun at a party.**

I can play "Pop Goes the Weasel" by squeaking my hands, which makes up for things.

**So you believe that Jerusalem may picture our heart? And the earth may picture our flesh?**

Why not? But again, don't tell me that God won't have a literal kingdom on earth with Jerusalem as its capital. There are too many Scriptures speaking plainly of it. No one should embrace these figurative applications

at the expense of the literal. That's the big mistake that has shipwrecked many "believers" today. If God doesn't mean what He says, then we have no revelation at all. The Word becomes a floating lighthouse, making us dependent on "spiritual" people who get personal revelations on exercise bikes to explain it for us.

### Like Marvel.

Marvel is living proof that "private revelations" are inherently dangerous and shouldn't be trusted apart from confirmation in the literal Word. God doesn't leave His Word to private interpretation. Even Melvin and Mayhem disagree. How do we know who's right? These allegorical applications are oftentimes helpful, oftentimes rich, but God's plain, literal declarations are the spiritual gold of revelation.



*"Quit worrying about corroborating your sources—it's not as if anyone's going to take all this literally."*

### What about this "spiritual Israel" business?

It's the same thing—figures of speech. What a great deception has been founded by people who have failed to grasp figures of speech. Worse, this unscriptural phrase, "spiritual Israel," has shipwrecked the faith of millions who now disbelieve God's promises to literal Israel. I hate this term more than I hate meatloaf.

**People get this idea because Paul uses so many Israelite terms to describe those of the nations who are in the body of Christ.**

I know. Galatians 3:7, for example: "Those of faith, these are sons of Abraham." The way most people understand this verse is: anyone who believes—Jew or Greek—

becomes a spiritual son of Abraham. And everyone knows a spiritual son is better than a literal one. Since this is so, then God doesn't have to fulfill His literal promises to literal Israel, seeing as how He's now got spiritual sons of Abraham, that is, spiritual Israelites.

### That's the way the thinking goes.

There's only one slight problem.

### It's a metaphor?

Right. The nations are not spiritual Israel—they're figurative Israel. They're *metaphoric* Israel. They don't in any way replace Israel. They're used to picture Israel, to show that they are—in a way—*like* Israel.

### Is there another example of this from the Scriptures?

In Matthew 26:26, Jesus held up a piece of bread in front of His disciples and said, "This is My body." Now, was the bread literally His body? Did the bread go out and get crucified?

**No. The bread represented His body. It being broken was a picture of what would happen to Him.**

Exactly. Literal bread, literal body, figurative identification. But what a great deception has been built by failing to recognize this metaphor. With this error in mind, think of those who use Paul's phrase, "Those of faith, these are sons of Abraham" to cancel God's promises to the literal seed. To be consistent, they should also teach that, after Christ used the bread to represent Himself, He, Himself, was canceled. That would be the case if a metaphor eliminates a reality. But it doesn't. Rather, a metaphor *pictures* a reality. Does the ocean disappear when you take a picture of it? Not hardly. The bread that pictured Christ did not eliminate Christ. Likewise, those of the nations who picture what God will someday effect for Israel, do not eliminate Israel. Galatians 4:28 confirms this—"Now you, brethren, as Isaac, are children of promise." See? The nations are *as* Isaac. They are *like* Isaac. But they neither eliminate Isaac, nor do they nix the promises God made to Isaac and his literal descendants.

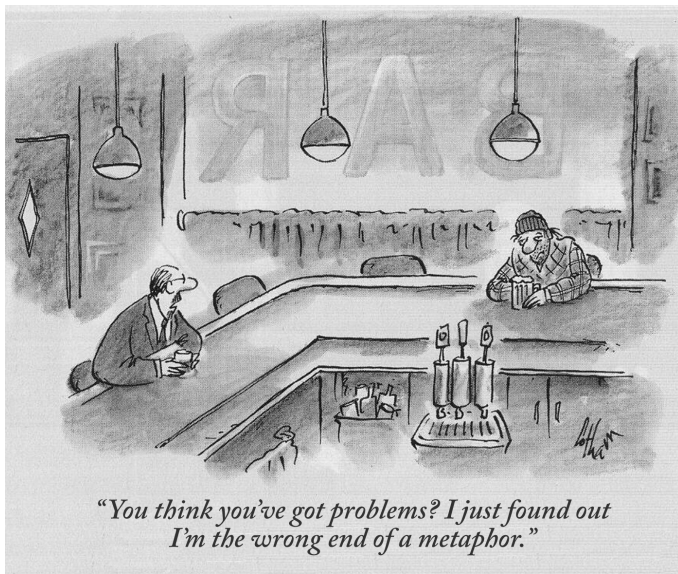
**Besides, to say that the body of Christ is spiritual Israel denies that Israel, itself, is spiritual.**

Yes; that's been my point all along. People try to spiritualize things God has already made spiritual. It's pride. If men and women somehow have the power to spiritualize God's Word, then people will start looking to the men and women, not to the Word. And this is just what has happened in the spiritualization camps. The Word is nice, but they don't really need it. I've been to meetings like that. It's scary. The doctrines they come up with are even

scarier: *this person had a dream; that person heard a voice; that person had an eerie feeling driving past the graveyard.* Pity the poor clod who presents a Scriptural fact. At the meetings where I speak, people are looking down at their Bibles. It's not very good for the ego.

**I think people get a head trip from thinking of themselves as spiritual Israel.**

Do they ever. Tell them they're figurative Israel, and the cookie crumbles. "Gee. I found out today I'm only the wrong end of a metaphor." When you get right down to it, humans are dumb and ordinary. It's God Who dazzles us with His Word and His works. And wait until you see what He's going to do with Israel. He's going to stun the world, that's what. What could be more spiritual than Israel coming into her promised kingdom? Man, don't let anybody spiritualize away that blessed truth. That truth is spiritual.



**Let's talk about the book of Revelation for a moment. People will make fun of you for thinking that everything written there is literal. Do you really believe there will be a wild beast with seven heads and ten horns?**

People are all the time telling me that Revelation must be read "spiritually." This is the same voo-doo I've been talking about. Revelation doesn't need to be read spiritually, but with a solid grasp of figures of speech. I know this will take all the fun out of it, but we want truth, not fun. Almost the entire book of Revelation is, itself, a figure of speech known as *Vision*. John is seeing things that do not exist at the time. Did John see a seven-headed beast with ten horns? You bet he did. Why

do you think he got shook up so badly?

**But then the messenger of the Lord explained to John what this represented.**

Right. The messenger said: "The ten horns which you perceived are ten kings."

**Literal kings?**

They have to be. "Ten horns are ten kings" is a metaphor. In a metaphor, the nouns on either side of the verb "to be" are to be taken literally. The figure lies in the verb "to be"—in this case, "is." And the last noun in the metaphor is the thing being pictured by the others. So don't look for ten horns, but do look for ten kings. Poor John—he saw the ten horns.

**So in the book of Revelation, there are many literal things being described figuratively.**

That's a good way to put it. In Revelation, look for figures within the principle figure, describing literal events.

**Too bad you sound so calculating.**

This is more spiritual than making the lame walk. But try to put it on Christian television and get people to watch.

**"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."**

A figure of speech called *Implication*. The similarity between our Lord's body and the temple is implied.

**"Heaven is God's throne."**

Good one! Here are three figures in one. Because heaven is not said to be *like* a throne, but to *be* a throne, "throne" is a metaphor. But "throne" is also a figure called *Association*; since a throne is so closely associated with rule, it's put for it. And since "throne" implies that the Deity sits down, it's also a figure called *Condescension*, where God is given human attributes He doesn't actually possess. Too bad this verse isn't in Revelation. Then all these figures would be included in the principle figure: *Vision*.

**I'd feel better about this if you would jump up and speak in tongues.**

We wouldn't learn as much.

**Why has spiritualizing—or I guess I should say, finding allegories in the Word—become so popular?**

Because it's easy. All you need is a gut feeling. You may be right, you may be wrong. In my opinion, Marvel is nuts. Melvin and Mayhem may be onto something, but which one is right? They both said different things. When someone begins an exposition on allegorical grounds, a red flag should pop up. Proceed with caution, is all I have



*"And to think they called us 'stupid literalists.'"*

to say. Test it against the literal Word. If it rings true, then enjoy it. If it's Marvel, tell her to go home and blow-dry her road atlas.

**People have told me I spend too much time in the Word. They say that I need to "flow with the spirit."**

Have you noticed something about that? "Flowing with the spirit" apparently includes watching television, going to the mall, and reading romance novels. Just don't spend too much time with those Bible words! I'd like to have a dollar for every time someone has said to me, "The letter killeth."

**I'll settle for a nickel.**

Even a brief glance at the context of Second Corinthians 3:3-7 will show that the letter that kills is the Mosaic law chiseled in stone, not the Word of God. Jesus said in John 6:63 that His words were spirit and life, but that some were simply not believing those words. Where are His words recorded? In the Scriptures. Would we know them apart from the Scriptures? Sorry, but no.

**When people spiritualize the Word—can I use that term?—they don't have to understand it or correctly cut it.**

Spiritualizing God's Word is, many times, a smoke screen for Scriptural carelessness and laziness.

**I think so, too.**

Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth." This is work! In Second Timothy 1:13, Paul exhorts Timothy to have a pattern of sound words. *Words*. Many of God's people have taken to spiritualizing Scripture because, by

doing so, anyone can become an instant "expert." You don't need a knowledge of grammar, or of figures of speech, or of Greek or Hebrew. A spiritualizer automatically pirouettes to the head of the class. He's beyond instruction. Nobody can teach him because practical instruction has become, to him, unspiritual. He has a mysterious insight into God's Word that nobody else can attain. This is a whole lot easier than becoming an unashamed worker. If you spiritualize Scripture, you don't have to be a worker. You don't have to be precise. You don't have to be a student. You don't need words. You don't need facts. When someone approaches with a fact, you can simply write him off by saying, "facts are unspiritual." Then you can twist verses like "the letter killeth" to justify your ignorance.

**Which is really only proof of it.**

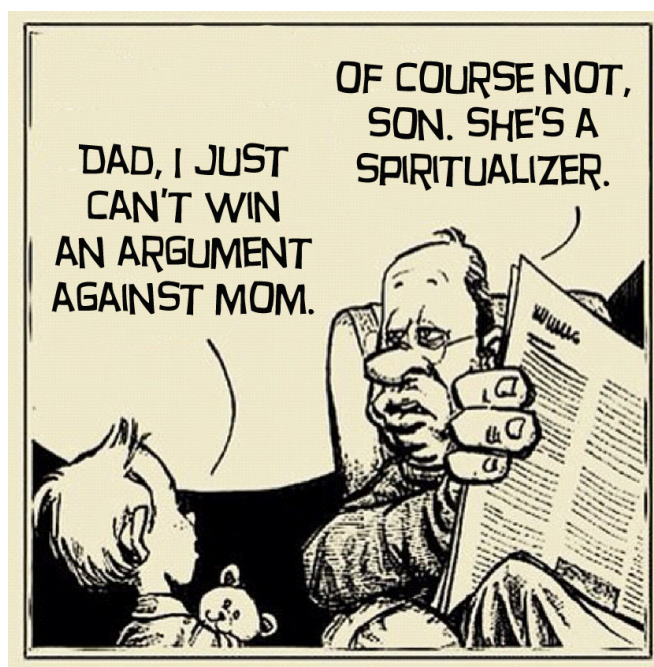
I didn't say that.

**I used to do the same thing.**

What? Stand on a soapbox?

**No. Spiritualizing gave me an edge over those who knew more than me about God's Word. I used to put these down as literal-minded. I accused them of wanting to figure everything out. Since I was either unmotivated or too busy to study that intensely, I became "spiritual" and scoffed at the learned. Now I sit at their feet.**

It's strange that believers would berate other believers for wanting to know more about God. It's hard to study God's Word. But it's easy to sit back and call the learned unspiritual.



**The hardest thing to get people to see is that words are spiritual.**

I know. I've learned to quote them First Corinthians 2:12-13: "Now we obtained, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may be perceiving that which is being graciously given to us by God, which we are speaking also, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit, matching spiritual blessings with spiritual words."

**So the spirit taught Paul the right words to teach.**

Yes. *Spiritual* words. And those words are recorded in his letters.

**I'm reading out of the *Concordant Version* here, the very next verse, verse fourteen: "Now the soulish man is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God." Doesn't the King James Version read, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God"?**

Yes. That verse has caused a ton of trouble. The *Concordant Version* is right. The Greek word there is *psuchikon*. This is the adjective form of the noun, *psuche*, which was rightly translated "soul" fifty-eight times by the King James translators. Because an adjective can't mean more than its noun, the KJV translators should have done what the *Concordant Version* did: translate the adjective "soul-ish." Simple. To their credit, they did translate it "sensual" twice, which is pretty good. Why didn't they do that all the time? To translate this "natural" is totally unwarranted. It has really confused people.

**Sure. If the natural man can't receive the things of God, then we have to do something un-natural to receive them.**

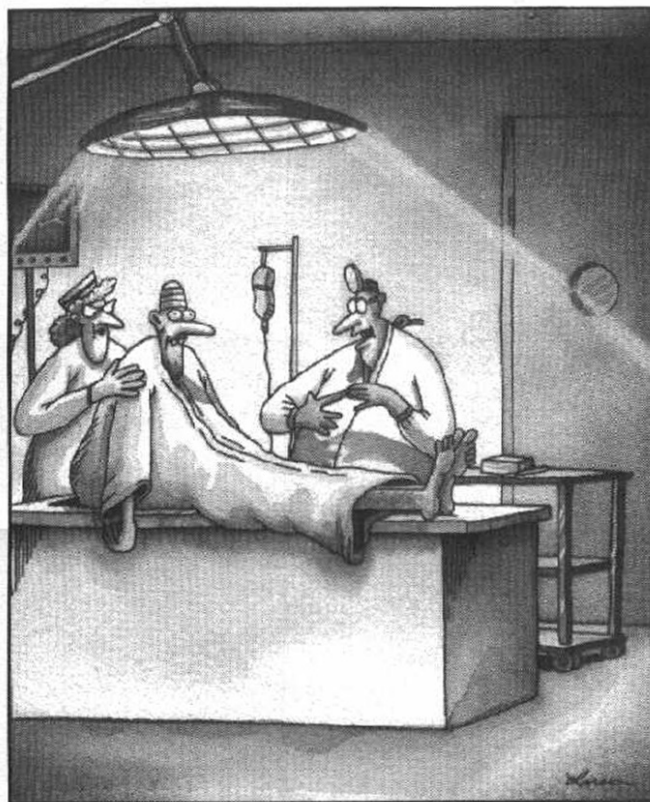
Exactly. And I really believe this is where the spiritualization business came from. If we can't know these things naturally—that is, by natural processes such as thinking and studying—then we've got to get metaphysical. Spooky. *Woo-woo*. Feeling stuff. Psychic-type junk that passes as spiritual. I really think this mistranslation of First Corinthians 2:14 got the ball rolling.

**I can't help but think of Marvel when you say that.**

I remember a lovely, old man—he had been a Christian all his life—and he said to me about a month before he died: "We just can't figure out the Scriptures with our natural minds." I had been trying to show Him some comforting verses, but he wouldn't read them. He was actually afraid of his natural mind—all because of a mistranslated verse.

**When you think there's something wrong with natural processes, then you start to imagine that thinking is unspiritual, and reading is unspiritual, and study is unspiritual ...**

The whole truth of this passage is that the soulish



**"Okay, Mr. Dittmars: We just removed your brain, but you don't need it to receive the things of God, anyway."**

man is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God. The soul is the emotions. The senses. The person who seeks nothing but sensual gratification every day—eating, drinking, television, sex, whatever—he's not going to receive the things of God. Our spiritualization friends fall into this category when they depend on feelings for revelation. What is passing for spirituality with them—feelings and such—is actually soulish. And what is passing for unspirituality by them—thinking, studying, examining—is actually spiritual.

**"Now he who is spiritual is, indeed, examining all."**

That's the very next verse: First Corinthians 2:15. The spiritual man is examining. It's spiritual to sit at a desk and pore over Scripture.

**We don't need spiritual brains. The natural gray matter doesn't change. What we need is spiritually energized brains; we need brains energized by the spirit, rather than the soul.**

That's beautiful. Same brain, different fuel. I'm reminded of Paul's words from prison—2 Timothy 4:13. Here's the man who wrote the better part of the Greek Scriptures, and what does he ask Timothy for? "When you come, bring the scrolls, especially the vellums." Even a great apostle needs to read. Romans 12:2 says that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, not



*"Is this tree I'm leaning against a simile or a metaphor?"*

the removing of them.

**Amen.**

One more thing.

**Yes, please.**

The two men on the road to Emmaus in Luke, chapter twenty-four. You know the story. The resurrected Lord disguises Himself somehow and starts walking along with them. Mind you, here's the Son of God on the day of His resurrection. If anyone could have blown these guys away with wild revelations from beyond the blue, He could have. But what does He do? "And, beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interprets to them, in all the Scriptures, that which concerns Himself." What control. Not even our Lord, on the day of His resurrection, is disposed above what is written. He works out of the written Word."

**First Corinthians 4:6- " ... that you may be learning not to be disposed above what is written, that you may not be puffed up ... "**

In Colossians 1:25, Paul says he completed the Word of God. If anyone wants to be disposed above what it written today, they're on their own.

**Which brings us to the matter of translation.**

A critical subject indeed. But look and see. We have gone on for too many pages already, and I perceive we may have already strained our readers' patience. Is it possible you can be back here next month? You seem to have some insight into these things, and we speak well together.

**I'd like that. But first, let me cancel my Greyhound reservations to Schenectady. ■**



## **Morgantown, NC Gathering**

*Wednesday, February 27, 2013*

5:30 p.m.

**Teachers:** Martin Zender; Clyde Pilkington; Dan Sheridan

**Location:** Timberwood Restaurant,  
1301 Bethel Rd. Morganton NC, 28655  
**(Dinner, followed by teaching).**

**Contact:**

Brad Truitt: btruitt@compascable .net  
(828) 674 4185



## **Columbia, SC Gathering**

*Monday, March 4th, 2013*

7:00 p.m.

**Teachers:** Dan Sheridan; Clyde Pilkington

**Location:** Waterford of Columbia, 9370 Windsor Lake Blvd, Columbia, SC 29223

**Contact:** Ron Tidwell: tidi@usit.net

(803) 457-1202

**HOPE TO SEE YOU!**