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**"This is an era of  
grace, not "nice."**

—Martin Zender

# Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

*"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love,  
I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2*



Two out of three isn't bad.

## The *King James Version* considers nature evil

—and so do many Christians, for that matter



One of the most troublesome mis-translations in the *King James Version* is its treatment of 1 Corinthians 2:14—

**"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."**

Here, the *King James Version* makes nature the thing that opposes the spirit, and vice versa. The natural human must be bad because he cannot receive the things of the spirit of God. The only thing that can overcome a natural thing, then, would be a spiritual thing. So—according to this translation—if you are spiritual, you cannot be natural. And if you are natural, you cannot be spiritual. If you want to do spiritual things, therefore, you must become *unnatural*.

This is a misconception, a lie—and an open invitation to despise one's nature and become religious (see the fun lady above).

The problem is that God did not say, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God." The Greek word translated "natural" here is *psychikon*. This is an adjective, based on the noun *psyche*, which means "soul," and

which the King James' translators translated "soul" 58 times.

What is the soul? The soul is not a thing that exists in our body. It is not like an organ. A surgeon cannot go inside you and perform a soulectomy. The soul is a figure of speech for our awareness. It is our consciousness of life that comes to us via our five senses. Keep that in mind.

If God wanted to say "natural" in 1 Corinthians 2:14, He would have used the Greek word for natural, which is *phusikos*. This word means (according to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*): "belonging to nature." The King James' translators themselves translated *phusikos* "natural" in Romans 1:27:

**"The males, besides, leaving the natural (phusikos) use of the female, were inflamed in their craving for one another."**

*Phusikos* clearly means "natural" here. So our question ought to be: Why does the KJV translate *phusikos* "natural" in Romans 1:27, but then in 1 Corinthians 2:14, where a completely different Greek word appears (namely, *psychikon*), they also translate that word, "natural"?

Because, like the NIV, the *King James Version* is inconsistent. The King James' translators wanted 1 Corinthians 2:14 to say "natural," so they forced it to.

**The KJV dudes were  
Catholic, dude**

The Catholic church believed (and still does, to a degree) that nature—including the human body—was evil. This was

Gnosticism dressed up in Christian garb. This is why Catholics (and Protestants, and all other religious people) like to deny themselves. They feel holy when they do it. They feel that by denying their natures (sex, hunger, a desire for beauty, etc.) they become spiritual.

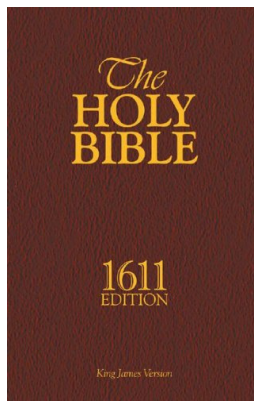
**"The King James' translators wanted 1 Corinthians 2:14 to say 'natural,' so they forced it to."**

Why would they think that? For one reason, because of this mistranslated verse.

I am showing you the correct translation because I don't want you to think that your nature is evil. If you start believing that, you might start doing ridiculous things like denying yourself life's basic pleasures (eating, drinking, sex), or else feeling guilty when you indulge in them.

Since the noun *psyche* means "soul," then the adjective *psychikon* (in 1 Cor. 2:14) can only mean, "pertaining to the soul," or, "soulish." (Remember fourth grade English, when Mrs. Smith told you that an adjective cannot mean something different from its corresponding noun? It was a different part of speech, not a different word.)

"Soulish." This is precisely how the *Concordant Literal New Testament* translates it. Here, then, is the CLNT



version of 1 Corinthians 2:14—

**“Now the soulish man is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God, for they are stupidity to him, and he is not able to know them, seeing that they are spiritually examined.”**

The word “soulish,” in this Scriptural context, means, “swayed by the soul, rather than the spirit.” The soul, again, is a figure of speech for that which we perceive through our five senses. Paul is teaching that it is the person who views the world *only* through the prism of the emotions who is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God.

### Pagan buzz-kill

Much of Christianity has unconsciously adopted a teaching called Gnosticism. Gnosticism is a pagan philosophy which says that the material world is evil. Gnosticism derives its name from *gnosis*, the Greek word for knowledge. Gnosticism promises salvation through a secret knowledge possessed only by its followers. This knowledge grants the devotee the ability to overcome the evil nature, and the evil human body.

To Gnostics, spirit and matter are continually opposed. That is, there is no way that a physical, natural thing can be spiritual. To be Gnostic, one has to renounce physical desires and practice a strict asceticism in order to overcome the body. Through purification rites, a Gnostic is supposed to be able to liberate his or her soul from the evil matter of the world, including his or her own body. In Gnosticism, therefore, the human body needs to be overcome—certainly not celebrated.

Most Christians, hearing of Gnosticism, would say, “That’s weird.” And yet this weirdness flourishes today in the Christian midst. I think specifically, but not exclusively, of the Catholic church. What is penance, but the denying of oneself? During Lent, does one determine to have more sex, eat more delicious food, go to more museums, or sleep longer? No. One denies oneself.

Old-time Catholics used to go around whipping themselves. Modern Catholics merely give up chocolate. Many Christians feel guilty whenever they are not “suffering for Jesus.” The sin here (yes, it is a sin to consider what God has

declared to be good to be, instead, evil) is only a matter of degree. The common denominator is that natural urges must be overcome and the body subdued. After all, Jesus cannot truly be happy with us unless we deny ourselves pleasure. He died on the cross—can’t we at least go easy on the Kit-Kats and stop masturbating? The sacrifice of Christ is supposed to make us thankful, happy, and determined to live fully in the freedom He bought us. Instead, for religious people, the sacrifice of Christ makes them want to suffer for Him—not as an act of devotion, but as a token of His favor.

This can only insult Him. “Wasn’t *My* sacrifice good enough for these people? They feel they need to *add* to it? I died to remove



**When you’re a Gnostic, you can grow out your facial hair, wear cool helmets, and hold books in the most awkward manner possible.**

guilt from their midst. And now, they’re racked with the very thing I removed—and *they think they’re doing Me a favor?* I wish they’d just thank Me for My sacrifice and get a life.”

**“For freedom Christ frees us” (Galatians 5:1).**

If this verse said, “For religious bondage and guilt-based dedication to religious suffering, Christ frees us,” then I could see the need to deny oneself.

Otherwise, no. ■

## Human conscience is aligned with God.

**H**uman nature has been devitalized by sin, but it is not, itself, wrong. In fact, it is right. I can prove this from Scripture.

Romans 2:14–15:

**“For whenever they of the nations that have no law, by nature may be doing that which the law demands, these, having no law, are a law to themselves, who are displaying the action of the law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying together and their reckonings between one another, accusing or defending them.”**

This is from the *Concordant Literal New Testament*. For verse fourteen, the *King James Version* has:

**“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.”**

If human nature is sinful, then how can the Gentiles “do by nature” the things contained in the law?

Again, I am not saying that human beings are not sinners. God gave us natures and consciences to guide us. Yes, the conscience can be defiled (Titus 1:15), but this only proves that the conscience itself is aligned with God; it has to be *defiled* in order to sin. When not defiled, it is in accord with God. Else how could Paul say in 2 Corinthians 4:2—

**“We are commending ourselves to every human’s conscience.”**

I doubt that Paul would commend himself to something that was continually evil and wrong. ■

**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THIS MINISTRY!**

**A**lthough we have not been the best *personal* correspondents of late, Rebecca and I appreciate hearing from you and read everything you write. For those who have helped us financially—THANK YOU! We continue to need your help in making the good news of grace available to all.