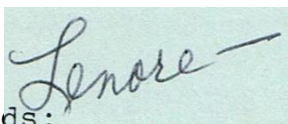


RUSSELL'S RUMINATIONS
A LETTER OF ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON ISSUES
OF INTEREST TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Vol. IV, No. 2
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Dear Friends:

I just reread the "Introduction" to each of the six issues of the Ruminations that I have composed and mailed forth since May of 1981. Most of you who read this are familiar with my affirmation about the source of the quotes I present in this letter format, so I'm tempted to make this shorter and short, working toward extinction. Yet I also know that there will be new readers with each fresh letter who will (at least should) wonder what this is all about. More fundamentally, though, (and I am a fundamentalist in a unique way) I should like to reaffirm, with each issue, the reality of this educative experience that I continue to have.

It commenced in May of 1979, which gives it a four and a half year history. The "it" is a reasonably regular, fairly ritualized time of meditations, in which I receive Teachings from the Holy Spirit on a wide range of themes (Who could speak to a wider range?). Most of these are received in the early morning (in the 5:30 - 7 AM period), and mostly in my study here at the Farm... in front of the living room fireplace in the winter. I have received them at other times and in other places... and sometimes this variation is necessary... but MOST come as I have indicated. (You will notice that one of the Teachings I use in this Rumination was received in the evening in the S.I.U. Medical School Library in Springfield; I taught a course up there this Fall and had a two and a half hour period after my class was finished before the plane brought us back south. That could be a time for meditation... why not?)

In previous issues I have selected and offered rather limited and specific quotes from Teachings, which I have identified by title and date, upon which I have them "ruminated." This has seemed to be a good format, but the Spirit suggested an experiment this time with another mode of presentation--the whole Teaching, so that readers can experience the total context of the quotes on which I choose to muse. For convenience I shall number the paragraphs so you can go back and see what was said in the "original" more easily. I hope this is sufficient preface/orientation.

Most Christians do not disbelieve that there is "someone" called the Holy Spirit and that He is around and active in earth life. The double negative is purposive, because, though this is an article of their faith, they have had no actual experiences with this Being, and therefore the functional belief is rather superficial. Let the Spirit say it in a better way than I can. In a recent Teaching on "Angels", He said:

You do not disbelieve in angels. You admit that this form of life is possible and probably, and, again, it is part of the Scripture that you do not disbelieve. Yet you have had no actual experience with one or more angels, and so your belief is superficial. It is like

not the way most Christians believe in Me, the Holy Spirit. They believe that there is such a manifestation of God, but they have not had experiences like yours. They don't know Me as friend, humorist (even jokester), counselor, and teacher... yes, even preacher, as you do. And many do not even desire to hear about this relationship of ours. This makes Me less than enthusiastic about free will. ("Angels", December 23, 1983)

Interestingly, some Christians seem to feel that the Holy Spirit is in church, at other sacred gatherings, and is around when "things are good." But as soon as a situation turns "bad"... profane, secular, shady... the Holy Spirit "takes off" and doesn't participate. Given the mixed nature of most situations, the Spirit has to do some mighty fast shuttling.

Another perception, that these Teachings have verified repeatedly for me, is that the Holy Spirit is present in and observant of All that we do. He is fully aware of how we are reacting and interested in what we think, say, and do. Have you ever considered that as you read a book or view a movie, in a theater or on television, the Holy Spirit is present and helping you to more learning and growth than you could manage by yourself? If you have considered this and think it possible, you can go on with this letter without any big difficulties. If you have not considered it, or have considered it and rejected the notion, then you'll have to make up some other context for continuing the reading of these following pages... OK?

In chronological order, in May of 1982 I watched the complete miniseries on TV entitled Marco Polo, which was followed by a Teaching entitled "Some Lessons from Marco Polo." In the Fall of that year I saw a movie called First Blood, starring Sylvester Stallone, and this brought forth the Teaching, "A Gentle/Violent Man." In March of 1983 I saw the movie Gandhi, and, not unexpectedly, I was given "My Thoughts on Gandhi." Then in the Spring and Summer just past I read two novels, in what will be a continuing series by Jean Auel, the first titled The Clan of the Cave Bear, and the second The Valley of Horses. Two Teachings came concerning this total story in August, and these were dubbed "The Clan and the Valley," and "The Clan and the Valley, II."

I shall not ruminate chronologically, however, but shall begin with Gandhi.

**MAR. 20, 1983
SUN., 5:35 AM**

MY THOUGHTS ON GANDHI

**FARM
STUDY**

1. You didn't wait for a meditation that might give you guidance in the writing of last night's essay, o son, and now you have composed it. Since you have given it this much thought it shall be difficult to "prove" to anyone that these pages are My thoughts and not just more of your own. Just be faithful, and listen in the way that you now know well, and at least you shall know and be satisfied.

2. As you suspected, though it was not said in the film nor in your essay, the man called Gandhi was a highly developed soul who had a good and close relationship with Me. He lived a unique life with special opportunities, and the spirit with which he lived it was pleasing to Me. And it is pleasing to Me that so many people in your United States are seeing the film, an excellent portrayal of a life lived in such opposition to many of your current values.

3. His espousal of freedom from the British gives him enough positive identification with an early American experience to be acceptable... even intriguing, for he lead his country out of the Empire without generals, armies, and destructive battles. This is not your way, of course, (your nation's way) for you value your wars and feel that you must be a strong military power. Wouldn't it be interesting to see the United States become the world force for non-violence and turning the other cheek? It would be even more wonderful coming out of the background you have, but also unlikely. It would be a massive test of some of the most important teachings I brought to the world as Jesus... that most of you Americans learned as children in Sunday School. Can tyranny really be overcome with kindness, love, hard work done in joy, and non-violence? I say that it can, but not enough people, even Christians, are willing to live it with conviction, and get through the short term set-backs.

4. Gandhi's life was lived in the midst of many religious heritages. His personal heritage was Hindu, and he lived it at its best, recognizing the important manifestations of God, even beyond those in the Hindu tradition. He knew the power of the Moslem faith and the dedication of many folk in that tradition. He learned the history of the Jewish people, and he identified in some powerful ways with Me, as Jesus. He also knew Buddhism, though that was not portrayed as important. Through all of these he recognized My sovereignty and power, and he availed himself of it. I was pleased to give it.

5. I am not displeased with an earth that has many religious traditions and practices. I like the Christian best... but I say this to you as encouragement to continue in this faith, which is your heritage. What do I say to a Buddhist or Moslem seeker... one who is responding to My call, much as you are? Am I calling all to be One Way, and most are resisting and denying Me? Am I calling Catholics to be Pentecostals? Am I calling all souls to be Presbyterian Christians? Does it seem likely?

6. As portrayed, Gandhi used the fast as a political weapon, but it was first and foremost a spiritual exercise for him. I recommend that you try some fasting, for its effects on spirit. It is not merely a matter of not eating, but of giving up something good – food – for something better – spiritual discipline. Decide how you shall do it... the details are not important... and then institute it, and not when it is just easy to do.

7. You have no desire to be the kind of international controversial figure this man was. In spirit you are not as developed as he was. But you are close enough to identify. If you continue this active relationship with Me you shall have confrontations you shall not enjoy, but you also shall be showing a way to some who need it. Continue on this path with Me, being as I am, both meek and lowly and strong and powerful. (One need not exclude the other.)

8. Your main means of communicating should be writing, and I encourage you to use this in the various opportunities that come to you, some from Me (but which?). Be My servant in a number of ways today. Be aware as they unfold, some expected, others not. Remember the Sabbath.

Shalom

6:59 AM

You notice that initially I get a bit of chiding for writing an “essay”, which were reflections on the film, before I received this Teaching. That essay was for a lay publication of our local Presbyterian church, called Doves from the Ark, and I wanted to write it while the film was still fresh in my mind. Anyway, the issue in which this was to appear never “borned”, so... only I know what I wrote before I received this.

In #2 it says that Gandhi was a highly developed soul who had a good and close relationship with Him whom we Christians know as the Triune God. The film didn’t focus on this and hence didn’t indicate how and why this spiritual nature came to be so evident in his life.

The last years of Gandhi’s life (which were the most spiritual and the most publicized) were the years of my youth and early adulthood... the years of a weekly Life Magazine and Movietone News. (He was slain during the first year of my first teaching job.) So I remember that Christians, generally, accepted him as a spiritual man, but many could not accept the all-inclusiveness in which he believed... his outside inspiration came from the Bhagavad Gita, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and the Koran. These folk could not accept him as a Christian... if he did not renounce these “alternatives” to Jesus (which, of course he did not see as alternatives).

What I see now, and didn’t see then, is a difference in interpretation as to what “fundamental Christianity” is... and Gandhi personified that conflict. Some would affirm that the fundamental is, “Jesus said, ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life... no one comes to the Father but by Me.’” This translates to an exclusive belief in Jesus as Savior and a rejection of other religions as false ways. Because Mr. Gandhi did not so reject, he was not a Christian... and therefore, unfortunately, only falsely spiritual.

Others would counter, however, that the basic fundamental is, “Jesus said, ‘Come all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ and ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.’” This would include Gandhi and all others who would acknowledge Jesus as one who would take them as they are... not in a single, narrow, burdensome way.

The Spirit says, in #4, that through all of these religions and traditions (and scriptures) Gandhi recognized “My sovereignty and power” and availed himself of it. The Spirit was pleased to assist in his life... and, presumably, in what he accomplished.

Paragraph #5 is interesting to me. He says He is not displeased with the many religious traditions and practices evident here in the earth. “I like the Christian best” is stated, but this is what he says to me, to encourage my happy continuation as an active Christian. But does He want all to be as I am? Or should I seek that which is the “most approved” Christian approach? And is there one? He leaves it in question form, and, finally, so do I.

Back in #3 He notes that Gandhi succeeded without violence or threat of violence, but that we value our wars and our position as a strong military power. Yes, wouldn’t it be interesting to see us become the force for non-violence? Despite our Christian heritage we really don’t appear to believe that Communist military might can be countered with love, kindness, and non-violence, now do we? Were

those some of Jesus most important teachings? Was the Sermon on the Mount (the portion of Christian Scripture most helpful to Gandhi) meant to be practical for “our world” or was it just an idealistic vision?

The film portrayed Gandhi as successful in bringing India out of the British Empire without violent confrontations, but also that Hindus and Moslems who made up the “new India” were not willing to give up violence in their own controversies. In an ironic sense, non-violence worked in the secular realm, but not in the religious. Also, Gandhi’s own death was a violent assassination, suggesting that, pragmatically, non-violence may stimulate the violence it seeks to counter. What a fascinating world!

In #7 I am described as one who does not seek to be an international controversial figure, and how right that is. Yet if I continue this active relationship through these Teachings... and these Ruminations, which are to become a major priority of mine... I shall have confrontations which I shall not enjoy. Hmmm. Can I avoid confrontations and uncomfortable challenges without ceasing this activity? Can I balance being meek and lowly with being strong and powerful? Can you? Hmmm.

* * * * *

I juxtapose the ruminations on this film with another that is, in most respects, an opposite... First Blood. This takes place in the northwest section of the U.S. of A. in the immediate post-Vietnam period, and is the picturization of a “hassle” between a man named John (a good name in any language) and some “red neck” police officers, who are “protecting” their small town from “drifters” of John’s “type.” Well, John happened to be trained and to have functioned successfully as a Green Beret or Ranger in Vietnam, with much capacity to survive hardship AND to deal VIOLENTLY with opposition. He was trying to be gentle, but he was provoked to violence, and he was exceedingly better at this than were his provokers. Hear what the Spirit said about this film experience.

NOV. 5, 1982
FRI., 5:53 AM

A GENTLE / VIOLENT MAN

FARM
FRONT OF FIRE

- 1. Hear, o son, as I speak some words about gentleness and violence as aspects of human nature. The trigger, for you, is the film you saw, but you certainly know by now that I am not adverse to commenting on experiences that are yours to have, here in the earth.**
- 2. Gentleness and quietness are one type of nature. Violence, even savagery, are another. These have a yin and yang quality about them... but I do not desire that they be evenly balanced. Gentleness is the more favored state of being, certainly, but in certain life situations it can be supplanted, for a time, with violence. Though My major rule is Do unto others as you would have them do unto you there are occasions when mutual violence also fulfills the rule.**
- 3. In the film the man, John (a good name in any language), had severe violence done to him, by men and by nature. He survived a most violent fall, in addition to all that self-styled opponents had created, and it was time for a violent nature, one well-trained and disciplined, to take over. You recall, of course, the story of My violence, as Jesus, taking an action, in the**

temple area, that contrasted with My gentle nature. I was not often this way, but it was appropriate at that time. So violence has a place in the spiritual nature of humans.

4. Does violence have a spiritual quality to it. Not always, certainly. It can be an out-and-out repudiation of spirit, as that was which was inflicted on John. He would have submitted and remained gentle, but the spirit that had kept him alive in times before, a spirit linked with effective violence and combat, became dominant. Unnecessary and stupid violence done to one with a spirit that values living can bring forth violence to counter, where continued gentleness would be, truly, a denial of spirit.

5. There are realms where violence has no place, and those in such realms who have never really experienced an earth incarnation often cannot understand and appreciate this strange manifestation of spirit. My sojourn in the earth gave Me an appreciation that could not quite have been the same had I remained only spirit. And, you see, when I speak as the Holy Spirit, I have, as a part of My present nature, all that was in the Christ. So I, as pure Spirit, am enriched by My manifestation in human form. (In your language and with your thought patterns it does not come out clear and sharp. Yet you understand in your spirit, while the mind still protests, though gently.)

6. I also showed violence toward the Pharisees, those folks who knew the Scriptures so well. The violence was of a verbal rather than a physical nature, but, certainly it was violence. You have wondered about this violence, for it seemed not to be a response to violence offered by them. In the realm of spirit, it was. They showed a denial of Me and of that which Scripture foretold. It was My response as a man, at one with the Spirit of the Father, feeling a violence in their spirits which was misplaced. At the crucifixion, of course, I was moving back toward the realm of spirit and so I gave no violent response, verbally or physically. And, at the end, when John's spirit had triumphed in the battle forced upon him, he displayed only gentleness.

7. So violence, when linked with spirit, can be a balance for gentleness. It should always be a restorer, for gentleness is the preferred manifestation of the life force. Excessive gentleness may not be a productive rhythm for life. Violence on a massive scale, such as is possible now, is an unfortunate development here in the earth. Violence between and among individuals can have a certain holy quality, but mass violence, where inanimate objects destroy gentle people is a profanation of this spiritual possibility.

8. You are basically a gentle man, but the film stirred the spirit of violence that still can be part of your life... and can be remembered from days of youth. Savor those feelings with your spirit. Violence remains a way of responding, even in the midst of preferred gentleness.

A gentle Amen 7:02 AM

In #2 the Spirit describes gentleness and violence as having a yin and yang quality about them, which means opposites that must needs balance each other, each being good and desirable in its proper balance. Gentleness is the more favored state of being, and John was initially as gentle as Mohandas. (Interestingly, in a book called Gandhi the Man, the author, Easwaran, tells that Gandhi had a tendency

to be angry and violent in his early life, and that he learned to be... not just believe in... gentle and non-violent from his wife, Kasturbai.) It became evident, however, that John's gentleness had come as a balance to training and experiences that were awful in their violence. As violence was done to him, unnecessarily, his mind began to associate it with tortures he had endured in Vietnam but was trying to forget.

Initially he was living by the Golden Rule... do unto others as you would have them do unto you... being gentle as he wanted them to be with him. But as their violence increased he stayed with the Rule, but now the mode was mutual violence. He now expected and wanted violence from them, and he was exceedingly better at it than they were.

He moved the action into the rugged forested mountain country of the Northwest, and now, as #3 indicates, nature also did him violence. But he was well-trained and disciplined... enough to use nature in violence upon his pursuants.

Reference is made to the incident in the temple in Jerusalem when Jesus showed violence toward the institution of money changing. Using the phrases from Gandhi, #8, Jesus who was more often meek and lowly showed forth another aspect of his human nature, that of being strong and powerful. The thought concludes that violence has a place in the spiritual nature of humans.

My college football playing days go back almost 40 years now, but I can still recall the exhilaration of violence that came in that collision sport. I was not, then, a violent, destructive person, but the desire to be destructively violent, in the game, was a part of me. One of my good friends and teammates was Don Paul, a happy, even jovial person. Yet in his pro career as a linebacker with the Rams he was one of the most violent of players in his time. One of the most successful and wonderful commercials of recent times was the one for Coke, with Mean Joe Greene of the Steelers and the little white boy admirer. One of the meanest, most violent of big black men, aggravated further by an injury, returns to gentleness and giving because of the quiet kindness of a little kid. Rhythm and balance.

#4 begins with the question as to whether violence has a spiritual quality. The answer is that not all violence is spiritual (particularly that which is unnecessary and stupid), but some is... and at a point, continued gentleness can be a denial of spirit. But just when is that "point"? In the dark of this very early morning the dogs were barking... at the wailing of coyotes, relatively close to us. We have a little calf, born on the icy ground of December 23 and rejected by his mother, that we have kept alive with tender care and bottle feeding. He was in an open milk shed, and so I got up and loaded my gun. I would not be wantonly destructive of coyotes, but I was ready to be violent if they threatened this little calf. This seems, as I think about it, to be as spiritual as turning over money changers' tables.

Christians generally feel that God's incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth in an earth life was important as an example of living for others and as a teacher of eternal truths. Isn't it an interesting observation, then, (in #5) that this mortal experience added a "dimension" to God, which certainly wasn't necessary, but was, nevertheless, enriching. Does such an "admission" detract from the greatness of God? I'd say No.

This may not be an apt example at all (and I apologize to you if it seems to inappropriate), but I obviously feel that it has some merit, or I would have edited it out. (I am, after all, both writer and editor.) This is my 35th year of teaching (and I probably had teaching experiences in other lives), so it

could be said that I have little to learn from each new class that I teach. But I testify that I am still learning, from both successes and failures. Do I need to learn more? Perhaps not, but I find it exciting that I am still learning about teaching.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus was so verbally violent toward the Pharisees, the “good church people” of his time. In #6 it says that this was a response to violent spirits, discernible by Him who was both God and man. I still remember the observation by a friend of mine who was a principal of a school that became integrated in the early days of this social movement. Parents of middle class white kids were often irate about physical violence done to their offspring by black youngsters. He tried to explain to them what he regularly observed... white students using language as a weapon in ways that the blacks couldn't, provoking physical reprisals... but the parents weren't willing to equate the two forms of violence.

The portrayal here, in “First Blood”, was of individual violence, but what of that massive destruction of “The Day After”? When inanimate objects destroy gentle people (#7)... in this there is no spirit, and I do agree. This kind of violence has no justification. A Pershing II might not make into an ideal pruning hook, but let's give the conversion a try!

How do you react to the “conclusion” in #7 that violence, when linked with spirit, can be a balance for gentleness... even a restorer of this preferred state of being? I like this as a truth. As it says, in #8, I am basically a gentle person, but the film did stir a spirit of violence in me that has always been a small but persistent part of my nature. That portion would surely have had me as a combat Marine during World War II, even as the more dominant aspect had me going to school and becoming a non-combative naval officer. I do savor those feelings. I felt a great admiration for John as he carried out his effective elimination of his stupid attackers (even as I realized they were trying to do right... as they saw it). I felt good at the end... a gentle feeling of having vicariously been with one whose spirit was manifested in violence.

Mohandas had been non-violent and had been assassinated. John had been violent and survived many assassination attempts, and returned to gentleness. Is that a proper balance?

* * * * *

If you think it was a shift of scene to go from skinny old Gandhi to the man who played Rocky I, II, and III, then prepare for another... to a tough little girl in a prehistoric time. The Clan of the Cave Bear was written by Jean Auel of Eugene, Oregon and was forced upon me, happily, by Phyllis Reed, one of my former doctoral students, now professing health education at the University of Nevada, Reno (one of the teams S.I.U.-C. beat on its way to the Division I-AA National Football Championship).

I am not an accomplished writer of “digests,” so I am reluctant to try to summarize 495 pages of action prose. However, if you haven't read the book you do need some context with which to connect the Spirit's comments and my muses on these. OK, here's my strategy... a one paragraph precis, and then I'll explain as I go along with comments on the Teaching.

The story takes place in prehistoric times in an area of the world that would now be the Ukraine, near the Black Sea. The central character is a girl named Ayla, who is tall and fair-skinned, being of those who would become the Caucasian homo sapiens. When she is five years old her family is killed in

an earthquake, and she is found by a small clan of cave-dwellers, of the human sort that presumably died out because of insufficient cerebral function to adapt. Her rescuer is Iza, the medicine woman, who becomes her mother; the other significant positive influences are Creb, the crippled spiritual leader, and Brun, the leader of the Clan. As Ayla grows up she wants to “be Clan”, but her brain lets her think and reason in ways that the Clan people cannot. Sex roles are very defined, and though she tries to be a proper clan female, she is forever doing something she shouldn’t... including teaching herself to use a sling and hunt. Clan members have powerful memories of how they are to act and what they are to do in situations, but limited capacities to adapt to new situations. Ayla has virtually no “memories”, but is a magnificent adapter. In the end, the leadership of the Clan changes to a young man who hates Ayla, and he banishes her. This leads into the sequel, called The Valley of Horses, wherein Ayla gets to this valley, alone, and begins to befriend animals, who help in her adapting and surviving. A parallel story is being told, of two brothers who are of the same biological/mental heritage as Ayla. Finally, she meets and saves the life of Jondalar, the older, handsome brother, and they live together, learning from each other. At the end of The Valley... they meet another group of their own kind of people... and hence the story can continue (the series being titled Earth’s Children).

Hear now what the Spirit says...

AUG. 24, 1983
WED., 7:36 PM

THE CLAN AND THE VALLEY

SPRINGFIELD
MED. LIBRARY

- 1. You have wanted a Teaching relating to this pleasure reading you have done this summer, and I see no reason why I should not offer you one. You even can assume that I initiated the idea, for you are pretty conservative about “deciding on a topic ahead of time”. Yes, o son, I certainly could have negated your request, if I had not wanted to comment... or if I had something more vital this evening.**
- 2. You enjoyed this fictional journey into another time and environment. It kept your interest and you identified with the characters and felt emotions, as they did. It is a good story with intellectual and emotional challenges. But does it have a spiritual dimension?**
- 3. There was obviously much feeling for spirit, though its focus was not Me, as you know Me. It was at a time and in a place not described in the Bible. Relationship with Me had to have different frames of reference. However, there were rituals, and I like these. There were traditions, and I like these. The people were doing the best they could for the setting.**
- 4. The Clan gave spiritual significance to certain animals, linking individual humans to particular animals. Yet there was one mighty spirit, one mighty force that was sovereign and who was not subject to deposition by any other animal spirits. Yes... there was I, in primitive form.**
- 5. I was tied to the tangible, true, but this need I finally “perfected” in coming to the earth as Jesus... God in tangible form. The likeness is more important than the difference.**
- 6. There was Creb, a man of spirit, with power in the Clan because of his spiritual being. Even though he was of the less developed people (those just above the animals, or so it was**

judged) his power came both from election and from development. He was an utterly unlikely individual to become a holy man, but he was so elected (say I, as persons are to this very day), and then he developed on, partly because of that election.

7. Ayla was a spirit of an “other” sort. He knew it, and she came to know it also, even though her understanding of it was generally child-like and naïve. She had the strong desire to be Clan, but also the sense that she should go beyond “acceptable” behavior. Hers was a “free” spirit, certainly, but this quality was mixed with that of election. She should not have survived several threats, but she did. The story says directly that this was due to her personal resourcefulness. But the more important question is... why did this develop? The answer is indirectly told. She was a person whose spirit directed her to survival. She had emotions of sadness and of doubt, but when the real challenge came her spirit carried her through.

8. Strong spirit (and hers was that of the strongest force short of Me... a translation) allows and empowers a person to accomplish what seems impossible to others. No one else in the story had relationships with the animals as Ayla did. Was not the instinct of such primitive animals to shun the physical being of one so different? Powerful spirit overcomes such barriers... then and now.

9. Would her spirit have developed so powerfully if none of the tragedies had befallen her? Obviously these were necessary for an exciting secular story, but the spiritual answer is in parallel: she surmounted what was forced upon her, and she created situations out of which spiritual growth continued. Yet she also was able to affect a rhythm that included times of respite from direct challenge, in which she could grow in the knowledge of her increasing spiritual power.

10. Ayla is a woman of service to others. She does for others, even when it may not be to her benefit. This is spirit manifested in simple actions. She has power, but she remains a comfortable servant. Yes, this shall continue.

Aloha 8:31 PM

After a personal introduction in #1, the question in #2 is whether the story (and you notice from the title that He is commenting on the combined story, told in both books) has a spiritual dimension. One way of answering this would be to ask the author... did she intend to say something about spirit in this story? My preferred approach is to accept that any work of art can have a “spirit of its own”, which may or may not be consistent with what the creator intended. This will be more obvious to certain people, because no form of art... or individual work... “speaks” equally to all. So, I’d say that this story has lots of spirit in it, whether Mrs. Auel intended such or not.

In #3 the Spirit affirms this... that there was much feeling for spirit, in a time and a place and among people not described in the Bible. I don’t feel that it diminishes the supreme value of the Bible to affirm that God cannot be limited to Jewish history and the story of God’s particular relationship with these people. When anyone limits God to a particular time, place, and mode of behavior, that one is

“creating” a God, who is always less than “the real thing.” The Clan did have rituals and traditions, and these were observed with what was obviously spirit (in some, at least).

One of these traditions, that was acted out in ritual form, was the naming and totem ceremony. The Mogur (who was Creb, the spiritual leader of the Clan) gave the name for each child born, and then, through the gathering of the spirits, revealed the animal or bird that would be the protector for this child. Now presumably Creb did not just select this totem arbitrarily, but accepted what came by revelation. The Clan was shocked, then, when he announced, with no hesitation, that Ayla’s totem was the Cave Lion, one of the most powerful of male totems. Through this accepted ritual they were forced to know that she was to be quite a special individual. Now I’m not one to try hard to draw theological significance from a fictional story (and I’m not eternally looking for Christ figures), but I think it is interesting that Jesus, the Christ, was designated as “special” at his baptism, with the gentle dove as the sign. Ayla, a “different-appearing” female child, was associated, at her naming, with the strong, fierce cave lion. Quite a balance.

The comment in #4 is relevant to the fact that there as one supreme protective totem for the Clan... Ursus, the Cave Bear. There was no competition for this supreme “spot”; his was the unchallenged leading spirit. Yet each three years, at the gathering of the Clans, there was a Bear Ceremony, in which a cave bear, that had been raised lovingly and carefully in captivity, the most revered of animals, was killed in a violent ritual ceremony. Each Clan member then drank of his blood and ate of his flesh. “Everyone shared in the communion with the great bear that bound them together as one people.” And at the close of this portion of the story it was written: “The Spirit of Ursus had been sent on his way with full and proper ceremony.”

Now you could say that this is just a weak literary analogy (and perhaps there are lots of these). I like the Spirit’s comment better... “there was I, in primitive form.” I still remember the experience I had as a young faculty member at Stanford... taking an even younger Hindu student, just arrived from India, to a Presbyterian worship service that included Holy Communion. As I tried to explain to him what we were doing and what the symbolic significance was, I realized that our own ceremonies and rituals are perceived as sacred, but when described, as you would some other groups rituals, they sound primitive... even a bit barbaric. Try the explanation sometime... and let me know how you do.

I like the idea in #5 that God’s coming to earth in tangible form was “perfected” in Jesus. The Old Testament tells of God coming to Moses in a burning bush and, later, to the Hebrews as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. Could there not have been other forms in which God as making Himself tangible to his human creations? Likely. And as He says, “The likeness is more important than the difference.”

Creb was a man of spirit. He was crippled and handicapped from a birth defect or injury, and, according to the ethic of the Clan, he should not have been allowed to survive, for he never could become a hunter. But, as it says, he was “elected,” in a spiritual not a political way, and this was the initial source of his power. He was part of the Clan, but he was able to recognize Ayla’s superior spirit (her spirit as an individual and as a representative of those “others” – the people who would eventually supplant those of the Clan mentality). His spirit helped him understand beyond the limitations of his intelligence. And so, it says, does God still elect and raise up people who can understand and accomplish beyond what they should.

Ayla also enjoyed an “election.” She was “special.” Creb knew this, and he therefore taught her much... beyond what he should have taught any girl. She recognized, even as a child, his spiritual qualities, and she learned much from him. She survived several experiences that should have been fatal, and, in physical, mental, and emotional terms, this was because she was strong, intelligent, and resourceful. But was this just from chance? When spirit is strong it directs one to resourcefulness. Having the cave lion totem was not arbitrary; it was meant to be hers. And it then abetted her spirit, and she accomplished more than if her totem had been less powerful. “To her who has, shall more be given...” In their book, Lessons of History, Will and Ariel Durant said that freedom and equality are everlasting enemies. Since people are not created equal (even in spiritual opportunities, this story suggests), movements toward equality always restrict freedom, and when freedom is supreme, inequalities are most evident. (If you pick up more than a bit of “Calvinism” in my interpretations, you are hearing accurately.)

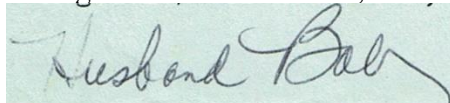
Ayla’s relationship with animals started in the Clan, but really developed in her banishment... two in particular being a horse and a cave lion. Animals survive by instinct, and normally they would not have developed such a relationship with a human... but she was one of strong spirit, which even the beasts recognized and valued. Part of this came, of course, in how she treated them... her service to them (#10). She had a natural desire and capacity to do for others... in simple and in powerful actions. This started with the Clan, then was manifested in relations with animals, and then culminated, in this story, in her relationship with the man, Jondalar, of her own kind. To do for others... a major evidence of strong spirit.

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Now I said, initially that this would include Ruminations on two more Teachings, “The Clan and the Valley, II” and “Lessons from Marco Polo.” But that would take several more pages, which is more than most readers want to turn. (Also, practically speaking, the next page almost doubles the postage bill.) So, I shall leave this as a serial, promising to have the first issue of 1984 come out in the early Spring and complete this “assignment”, with, possibly, another Teaching included. This means that you if haven’t read “The Clan... and “The Valley...”, you could settle down to some cozy winter reading, and be readier for this next installment.

Sadly, comments (beyond general approval) are not frequently written to me. So I reiterate that I would dearly love to hear/read reactions, responses, critiques, and counter-thoughts. Until Spring, then...

A gentle/violent Shalom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bob Russell", written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Bob Russell

Christian, Professor, Health Educator,
Writer, Song Singer, Farmer, Philosopher