

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

Vol. V, No. 1
Rt. 2, Box 197
Cobden, Il. 62920
April, 1984

Dear Friends:

Here we are, well into 1984, the year I am to publish three of these "Letters of Analysis and Comment...", which means I should have had this first issue written, printed, and mailed by this date. It is not to be. The Spirit likes my dedication, but is often disappointed at my accomplishment by a given date. Of course, in His realm there is no necessity for time, which makes "by the end of April" seem less "threatening." Recently He showed some of His marvelous adaptability (do you think of the Holy Spirit as infinitely adaptable?) by saying that this must be started by the end of April... and finished before Lenore and I leave for Hawaii in mid-May. So, it has commenced... as suggested.

In ever briefer form I testify again that I have morning meditations with the Holy Spirit (the general promise for such being in John's Gospel) which result in written Teachings, which are of much help to me in understanding and living in this present world. I have used these as the basis for an Adult Study class at the First Presbyterian Church in Carbondale (the class called "Morning Meditations with the Spirit"), and individual Teachings have been helpful to some specific people.

AND... I have done seven issues of this letter, under this title, using quotes from these Teachings as the basis for my ruminations. So this epistle shall follow in this not-so-hoary tradition, a combination of quotes from my recording of communications from the Holy Spirit and my thoughts, aroused by these.

I closed my last Ruminations (December, 1983) with this two sentence cry: "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." And I did receive some... seven extensive and diverse enough to save. They are all from wonderful, spiritual people, but quite different from one another.

In paragraph #5 of "My Thoughts on Gandhi", the first Teaching in Vol. IV, No. 2, He says, "I am not displeased with an earth that has many religious traditions and practices... 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?" Six of the seven who wrote are well-known to me, and the seventh I know only by reputation and by warm letters. Of these that I know, one is a Catholic, and one is a Pentecostal... and one is a Presbyterian. Interesting? So I am proposing to start with quotes from these letters, as a basis for some initial ruminations. Then I shall go on with "The Clan and the Valley, II" and "Some Lessons from Marco Polo."

The first response is from a long time friend, such a kind person that he had to send some commendatory words, even though he didn't identify much with the content of the December issue. He said, In part:

The last issue (Dec. '83) I guess would not be the one that we felt the most identity with... but we enjoyed it nevertheless. We marvel at the commitment – the discipline which you show in this – and the tremendous amount of energy that it must take to do this day after day – month after month... I know that in a sense there is a built in “payoff” for you in those times of quiet with the Lord... but I sure do wonder where the good vibes... and good strokes... are... from people you share this with over a period of time... I sure hope folks appreciate it...

I must admit that sometimes I, too, marvel at this commitment. Oh, the results are very satisfying, but I still don't think of myself as a meditative person, on a regular basis. But I do have volumes of Teachings that give evidence of some dedication.

The next quote is from another good friend, who is also a professional colleague, and a former student whom I helped direct.

I ALWAYS enjoy receiving my Ruminations, but this is the first issue where I feel that it's time I shared some of my thoughts.

Seeing the movie Gandhi both exhilarated and depressed me... I was overwhelmed by meeting such a mortal man, and did feel as tho I had met him thru the movie. I was equally as devastated by his death, and still do not understand the reason why. Actually, all the violence in the movie and the lives that were lost were a tad overwhelming. Which leads me into one of the comments I have for you, and that I... with your writing, could you not be of significant help to Dan Leviton and his efforts with PEACE EDUCATION... They've begun international work, and I dare say that you could be such a positive contribution for the U.S., in person and on paper. What we do to one another every day frightens me, and even tho this will tread on your ever optimistic outlook, are the “bad guys” winning??

The other comment, that I have held in reserve for a LONG time, as I've been waiting for some indication of a similar nature from your communications with the Holy Spirit, concerns your sharing MORE of these daily experiences with the world, beginning with the health education folks... or the death forum folks... who may be more receptive. I do think you're going to receive an unbelievable amount of flak, total disrespect, and whatever else people can drum up from their bellies - - but from those of us who lead with our hearts, then our heads, there will be increased enlightenment I have felt that your national presentation was long overdue, but then you and the Holy Spirit are the card holders there. But I want you to know that when you do this, I reserve a center-front seat, and will back you 100% no matter what... I believe in you...

The last part of this is stimulating, for I also wonder what will happen when this gift (or this “strange compulsion” that I have) is introduced directly to my fellow professionals in health education. Of course word of this publication is “seeping out”, and probably a third of those who receive it are associated with the field in some way. I look at it thusly: if a more orthodox researcher in the field had a source of data which was uniquely available to him (or her, of course), he would be expected to utilize it and present findings to colleagues... even to the “wider world.” From this perspective I can see these Teachings, which come through me and to me, as data which can be helpful in dealing with issues in earth life. The Holy Spirit has promised, and here He is... in one tangible form, at least.

The commentator's response to Gandhi was positive, but the violence that resulted from his non-violent posture was depressing. Dan Leviton is a health educator at the University of Maryland who is saying that our concerns for injuries, ill-health, and deaths from accidents, disease, poor eating practices, lack of exercise, etc. are misplaced if we don't put real effort into peace... or avoiding war which shall out-devastate these other puny threats. I believe, basically, in disarmament rather than in peace through military might. But the Spirit did say that we (the U.S.A.) value our wars and feel that we must be a military power. I don't mind being counter culture in some ways, but I just haven't yet become active in Peace Education.

Another good friend and colleague told of a divergent response to Gandhi... in his third paragraph.

I just finished Russell's Ruminations, Vol. IV, No. 2 and felt it was your best. It truly "reached me" because I have wrestled for many years with the gentle/violent man syndrome inside of myself. On one hand I know the love I feel for others and how this warms my soul – and how much this means to me!! But then I also have the extremely violent and destructive feelings when people have been harmful to (or a threat) to me and those loved ones. Is this the inner city survival training I received --- without even knowing it?

Your football analogy really hit home. I remember the ultimate respect I had and gave to the fine athletes "on the other side of the line", but then my intense desire to "test" them and ultimately (for that particular contest) destroy them! What does this make me?

Your recollections and thoughts on Gandhi were 180* different from mine. I too remember him during my teen years and never did develop the respect for him that others did. The movie attempts to deify him with selective examples of his life and bending of historical fact. I have gut reactions against his intolerance to the opinions and philosophies of others. As I remember him, you had to be in his camp!!! Maybe we can share additional thoughts on this the next time we meet.

Interestingly his more positive response was to the concept that violence can be justified... can even be an evidence of spirit. I still find this a fascinating idea... that while we decry violence on the one hand and admire those who are non-violent peace-makers, we can also know that violence may be necessary at times. Putting value on one attitude/behavior does NOT mean that its apparent opposite cannot be valued... and be a part of acceptable behavior.

Another respondent (who said a nice word for the new mode of presentation... the entire Teaching rather than just selected excerpts... which I shall continue later in this issue) also was interested in the violence theme... which then reminded her of the love paradox...

Thank you for the most recent Ruminations. I do enjoy pondering the Teachings and your interpretations. Also I prefer your new mode of presentation.

Specifically, the issue of violence was interesting. I had never seriously considered that violence could ever be good, not to mention spiritual, although there have been times when (to my chagrin) I was genuinely relieved when the bad guys "got it." MAYBE sometimes violence is permissible for good to defeat "evil". I will have to think about this. It also brings to mind some other paradoxes...

For instance, I have always thought of love as an absolute good. Yet among my family and friends (not to mention millions of others, no doubt) there have been serious problems when a happily married person also loves another person of the opposite sex (the spouse plus a “friend” whom they have grown to love over the years). Is this sincere, if socially inappropriate, love somehow wrong? Or is there another element (possessiveness, lack of understanding, inconsiderateness) in the situation that makes it “wrong”... or at least problematic? If the Holy Spirit has Teachings on this dilemma, I would certainly appreciate learning of them.

Yes, it’s true... even love can be controversial. Love is an emotion, but love, in a more profound sense, is evidence of spiritual maturity. I have had two recent Teachings, one called “Loving as Living” and the other “Loving as Spirit.” The Spirit says that we do not increase our capacity to love by restricting our loving... but our culture does counter this with the admonition that, while love for our children can be expanded so that love for a new baby does not diminish love for other children, love for adults other than spouse is evidence of diminished love. It’s a cultural practice that bolsters the stability of the family, but when love is commanded... or prohibited... it’s a cultural practice extended too far, it seems to me. So I shall do a Ruminations on this love theme soon... probably the next one.

There are three major types of objections to the reality of these Teachings that I affirm... and therefore to these Ruminations. One is from people who don’t believe in... at least don’t have “much truck with”... God and any supernatural manifestations of Him (and they wouldn’t use capital H). I minimize this by sending these out to very few people who have such an orientation to life. Most of these “few” are old or good friends who might be interested in what is said because I sign it... and they just ignore reference to the Holy Spirit.

Another type is Christian... or has some acceptance of spiritual matters... but has never had such an experience as this that I have and comes from a tradition that doesn’t recognize this... or even denies that it happens. Again, such may read because I do it... but are just a bit uncomfortable with some of what I say.

The third type of objection comes from those who are fundamental, born-again Christians, accepting of many gifts of the Spirit, but who feel that if anything that I report the Spirit saying does not agree with their interpretation of the Bible, then everything said is suspect. The Spirit has told me that He approves of such a position (but among many that He likes), and that I should remain in spiritual communication with such good people. Since many of them are relatives, I continue to do so.

So I close this opening segment with a couple of paragraphs from kin... the first one an interesting combination of “Yes, I like...” and “No, I don’t...”

Bob – got and enjoyed your latest renumerations. (sic) It must be somewhat disappointing to not have specific responses other than the general “enjoyed”. So a bit more specific response – particularly enjoyed the Gandhi review. Shared many of the same feelings, and we always think one is right on when they think what we think. Had a bit harder time with the loving/aggressive character of First Blood. And I thought the bit about the Cave Bear/Valley of the Horses was a bit tiresome. Found I put it down in the middle – that it was wordy and “reaching” and not terribly relevant to anything.

Don’t mean to be harsh or critical, for I feel neither of those. I know that when one feels God has given them insights, directions, wisdoms – that other people’s responses

basically are not terribly important, and that's as it should be. I just may not be in a place where I see all those things, and that's my loss. God has each of us where we "ought to be," and we understand and appreciate things at a level that is appropriate for us. I think this whole experience of you and the Holy Spirit is terrific, and I share with you the happiness and growing experiences that you are having and delight with you that God has given you this path. It may be 100% right on, it may be an imperfect understanding; there may be much left of "you" in them – but any or all of these are fine. 2 & 2 is 4, and it also is 22, and in other bases can surely be other things.

The other is an honest attempt to be honest, without being unloving.

Bob, thank you for sending your Ruminations. I am glad you are, and I have read them. They have good thoughts and it is interesting to read the hominess and familiarity with which they are written. That is all right. My saying anything about my true response would be worthless if I were not honest, so I can only say they are interesting, but more from a soulish or psychic realm than from the Holy Spirit, as I know Him. And that I do not believe reincarnation is scriptural, therefore any reference indicating, inferring or declaring such contributes to my dis-ease. As philosophies or meditations, they are worthwhile. As "thus saith the Lord," I have a problem. Okay?

I have to reply in kind. In the spirit of love and acceptance, it is OK. In the sense that I'm just making these up... not really Okay.*

(* There was one more response I was going to include... quite a treatise on violence... but I want to get to the two Teachings I promised... But reactions ARE fascinating, now aren't they?!)

* * * * *

I desire to continue on with the story of Ayla, as told in the two novels by Jean Auel, The Clan of the Cave Bear and The Valley of Horses. I'll just repeat the one paragraph summary that I created from the 495 pages of action – and emotion-filled prose... and then I'll comment on the Teaching, "The Clan and the Valley, II", which was additional reflection on the combined story.

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 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).

And now... the Spirit says...

**AUG. 26, 1983
FRI., 5:56 AM**

THE CLAN AND THE VALLEY, II

**FARM
STUDY**

- 1. You come, answering your call and Mine, for another lesson from these stories of primitive times. You have faith, o son, that I can continue to offer you insights from this source. Your faith is not ill-placed. Let Us continue.**
- 2. One of the emotional experiences of the combined stories that you felt, almost as Ayla did, came from the prejudice that Jondalar and many "others" felt against the Clan people. It was assumed that they were really animals and did not have the emotions and the spiritual experiences that "true humans" do. Ayla knew, and you did, too, as you read the stories, that this was not true... that there was much evidence of spirit in Clan life.**
- 3. This human tendency continues to this day, often expressed by one religious group concerning another. Even true servants of Mine, motivated often by strong feeling for Me, denigrate other groups whose worship and relation to Me is different. I am not denying the value in helping others see a better way to me, but when it is done in ignorance of the others and with little charity for their ways it is misplaced devotion.**
- 4. You feel the honest dilemma of knowing the Christian way and knowing the Scripture "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me"... and yet also feeling that some who seem to reject your Lord do have relationship with me in other ways.**
- 5. The "others" were superior, in many ways, to the Clan. And yet their spiritual beliefs and practices were primitive when compared with modern Christianity. Is the Christianity of this day the culmination? Am I completely revealed? Are there no more spiritual truths to gain and incorporate into life? My more complete revealing is not tied in any real way to material progress, then or now. Now this. The culture that is more modern, more "advanced" is not necessarily more spiritually sophisticated.**
- 6. But beware of the opposite also... the more simple is not necessarily more spiritual. I simply affirm that there is no predictable relationship. It really is not a matter of "who is better" but one of "who loves, who shows mercy, who gives of themselves to others (even to those not like them), and who yearns for more relationship with Me, even as they utilize what they have."**
- 7. When Ayla was sent out on her own she was "dead" in the sense of relationship with other supporting people. She retained the faith and the knowledge that she had of Me (in the primitive way of the Clan), but she had no one from whom to learn more. (Or was I there?) She did what one of developing spirit should do... practiced what she knew and found animals, certainly more primitive than she, to love and relate to. There was exhibition of spirit in taking the chances in raising and trying to relate to animals different**

than she. Yet as she provided for them, sacrificed for them, even they responded with loyalty and obedience, simple evidences of love.

8. The lesson is an important one. The most spiritual way is not to dominate another with constant reminders of your superiority, but to give, accepting others as they are, learning from them, which encourages them to give back to you. It is difficult to translate such a lesson from simple human-animal relationships in a prehistoric valley to relationships among nations representing the billions of people now inhabiting this earth. But it is fundamental spiritual wisdom.

9. I have accepted you as you are. I am trying, with love and patience, to help you grow spiritually. Evidence of My success comes in your spirit but also in your actions – with your family, with students, with those not like you. You may learn much from unlikely sources.

10. Your next Ruminations awaits. This, too is loving service.

Shalom

7:05 AM

For me this has been a “successful” story, in the sense that I have identified with it and feel reality in it. Even though my discipline is one considerably oriented to science and measurable matters I have no trouble with discerning reality in stories, plays, poetry, song lyrics, and other forms of fiction. And, consequently, the Spirit is willing to offer insights coming from this story. #1 says this. Nice.

As the tale develops there are only hints about the kind of people the “others” are... Ayla’s apparent kin. The focus is on the Clan, and though their weaknesses and shortcomings are made clear, I quickly come to think of these as credible humans, who have taken in and accepted (most of them) anyway this little girl who, from appearance, is an “other” rather than one of them. Their approach is very human... they take in this individual, but it doesn’t alter their general negative feeling about the “others” as a “group.”

So the whole first book is about the Clan, and though the final action taken by Broud, the young leader, was a hateful cursing and banishment, I had a positive feeling for this primitive group and for the spirit they exhibited. Early in The Valley..., however, it was quite clear that the “others” had a terrible prejudice against these cave people, in general... considering them animals, without true emotions or mature spirits. This is what #2 describes, and I found myself resenting this injustice... and feeling negative about the “others” before I was even much acquainted with them. Such is the power of prejudice. My feeling against it was becoming virtually the same as that against which I was reacting.

In #3 the Spirit indicates that this human tendency, which was probably more pronounced in those who were more advance and more civilized, is still with us... even in religious groups. That is, “true servants”... those who have truly accepted Jesus Christ as savior and acknowledge the Bible as the basis of their faith and life... can become very “protective” of God’s ways, and become even hostile to those who do not perceive the Lord and practice His ways as they do. I was talking to a young Campus Crusade devotee recently who identified her parents and siblings as Presbyterians, but then asserted that “They’re not Christian.” She still loves them, but from her new perspective they have become somewhat like the “cave people.”

You may be aware that a number of Christians, from a wide span of orientation, feel that those who call themselves Latter Day Saints (even Mormons) are not Christian. Well, Lenore and I spent 2 ½ months as an active, inquiring part of the Carbondale Ward of that church this past winter, and from this experience, which definitely reduced our ignorance of their beliefs and practices, we have no qualms about including them in the Christian fold. My observation is that most Christians who “deny them entrance” have no first hand knowledge and, while they want to be charitable, they maintain their attitude based on emphases they can’t accept... that the Mormons themselves really don’t exhibit. I like the phrase “misplaced devotion”... the Spirit recognizes devotion and allegiance, but doesn’t approve when it results in judgment and exclusion.

I am quite comfortable with the Christian way and even with this assertion (in #4) of Jesus in John 14 (the sermon... reported only by John... which also promises the Holy Spirit, Who will teach me all things and will dwell in me), but I do also know that many people have spiritual experiences, enhanced by this same Holy Spirit, who do not believe as I do.. or even “as Christians should.” A young colleague of mine is introducing students of hers to the concept of Human/Spiritual Interaction, which the Spirit would like to see acknowledged, increasingly, as a dimension of human health (personal and community), and she can’t even call Him by name... any name. But in some ways she is more effective than I am. Remember Jesus’ absurd, illogical, but clearly asserted dictum that the last shall be first, and the first last...?

With reference to #5, the spirit of tradition says that our practice of Christian religion today (whatever the tradition may be) is a kind of culmination and should be maintained. I respect tradition, but I also have a sense that there are ways of practicing and expressing faith that have yet to be revealed or developed... and that there are truths for this age, some of which are traditional and some of which are new. I accept the doctrine that the Holy Scriptures contain all important truth for spiritual living, but I also know that I have encountered truth in many other sources (including these Teachings, of course), expressed in a form with which I can relate. Having absorbed or created any truth, I am happy to verify it in the Bible... as well as find it there originally.

Paragraphs #5 and #6 offer the perspective that there is no direct relationship between material progress and spiritual maturity. We tend to think that “progress is all of one piece”... technology is evidence of civilization, and civilization means more education, and more education... well, it should foster spiritual growth. Or else we reject all this and feel that there can be no real spirit in the modern world, the way it is developing. Ditch the extremes. Any environment, however simple or sophisticated, CAN BE one for spiritual expression and consequent spiritual growth. The ingredients... love, mercy, giving of self, and relationship with the Lord, while utilizing what you have.

I must admit (in response to #7) that I don’t really like to contemplate going into a situation where I am completely without prior relationships. I am just now considering going to a conference in the Fall where I may know no one... and I found myself searching the preliminary program for names that give some previous identity... “Oh, maybe he’ll be there... or she...” Ayla’s was an experience devoid of people, so she had to show her love to what was there... animals... a horse and a cave lion. I know people, and I’m sure you do, too, who have a relationship with their cat or dog that is more loving and more relational than with many friends, even relatives. Our son Peter, who was killed in 1976, just before he was 18, tended to have one or two friends at a time, seeming almost reluctant to chance true friendships with many. It is honest, then, to say that his dog, the big Doberman he called Stash, was his best friend for the last year and a half of his life. Pete raised him from a pup, lovingly but firmly, and they were constant companions. It seemed entirely right, then, when Stash also died as a result of the accident, that they be buried together... Stash lying on his chest as he had done so often in life. Animals, then and now, can’t talk, but they obviously respond to love and care.

All of this leads to the last important lesson, in #8. You show spiritual strength not by dominating and showing strength, but by loving, by giving, and by not only accepting others as they are but in being willing to learn from them. It seems ridiculous to try to apply this to the U.S. of A., that nation which must be strongest of the strong... and must encourage all to be as we are. I guess I have enough trouble applying it just to myself. I have lots of opportunities, and I miss many of them. But the Spirit affirms His willingness to help... and adds that I may learn much from unlikely sources.

* * * * *

The other Teaching I want to share came after the TV miniseries film entitled “Marco Polo”, which aired back in 1982. As with the books referred to before, I identified with this story, semi-fiction and semi-non-fiction, but full of truth. And, once more, the Spirit helped me to learn from this commercial, electronic source, an intrusive part of the world in which I am now incarnate. (#1)

**MAY 20, 1982
THURS., 5:15 AM**

LESSONS FROM MARCO POLO

**FARM
STUDY**

- 1. You must know by this time, o son, that I can and do bring spiritual lessons to you in many different, and contemporary, ways. This Sunday you will have discussion on A Lesson from Uncarved Block. What could be more appropriate... and surprising... than following this with Lessons from Marco Polo. For that long film did present a number of lessons... and I should like to affirm again that I am involved in your life now, wanting you to learn as much as possible from the world in which you are now incarnate.**

- 2. One important lesson is that there are likenesses but also differences among My human creations who are in different cultures. There are ways in which people can relate to one another, despite their differences in world view, and, mainly, this is the work of spirit in bringing feelings of unity. The mind tells you of differences. The emotions have you feel differences (even in the expression of emotions). But the spirit seeks unity and at-onement. There were many illustrations of this, but one scene near the end was powerful. The Kublai extends his hand to Marco and says, “If you take the hand of a Mongol some of his spirit goes with you.” Though there was a strong sense of the uniqueness that Mongols only shared with each other, here was an offer from the mightiest of all to share his spirit.**

- 3. I’ll repeat here My comment from yesterday, which originated in Marco’s willingness to be a friend even to the great ones before whom he should have just knelt in awe. Many Christians are unwilling to come to Me in friendship. They say they’d like to, but they just won’t or can’t. The other side was illustrated last evening... the Mighty One will reach out. Dare you take His hand and share His Spirit? What if the Great Khan were leading him into a trap... tempting him to do the forbidden so that punishment could come? What if these teachings come from a clever “false” and “evil” spirit who is guiding you away from truth, from which punishment shall come? Can you take the risk? Isn’t it safer to hold back, particularly in spirit? When you take a risk with spirit there is much to be gained.**

- 4. Yes, it is true, as was depicted, that there were many in the Church that was and is My Body who felt it more important to protect what little knowledge and understanding they had than to be open to new knowledge, particularly that concerning other manifestations of faith in Me. The two great leaders, the Kublai and the Pope, wanted to reach out and embrace those who came to Me differently, but many of those subordinate had no such vision and felt the need to protect themselves by putting others down.**

5. I am the Spirit of the One God. I have manifested Myself in many ways. Why should there be differences in look of face, color of skin, and size of body? Why should there be differences in language... that expresses so much of what a people are? Why should there be differences in customs, from ways of expressing love to ways of killing? There just are... and there should be. So also there are and should be different manifestations of Me.

6. Yet do not think that this diminishes your responsibility to share the Me that you know with others. Marco saw the value in the other approaches to God (and the misbehavior of those who represented Jesus, the Christ), and this changed his outlook somewhat, but he still had his own spiritual and religious story to tell. And there were those (some unlikely) who were eager to hear.

7. Marco journeyed to lands that the knowledge of the day said did not exist. He was prosecuted and almost convicted for telling stories that went beyond the wisdom of his day, and of his Church. The earth is now completely charted. But other realms exist that the wisdom of your culture and of your Church says do not exist. Will you hang back and be safe? Or will you tell stories of what you know and have heard, even as these “cannot happen”? I need Marcos in every age. Renew your enlistment.

Shalom

6:28 AM

This Teaching addresses the matter of differences, as did the previous one, but emphasizes early in #2 that there also are likenesses... and that it is the spirit that is responsible for feelings of likeness and unity, even when differences are obvious. It is the mind that differentiates and calls for recognizing the reality of these dissimilarities. Emotions can abet his, particularly when the behaviors of “others” are threatening or otherwise discomforting. But when spirit is strong there is another competing perception... a sense of unity and at-oneness that truly can be powerful. This semester in one class I have had, as a student, a middle-aged, black woman from Swaziland. The differences between us, in background and experiences, are gigantic, but there is also a strong spiritual bond that is almost spooky. Quite interesting!

The handshake in our culture has become such a common custom that it scarcely can have the significance that it had for the great leader of the Mongols, Kublai Khan. I increasingly feel that the hug now has this significance... at least I nearly always feel a spiritual relationship with people I hug, males and females alike. And I guess I'd say it is more so with males... because hugging a female is more acceptable just as a sign of affection... or something like that...

Paragraph #3 leads us into a beautiful analogy... Marco and this most powerful of humans... and me, or you, and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit says, “Many Christians are unwilling to come to Me in friendship. They say they'd like to, but they just won't or can't.” For some reason the Spirit extended to me, five years ago now, a most friendly invitation... and for some reason that I can't clearly identify, I have responded enthusiastically and virtually without fear. I realize that this continuing experience could be illusion... could be a false or evil spirit... could be leading me away from truth... so I take a chance when I accept this reality. Yet my own spirit just cannot evaluate it as too big a risk, just as Marco's told him, “Go for it!” Spiritual risks can be crucial risks, but, as He says, there is much to be gained.

The Catholic Church in the time of Marco was certainly more committed to protecting the knowledge they had than to seeking new understandings (#4). Since that time the Church, the Body of Christ, has on the one hand, maintained itself, and, on others, has reformed in several ways, splintered in many directions,

and even started entirely anew. Myriad other manifestations of the spiritual nature of humans coexist, compete, and supercede this “Christian way.” As you remember, a major purpose in my having these spiritual experiences is in order that I might be one of the leaders in restoring a spiritual dimension to the accepted perception of health and health education in this culture. The only way this can be done, say I, is in understanding and accepting an ever-expanding concept of spiritual... not in trying to reach some consensus or in pushing for one interpretation and “putting down” those who do not take this path.

This leads, then, into the last three ideas, which are very powerful. The Spirit that speaks is the Spirit of the One God, Who is manifested in many ways. He created and likes diversity. Did you ever consider what color Adam and Eve were? Western art always pictures them as creamy white, but given their “progeny” this doesn’t seem likely. What is an “average” human on the earth today? Certainly not white, middle-aged, healthy, English-speaking (only), and university-educated... even male... like me. The ecological principle, that I’m sure God designed, is that in diversity there is strength and survival. So there are differences, and there should be. And even different manifestations of this One God... who can speak in an incredible number of ways. (He assured me once that King James English is not His native tongue.)

And yet, while Marco saw the truth in other approaches to God, he still had his own story. And I have mine. And you have yours. And each of us has both a right and a responsibility to share this story... “The Me that you know”... and hear others. I know this... and yet I am still uncomfortable with the sharing. Why? Because I know that, certainly in the Christian tradition, differences are divisive. If some who read this knew my whole spiritual story you would feel less inclined to relate to me. I don’t want that, and neither do you, so we both hold back. Two of my own sons, who are strong Christians, receive these Ruminations but never comment on them... because it would be divisive. It would be too much of a risk to share without judgment. Maybe it will not always be so.

The last portion (#7) is both thrilling and chilling to me. Marco told stories, based on his experiences, that went beyond what was accepted knowledge of his time. This culture and my church don’t actually condemn what I do, spiritually, but on a full scale it’s in the disapproving range. (Actually there are no more official heretics in the Presbyterian Church... I can’t be anathema-ed.) So, yes, I still hang back and try to be safe. But I have stories that I want to tell and experiences that I want to share. The Spirit says, **“I need Marcos in every age. Renew your enlistment.”**

I continue to renew my commitment to the Lord in this tangible manifestation. Right now I know that I shall publish three issues this year... one on love and one on the Spirit’s sense of humor and fun... but I’ll still be bumping up against an August deadline, almost certainly. Circulation is now about 200... calling for a bit more system than I now have.

I wish you faith, and strength, and love, and wisdom... and the urge to share your thoughts and reactions with me. Be a Marco, too.

A warm Shalom,

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

Marco...