

**RUSSELL'S RUMINATIONS**  
**A LETTER OF ANALYSIS AND COMMENT ON MANY, BUT SELECTED,**  
**CURRENT ISSUES AND EVENTS**

**Vol. II, No. 1**  
**Carbondale-Cobden, IL 62901, 62920**  
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Dear Friends:

In February of 1978 I began a venture with much promise. It was this that you see emblazoned above as a sort of letterhead ... a six page letter dealing with Educational, Social, Theological, Moral, Economic, and Environmental issues. I collected some quotes, then arranged them in some order that allowed a progression of comment from one to another. I wrote, edited, printed it, and sent it out. A few responses trickled back. I did another one in May of 1978 that went nearly eight pages. Then I let the project slip. The summer issue never quite took form ... and I just let its priority remain low. But I still remembered, and knew this was something I should continue.

In Vol. 1, No. 2 I included a "Parable of Predestination", which I identified, sparsely, as having come from "some regular daily Meditative writing", being "given to me one May morning in 1965". That meditative writing dwindled during the summer of 1965, as we prepared to change our locale and lifestyle to that of Southern Illinois. I didn't really miss it ... it was just another interesting thing I had done. Then it commenced again in May of 1979, but this time it became a kind of "automatic writing," with the "teacher" being identified as the Spirit, even the Holy Spirit.

This has continued, with some regularity, usually in the early morning ... the first waking hour of the day. I now have eight "books," with those clamp-type bindings, filled with the "teachings" in chronological order ... the original written-by-hand pages. For some time I have received the repeated suggestion, in these writings, that I resurrect Ruminations and use some of these teachings as the basis for comment and analysis. But I still put it off.

Then I was told to gather together all that has been said about my recent back and leg discontent ... and I did that. It seems interesting enough to use as the basis for this Vol. II, No. 1.

So, let me tell you first about the writings. Readers, I'm certain, will exhibit a rather wide range of feeling for the reality of this "thing I do." I would urge that you concentrate upon what is said rather than be hung up about the credibility of the Source. Still, I have to affirm, on the basis of faith AND experience that I am "receiving" the words, sentences, and ideas in these writings from a source Self-identified as the Holy Spirit. The purpose? ... to help make me a better health educator, my profession, and one who can speak and write truly of the spiritual dimension of holistic health. Why me? Basically, because the Spirit works when, and where, and how, and with whom He chooses (good Presbyterian doctrine and also communicated to me). And ... I have certain developed capacities that now, with Guidance, can be used in His service. This is what I affirm, but, as I suggested earlier, accept it if you can ... or in any way you can ... but whatever your judgment about source, hearken unto the words themselves.

I shall share some of my ruminations upon these ideas. If this is a successful venture this will cause you to think ... and thought is the way toward wisdom. A few wonderful readers will even respond in writing and make me aware of thoughts generated, some supportive and some antagonistic.

The story commences. On Friday, November 28 I was shoveling the remains of a noticeable but puny snowfall that came Thanksgiving Eve. I felt a little "click" in my lower back, and I knew, even as I continued shoveling (for my Puritan nature is a strong one) that this could be something serious. It was. It has been diagnosed, medically, as a ruptured disk, with a piece lodging in a nerve canal and killing the nerve. I had pain during December and part of January, but not since. I cannot support my weight on my right toes and therefore cannot run and jump with that right extremity. The outside of the foot is numb. I walk with a slight limp, and I am careful about lifting certain things in certain ways.

There was no medical treatment prescribed. A combination chiropractic-acupressure series of treatments was helpful, but brought no dramatic return of function. Two vastly different massage regimens sent healing blood coursing through muscles galore, but my toes stubbornly maintained their retirement from useful action. I perform a series of exercises almost daily, which, with bicycle riding, walking, and lawn mowing, have prevented any noticeable atrophy in muscle size. I am open to most any approach to further healing that seems reasonable in time and expense.

Listen, now, to some excerpts from "my" meditative teachings in relation to this back and leg injury. I would ordinarily not dwell on this "negative" aspect of health, but heed the positive vibrations that come forth from it. On July 7, 1979 I had a teaching entitled Misfortune, which spoke of God's involvement in situations of hurt. It had no particular referent event ... was just a general explanation of the Lord's connection with justice and mercy. On November 29, 1980, the day after the shoveling incident, at 6:47 A.M., I began to write to the theme, MISFORTUNE ... ACTUAL, and hereinafter follows the portion relevant to our subject

#### **Nov. 29, 1980 MISFORTUNE ... ACTUAL**

**... Your back, this morn, is stiff and sore, and it is difficult to function fully with an injured back. There is no point in considering the "might have beens." It happened. You prayed for immediate relief. I heard, but did not provide such. You bargained with Me, and I shall expect you to do what you have pledged.**

**I did not cause the hurt to develop, but I am here to take advantage of it. You must be less active this week, and therefore you can give fuller attention to the analysis of My teachings to you...**

**So, I let it be known to you that this misfortune to you has become a symbol for the completion of this assigned task. As you feel the discomfort it shall be a reminder that you have this task to complete ... and limited time in which to do it. You have other tasks, too, some important ...**

**So, you are now embarked upon an experience in healing. Be sensible in your dealing with this hurt, for it is important that the back heal properly. Yet balance this caution with the knowledge that pain can be an important symbol and that function returns only by the regular exercise thereof.**

**You know what you have to do. Be dedicated to this task ... and the others you must do, also. Let this misfortune that temporarily hinders you be the reminding sign of your pledged responsibility. You shall not heal miraculously. Appreciate the process.**

**Be My servant, even as you hurt ...**

This indicates, of course, that I was attempting communication with the Lord immediately, as many of us do in times of emergency. He heard, but did not respond dramatically. I then bargained, which really means I promised to complete an analysis of previous teachings, a task in which I was bogged down. I wanted something in return, but my promise was not contingent upon some miracle.

The Spirit recognizes this and seems to accept it. The accident was not caused to produce this result, but since it did He shall take advantage of it.

So, it says, the hurt has become a symbol of something important (though unrelated) to accomplish. That could be pretty negative, associating a fairly significant pain with a spiritual-intellectual task. But it wasn't. The pain was not unbearable, and my state of relationship is such that I could accept this rather well.

Hence, I was told early on that I would not heal miraculously. I still was open to the possibility of this being wrong ... that is, I settled into no dumb state of resignation ... I had expectations for return of function. This just said there would be no miracle ... and that I should appreciate the healing process.

Now, I have had few injuries or illnesses in my life, but, still, this seemed pretty unique as a way to commence a recovery period.

On December 4 the teaching was mostly on other matters but did contain these three sentences.

**Dec. 4, 1980 HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD**

**... Remember, of course, that every experience is finally one of spirit. It is evident that your back injury is a physical reality. Still it is also an experience of spiritual functioning. How do you function, totally, with this departure from the ideal? ...**

The back and leg injury is an experience in spiritual functioning. So is every event, potentially. That question, "How do you function, totally ...?" was one that made me ponder. And it emphasized the holistic nature of health. I'm sure it helped keep a positive perspective on the experience.

On Sunday, December 7, the pain must have been rather pronounced, and the next day we would start a drive to California in our little Orange VW Squareback. The title was rather direct – PAINS – and the portion of it that had to do with those specific pains said ...

**Dec. 7, 1980 PAINS**

**... The pains in your leg are present and physical. As you have reread and analyzed the teachings from last year you become aware of pains past that have truly passed and are no more. You feel sure that your body's natural capacity to heal shall win out over this present discomfort, and you know that I have emphasized that pains of different sorts are important parts of life. You realize there may be a purpose to these leg pains ... or that they are just accidental, but now become a test of your spirit. The most important thing is that you give as little attention to the pains as possible ... that you give your true attention to the important things you still have to do before leaving. And also accept, with a loving spirit, Lenore's ministrations. When she wants to help, let her ... and accept her concern gratefully. The pains shall pass, but not immediately. You have some more to endure ...**

**... The value of pain is as a reminder of Me. Count your blessings and do My will, and the hurt will be less...**

My bargain, remember, was to review and analyze the teachings of the year just past, and I was finding reference to pains which I had since forgotten. This was an important perspective. I do expect my body to heal itself with its natural means, and I was being reminded that this had been occurring.

Whether they were purposed or accidental, the pains were a test of my spirit, one important aspect of which was giving them as little attention as possible. I'm sure that someone who has lived for years with chronic pain, such as my sister, Joanne, and Lenore's sister, Wilma Ruth, must and does learn to give pain minimal attention. But when pain is a pretty unique experience it is quite tempting to dwell upon it. And resolving not to give it attention easily slides into thinking about what you're resolving not to think about. The key, of course, is the suggestion that follows: give your true attention to more important matters. It has to be a positive alternative, not just "less attention" to pain.

Lenore, of course, was wanting to help, and though I am no blatant Spartan I tend to see being helped in situations such as this as weakness ... and my first inclination is to eschew weakness. On the other hand I do like to help people in need ... and I realize that this is only possible when they can accept the assistance. So this was an important admonition ... "accept, with a loving spirit, Lenore's ministrations". It is better to give than to receive, but it is uncomfortable to impossible to give if another refuses to receive.

The next reference was almost a week later, written early in the morning at the Bushes in Crow Canyon in the East Bay Area of California. We had "made the trip."

**Dec. 13, 1980 FAITH**

**... Faith develops as fully from experiences that should be called unsuccessful as from obvious triumphs in which I am involved. For example, at this point your leg is not feeling better and better ... healing is not dramatically clear. This morning it seems to be worse. Yet I have told you that this is a time of healing and that you must have faith in Me and in the healing capacities of your good body. Continue to**

**do the exercises and exert the rhythm of rest and exercise that maintains and builds strength.**

The entire teaching focused on Faith, and this was the very pertinent example relating to my leg. Based on the underlying truth that faith is much more important than comfort (which could also be translated that spiritual health is more crucial than physical, if one must be diminished), it counsels that faith develops not just from “successes” (when God does what I want Him to do) but also from non-successes. Faith has to be tested in situations and circumstances in which God not only does not do the ideal thing, but even seems to act in “un-Godlike” non-compassionate ways. Occasionally I think of the depression that shall surely be ours to experience sometime soon (because we’re unwilling to make sacrifices now which could ameliorate the effects), and I consider some contemporary version of Habakkuk’s plight

**Even though the fig trees are all destroyed  
And there is neither blossom left nor fruit,  
And though the olive crops all fail,  
And the fields lie barren;  
Even if the flocks die in the fields  
And the cattle barns are empty,  
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord;  
I will be happy in the God of my salvation  
The Lord God is my Strength and He will  
Give me the speed of a deer and bring me  
Safely over the mountains**

That, truly, will be a test of faith, for God will not have answered our prayers for prosperity and at least the status quo. Will we trust that God can heal an economic breakdown? Is God interested in our economy and our social system? Well, if He is interested in my leg, He could have this other concern, too, and want to see evidence of . . . and growth of . . . our corporate faith.

On December 19 we were back at Mary Ellen’s up Crow Canyon, where I was able to be up before 6 and have a place to write quietly. (This meditative writing can be done in the midst of noise and activity, I have discovered, but it seems best in the quiet atmosphere of a more “standard” mediation.) The teaching was a fascinating one entitled My Church, but it began with these lines (and, note, it has been nearly a week since the last one):

**Dec. 19, 1980 MY CHURCH**

**Your paining leg brought you to this time of writing today, o son. Today you did permit the pain and discomfort to lead you back to Me . . . and it is about time. True, the situation was far from ideal at Michael’s, but I have missed these teaching sessions, and I know you have, too. Continue to have faith in the healing process, and spend as little time as possible feeling sorry for yourself. I still affirm that there is spiritual value in what is happening to you physically. You are not as aware nor as appreciative of this as you should be . . .**

This was the last mention of my injury during the time we were in California. I particularly liked the admonition to “spend as little time as possible feeling sorry for yourself.” I tried to be true to that call.

On the morning of January 3<sup>rd</sup> I was back in my study on West Willow in Carbondale and received the first teaching of the year 1981, entitled, appropriately, A New Year. My leg had been hurting rather badly, with nights particularly painful. My limp was quite obvious . . . but I was feeling sorry for myself as little as possible. I was considering now, going for some chiropractic-acupressure treatments, for relief of pain and possible improvement in function. I had reasonable faith that these would have some benefit.

### **Jan. 3, 1981 A NEW YEAR**

**. . . You do not really want to hear anything about the pain in your leg. You still have an inherent faith in Me and in the natural, healing process, but obviously you are not healing now, so it is your style to want to ignore the conflict. This is still a learning experience for you, but you had best seek some help for the affliction. It need not last much longer. Still, be aware of all that has happened and appreciate as much of the experience as you can. All experiences lead to Me if you seek or are aware of the connections. Profit from this as much as you can . . .**

This contained one eye-catching sentence, certainly. With reference, presumably, to the affliction, it said “It need not last much longer.” If that was the reference, it does not now seem to be true. If it was about the pain only, it was quite correct. That’s my interpretations. Why not?

The closing paragraph of this January 3<sup>rd</sup> meditation told me to come each day for a week. So on the 4<sup>th</sup> I was writing again, after a night of considerable pain and sleeplessness. It began . . .

### **Jan. 4, 1980 IN TIMES OF STRESS**

**This is a reasonably good test of Our relationship, o son, for this morning you clearly are stressed from pain and lack of sleep . . . and therefore you should not be very receptive to My teaching. But you have started, having kept the commitment made yesterday morning. So let us see how receptive you can be for about an hour.**

**In time of stress there is a tendency to turn in toward self and to feel sorry for self. This can, of course, produce some good results . . . if it leads to proper care or changed behavior. This is where its value ends. Focusing on the cause of the stress beyond that necessary to engineer its relief is rarely worthwhile. A time of stress should be a time in which to deliberately move away from self and think of and act for others. This is difficult, certainly, but I share the truth with you and invite you to try it . . .**

Now there’s a challenge . . . in time of stress when the inner clarion call is to focus on self . . . to “solve your problem” . . . the Spirit counsels to move, deliberately, away from self and to think of and act for others. I considered, and still do, what that could mean if any sizeable number of people under

any kind of stress, physical or other, turned and did something happy and constructive for others. Possibilities are . . . incredible.

On January 7 the repetition of pain broke, and the teaching was Surprise!

**Jan. 7, 1981 SURPRISE!**

**. . . The major surprise, however, is the absence of pain in your leg, when earlier in the evening another hard night seemed inevitable. I admit that the process for these past nights has not been particularly pleasant, but there have been some surprises. Think on it . . . just being awake until 5 A.M. is a rather surprising achievement. You really haven't made the most of the experience. You still think too traditionally in terms of pain and self. Yet you have shown some progress. Always consider that an experience like this puts you in relationship with some other humans where this would not have been possible otherwise. There are surprises, eternally, from suffering. One of the most interesting aspects of life here in the earth, o son, is that, while suffering is to be avoided and alleviated, when a person must experience it there are often surprising, and positive, side effects and results. This should not send you in search of suffering, but it is a perspective to hold consciously as you suffer.**

I must admit that I had thought traditionally about being awake until 5 A.M. I truly had not considered it to be a "rather surprising achievement." But I was glad to hear I was making progress. I appreciated the words on suffering. I could not come near to being in experiential relationship with Joanne or Wilma Ruth, but I did feel closer than before I had this bit of suffering. Don't seek after suffering, it says, but if it comes look for those surprising positive effects or results. I was feeling some of that.

As January unfolded there were a number of meditative writings, but no mention of this infirmity. The pain was diminishing, but the disability remained, and I was doing, rather faithfully, a set of morning exercises to stretch, strengthen, and increase blood flow to the muscles that were not functioning and to my back. I still had the nagging feeling, however, that something more might be done to or for me. Still, the semester was beginning... and I just did nothing further. This I heard toward the close of the month.

**Jan. 25, 1981 REFLECTIONS ON A MONTH**

**. . . You are doing well with your infirmity. Go ahead and seek other help, but I have told you healing shall not come quickly or miraculously. Persist in exercise and appreciate the absence of dramatic response . . .**

Almost two weeks later . . .

**Feb. 6, 1981 ADAPTATION**

**. . . Your spirit in relation to your own injury is good, but increasingly troubled. You have trust in Me, and you have accepted My statement that this, o son, shall not**

**heal rapidly. Yet you do not want to accept passively something that could be changed for the better. Go ahead and take the action you contemplate, but hold to your faith that what happens to you is My Will.**

I was holding to the trust that this was a lesson for me in living and had accepted that healing and/or recovery would be slow. I now decided, however, to do a series of ten chiropractic-acupressure treatments, two-three times a week, which, Don Odum said, would be sufficient to determine if this approach could make an important difference. I also decided to have a diagnosis, finally, by an orthopedist, but the appointment wasn't possible until March. In early March I received this informative communication on pain, of which I now had little.

### **Mar. 8, 1981 ACHES AND PAINS**

**. . . Your aches and pains have been essentially gone, though the lingering feeling in your back is worrisome. Your left elbow has a strange pain, of unremembered origin. Accept it merely as a symbol of imperfection and as a reminder of all you possess that does not hurt. Fundamentally, pain of some sort is a part of all being . . . and a fairly major part of the being of some persons. I tell you again: for some this comes accidentally, for others is it karmic, and for others it is just the manifestation of a defective body . . . which has no necessary relationship to mental-emotional-spiritual being. Some pain is inflicted by evil spirits, and this is the most difficult to combat. And some pain is a "gift" from Me, offered for purposes that are uniquely Mine. So, in most instances, I am not the direct instigator of the aches, but I can often use them for My purposes. . .**

**. . . suffering can promote spiritual growth that could come in no other way, suffering stimulates compassion as nothing else can, and suffering affects a balance to life that many should recognize.**

**You, for instance, have had a life of superb wholeness in body. Your body has functioned well and relatively painlessly. Appreciate the past, but do not pine for it. Live in the now-present, fully and responsibly, and anticipate either future. . . one of complete recovery to wholeness again or one of continued disability. Either one has merit; either one is a means for relationship with Me, and this is the central purpose of life.**

**. . . It is perfectly proper for you to seek help and to follow whatever the regimen prescribed is. . . as long as it does not interfere with your service to Me. Be diligent in what you do, but give it as little of your spiritual attention as possible. . .**

It describes, briefly, some basic causes of pain, including that which comes as a "gift" from God. That doesn't bother me at all. . . because the next idea puts it into perspective – from suffering can come spiritual growth . . . It stimulates compassion (a world without suffering would be a world without compassion . . . it seems, on the surface, like a good trade, but I'll bet it wouldn't be) . . . and it brings a balance to life. As I looked ahead to the medical diagnosis I had no trouble with the now-present and the possibility of either future, for I felt assured that either could be a means of continuing relationship



with the Spirit . . . certainly more important than running on my toes and not feeling numbness in my foot.

On March 11 I had the medical diagnosis in Springfield, which came mostly on the basis of a careful two page, typed history of the affliction, which I had sent in prior. Immediate surgery, as soon as the pain started down my leg, might have prevented the slaying of the nerve, but I would still have been without a disk, and this can always be troublesome. There are no guarantees in back surgery . . . Most is done, said Dr. Frechette, to relieve severe, almost unbearable, pain. I really never had such. And, practically speaking, I with my values, would just never have submitted to surgery on the evidence that I had in early December.

At any rate, on Sunday of that week I was up in Norther Illinois, teaching a course at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital. Early that morning I had a complete teaching which, for me, put the whole experience into perspective. So I present it to you, in toto, for consideration.

**Mar. 15, 1981 LEG, BACK, AND SPIRIT**

**Hitchin Post, Libertyville**

**You are interested o son, to hear what I have to say about your leg and back. You remember Me saying that healing shall come, though it be slow. Now the M.D. says it shall not heal . . . you shall not be whole again, and you wonder what happened to my proclamation. As you suspect, this all has something to do with spirit also, so hear what I say now as you confirm that your foot has its come-to-be expected numbness still.**

**Go back and reread all of the teachings from late November, for several have bits to say about this injury. You might even put them all together in a single “scholarly” synthesis and see if there is consistency or not.**

**What I say now is that you, as a healthy person, particularly healthy in spirit, must be ready for and contribute to healing and wholeness, however I define it. For, in a true sense, you shall heal from this injury, but it may or may not involve the full return of function to your foot. This means that . . . yes . . . it may be that the medical diagnosis is wrong and there are means beyond the medically known that shall cause this physical disability to recede and disappear. You can hope and pray for this still. Remember that nothing is impossible with Me. I do have the power to change the non-changeable . . . to bring the dead back to full, vibrant life. I do not exercise this often. It is not the way I choose to have this world be . . . but it is still within My power. Never doubt this. This is where spirit is part of the picture. Your spirit must affirm that . . . yes . . . a “miracle” is possible.**

**Right now you are still in a spiritual process. All you know is that a reputable medical opinion affirms that physical healing is quite unlikely. Your reaction to this is generally pleasing. You proclaim to Me that if you are to have this disability that you will further develop other aspects of self so that your overall health is maintained . . . even enhanced. It shall be an impetus to growth toward wholeness that shall be obvious. This is a thought that you must not lose, for it has much merit. Nevertheless it must not be your only posture.**

**The third possibility, which you are also entertaining, is that dedicated exercise and persistent effort... beyond what you have ever exerted... may be necessary for a healing of dysfunction. Would you be willing to devote several years to the effort when the indication as to whether you would ever succeed is cloudy to dark? Could your spirit sustain such an effort and grow in the experience rather than be diminished by lack of success?**

**Know that every experience you have for the rest of your life in this earth is ultimately one of spirit. You are now enlightened enough to know this, and you should be able to affirm it. This does not mean that the physical and other aspects of any experience are unreal or unimportant. Far from it. Consider and work with these realities, but realize and affirm the ultimate reality.**

**Healing is ultimately a condition of spirit. Your spirit has not been greatly troubled by this injury, but neither has it been unaffected. Healing in the spirit shall be that which affirms that wholeness has returned – either as the return of function, as dedicated process toward rehabilitation, or as acceptance of the disability as of little consequence... as of no more importance than having to wear glasses.**

**Each has merit, and it is the challenge to your spirit to be involved in all three as an exercise in growth. Pray fervently but honestly. See what this focus does to your prayer life. (Any improvement would be welcome, certainly.) Set goals in exercise and accomplish them. Yet day by day function as if you are whole, paying no heed to the disability... accepting its limitations without acknowledging its “victory.” You are good at living with inconsistencies. Try this one and see how you do with it.**

**Finish the letter and carry through with the group.**

**Shalom on a Sunday**

**6:27 A.M.**

So, healing is ultimately a condition of spirit... the affirmation that wholeness has returned, in any of three ways. I think I'm doing pretty well at functioning as if I were whole, and I'm quite willing to aver that the healing from this injury is virtually completed and that it has been an experience of considerable growth.

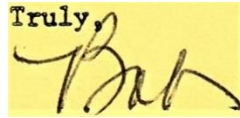
The suggestion in the second paragraph of Leg, Back, and Spirit was repeated a bit more forcefully later that week... and was very like the question back on December 4.

**Mar. 19, 1981 SYNTHESIS**

**... First, it shall be important to do what I suggested in one of Our last meditations – go back and synthesize everything that I have said about this back and leg injury of yours. Be sure you know what I have said... that you have the right balance of perspective. You have a physical disability... yet what is its total effect on you as a functioning person? This perspective can come only with this synthesis that I urge you to develop....**

So, I did the synthesis, and it became the basis for these Ruminations of mine. If any reader is moved to write back, with comments affirming, critical, or just counter-ruminations, please yield to the temptation. I promise to include such responses in the next number of Volume II, which should hit the mailboxes in early Fall.

May you feel enriched in some way by this experience. I do, just anticipating a number of you reading these pages.

A yellow rectangular stamp containing the word "Truly," in a small, black, sans-serif font at the top left. Below it is a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob".

Bob Russell  
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