

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

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Dear Friends:

Spring shall arrive this week, but it is yet winter by the calendar, and thus time to send forth another Ruminations... to readers both old and new. Of all the writing I do this is the most special, and yet it really isn't difficult... except in selecting the sources to actually use, from the many I have.

My theme in the goldenrod letter of last November was death and eternal or continuing life. As I said in the introduction to those pages, I had more than a little reluctance concerning that theme, but I was pleased, at the end, that I had done it. I thought that would be "it", and I'd go on to some other, less controversial issue in my first one of 1986. But two "things" happened that urged me to continue this theme a bit further: (1) more interesting letters about this subject than I typically receive (making this a strong challenge to the Ruminations on alcohol) and (2) several more unique Teachings from the Spirit, encouraging me to "give this another shot."

For those of you who are new at this reading experience, the Teachings (to which I refer with a capital T) are the tangible results of morning meditations with the Holy Spirit that I have 2, 3, or 4 times a week. After some "settling" and "centering" I become aware of a title (occasionally I offer one, but usually I just accept what comes). Then I just start to write what I hear, giving it as little thought as possible. It lasts about an hour, and I handwrite three full pages, which then translate to one full page typed (or "word processed"... son John Patrick gave me, as a Christmas present, some number of these on a Macintosh disc... some are now available). I do not edit them, except when I have made an obvious mistake, or when I've left out a comma... otherwise they are as I heard them. (The Spirit promises that if I've made a mistake He'll\* let me know through some subsequent Teachings.) It sounds kinda spooky, but it really isn't. Instead it's enjoyable and very rewarding, so, by direction, I now share some of these latter-day insights in this letter form.

But enough of method (important though it is!)... let's get to content. First, I want to share some parts of some letters that I received since last November. Since these were personal letters to me, and I have not sought permission to quote them, I shall not identify the several writers in any specific ways. If names are used I'll change these or leave blanks. Now some, I suspect, wouldn't mind being identified, but I'm not sure, so I'll tread the anonymity path.

Because one of my purposes in this venture is to help restore the recognition of a spiritual dimension to health that is acceptable to health educators, I always am pleased to hear of a student doing a thesis or a dissertation on spiritual matters. One such wrote to me, telling of how she selected her sample of college level health educators and reporting:

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\* I'll note again that the Spirit has indicated, a number of times, that this "He" is just a "convention"... the Holy Spirit is fully female as well as fully male... not either/or, but both/and.

*... In the total sample - - I tracked them all down - - I found belief in the existence of spiritual factors that influence personal health among 79.4%!!!! No one is more surprised than I am. During the interviews, I was also surprised to hear so many references to you, and your newsletter. This is not to say that I did not think you had impact on the profession, but I thought you would be pleased to hear that your name was mentioned frequently and by people that had never met you or had anything to do with Southern Illinois University.*

The "newsletter" to which she refers is this very Ruminations. Though I am pleased with the personal recognition I'm more excited that this letter is being read and that, through it (and, hence, the Spirit), the spiritual dimension is emerging as legitimate.

As a buttress to such a conclusion, another professional colleague of mine wrote:

*I congratulate you on your ability to "hear" directions from a superior being and then interpret them to your colleagues and friends. We are fortunate to have one as you in the area of health education.*

*Your discussion of life as linear and circular was especially clear and meaningful to me because of my interest and wonderment in life after death. Since nothing is really lost in this world (they merely change form), then there must be another level of life that extends beyond the mere physical. This concept surely comforts those of us who labor for the goodness of man and woman. Even though virtue and work at times is its own reward, we need to know there is an even greater reward in becoming one with the Master. Take care and keep writing.*

Another health educator commented, with a bit more substance...

*I really liked your latest Ruminations - - my faith in trusting that your Teachings are from the Holy Spirit has amplified and expanded my personal belief in God. Therefore, your letter about death is thought-provoking, exciting, sobering, reassuring, challenging, and it's really neat that the Spirit communicated with you concerning your son, Peter. What a feeling that must be! It made me wonder how some of my friends are doing?! Your self-imposed 9 ½ pages are chocked full of thoughts that can be interpreted at all different levels and applied to many potentially traumatic situations in life besides death. I had a new insight about the divorce I went through, for example.*

If you recall, the Spirit said, in conclusion, three years after our son, Peter, was killed at 17, "Peter was, and still is, a unique being... (he) is one of Mine, and he develops well." That is "neat", and it does cause me, too, to wonder about other people who have passed on over into some other realm of life.

One of my long time friends, even as he has done a few surprisingly "liberal" things, would be considered a theological conservative, but, as he says here, he rejoices that he is not called to be a "judge", and though what I write doesn't, at first, seem to be in tune with some Scripture, it causes him to think and to admit some "fogginess"...

*Thank you so much for the last issue of Russell's Ruminations. My admiration and respect for you... and for what God is doing in your life... continues to grow! As we've shared in person... and we've shared by correspondence - - our friendship has never been based on demanding that we totally agree about millions of things or even a few things. We've just rejoiced in what God is doing in each others' lives and let Him - - God - - do the work He has set out to do. The longer I live - - the more I rejoice that God called me to be a "lover" and not a "judge"! I think the people of ultra-conservative bent - -*

*such as Falwell - - who simply relegate all those of another mind about things... to the pit - - take on an intolerable burden.*

*As far as revealed truth... I have a hard time with a "position" that seems to not be clearly delineated in the Bible. Thus - - I have a difficult time with the idea that we are reincarnated into this life many times over.*

*I believe with all my heart that once born, all souls live forever - - somewhere. With that I surely believe that God has some way to decide who will be in Heaven and who will be in eternal punishment. I don't think we earn Heaven... and I haven't the foggiest notion of how God makes all those decisions. It is too "pat" to simply say that the "born again" go to Heaven... although I think they will. But who are the "born again"? And how does God treat those who have so little light and information and no Bible and have seen no good role models in the so-called "Christians" around them?*

Now, in contrast to this rather orthodox Christian responder, another friend writes:

*I really enjoyed your last Ruminations. My interest seems to be inversely related to the amount of holy scripture present... which is interesting to learn. I'll admit I have never read a complete page of the Bible. There is something in the manner of the text that I cannot connect with. Which is one reason why I find your letters so interesting. The thoughts are insightful and playful, grounded yet dynamic. Your last efforts were particularly interesting to me. Let me interact with some of the thoughts.*

He then did, and his questions and conclusion were fascinating, revealing aspects of himself normally not shared. He then wrote about his own teaching experiences in this area... and then... the influence of son Peter again...

*Your letter got me thinking. I have been teaching Death and Dying courses for the past 5 years. There was never a conscious choice to do so. It seems like opportunity placed me in the role. Students seem to find my thoughts on death and the process of living-dying useful. I have noticed that the depth of my understanding seems to increase each year. Ideas, creative thoughts seem to flow easily on the topic. Yet it is also a set of topics that are, for me, ultimately confusing. The rhythm of my feelings runs from comfortable confidence to anxious denial. Teaching this particular course is another example of something I do which feels right, but I certainly don't know why.*

*Have I ever shared the story of how I came to "know" you? My senior year at \_\_\_\_\_ was spent in the library reading. Quite by chance I was leafing through a Health Education journal. I found myself reading an article about Death Education. Part of the article focused on a father interacting with the experience of his son's death. I found it a moving piece. At that time I "knew" it would be important for you to be my Professor. The reality of the past several years affirms that form of naïve knowledge. Many times in my life these critical incidents, which seem random, have a form of certainty about them. They do make life fun and instill a form of power all their own.*

Another reader/friend provoked to write was, I thought, also theologically conservative, but his joyous stream of consciousness (in part, at least) went:

*I just re-read parts of your last writing. You have some good things to say about Sister Death. I have thought often and much about Death and have had a few "Simplifications" of my own. Death is simply a concomitant of life, not a thing in itself. It is a normal part of Growth, but as you point out, it seems to involve only physical matter, not spiritual matter, and therefore the spiritual part continues.*

*But the thing that used to cause me difficulty was all those little spiritual parts, bopping around in some eternal where-ever! Then I learned a simplification. What do we mean by oneness with God? Something we strive to attain, to get back to?? I never really bought that, but I had nothing better. How about this: there is one Life (soul, spirit, animus), and that Life is God - - That Life is My Life now. That life coursing through me is not a broken off part, a biscuit separated from the dough, but rather I am animated by the Living Spirit!! The Bible says so, the Mystics and Teachers have said so... why not really believe it??!!? "In whom I live and move and have my being" is not pious poetry, but a fact. The living amoebic soup the evolutionist talks about IS GOD. HE IS LIFE. Death has no sting! It is a grand transition. But continuous.*

*I am a physical, localized, sentient and intelligent center of that one life. ERGO, it does not "come back" or "go on"; it does not do anything BUT BE. I use that one LIFE, that ONE MIND, that One everything, which being alive implies. IT IS GOD. God in Me. I and the Father are one, because it can be no other way. I am not a ceramic figure on a heavenly shelf. I am God in this place. You and I are all of God we will every see. What I will be aware of and what I will do about that awareness!! Ah! There's the rub! Death is not a return to the universal soup; we never left it!*

Another expected "traditional Christian" did respond as I thought she would, but with love and "connectness"...

*Since I am a "traditional Christian" I disagree with some parts - - such as on page 2 that we can experience eternal life before this present life, and I'm not sure about some returning as part of life everlasting to earth... unless you mean to rule with Christ in the millennium. I don't believe some have been here before. Guess I'm one of those "good mature Christians" who will have to let the idea lie for awhile.*

*Don't know about the funerals with people more or less present. "Absent from the body - - present with the Lord" is my understanding.*

*I'm not able to see suicide as anything but ending a life God's not thru with yet... Looking forward to your next letter. I figure God's timing is always right, and now must be the time to be in touch.*

Finally, the prize letter in my "mailbag" was from a friend now in her 96<sup>th</sup> year of life (in the earth), with handwriting better than most people in their youth. She agrees, she disagrees., she admits to "paradox"... and leave it to God!

*I want to thank you especially for Russell's Ruminations, and for the intimation that the same will keep coming if you have my new address! At 95 you may be sure that I'm thinking a lot about death (though I always have and believe people who love life do), and that I was most interested in the Spirit's teachings to you and your comments thereon. Very beautiful and helpful thoughts came to me! Thank you for the Teaching about funerals, and the one about Peter. I could not relate so well to reincarnation or transmigration of souls\* Guess I'm one who feels the need for individuality - - the "I-Thou" relationship with God and with others - - which seems to me to be the predominant Biblical idea, though of course what Charles Williams calls "co-inherence" is stressed also - - I in you, you in me, all in God, as Jesus prayed that we all may be one, "even as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee." Paradox seems the key to spiritual truth nearly always! But this seems to me to be something other than one identity becoming some other person or thing, with God the sum total. But that is only my understanding. Be it as God wills! The Spirit says to me, "Have no fear."*

\* Neither of these terms was used by me or by the Spirit. We spoke of "continuing life", "eternal life", and "everlasting life."

There really were no harsh, caustic, disagreeing communications. Either those with such reactions did not write them, or the Spirit has a way of spreading Shalom in these Teachings... or people who would honestly disagree don't ruminare with me...

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One of the reasons for continuing this basic theme on into 1986 was a Teaching I received on January 29, commencing at 6:32 AM, the morning after the space shuttle Challenger's accident. It was the basis for my morning class at the church the next Sunday, and you, too, may be interested in the Spirit's observations on this contemporary, tragic happening. (I present the Teaching in its entirety, number the paragraphs so that it is easier for you to know toward which my comments point.)

**Jan. 29, 1986  
Wed., 6:32 AM**

**DEATH... "ON THE WAY..."**

**Farm  
Study**

- 1. Yesterday you experienced a well-publicized tragedy as seven well-trained people died in a fiery explosion on their way to "space." Oh yes, there were other deaths yesterday, some worse in the experience, but these were symbolic deaths. They were martyrs to a naturalistic, scientific cause. So what do I, the Holy Spirit, have to say about this unusual event?**
- 2. First, of course, I was there at the moment of explosion, and some, with hands in Mine, made an easy and gentle transition to the realm of spirit. Others were on farther paths without the reality of relationship with Me. That is, some were ready to "walk in space with Me", and some were not. And so it is with all the deaths that occurred yesterday (though there is a range, of course, rather than just two clear categories).**
- 3. I have no objection to this "space program", and I have been pleased as some who have participated found Me, in My Creative Majesty, as they contemplated the picture of earth and space. Yet from My perspective it is a rather silly use of time, money, and resources. It is designed to conquer the limitations of life on the earth's surface, and each of you can experience that in its ultimate form as you pass on over from earth life. Talk about weightlessness! Though some in the program do affirm My presence and call on Me for help and protection (and I heard many prayers yesterday that were obviously not answered in the way the offerers expected), it is a secular enterprise, based in science and technology that denies, finally, the need for Me. As I said, I have no objection to the "program", but humans are not better off because it exists.**
- 4. All of the usual efforts were made to prevent this accident and prolong these lives, but the combination of knowledgeable, alert, conscientious people and technology, with its many backup checks, was not sufficient. The technology of television and radio allowed you to see and have described the moment of explosion, when the marvelous technology of space travel failed... "on the way..." The loss of life is tragic, in secular earth terms, but one fact of both earth and spiritual life is that any cause that "aspires to be "great" will be benefited by martyrs - - those who give their lives that the cause might continue.**
- 5. It shall be interesting for you to see whether this martyrdom is acknowledged, for it is only symbolic... the seven did not willingly die for the space program... only willingly took the risk. Their deaths will not call forth great improvements in the process. The accident**

was not because of some general, correctable flaw. So if they are seen as martyrs, the cause will continue with more actual spiritual fervor. If they are not so acknowledged, then the program will be slowed for fear that other preventable deaths might happen. And hence it would become more of a spiritless technological enterprise.

6. Does love have anything to do with a “space program”? Love can and should be part of every human enterprise. And “greater love has no man or woman than this... that each would lay down life for fiends.” Symbolically this applies. The seven gave their lives in the love of the program and for their associates in it. If this is acknowledged, the program will have more spirit, but it will not be safer.

7. As Jesus I gave My earthly life, and My body was transformed into the church. But this was not a safe enterprise. Others gave their lives, and still others just were killed, but the spirit prevailed, and the body thrived. In some places it is still a dangerous enterprise, and deaths come because of it. The deaths make it stronger, if spirit prevails. If spirit is denied, the cause will flounder in its quest for safety first.

8. In one sense the title for the day is an obvious truth - - for each of you, death of the body comes at some time as you are “on the way” to spiritual maturity. But of course death is not the end of that “way”, but merely a transition, and the “journey” continues. Life in its ultimate form is not lost because of death.

Peace

7:46 AM

The very nature of the Teaching says what is obvious for some and somewhat surprising to others: the Holy Spirit is fully aware of the happenings in this earth and “is there” when events occur. He immediately characterizes these as “symbolic deaths” and those dying as “martyrs to a naturalistic, scientific cause.” For on that day, and on every day since, there were (and have been) many other deaths, mostly unnoticed by the majority of us.

The Spirit “was there”, and for those who were in relationship with the Lord the transition was “an easy and gentle one,” despite the violence of the actual bodily deaths. And the implication is, of course, that the Spirit was also in ICU’s, in nursing homes, at fires, auto accidents... all of those places where spirits moved on to other realms... my understanding of death.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph is interesting in that the Spirit initially says He has no objection to the space program, but then admits that it is “silly”... and from His perspective it may well be. It has value as a means by which spirit is shared and in which spirit grows and develops, but in a sense is a denial of the value of this earth, on which we’re privileged to be. It also is noted that this is a scientific, technological program which does not recognize the power of God as a factor. Therefore, all in all, it is not an enterprise that gets enthusiastic support.

In paragraphs 4 and 5 He commences a line of thought which is quite unlike the present NASA and government position. He focuses on the symbolic martyrdom of these astronauts rather than on finding the correctable cause... which He suggest “is not”. (The scientific enterprise is committed to finding “the” cause, but do you suppose it’ll be one on which there is complete agreement? But there must be one... true?!) Just after the accident there was much talk of heroes and even a bit about martyrdom, but now the messages seem to be “this must be absolutely safe...”, which brings it close to the Spirit’s description of “a spiritless technological enterprise.”

The next two paragraphs connect this up with love, with the earthly life and death of Jesus, the Christ, and with the Church... emphasizing that in the giving of life in love there is a development of spirit that is hard to achieve in other ways. The final paragraph picks up the theme of last November's letter... that death is merely a transitional event on the journey to spiritual maturity. Life continues.

This truth was reinforced two days later in a meditation that commented on the astronauts again, on the death of my little dog, Tigweiser, on my own mortality, and on food as a factor in death. Then...

**Let's put that in larger, more general terms. Life is the essence of My creation. The physical, non-living world is in order that life might thrive. You know that particles of the non-living earth are continually becoming part of living matter, and then being returned. There finally is little real distinction between living and non-living matter... and no ultimate difference between life and death. At a moment there is difference between healthy, active life and the inertness of death. But as the moments accumulate life goes on, for I have created it to do so.**

**As Jesus I died, but soon comes the season that accelerates resurrection. You shall not see Me in bodily form as a resurrected young Jew in a seamless robe, but you see Me in the faces and lives of countless people who know God through Me. And I come to you live, as the Holy Spirit, obviously active in this world that I share with you, even as I have no discernable body. The life of the spirit is the true measure of life, and as this develops... best through relationship with Me... it is not hampered by death. This is just a time of transition, of assessment, of "that's over, what comes next." ("Death... and Continuing Life," January 31, 1986)**

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This is the Lenten season, and in a Teaching entitled "Lent" I was reintroduced to some of the truths of this time of remembrance. Part of it was speculation upon that which could have been taught if Jesus had been in active ministry until He was 70, But, then...

**As God, however, I decided to go with death rather than with life. This is an important Lenten truth. I decided to go with rejection rather than with exultative acceptance. What began with Hallelujahs came soon to "Crucify Him!" But then came Hallelujah again. Lent must remind you that there must be death for life to continue. There must be rejection for acceptance to have its fullest quality.**

And, on to the last two paragraphs...

**There are two truths about the Easter week that I should mention now and elaborate as that season is closer. The story includes both. One is that I would have preferred ongoing life and ministry, but evil, selfish forces prevailed, and I was killed by crucifixion. The other is that My ministry was over and as My ultimate last voluntary act I gave Myself up as a sacrifice. Each has importance, and you shall hear both.**

**You know which one is more real to you, but you need not reject the value of the other. To be forced against your will as opposed to doing what you will is like unto the rhythm of life and death. ("Lent", March 6, 1986)**

Two truths... seemingly opposed. I have tended to favor the latter, on the notion that it must be “truer” than the other. The challenge is to hold to a truth and not reject its apparent opposite. One application of this is in relation to food (which I mentioned above). Food is life that has been sacrificed... and food can abet life and health or can make it difficult for the body to function fully. I consider this frequently, and, closing in on 60, I speculate on my longevity. The Spirit doesn’t answer this directly, but He gives me a nudge... my parents are now 82 and 83, living together in their own apartment, in pretty good health.

**Food is an essential for life, but it also is a factor in premature death. There is legitimate concern for eating in ways that maintain health, but it is foolish to feel guilty about occasional excesses or consumption of tasty but non-recommended foods. Food is life that has been sacrificed in order that other life might continue and thrive. This is quite obvious with your rabbits... much less so for processed foods. Yet life begets life, and death is a means to that good and necessary end.**

**You consider your own mortality occasionally, and you know that you are moving into that span of life when deterioration and weaknesses begin to be evident. Then you consider your parents, advanced in age but staving off deterioration admirably. Have they given you the capacity to do likewise? You cannot be sure, but My advice is to assume that you shall share in this healthy longevity. I give you no guarantee... just this nudge toward favoring healthy life. (“Death... and Continuing Life,” January 31, 1986)**

One other “opposite truth”: the death of a person is always sad and devastating to those who survive... and a death may be a relief and a source of freedom. Grieving may not always be healthy.

**One of the hardest truths to accept, as a person is dying, is that, in some ways, life will be lived more fully despite the death. The dying person, because of his or her personality and because of the dying process, may be thwarting full living for others. The death can thus bring freedom that wasn’t possible before. The person with well-developed spirit knows this and may even be able to express it. It is not a form of self-degradation, just an element of truth. Some close kin, particularly spouses and children, often waste valuable living time in grieving for the one gone. Some grieving is desirable, but too much shows excessive focus on self and on the negatives of death. (“Of Hospice I approve”, January 20, 1986)**

And yet one more: should hospice volunteers talk to terminally ill patients about death... and should one share personal understandings of continuing life?

**I tell you that there just is no reason to fear death. If you are living life fully, even as you die, your consciousness is increased rather than diminished (even as it appears, physically, otherwise). I needn’t tell you what the exact nature of the experience is, but I can say that it is truly the continuation of life. You will not be alone, and the total environment will be a pleasant, happy one. Eventually you shall have to deal with the selfish aspects of the life you have just completed and with the unfulfilled tasks that were yours to do, but these can wait until the welcome has been offered and accepted.**

**I realize that there could be some problems arising from a declaration like unto the one I have just made offered to a patient with a less developed spirit and sense of the continuation of life. But I say that if it is acceptable to express doubts about ultimate questions, then it should be equally acceptable to express a firm faith, based in revealed knowledge of Me and**



**My ways. I see nothing wrong with a hospice group made up of some variety of people, in terms of full faith in Me. It is a good experience for growth. (“Of Hospice I approve”, January 20, 1986)**

I now think of closing this rumination, and I have two possibilities... and in the spirit just expressed I shall include them both, the shorter one first... the final paragraph of “Death... and Continuing Life”, which follows the Spirit’s comment on page 7.

**Be ever more aware of life as it is manifested in so many ways in the experience of each day. The wood you burn was once alive, growing and doing its part to maintain life. The ashes are strewn to continue the life cycle. Ah, it is a wondrous creation I have wrought. And death is an integral part of this living creation. Truly, say I.**

And now, the “final closing thought”. It is the second half of a marvelous lesson I received in early March. Some of you readers are bothered by the assurance I project about the death experience, preferring either more mystery or a more judgmental, final end to earth life. Others wish that I weren’t so reticent about sharing truths about the continuity of life. In this quotation the Spirit discourages too much searching after knowledge that will come later, wasting opportunities to live earth life fully... and then encourages the appreciation of spiritual experiences... as they come.

**Any life in the earth is limited, and for some the time is quite short, by design or by chance. The actual length is of very little consequence in the total journey of soul development. Death of the body is an important experience in earth life. If you are ready for it, it can be an important spiritual experience. If you are not, it can be another opportunity missed...**

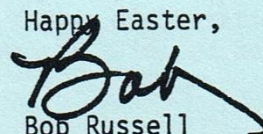
**You may wonder why each of you is not aware of the many manifestations of life in “forms” other than human. You gave this up as you came into the earth, and you live in a culture that discourages too much rediscovery of spirits. Part of health is to live life fully as you have it and not seek experiences that are not relevant to this life. Some persons waste much time and effort in an earth life seeking to know that which becomes very clear with death. And then they realize they have passed up golden opportunities in the earth in pursuing this inappropriate knowledge.**

**I say this, but then I add the balance, the rhythm. It is healthy to be aware of and appreciate the evidences of spirit and of life that was “before” and shall be “after” as they come to you in normal life. That is, do not deny the reality of spiritual development that gives you certain insights and experiences. Just do not wander off seeking these and neglecting the innumerable chances to be human.**

**Yes, health is that rhythmic dance that sometimes takes you to extremes as well as keeping you around the golden mean. Health is your capacity to be all that you can be... and even a bit more.** Shalom (“Life and Health”, March 4, 1986)

So... may these ruminations add to your own “rhythmic dance”, and may you depart, occasionally and joyfully, from the golden mean. Be all that you can be, and more... and have a

Happy Easter,



Bob Russell

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Letterwriter, Songsinger, Farmer  
Philosopher, Storyteller, Lover of Life