



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

May 2014

Thoughts In Solitude

It's not popular from a worldly perspective to leave the world and seek God unless it is hip deep into psychology and brain science. These new interests may be all the rage in many Buddhist and Christian circles, but they may not serve the spiritual seeker who wants to find God. The ego-self is happy to be in a dalliance with modern ideas. In such an affair, it remains strong, frivolous and the center of our lives. As long as the ego-self holds a central position, our ability to know God decreases. The more ego-self is there, the less of God.

As we plunge further into solitude, silence and stillness a burgeoning sense of foolishness follows us. There are times when we get stuck in an inner skirmish between the ego and our yearning for God. The ego frequently challenges our devotion with shouting, "You fool!" when we renew daily our devotion to the Dharma as our purpose.

Devotion of this sort requires guts and a keen sense of inner loyalty to a devotional way of life. Devotion demands a greater honesty than psychological analysis, where defenses are reworked and rebuilt in more "appropriate" and "healthy" ways. A mask of defenses is still a mask and it disguises and blocks knowing the Truth. As human beings, we tend to relate to everything as "mine" and this masquerade although often acceptable in the material world, is a death mask in the spiritual realm.

Here is a little example.

When we feel "blue" we tend to want to find a way to get rid of this feeling. We hunt for things to make this feeling go away. All sorts of catastrophic fears monopolize the mind. We want it to stop. This

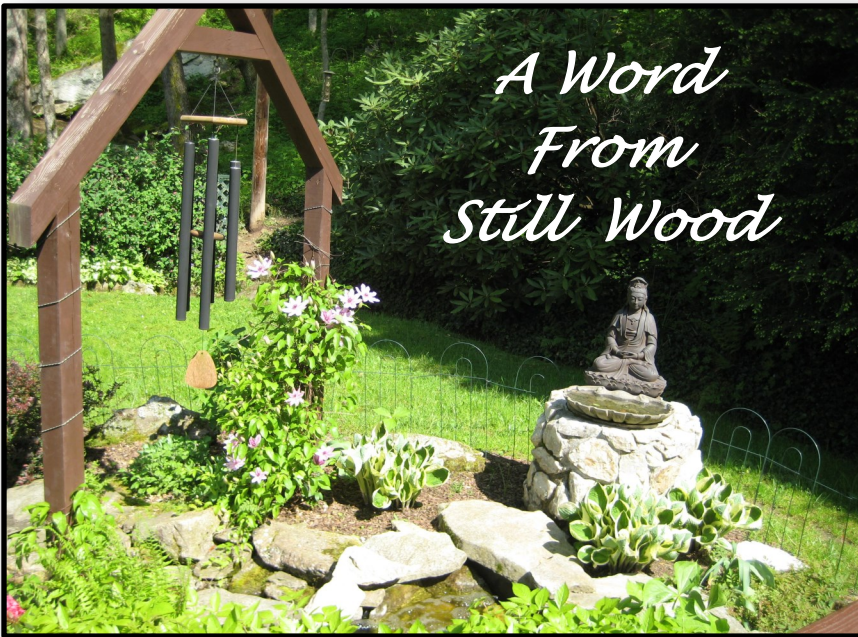
is the human condition and is normative in the material world. If we seek help from the material world, we will get directions on how to get what we need or how to get what we want. We can barely imagine another way, a way that looks for the Dharma of the feeling, of the moment, of what is actually going on in this circumstance.

It is similar to being in the darkness for when we are in the darkness we hunt for a light switch to end the darkness. But we need to remain with the feeling, facing whatever it is as God's voice, the voice of the Dharma rather than reacting to an inner impulse to escape. We need the feeling as part of our interior landscape with rationalization or fear. We begin to see everything, the whole panorama of inner experience as the voices and sights of Dharma and let go of seeing our inner topography as "MINE." It means accepting whatever is happening, wherever we are, as Dharma.

This inner geography is our spiritual life with God whether we see it or not. It requires relinquishing our fantasies for something to be better, for something to be otherwise, for everything to be MINE. This way is an expedition of leaving ME and MINE and crossing into the unfamiliar geography of solitude, silence and wholehearted engagement with the diversity of the Dharma, the assortments of God.



Yao Xiang Shakya



A Word From Still Wood

*"I said to my soul, be still and wait...
In the darkness shall be the light
And in the stillness the dancing." T.S. Eliot*

How well this fits with the thoughts in our lead article! It also reminds us of the moment of Resurrection when the Living Lord leapt forth from the darkness of the tomb, dancing for joy that death was no longer permanent. Yes, death is inevitable but it is not forever. A new life awaits us once we pass through the portal of Sister Bodily Death, a life of joy and love; of song and dancing. It is a life we cannot even imagine but which we can count on. Let us practice our dance steps!

Here at Still Wood we are savoring a late but delightful arrival of spring. Even as we praise God for daffodils and tulips and forsythia, we want to send out a song of gratitude for your outpouring of generosity to *Raven's Bread* since the last issue. Donations, large and small, with expressions of appreciation for the various ministries *RB* offers flowed in. We are deeply touched! Also, the warm welcome given our new blog "For Lovers of Solitude" is truly amazing. What deep and mean-

ingful conversations are taking place at: ravensbreadministries.com/blog. (We apologize for failing to update the blog address on our website which discouraged some potential participants. It is corrected so please try again. Rich fare awaits you.)

Welcome to all our new readers, to purchasers of the Resources and books we offer; and especially, to all who contribute their thoughts, insights, and reflections to fill out the pages of *RB*—articles born of solitude which "feed" our souls in unique ways. As we had hoped, way back in 1997, this newsletter has become a means of exchange among hermits, authored entirely by solitaries, and bonding all of us in a mystical community. We are able to address "sensitive" topics with respect and offer more than one view of a delicate dance, called by the Spirit.

*"Dance is meditation in movement,
a walking into silence
where every movement becomes prayer."*
Bernhard Wosein

As I read this, I recall the many times I danced in the solitude of my hermitage, listening to a CD or simply to the music of nature around me. Part of hermit life is growing into a space where self-consciousness no longer controls how we act. We are freed of concern over what others may think of us. We learn that every move we make is part of The Dance: turning a page, kneading bread or polishing a plate. We are alive to the Presence that flows through us, a Presence of Compassion and Mercy. We can laugh merrily at our silly mistakes; our pitiful attempts to become "perfect" and wonder why perfection ever mattered. Note how everyone dances to their own rhythm. Never underestimate the beauty of the ordinary; nor fail to see your own beauty and power. Hermits are not usually thought of as the "movers and shakers" in the world but, let us believe it, we most definitely are!

*With our grateful love,
Karen & Paul*

***Raven's Bread* is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in eremitical life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. It affirms and supports people living in solitude. As a collaborative effort, it is written for and by hermits themselves, delivered by postal mail or email. Please send your written contributions, address changes, and subscription donations to: pkfredette@frontier.com or *Raven's Bread Ministries*, 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via Paypal at our website.* Our phone number is: 828 622 3750.**

The annual donation is \$10.00 in the USA or \$12.00 US for readers outside the States. Please send payment in US funds (PayPal converts foreign currency to US dollars). Any extra donations are used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford the full cost.

Raven's Bread derives its name from the experience of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 17: 1-6, where a raven sent by God nourished him during his months of solitude at the Wadi Cherith (The Cutting Place).

***Our website is :[Http://www.ravensbreadministries.com](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com) ; email: pkfredette@frontier.com and Blog for Lovers of Solitude: www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog.**

WEBSITE OF INTEREST

Longtime Platonist contemplative ascetic and eremitical monastic, Eric Fallick, has prepared a website with several short writings and translations that may be of interest to solitaries. Of particular interest to hermits may be essays on renunciation, the practice and experience of contemplation, the limitations of cenobitical monasticism, and a translation of an urban hermit in ancient Alexandria.

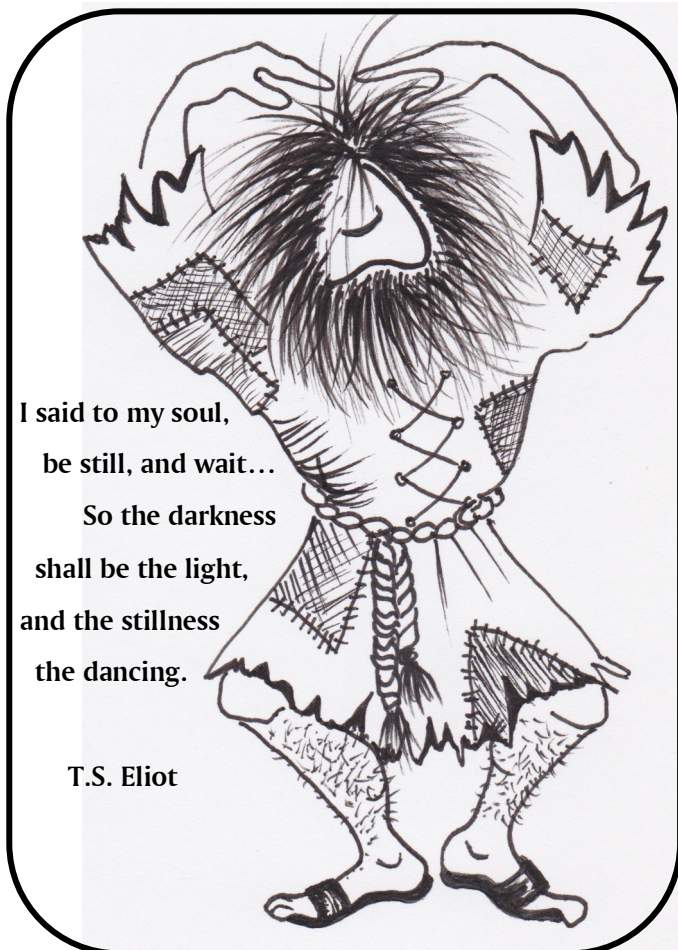
Website: www.eumaiosllc.com

DISCUSSION TOPIC FOR AUGUST 2014

Raven's Bread is frequently asked how can hermits earn a living while safe-guarding their silence & solitude?

SUBMIT BY JULY 1, 2014
(Limit to 300 Words, please)

Wood B. Hermit



I said to my soul,
be still, and wait...
So the darkness
shall be the light,
and the stillness
the dancing.

T.S. Eliot

I wanted to be a hermit and only hear the hymns of the earth, and the laughter of the sky, and the sweet gossip of the creatures on my limbs, the forests.

I wanted to be a hermit and not see another face look upon mine and tell me I was not all the beauty in this world.

For so many faces do that—cage us. The wings we have are so fragile they can break from just one word, or a glance devoid of love.

I wanted to live in that cloister of light's silence because, is it not true, the heart is so fragile and shy.

The Hymns of the Earth

By

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

Taken from

Love Poems from God—

Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West

SEARCHING FOR WRITINGS ABOUT *HERMIT LIFE?*

Check out *Raven's Bread Resources*, available on our website: www.ravensbreadministries.com

SEARCHING FOR A RETREAT? *SILENCE, SOLITUDE, SIMPLICITY*

Consider *Raven's Rest*, a single person private apartment in the Smoky Mountains of Western North Carolina.

See: www.ravensbreadministries.com
for further information.

**A NEW BOOK BY A RAVEN'S BREAD READER!****The Love Letters — SAINT FRANCIS AND SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI MEET POPE FRANCIS**

by Bruce Davis, PH.D.

The "Love Letters" is historical fiction. What if St. Francis and St. Clare were to meet Pope Francis? What would they wish to tell him of their thoughts, dreams, and hopes for a renewed Church in the 21st century? Can Pope Francis fulfill St. Francis' mandate to "rebuild My Church which is falling into ruin?" A church that is less concerned with rules and order and more about forgiveness and compassion was their dream in the 13th century. How shall Pope Francis implement their vision so all of us may become instruments of peace, lovers of simplicity, and sowers of the joy born of selfless love? We are the Church, so like Francis and Clare, let us support this prophet of love given when the Church most needs him.

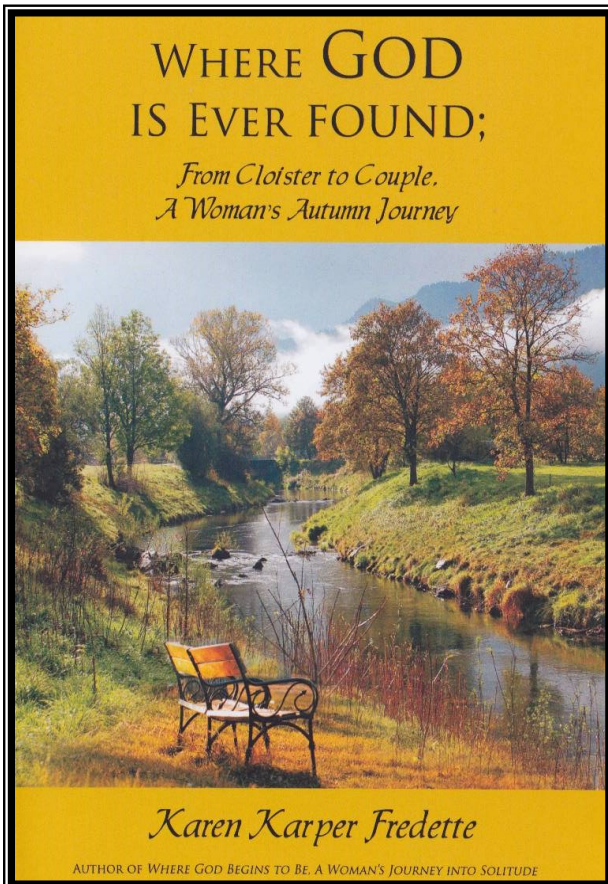
100 pp. Paperback 2014. Grave Distractions Publications; ISBN-10 0991349741; ISBN-13 978-0991349746

BE STILL AND KNOW, God's Presence in Silence

by Norris J. Chumley.

Early Christian spirituality is a fascinating topic today among scholars and general readers alike. Stories of hermits living in the desert in their pursuit of God intrigue people. What motivated them and drew them to silence on the path to God? Chumley introduces us to "hesychasm," or silence, and to the lives of its early practitioners. We are then encouraged to explore its value for today.

156 pp. Paperback. \$20.00; 2014; Fortress Press; ISBN- 13: 978-1451470512; ebook ISBN:9781451479911

**YOUTUBE VIDEOS**

You are invited to view the videos of our weekly Livestream broadcasts which are now available on *YouTube*. Type in: Karen & Paul Fredette and all the programs beginning March 2013 will appear thanks to David Holmes. The March to August 2013 programs are based on **Consider the Ravens**. These are followed by presentations focused on Clare & Francis of Assisi, using Karen's biography of St. Clare as the main source of the material presented. The most recent series of programs, entitled "***A Hermit's Journal***" reflects on Karen's initial experience of hermit life in 1989 in Colt Run Hollow, West Virginia.

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you find this website helpful to you and have comments, and/or suggestions for making it more relevant to the needs of hermits and religious solitaries of any faith tradition (or none), please use the "CONTACT US" feature to express your thoughts and opinions...and thanks...and may you be blessed now and forever.

Karen & Paul