



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

February 2021

Thoughts in Solitude

Y'all might be the very people to answer a question that has been on my mind for several years and to which I'm having a hard time getting a thoughtful answer from anyone:

"Can it be a home

if only one person lives there?"

When I ask people this, I usually get a quick, flippant answer, "Of course it can!" from people (including therapists) who have never lived alone or maybe even spent one night alone in their lives and can't imagine being alone, eating alone, watching TV alone, walking alone, sleeping alone, year after year. I finally said to one friend from high school—who is a therapist—"This is a profound question in my life. Something that I agonize over, and you're blowing me off with a sound bite!" This is a woman who wrote me after the lockdown started, "When John (husband) and I sit down to dinner every night, we know exactly what you're going through." (*Insert eye roll here.*)

When reading your newsletter, I am befuddled by the number of people who label themselves hermits and yet live with a partner. I don't question the validity of this, just that it means they have someone to talk to in person if they need to talk, someone to hold them if they need to be held, someone to sit or walk in silence with, someone to pick them up off the floor if they fall (and call 911 if necessary). I live on the edge of an abyss with no one to catch me or even care if I fall in. Or, frankly, even notice.

I guess my question is one of *authenticity*. A home, so all the lore goes, is where you live

with your family and loved ones. Where you hunker down for safety and companionship. When I ask, "*Can it be a home if only one person lives there?*" I'm asking, "Is this a *real* home?" If it isn't, what is it?

I believe in God, and my preferred term is one used by Suzanne Segal, *The Vastness*. I believe that The Vastness is made of (to state it simplistically) love in some way. I believe this, but I do not have a *sense* of it, of the presence of God, a personal, loving presence. Oh, how I wish I could experience that! To feel that I am held in the arms of love as the cozy Protestant hymns describe it. I feel that I am twisting alone in the wind. I believe in my head that The Vastness sees me and even knows the number of hairs on my head, but I do not feel *seen*. I read somewhere that the definition of loneliness is "not feeling seen." My belief in The Vastness offers me no solace or comfort except intellectually.

Background: I was raised Roman Catholic and converted to Judaism 24 years ago when I was 48. My late husband converted the following year. He has been gone now for 20 years. I have no children, siblings parents or any family. I'll stop short of telling you my whole life story but affirm I am interested in your thoughts on my question.



E. Cooper

New R.B. Reader



During most of 2020, while unimaginable and heart-breaking events were taking place around our world, we (Paul & Karen) were slowly reading our way through a book which stretched our souls, as well as our minds and hearts. We were dipping into the history of our universe from the Big Bang to a Now that continues to expand in such beauty that we are left speechless.

One author, Judy Cannato, employs the term “radical amazement” in attempting to express the appropriate human response as we discover ever more mysteries of the cosmos. And as we try to comprehend how incredibly vast the universe is, we also sense how very, very small we are! This is not such a bad thing to ponder.

Although we are more like grains of sand, even on this home-globe we call earth, each one of us is a living being loved beyond measure. Just consider the wondrous marvel of our own human bodies. New discoveries about the intricate complexities of nature are

being made daily in laboratories around the world.

One of the more recent discoveries about the universe is that it continues to expand; growing larger and moving faster through time. Sophisticated instruments can now detect both dark energy and dark matter, acting in and filling out what we once supposed was just empty space. And as the universe is expanding and accelerating, all of creation, even human beings continue to evolve. Wherever we look, whether the starry sky or a tiny gnat, something new is happening.

Recently the word “virus” has received far more attention than anyone wanted. We cannot see a virus; we don’t notice a virus entering our body, but at a certain point in its development, we feel how it is changing us in ways that are uncomfortable and even dangerous. Our marvelous human immune systems try to eliminate this invader and we can feel like we have been kicked by a mule! Most of us overcome these unwelcome assaults and are considered “lucky”. What about the hundreds of thousands who are not? What happens to those who pass out of this world, leave this tiny planet? Where do they go? What do they become? What new part do they play in this glorious dance of the universe?

One wonderful fact we know is that LIFE does not end, it only changes. Life, energy, consciousness, awareness all change form, but do not cease being. No matter what name we may give it, LIFE goes on; is here and now and everywhere; and LIFE is constantly changing, eternally in transition, evolving into ever more wonderful forms. LIFE has many names but perhaps the truest and most expressive name is LOVE. While alive let us learn all we can about living LIFE, about LOVE, and await in wonder what lies ahead of us.

With our grateful love, Karen & Paul

Raven’s Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in solitary life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. It affirms and encourages 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.

An annual donation is appreciated, each giving according to their means. Please send payment in US dollars (PayPal converts foreign currency to US dollars). Anything extra goes into a fund to insure that all who want **Raven’s Bread** can receive it.

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>; our email: pkfredette@frontier.com and the Blog for Lovers of Solitude: www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog.



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Wood B. Hermit

**Profiles of God:
ways of imagining what God is like**

By Fr. Eugene Stockton (an RB reader)
Edited by Leonard Blahut
Order from:
Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust
22 Somers Street, Lawson,
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**A thousand ages in your sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.**

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and
my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with
forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me
the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world,
and am free.

Wendell Berry

NEW VIDEOS: A WORD FROM STILL WOOD

In August of last year, after receiving so much correspondence expressing discouragement and frustration related to the pandemic, we decided to offer a monthly word of encouragement and hope via YouTube Videos. This link is for the January Video.

<https://youtu.be/jSYzxxnOnjs>.

Here is the link to the article that featured Raven's Bread Ministries in the New York Times on November 29, 2020.

"What We Can Learn From Solitude"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/28/style/self-care/hermits-solitude.html>



A Final Reflection



God does not give us what we want.

God does not cater to us in this way nor should we cater to ourselves or others in this way.

God waits for us to stop being the center of desire, making things “just right” for me.

When we drop this madness of seeking what we want we have a chance to be devoted to God. The world is set up so that it responds with the things we need to awaken.

This response, if we need to name it, is love.

not our puny self-centered love—

it is our transcendent love for that which leads us To God.

When we are able to open in the Way—we are free from suffering. We need to study the things that blind and block the Light of Being.

We think we are in control—we are not in control—thinking we are in control leads to attempts to arrange life the way we think we will be comfortable—we need to study these attempts because they

Are the building blocks that block the Light of Being.

It’s the times when we get irritable and angry, and we lose sight of who is in charge.

Go towards what you want to avoid—knowing letting go as comfort is groundless and you are not in charge.

Be like water. Water takes the shape of the container. Water in a round bowl is round. But you cannot pretend to be water.

Being water is an experience of being One True Being.

When we know we are One True Being, we see we are water, earth, fire, space, and that which is never affected by impurity.

The goal in life is to realize who we are.

You and the Beloved are...well-pleasing...Unbounded by things.

Liz Hulsizer