



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

May 2021

Thoughts on Solitude

Alonetime has no identification that isn't somewhat tainted pejoratively, even *solitaire*. If you're in actuality a nun or monk, your aloneness is acceptable. But for one outside of the church to be called such is a put-down. Ask Hamlet if you doubt me. Relatively few would see role models in reserved, isolated, introvert types, although the computer nerd (thanks to Bill Gates) has found new respect these days. ...Most private people are considered snobs, and only recently have females living alone lost the stigma of "spinster" or "old maid". But if alonetime assumes its rightful place in the "hierarchy of needs", then maybe we will adopt "soloist" rather than "loner" as a positive term for those who prefer, more than most, unescorted and unaided sojourns through life.

An aspect of the unifying principle in Chinese philosophy is helpful in understanding the coexistence of alone and together states. In Chinese thinking, nothing is solely *yin* or solely *yang*. Everything is complementary, composed of both tendencies in varying degrees. The *Tao Te Ching* captures the duality of which we speak poetically:

We join spokes
Together in a wheel,
But it is the center hole
That makes the wagon move.

We shape clay into a pot,
But it is the emptiness inside
That holds whatever we want.

Little in life is our own. Alonetime *is*, and more than that, it offers equal opportunity to

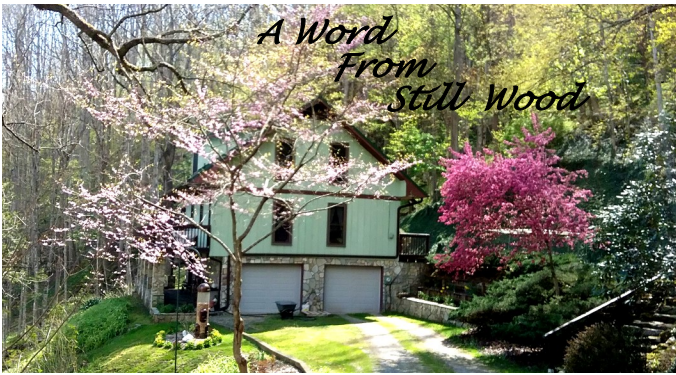
leave the limbo of living in the past or being a slave to modernity. Yet it does not have to be only dissidence. As in musical compositions, alonetime and attachment needs function together as point and counterpoint.

Within this new structure, there is a true liberty in tranquility, and harmony in being is no longer a balancing act. The reconstruction of aloneness informs us that the process for developing sound and wholesome independence and dependency indeed resides within both attachment and alonetime, and that the needs are equal and concomitant with each other. The idea that from re-construing our world we can re-construct it is not new. But no one formula provides the ingredients to match each specific person's claim to be alone. For me to prescribe exactly what you should do to achieve alonetime not only would be counterproductive, but would rob you of the solitude necessary to contemplate your life and tap into your own self-regulatory skills. The seeking of solutions is just as important as the finding, because the journey *is* alonetime.

With the superabundance of information, everyone is expected to come up with answers quickly and remove fears associated with not knowing. But once we all existed in the heavenly peace of alone, quiet, and empty reverie. It was a part of us then; it is an essential piece of us now.



Excerpted from
THE CALL OF SOLITUDE
ALONETIME IN A WORLD OF ATTACHMENT
By Ester Schaler Buchholz, PH. D.



One of the many joys which the spring of 2021 has brought us is the number of responses to the front page article of the February issue in which an RB reader asked a question which clearly touched many hearts. "Can it be a home if only one person lives there?" was posed by E. Cooper. The many folks who responded took her inquiry seriously and offered both understanding and counsel, sharing their own experience as well as prayer.

As we pondered this flood of thoughtful insights, we recognized just how potent the word "home" is and how it evokes such deep emotion in all of us. "Home" has many meanings, depending on one's personal experience.

One such example is found in Robert Frost's poem: "**The Death of the Hired Man**". A husband and wife are discussing the unexpected arrival of a former worker on their farm. Why did he stop at their place rather than go on to that of a relative?

As the husband observes, "*Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.*" In response to this rather harsh statement, his wife offers: "*I should have called it, something you somehow haven't to deserve.*" This gentler description touches our hearts deeply for all of us need a "home place" where we know we are welcome, no matter how unworthy we may feel we are.

A true home is where we can be totally comfortable, totally ourselves, truly wanted. If we have been fortunate enough to have experienced this in our lifetime, we often apply our experience to what it is like to be embraced by God's own love. If we have never been so blessed, we struggle to find to such a place or to experience that kind of acceptance. We may find a home by doing our best to make a "good" home for our family, or work to create a welcoming space around us where others may relax peacefully. Perhaps the most important element in any place we call "home" is a lack of harsh judgement; a sense of total acceptance; or as the young wife so acutely observed, a place which we don't have to "deserve".

Most of us have known some degree of "at-home-ness" in our lifetime so we possess the building blocks for creating one, for our self and for others. Many of the solitaires who contact us say that they feel most "at home" when they are alone. In other words, they have found the gift of being comfortable within themselves. They have also found the loving Source of their being at home.

We thank all of you who have taken time to contribute to this issue of Raven's Bread. It is a rich and nourishing issue because of the honesty, variety and sheer love that your reflections have given it. In fact, we could, with some accuracy, describe **Raven's Bread** as a "home for solitaires"!

We are also VERY grateful for the many generous donations which you have sent in recent months. Every donation that is sent to **R. B.** makes it possible for readers without sufficient funds to receive the issues and helps to defray the costs of shipping books and mailing resources. These contributions also help us to maintain Raven's Rest Hermitage without actually charging any set fees for retreat time. May you all be blest for your steady support and kind generosity.

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

It hasn't changed in a 1,000 years;
200 monasteries, 2000 monks,
no newspapers, no radio, no television:

**MOUNT ATHOS
(Part 1 & Part 2)**

A CBS News Rewind
60 Minutes with Bob Simon
Accessible through the Internet
on YouTube as a video.
Check it out.



**"...and we will come to him (them)
and make our home with him (them)."
John 14: 23**

Serious Lock Down Advice:

Please be careful because people are going crazy. I was just discussing this with the microwave and the toaster while drinking my tea, and we all agreed that things are getting bad. I didn't mention this to the washing machine because she puts a different spin on EVERYTHING!! Certainly couldn't share with the fridge 'cause he's been cold and distant. In the end, the iron straightened me out. She said the situation isn't all that pressing and all the wrinkles will soon get ironed out. The vacuum, however, was very unsympathetic...told me to just suck it up. But the fan was VERY optimistic, giving me hope that it will blow over soon. The toilet looked a bit flushed but said nothing. I asked its opinion but the front door said goodbye 2020. I was becoming unhinged and the doorknob told me to get a grip. You can just about guess what the curtains told me: they said to "pull myself together." We will survive.

Raven's Bread Lending Library

Any *R.B.* reader may request a copy of the library catalogue, via either email or U.S.P.S and select as many as three books to borrow for one month at a time. Or check the *R.B.* website, and make a selection from there. Over 100 volumes available. Books are returned at the reader's expense.

Raven's Bread Resources

Rare and/or "difficult to find" Resources about eremitic life can be ordered through *Raven's Bread* website or a listing with prices can be requested through the mail. Printed Resources can be sent as individual booklets via snail mail or as a PDF file attached to an email. Nearly 50 resources available.



FLEEING HEROD: A JOURNEY THROUGH COPTIC EGYPT WITH THE HOLY FAMILY by James Cowen
Using a fourth-century text that purports to describe the journey of the Holy Family, the author takes us on a fascinating pilgrimage through modern day Egypt. He meets with monks and health workers, desert mystics and visionaries... Cowen reminds us that traveling in ancient footsteps still has the power to reveal truths still valid today.

260 pp. hbk.\$12.95 Paraclete Press 2013

ISBN-10: 1612613047 ISBN-13: 978-1612613048

HOUSE AS A MIRROR OF SELF: EXPLORING THE DEEPER MEANING OF HOME

by Clare Cooper Marcus

This is an unprecedented examination of our relationship to where we live, interwoven with compelling personal stories of the search for a place for the soul. She explores how our self-image is reflected in our homes, power struggles in making a home together with a partner, disruptions in the bonding with home, and beyond the "house as ego" to the call of spirit.

320 pp. \$18.35 pbk. Nicholas-Hayes, Inc 2006

ISBN -10: 0892541245, ISBN -13: 978-0892541249

THE THEOLOGY OF HOME: FINDING THE ETERNAL IN THE EVERYDAY

by Carrie Gress, Noelle Mering with Illustrator, Kim Baile

Home. It is an elegant word, at once both simple and far-reaching. Home is a place to live in and feel comfortable, but it is much more than that. Home is where we are nurtured, where we live, and where we love. The language of home is universal. It is where we find the eternal in the everyday.

235 pp. \$26.49. hbk. Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. 2019

ISBN-10: 1505113652 ISBN-13 : 978-1505113655