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## Still Water

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## Still Water

I watched vast amounts of water pouring down two separate waterfalls that poured together into a central area, with tremendous roaring and the tumult of cataracts beating against rocks and throwing up waves and spray, only to flow away with hardly a ripple and no visible or audible evidence of the previous violent activity. How could this be? The huge volume of water that had just torn through constricted areas flowed away peacefully in a very deep and smooth-sided river bed. I had visible evidence of the saying, "still water runs deep."

We are the same persons who at times face intense challenges, painful and constrictive circumstances that we cannot avoid, yet are able to maintain or recover our balance, and move quietly forward. How are we able to do this? The depth of our spirituality is one significant factor, the evenness of the adaptations we make based upon our previous experiences is the other.

The noisy, attention-getting movements and events in our lives are real, but they are actually of far less importance than the values we apply to even small, every-day decisions. No matter how strongly attractive or powerfully repulsive some thoughts or occurrences might be, the direction we choose is much more significant than the thoughts and associated feelings that come to us.

How do we want to live? What kind of persons do we want to be? The answers to these or similar questions provide the deep and smooth-sided channel that allows us to deal with minor or major turbulence on the surface of our lives and move through and away from them to experiences of peace and satisfaction. We do not forget or deny the pain or hard work involved in doing what is right even as we endure an injustice, face a crisis, or carry on through a day filled with many small but exhausting encounters with people. Nor are we drawn away onto a false pathway by flashy or fascinating attractions that seem to promise fulfillment but, as experience has taught us, never do.

Feelings follow action, so that peace and contentment are consequences of enacting our spirituality according to our values, rather than a commodity that we can take for ourselves as we might wish. The substantial part of our spirituality is found in each and every decision we make with integrity, sometimes in the midst of unsettling and perhaps fearful or anger-causing situations. Whether the issue is a small one, such as deciding whether or not to visit a sick friend in a hospital, or one with long-range consequences, such as selecting a career, when we make a decision that is appropriate for us and for all it is usually followed by an interior calmness of spirit, or peace.

Peace is as much a consequence of good decision-making as sharp dissonance is a sign of having somehow failed to act according to our sense of right and wrong.

As powerful as the waterfalls might seem when they occur in our lives, if we make our decisions based on the deep and memorable experiences of spirit that we have had, we will soon arrive once again in a state of still water.