

# Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL

## *Fingerprints*

*There is nothing in our world  
that God does not know,  
nothing about which He is  
unfamiliar, because there is  
nothing in our world  
that God did not create.  
Thus, since He created it,  
everything in our world bears  
His fingerprints.*

# Supernatural Senses

**I**n the early eighteenth century, Antonio Stradivari created stringed instruments of unsurpassed quality, violins, violas and cellos that are still considered the finest stringed instruments around. An accomplished musician, such as the renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman, can hear and feel the tonal quality of a Stradivarius without even checking for the name of the manufacturer printed inside. The exquisite instrument itself bears the fingerprint—in this case, the sound—of the master craftsman. Likewise, the spiritual person sees God all around him, because everything bears His mark—the fingerprint of the Creator.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

*Romans 1:20*

What is a “spiritual” person? Is it just a Christian, an individual who has identified himself with the risen Lord Jesus? Or is it someone who communes with the invisible spirit-world, someone whose feet rarely touch down upon the gritty soil of terra firma (or, in the language of the seventies, a “space cadet”)?

In this context, a spiritual person is one who has stepped beyond the barest essentials of Christendom—one who has embraced Kingdom living in the here and now instead of deferring it until the hereafter. Every believer has the Spirit dwelling inside; every believer has been converted from a flesh-only being to a spirit/flesh being. But that involuntary implanting of the Holy Spirit at conversion does not ensure that the believer will then live a spiritual life. One can have the Spirit living within and still remain happily oblivious to the richness of life He offers.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

*Romans 8:11-14*

The supernatural senses of the Holy Spirit are key to our ability to sense and identify God around us. Without the hearing of the Spirit we could not hear God's voice in the wind. Without the eyesight of the Spirit we could not see His creative hand in the world about us. Without the touch of the Spirit we could not feel the presence of God in our life. Without the voice of the Spirit we could not express our thanksgiving and praise.

God—that is, God as represented by any and all members of the triunity of the Godhead—is an active participant in our lives. To imagine that one meets God only during weekly, corporate worship is a little like imagining that one is only bound by one's marriage vows once a year during the anniversary celebration; the rest of the year one is free to disregard the commitment to, or even the presence of, the marital partner.

We are free to disregard the signs of Him, but we do so by our own choice—and at our own risk. God has spread Himself around so liberally that we have no excuse not to discover Him. He is in the breeze that cools us in the midst of summer heat. He is in the soft cooing of the baby, pleasant and content within its mother's arms. He is in the rhythmic lapping of small waves on the shore of the mountain lake, and the bubbling song of the stream traveling over and around water-smoothed boulders. He is found in the shared intimacies of old friends over a weathered picket fence. He can be found in the crushing, incessant noise of the city, as well as in the bucolic stillness of the country glen.

God is near us in every tragedy and joy, every sorrow and ecstasy. His life surrounds our own, holding us up, nurturing, coaxing, chastising and encouraging. He is there when we are aware of Him, and He is there when we are not.

More than just a reassuring comfort, His presence actually *describes* God to us. He has left His fingerprint on everything about us—not just so that we would know that He is there, but that we might come to understand *who* is there. It is God's nature, His personality, His very essence that is there for the possessing, and we will remain something less than what we could be, until we avail ourselves of that knowledge. 卍

*Open my ears, that I may hear  
Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;  
And while the wave-notes fall on my ear,  
Everything false will disappear.*

*Silently now I wait for Thee,  
Ready, my God, Thy will to see;  
Open my ears, illumine me,  
Spirit divine!*

Clara H. Scott

# The Condition of the Heart

**W**ell, you silly goose. Do something! I thought as I crouched in the early morning chill on the near side of the pond. The temperature was still in the thirties, and I wasn't dressed for being outside for long. But the Canada goose standing on the opposite shore was too perfectly posed for me not to slip out into the early morning damp to shoot a few pictures of him. As a model, however, he fell considerably short of "super" status. The most I got out of him was an occasional head-turn, but the rest of his plump body remained as still as a marble statue.

At long last, with the dampness seeping through my sneakers and my bare arms numb with cold, I gave up. I rose and began to walk up the rise, back to the house, grudgingly content with but a few static images of the large goose.

Just then I heard a thunderous fluttering behind me. The coy waterfowl had just been toying with me, waiting till I turned my back before going into action. I turned quickly, raising the camera to my face. I panned with the launching goose, and as he passed just a few trees away, I pressed the shutter. Then once more as he departed the property.

And I thought about the old hymn.

*Sometimes a light surprises  
the Christian while he sings;  
It is the Lord, who rises  
with healing in His wings:  
When comforts are declining,  
He grants the soul again  
A season of clear shining,  
to cheer it after rain.*



*In holy contemplation  
we sweetly then pursue  
The theme of God's salvation,  
and find it ever new.  
Set free from present sorrow,  
we cheerfully can say,  
Let the unknown tomorrow  
bring with it what it may.*

William Cowper

Sometimes we stand there waiting for God to do something. We wait. And we wait. And to us the Lord seems as blank and motionless as a granite statue. Do something! We plead, but it seems as if He has turned off His hearing.

And then, just about the time we figure our heavenly Father has lost all interest in us—just about the time we have turned away from our disappointed expectancy—He surprises us by His grace. He takes wing and reveals His beauty, His undying love for us—and His flawless timing.

At its root, the ability to discover God in everything around us really comes down to the condition of the heart. Is God in His fullness a true and substantial part of our life? Or is He just someone we meet with for an hour or two on Sunday mornings?

Because God is gracious—in personality, in behavior—He will let us slide by, meeting with Him only occasionally at utterly predictable times. In His grace, He gives His children permission to live pretty much on their own. God does not press His affections, He does not force us into holy intimacy, but permits us the self-injury of living *with* His Spirit, but not *by* His Spirit.

Nothing of God is diminished by our behavior.

But *we* are.

Believers who spend little time with their Lord are ill-equipped to discover Him in their surroundings. Having little knowledge of His personality, they fail to recognize Him when He draws near; having little experience with His behavior, they miss the evidence when He works in their midst.

“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist...”

Acts 17:24-28a

The spiritually minded believer—one who actually listens to the Spirit dwelling within—is better equipped to identify the personality and work of God in unexpected places at surprising times. The believer’s “sixth sense”—the Holy Spirit—quickens the other five to detect the hand of God in the otherwise mundane temporal occurrences all around us.

The condition of the heart determines whether we discover God at every turn, or miss His handiwork and life-lessons all together. ☘

# Conflict

**E**verything on this earth points us to God. This is God's creation, and when He had made it, He declared it "good."

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

*Genesis 1:31*

We are surrounded by that goodness, a creation saturated with the personality of God, and we need not look far to discover something that points us to Him. The current CEO of the world's system, however, is not the Lord God, but every believer's adversary: Satan.

God made the land mass we refer to as the United States of America. It is part of His creation, and His fingerprints can be found everywhere from Maine to California, from North Dakota to Texas. But this land mass is governed by the laws of a federal government, as well as the laws of each individual state.

Just so, God made all of the earth. It is His creation. But the societies dwelling upon it are currently being "ruled" by Satan. Wrapped over God's good creation like a heavy woolen blanket on a hot August day, the system devised by its temporary ruler does its best to insulate us from our connection with God.

And [Satan] led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."

*Luke 4:5-6*

For the believer, Satan's influence only dulls the senses, but for the one who does not yet know God through Christ, those senses that might discover God in His creation have been dramatically restricted by the "god of this world."

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

*2 Corinthians 4:3-4*

Even so, as Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans, God's fingerprints—His *authorship* of Creation—remain intact for all to discover.

For those who know Him, every situation, every experience either draws us closer to God or tugs us away from Him. Thus our sovereign God remains central to our lives, for even when the believer follows after the siren call of the adversary, a part of him is still thinking of his God.

For the believer, everything in this world—good or bad, righteous or unrighteous—leads, inevitably, to this world's Creator. When we witness from afar the cruel and insidious machinations of the world's system, we are overwhelmed with revulsion, and a sense of pity for those who subscribe to it. For we subscribe to a better way. The glaring inadequacies of Satan's way cause us to tighten our grip on the lifeline of God's holy word.

Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.  
 Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations;  
 You established the earth, and it stands.  
 They stand this day according to Your ordinances,  
 For all things are Your servants.  
 If Your law had not been my delight,  
 Then I would have perished in my affliction.  
 I will never forget Your precepts,  
 For by them You have revived me.  
 I am Yours, save me;  
 For I have sought Your precepts.  
 The wicked wait for me to destroy me;  
 I shall diligently consider Your testimonies.

*Psalms 119:89-95*

But even when we pay heed to that siren song, when we give in to the darker cravings of our lingering flesh, the indwelling Spirit ensures that we will not have peace in our sin.

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away  
 Through my groaning all day long.  
 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
 My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

*Psalms 32:3-4*

Because the Holy Spirit is a permanent connection to our heavenly Father, the spiritually minded believer will see God in every sorrow or joy, every crisis or time of peace, every moment of temptation or victory. We will find and experience God when the world's system surrounds and invades us, as well as when we seek Him in the quietude of the sylvan glen.

And though He does not sanction our transgressions, we can discover our gracious God even there as His Spirit quickens our regret and confession, and His forgiveness leads us back onto the path of righteousness.



Thus we live by the sometimes-painful truth that we cannot hide in our sin. Since there is no place God is not, He will find us even there. He will always take us by the hand and draw us back to His way. ❧

Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
 Or where can I flee from Your presence?  
 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;  
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.  
 If I take the wings of the dawn,  
 If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,  
 Even there Your hand will lead me,  
 And Your right hand will lay hold of me.  
 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,  
 And the light around me will be night,"  
 Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
 And the night is as bright as the day.  
 Darkness and light are alike to You.

*Psalms 139:7-12*

The truth is that while God dwells in His world He is separated from it by a gulf forever impassable. However closely He may be identified with the work of His hands, they are and must eternally be other than He, and He is and must be antecedent to and independent of them. He is transcendent above all His works even while He is immanent within them.

What does the divine immanence mean in direct Christian experience? It means simply that God is here. Wherever we are, God is here. There is no place, there can be no place, where He is not. Ten million intelligences standing at as many points in space and separated by incomprehensible distances can each one say with equal truth, God is here. No point is nearer to God than any other point. It is exactly as near to God from any place as it is from any other place. No one is in mere distance any further from or any nearer to God than any other person.

*A. W. Tozer*