

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is . . . (KJ Psalms 63:1)

“OH, I’M A VERY spiritual person. I just don’t much like institutional religion.” How often do we hear that? These people might be surprised to learn that humans are *all* “very spiritual,” that we’re *all* drawn to what lies behind the world we live in.

Basing its research on 40 studies taken in 20 countries, Oxford University’s “Cognition, Religion, and Theology Project” has determined that religious believing is instinctual or innate to humankind. Religion, as Oxford University professor Roger Trigg described it, is “universal, prevalent, and deep rooted” in all cultures. “We tend to see purpose in the world,” Trigg concluded. “We think that something is there even if you can’t see it” (Clabough).

Atheists and secularists will likely see this religious impulse as a negative one, something individuals and society must “grow out of,” said Trigg. But then he continued:

Religious people would say, 'If there is a God, then . . . he would have given us inclinations to look for him.'
(Clabough)

And he's right. I'm one of those religious people who would say that. I do indeed believe that God has placed in each of us the inclination to find Him. It is always there, even when we choose not to respond to it. As Paul wrote:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. (NIV Rom. 8:5)

And yet, no matter how much we may wander off, setting our mind on some human quest or doctrinal byway, no matter how misdirected our religious impulses might become, this longing for God and inclination for spirituality is always going to be in us.

That's because we are something more than this natural world of physical cells and instincts. Just as music is something more than noise or notes. Just as art is something more than paint or pixels. Within us is *something more*. That's why human faith can triumph in spite of all the evils stacked against it. That's why we can shake with laughter in the midst of tragedy and shed tears of glee at the subtlest irony or the most obvious pratfall.

We all share in an unseen spiritual melody because God's spirit is in every human heart. This does indeed make religion something other than "just a quirky interest of a few" (Trigg, Clabough). And aren't we glad.