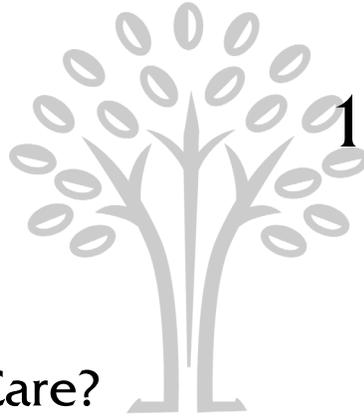


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Why Should I Care?

I'm not really a religious person.

But you believe?

Not really, not the way you think.

But you believe in certain things.

Well, maybe. I think certain things are essential.

Such as?

Such as the sun is going to come up in the morning.

Such as I've got some reason for being here.

Such as it's all got to mean something; we just have no idea what.

Then you have a kind of faith in something?

But not like you mean. I could still believe in those things even if all this is a big cosmic accident.

How about science?

It doesn't have all the answers we thought it would, but there is something hopeful about it.

But you're not going to trust your life to it?

No, it's a human thing that's fallible.

Besides, it discovers little things like atomic power that can be good, but can be used for evil purposes.

By humans.

Who else?

So what about this humanity thing?

What about it?

Do you have faith in humanity?

Are you kidding?

What about all that vast potential we always hear about?

Why would I trust in a species that just can't get enough genocides?

That's not a favorable rating.

No, it's not, and I happen to be one of them.

But humans are more than terror and torture.

Yes, but there is as much to mistrust as to admire.

So why are you so enamored with fantasy video, TV, and cinema?

They're probably an escape.

So *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* are just escapist?

Well, they say something.

About?

About what could be, another dimension.

Something more.

But not magic—I don't believe in that—or supernatural stuff.

But you like stories of possession like *Stigmata*—that's supernatural—and ghost stories. Why do you get off on that?

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I know what that really is—just imagination popping my primal fear.

Why do you get all teary-eyed when you go to a U2 concert?

It's really hopeful.

Hopeful in what?

In something more than all this.

Hope coming from where?

Just dreams, just longings.

So there's something about singing the same song with thousands?

Maybe you get a glimpse of the bigger picture.

But you're a tourist there, aren't you?

You don't normally live with the thousands.

I've got my small circle of friends. That's all I need.

Or all you have.

Whatever.

I can imagine you don't have extensive trust in either government or big business.

They're systems. You live with them. Try to make them better. Endure them. Outwit them. They try to get rich. They try to control or profit from everything they touch.

Cheerful thought.

Isn't it?

And the Web?

A parallel universe.

Is it real?

Kind of. Not exactly real. Not exactly not.

But you live in it.

It lives in the world.

But it's made by humans too.

Yes, so it's just as fallible.

But you find a sense of connection there?

Partially. It offers what it offers.

So why do you keep on watching the Olympics if you don't really like sports?

The international thing.

Aren't those just more governmental systems?

It's the people of those governments who come together.

But just for a moment.

A moment is all we ever have.

Ever want more than that?

Wanting doesn't change reality.

I know the difference between fantasy and reality.

Speaking of fantasy, is that where God belongs?

It's just a word.

So is your name.

I could change my name, and I'd still be me.

God is like that.

Keep talking.

It's a word that points to something beyond it.

So what about the idea of God?

Honestly?

Be brutal.

The deity of popular culture, the institutional church, TV evangelists, and football team prayers—I just can't buy those.

Tell me more about the God you don't believe in.

I don't believe in a Big Old Man in the sky, some Zeus on Mount Olympus throwing lightning bolts.

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I don't believe in a Divine Master Puppeteer pulling all the strings on all the little drones in the anthill.

I don't accept a God who has suffering as a part of the plan.

I don't believe in the tribal God, sending hocus-pocus to make us win while the other guy bites the dust.

I don't believe in that god either.

But you call yourself a Christian?

I discarded those concepts of god long ago. But I also don't believe in some flat, two-dimensional, mechanical, disenchanted universe either.

If you don't buy that all that stuff, but still have faith, what's the alternative?

That's what I want to talk to you about.

For Further Reflection

Ecclesiastes 1:1–9 What does it all mean?