

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



October 6, 2013

Why Humanity Needs God

We can argue all day long about the theoretical evidence for God’s existence, but one of the best proofs is more practical: the beneficial social effects arising out of belief.

“Those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (Titus 3:8).

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Matthew Parris is a British journalist and former member of Parliament who was born and raised in South Africa. He is also a confirmed atheist.

His experiences in Africa have provided him a unique insight into the problems that plague that continent and the various attempts that outsiders have made to address those problems. In late 2008, he wrote an article in *The Times* explaining his views on the subject. The title—“As an Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God”—is an apt summary of the article’s surprising message.

Parris is convinced that the chief problem in Africa is what he calls “the crushing passivity of the people’s mindset,” a sort of groupthink rooted in fear of tribal hierarchy and evil spirits. This mindset “grinds down the individual spirit, stunting curiosity.” He claims that the introduction of Christianity, “with its teaching of a direct, personal link

between the individual and God . . . smashes straight through [this] philosophical/spiritual framework.”

He notes that in his interactions with Africans, the Christians he encountered stood out as different. “Their faith appeared to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, an engagement with the world—a directness in their dealings with others—that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall.”

Some claim that the chief benefit of Christianity is the aid money and services that missionaries bring to the population, but Parris doesn’t buy it. Money and services can’t change the underlying worldview that governs how people relate to the world around them.

He concludes that if Africa is to complete its transition to a modern society, “a whole belief system must first be supplanted”—and offers Christianity as the most successful means of achieving that change.

Parris’s honesty is refreshing, but he should take his findings to the next level. What he acknowledges concern-

ing Africa can be said of *all* humanity: The personal and social ills of *every* culture can be traced to defective mindsets, or ways of thinking about life and the world. Those problems cannot be solved until the minds of the people are changed. That’s what Christianity offers.

Belief in God tends to produce good works, which, as Paul reminded Titus, “are good and profitable to men.” Wherever the religion of Christ has been implemented—the real deal, not phoney imitations—the lives of individuals have been improved and society in general has been elevated. Far from being a pie-in-the-sky fairy tale, Christianity has a social benefit in the present. “Godliness is profitable for all things, *having promise of the life that now is* and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

Christianity has its share of hypocrites who damage the brand—every philosophical movement does, even atheism. But on the whole, the teachings of Jesus have had an overwhelmingly positive effect on humanity. We pay a dear price when we decide we no longer need faith and cast it aside.

– David King