

Sunday, January 12, 2014

## From the book “The Ministry of Salvation” (2)

# The Image of God in Man

### 1- What is the greatest privilege God gave man over the rest of the creation?

The answer to this question lays in one fundamental point which is man was not created like the rest of the creation; rather he was created in the image of God and His likeness. The book of wisdom states *“For God created human beings to be immortal, he made them as an image of his own nature”* (Wisdom 2:23), and we read in the book of Genesis regarding the creation of man: *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food’; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”* (Genesis 1:26-31)



We notice the phrase *“The image of God”* repeated three times in this passage to emphasize the fact that God created man in His image. We also notice the words of the Holy Bible *“God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”*, Here the expression *“Very Good”* was only mentioned after creating man. In all five days of the creation, before man was created, the Bible only used the expression *“God saw it was good.”* This emphasizes the privilege that man received in that he was created in God’s image.

St. Athanasius explain this point in his book “The incarnation of the Word” saying: *“... And of all these earthly creatures He reserved especial mercy for the race of men. Therefore, upon men who, as animals, were essentially impermanent, He bestowed a grace which other creatures lacked-namely the impress of His own Image, a share in the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that, reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the Mind of God even as He does, though in limited degree they might continue forever in the blessed and only true life of the saints in paradise.”*

Creating mankind was different from the rest of the creation; man was created in God’s image and was given, as mentioned by St. Athanasius, a fellowship in the power of His Word. This is the reason why man was created as a reasonable being, in that he has fellowship in the power of God the Word.

### 2- How did man attain the privilege of being created in God’s image?

### 3- How did man receive life?

### 4- What did life mean to man in that stage (before falling)?

In order to understand how man received the privilege of being created in God’s image, we should read what is written in Genesis chapter 2, *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* (Genesis 2:7). In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, the divine inspiration speaks about the whole creation including man. In the second chapter of the book, we see that He talks about the creation of man in more details. He explains the privilege that this unique creature [man] has attained. God created him from the dust of the ground and breathed in his nostrils a breath of life. Therefore, the source of life that was given to man is a Divine breath. Subsequently, his life is closely connected to God the source of his life. As a result, man is composed of two elements, one is earthly “Dust” and the other is heavenly “the breath of life” that he received from the divine breath.

As we know, breathing for humans is to exhale air until it is depleted from the lungs and he needs another inhale cycle. As to God, the matter is different. When we say that God breathed a breath of life into man, it means that God has given him a continuous stream of life that does not cease.

**Thus, through the divine breath that man took from God, he gained life and took the image of God. Additionally, man’s life has become dependent on his continuous connection and clinging to God.**

*Fr. Marcos Daoud*

frmarcosdaoud@yahoo.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL