

Created in the Image of God
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

“God created man in order to have someone on whom to shower His love.”
Irenaeus of Lyons

God created the sun, moon and stars; He made the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, and He saw that it was good. But somehow something was missing, some component higher and more wonderful needed to be created. These lesser forms of creation declared the power and the glory of God’s wisdom, but they did not share His spirit, His love, His emotion. God longed to have someone outside Himself to love and who could love Him in return. He created, not to acquire something but in order to give, to share Himself with others.

THE CROWN OF CREATION So we read: “God created man in His own image... Male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). By portraying woman as coming from the same substance as man (Genesis 2: 22 – 24), the Bible teaches that man and woman are equal in dignity, and value. Together, they reflect the glory of their Creator. This was the masterpiece of their Creator God. Not Angels of pure spirit, not animals lacking in self-determination and creativity, but “persons” – soul and body, reason and passion, capable of love and moral choices; the finest reflection of Himself that God could produce: not as a result of some cosmic accident, but the very Crown of Creation.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD? Obviously, this image does not consist of physical likeness because Scripture makes it clear that God is Spirit. “Image of God” means that humanity was created to have a special relationship with God – personal and eternal. It means that we can know the reality of God’s wisdom, power and protection as well as experience His love and sense His presence with us.

WE MUST REFLECT GOD’S NATURE For example, the Bible tells us that God is love, so we have the capacity to love God and love one another. God is righteous and just, so we are created with a sense of justice and a will, enabling us to choose between good and evil. God communicates and we can communicate with one another and with Him in prayer and worship. Humanity is personal because God is personal, and each individual displays a distinct personality. We were meant to develop mentally, morally and spiritually. The creator delights to bestow His love on us as we ultimately learn to enjoy eternal life with God – ours not by nature but by God’s grace and generosity.

A REVOLUTIONARY TEACHING-INTIMACY BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANS
This concept makes the teaching of the Bible totally different from all other world religions. Only the Bible stresses God’s intimacy with people. Created man contains two elements – clay and the breath of God (Genesis 2:7). Clay

represents our kinship with the rest of God's creation; the breath of God represents our kinship with God himself. In the book of Psalms we have examples of this intimate relationship between God and his people: "The Lord is my Shepherd"(Psalm 23:1).; "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me"(Psalm 139:1).

Humanity has been called 'Anthropos,'the upward-looking one who prays, worships and erects altars: Homo Imago Dei, -"the God-like one" –capable of living in two environments-physical and spiritual.