

"Know that all persons are born alike, with a capacity and capability for reasoning and feeling---without preference of age, sex, or class" (Mark Minucius Felix, c. 200).

The opening address of the 1776 American Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson states, "We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

President Abraham Lincoln would further the impact of Declaration of Independence's "all men are created equal" in his Gettysburg Address by stating "Four score and seven years ago our fore fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Equality of mankind though did not have its origination in the ideals of famous American authors of declarations. Rather, these orators' beliefs were already the most basic of beliefs firmly grounded in the Holy Bible.

In God's creation of man He did not create man in the likeness of the creatures He created for man nor

did He create man with the preconceived notion of creating a superior dominant race of men. Rather, God most richly blessed and created man in His Image and according to His likeness.

In the Holy Book of Genesis, the first of all Holy Biblical Books, it is written,

"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'" (Genesis 1:26).

There is no color of flesh noted, no specific earmarking features to be discerned of man. The only specifics of man are that each and every creation of man is in the likeness of the Father in Heaven. All men originated from the original first man in the likeness of God.

"Then God formed man out of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

We all have the same Father in Heaven. By equality of our same abiding Father in Heaven we all have the identical rights and privileges to worship Him. Those who were chosen as children of God were those

whom believed in Him, obeyed Him, and kept His commandments. Children of God were not distinguishable by race, gender, affluence or scholarly education. Children of God were not distinguishable by society prominence, or families in which they were born into.

Rather children of God were those whom accepted the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings of salvation. All could accept these teachings; it was not categorized by sex, race, age, or proclaimed self-worth. All could accept these teachings. Equality was endowed for all humanity.

With the 2009 presidential election of Barack Obama, the first African American as the commander in chief of the United States of America, we live the American dream in its truest sense and purpose. We live the dream of all is created equal. We live the Biblical teachings of humbleness of equality for all, of being distinguished only by the virtuous life in which we choose to live and abide. Coming into fruition is the historical election of a man distinguished by his desire for a political life, to change the American way of life. Barack Obama, desiring to be the first African American president, political campaign platform promoted the need to seek out world peace, to financially stabilize the economy, to promote children's healthcare issues,

and raise educational standards. By election of this great nation through vote of multiple races, doing what many thought unachievable by virtue alone Barack Obama won the landslide electoral vote for the highest political office of this great country.

Lactantius, a Roman early church father, c. 304-313, has written, "God who produces and give breathe to men, willed that all should be equal that is, equally matched. He has imposed the same condition of living on all. He has opened wisdom to all. He has promised immortality to all. No one is cut off from His Heavenly benefits...In His sight no one is a slave; no one is a master. For is all have the same Father, by an equal right we are all children. No one is poor in the sight of God but he who is without justice. No one is rich but he who is full of virtues...For this reason neither the Romans not the Greeks could possess justice, for they had men differing from one another by many degrees; the poor and rich, the humble and powerful, private persons and the highest authorities of kings. However where all persons are not equally matched there is no justice. And by its nature, inequality excludes justice."

Equality under the Father in Heaven is not a new concept but one of ancient Biblical age. It is one the early church fathers indoctrinated in early Christian beliefs founded on Holy Scripture expounded upon.

Mark Minucius Felix, a early church father and apologist, further wrote much on the subject, "Are you elevated by nobility of birth? Do you praise your parents? Yet, we are all born with one lot. It is only by virtue that we are distinguished."

In the Holy Book of Galatians, St. Paul the Apostle explains to the Church in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28).

In the Holy Book of Acts, St. Peter said and it is written, "*In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him*" (Acts 10:34-35).

In the national pledge of allegiance we proudly and respectfully recite in our schools, sporting events, and programs of importance we declare "one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

We can now live that allegiance with our fellow United States citizens in all truth and well meaning. There is now no contrasting subliminal message given but a pledge of sincerity and right actions. Truly the 2009 inauguration of president elect

Barack Obama will be a historical moment for the proposition and teachings of the early church fathers, for the founding fathers of American history and their declarations and ultimately of how Our Father in Heaven willed His creation of humanity to exist upon this earth.

While we rejoice in this true allegiance of mankind's equality, let us not lose sight of its purpose. While this is a display of equality, the election itself is one of leadership for this great nation, not an expression of its character. In that respect, let us all pray for the leadership of this man, the pressures that follow all historical impacts and hope that he will resoundly meet all the challenges that currently plague this nation.

Let us pray for a better America, for an America to turn back to the basics of a Godly nation founded on Godly premises, to the fundamentals of the Ten Commandments, for the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings to ring within the hearts of all those who love Him. With upright leadership, prayer can return to the schools, and the Name of God can be freely spoken without fear of repercussion in all our gatherings. This is a ardent example of...

"rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

May the Lord God of Heaven and Earth be with our
Country, all its people, and its President, Barack
Obama,

Bishop Youssef
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Church of the Southern
United States