



Called to Be the Children of God: The Catholic Theology of Human Deification

Carl E. Olson MTS, Fr. David Vincent Meconi S.J.

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The first generations of Christians saw in their new lives in Jesus Christ a way to transcend all the limitations of sin and death and become new creatures. St. Peter expressed this as "participating in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), while St. Athanasius stated it succinctly 300 years later: "God became a human, so humans could become God." This is the heart of the Christian faith and the pledge of the Christian promise: that those baptized in Christ become "divine" through their partaking in God's own life and love. This is why Christians can live forever, this is the source of their charity and their holiness, this is why we do not need to live in a world ruled by fallen instinct and sinful desires. We have been made for more, for infinitely more.

This book gathers more than a dozen Catholic scholars and theologians to examine what this process of "deification" means in their respective areas of study. It offers fifteen chapters showing what "becoming God" meant for the early Church, for St. Thomas Aquinas and the greatest Dominicans, the significance it played in the thinking of St. Francis and the early Franciscans. It shows how such an understanding of salvation played out during the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent, as well as in French School of Spirituality, in various Thomist thinkers, in John Henry Newman and John Paul II, at the Vatican Councils, and where such thinking can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church today.

No other book has gathered such an array of scholars or provided such a deep study into how humanity's divinized life in Christ has received many rich and various perspectives over the past two thousand years. This book therefore hopes to bring readers into the central mystery of Christianity by allowing the Church's greatest thinkers and texts to speak for themselves, showing how becoming Christ-like, becoming truly the Body of Christ on earth, is the only ultimate purpose of the Christian faith.

"Rescue from sin and death is indeed a wonderful thing—but the salvation won for us by Jesus Christ is incomparably greater. And that is the subject of this book. In all its parts, this book, like Christianity in all its parts, is about salvation. But that means it's about everything that fills our lives, on earth and in heaven."

— **Dr. Scott Hahn**, Author, *Rome Sweet Home*

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