

The Christian Doctrine of Deification
Edward T. Jones

Matthew 5.48: 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect'

Luke 6.36: 'be ye therefore merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful'

Gen. 17.1: 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect'

Deut 18.13: "thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God"

Leviticus 11.44 and 19.2: "be holy for I am holy;" this is quoted in I Peter 1.15-6

James 1.4: 'let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire'

I Timothy 6.16 tells us that God dwells in "unapproachable light;" Isaiah 33.14-5 states that those "who shall dwell with everlasting burnings" will be those who "walk righteously, and speak uprightly; who despise the gain of oppressions, who do not take bribes," in short, those who are worthy to live with God. Paul taught (Romans 8.17) that the righteous would become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, who (Heb 1.2) was heir to all things. Galatians 4.5 tells of the saints being 'adopted as sons'. The Savior himself taught that those who believed in Him would do the same works as He had, or even greater works (John 14.12). Revelation 3.21 teaches that those who overcome will sit on the throne with Jesus, who sits on His Father's throne. I Corinthians 6.2: 'the saints shall judge the world' In short, the redeemed will indeed inherit the same power, glory and exaltation as the Savior. Most of these passages were used by the Church Fathers as the foundation for the Christian doctrine of deification, and will be discussed in this paper.

The Prevalence of Deification in the Early Church Fathers

Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (died 379) wrote that man is a creature who has received a command to become God.¹ Ryk also refers to a statement in a work by Basil: "Man received order to become God."²

Saint Augustine, during his debates with the Pelagians (from ca. 410 till his death in 430), wrote the following regarding the possibility of a human's deification: "For my part I hold that, even when we shall have such great righteousness that absolutely no addition could be made to it, the creature will not be equal to the creator. But if some suppose that our progress will be so great that we will be changed into the divine substance and become exactly what he is, let them see how they may support their view. I confess that I myself am not convinced of it."³

Crawford Knox writes that "virtually all the early Church Fathers" taught deification.⁴ French Jesuit Henri Rondet wrote that "[deification] is found in all the Fathers," both the Alexandrians as well as the

¹ Cited in David L. Edwards, *Christianity. The First Two Thousand Years* (Orbis Books 1997): 84. Also in Phillip A. Khairallah, "The Sanctification of Life," *Emmanuel* 96 (1990): 406; Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World. A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, translated by Anthony P. Gythiel (New York 1994; 1st Paris 1983): 61; Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books 1991): 236; Dumitru Staniloae, "Image, Likeness, and Deification in the Human Person," *Communio* 13 (1986): 64-83, at page 73. Marta Ryk writes that it is "perhaps the most frequently encountered sentence in Eastern theology in respect to the divine plan for man," in Ryk, "The Holy Spirit's Role in the Deification of Man according to Contemporary Orthodox Theology (1925-1972)," *Diakonia* (Fordham University) 10 (1975): 24-39; 109-130, at page 112. Both Staniloae and Ryk indicate that the statement is by Basil, but is to be found in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 43 (Gregory's oration at the funeral of Basil).

² Ryk, *op. cit.*, 129, note 94, citing Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*.

³ In Augustine, *Nature and Grace* 33.37, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, Part I, volume 23, *Answer to the Pelagians*; introduction, translation, and notes by Roland J. Teske, S.J., (New City Press 1997), page 244. Despite this statement Augustine did teach deification; see Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Conception of Deification," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 369-85, and below.

⁴ Crawford Knox, *Changing Christian Paradigms* (E.J. Brill 1993): 58.

Antiochenes.⁵ Another writer has written that it was the “universal teaching of the Catholic Church and her Fathers.”⁶ Jesuit Frans Jozef van Beeck wrote that it was the “most central theological theme of the patristic tradition ... a patristic common place.”⁷ Jesuit Jacques Dupuis has written that it was one of the “fundamental axioms for the early Church Fathers.”⁸ Jesuit G.H. Joyce wrote that “the Fathers of the Church from the earliest times with one consent take the apostle’s words [of II Peter 1.4: ‘participate in the divine nature’] in their literal sense. There is no question of any figurative interpretation. They do not hesitate to speak of the deification of men.” Joyce then quotes, and comments on, Irenaeus: “‘We are not made gods from the first, but first men, then gods’ [AH 4.38]. His testimony is of peculiar value: for we know that he imbibed his knowledge of Christian truth from St. Polycarp, himself a disciple of the apostle St. John. We cannot doubt that on a point such as this he is giving us the apostolic tradition.” Further, according to Joyce, “this they regard as a point beyond dispute, as one of those fundamentals which no one who calls himself a Christian dreams of denying.”⁹ The context of the passage by Irenaeus is also significant: God could have chosen to make us perfect at the beginning, but chose to provide us with opportunities to become perfect.¹⁰ Jesuit J. Mahe wrote long ago that the “deification of the just is a dogma universally known and admitted [by many of] the Fathers of the fourth century.”¹¹ For Mascall it is a “persistent tradition in Christian thought.”¹² Catholic scholar Thomas Weinandy has recently stated that Irenaeus’ statement that God became man that man might know how to become god “proclaimed a truth that would reverberate ever more loudly throughout patristic Christology.”¹³ Professor Mary Ann Donovan, in her recent study of Irenaeus, quotes the same statement from the *Adversus Haereses*. She then writes that “this final line of the preface [to Book V] sounds a dominant theme that recurs throughout AH and traces its own path in Christian history, occurring in another form in Athanasius.”¹⁴ After referring to Irenaeus’ statement, Yves Cardinal Congar wrote that it was “a very frequent expression in patristic literature.”¹⁵ Jesuit Gerald O’Collins has recently referred to “that major patristic theme, the divinization of the redeemed.”¹⁶ Orthodox scholar Paul Evdokimov refers to the phrase by Irenaeus and Athanasius as “the golden rule of Eastern patristic thought.” Indeed, he writes that this particular concept “completely

⁵ Henri Rondet, *The Grace of Christ* (Newman Press 1967; 1st Paris 1948): 80-1.

⁶ Michael Azkoul, *St. Gregory of Nyssa and the Tradition of the Fathers* (Edwin Mellen 1995): 15, note 6, where he cites, with references, the following fathers as having taught deification: Ignatius, Dionysius the Areopagite, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus (the Theologian), John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, Hippolytus, Cyprian of Carthage, Hilary of Poitiers, Pope Leo the Great, Ambrose of Milan, Peter Chrysologus, Ephraim the Syrian, Tertullian, Augustine.

⁷ Frans Jozef van Beeck, S.J., *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology. Volume One: Understanding the Christian Faith* (Harper and Row 1989): 63, 87. Elsewhere Beeck has written that “what Christ is by ‘birth’ or ‘nature’ we are by ‘adoption’ (Gal 4.5), ‘rebirth’ (John 3.3), or ‘grace’” ‘sharers of the divine nature’ (II Peter 1.4), or, as the Church Fathers liked to say, ‘gods by grace’” (159-60).

⁸ Jacques Dupuis, S.J., *Who do you say I am? Introduction to Christology* (Orbis Books 1994): 77-8.

⁹ G.H. Joyce, S.J., *The Catholic Doctrine of Grace* (London 1920): 35, 36.

¹⁰ See the text and discussion by Robert F. Brown, “On the Necessary Imperfection of Creation: Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* iv.38,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 17-25.

¹¹ J. Mahe, S.J., “La sanctification d’apres saint Cyrille d’ Alexandrie,” *Revue d’histoire ecclesiastique* 10 (1909): 30-40; 469-92, at page 38.

¹² E.L. Mascall, *Via Media: an essay in Theological Synthesis* (Longmans 1957): 121.

¹³ Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh 1993): 28. He quotes both Irenaeus AH 5, preface, and Athanasius’ *De Inc* 54.

¹⁴ Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1997): 142, quoting AH 5 preface, and Athanasius *De Inc* 54; referring for further references, and subsequent history, to Antonio Orbe, *Teologia de San Ireneo. Comentario al Libro V del ‘Adversus haereses,’* three volumes (Madrid 1985-8), volume I: 50-51.

¹⁵ Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 238, note 3; he refers the reader to Congar, “‘Dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus...’, meditation theologique,” *Maison-Dieu* 59 (1959): 132-61, at page 138, note 16 for patristic references.

¹⁶ Gerald O’Collins, S.J., *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford 1995): 201.

determines [Orthodox] anthropology.”¹⁷ Vladimir Lossky begins an article on redemption and deification with the familiar quotations from Irenaeus and Athanasius, and then writes that “the Fathers and Orthodox theologians have repeated them in every century with the same emphasis, wishing to sum up in this striking sentence the very essence of Christianity.”¹⁸ Regarding the influence of deification on Eastern anthropology Evdokimov quotes Gregory of Nazianzus: “I love this life because I am made of the earth. But in my heart is the desire for another life, because I am also a part of the divine.” Commenting on this passage Evdokimov writes that “man is not only structured morally and attuned to the divine by decree; he is of the divine race [*genos*]. The image of God predestines the human being for deification.”¹⁹ He goes on to contrast Western and Eastern approaches to the nature of humankind. “The Western anthropology is thus essentially a moral anthropology.... The goal of the Christian life can only be the vision of God.... Man is ordained for beatitude.” On the other hand, “Orthodox anthropology...is ontological; it is the ontology of deification.”²⁰ German Protestant Jurgen Moltmann wrote that deification was “accepted as authoritative in the patristic church.”²¹ Another influential Protestant theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg, agreed that the concept “determined the whole history of Christology” and that “there is no reason for denying every element of truth to the patristic idea of [deification].”²² Prominent U.S. Protestant theologian Reinhold Neibuhr admitted that in the Fathers “salvation is frequently defined as the ultimate deification of man.”²³ Several writers indicate that it was a common teaching for both the Eastern Orthodox Fathers, as well as for the Roman Catholic Fathers.²⁴ Christoph Cardinal Schonborn refers to it as “one of the most influential formulations of the Christian message in that [patristic] period.”²⁵

Lutheran scholar Robert Jenson, in an article in a Lutheran journal on the very topic of *theosis*, concludes by asking: “Perhaps the question has at least become a bit more urgent: The patristic church proclaimed deification; why do not we?”²⁶ Allchin, an Anglican, has written that “unless we affirm with Athanasius that God became man in order that man might become God, the language of incarnation is likely to lose its

¹⁷ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World. A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, translated by Anthony P. Gythiel (New York 1994; 1st Paris 1983): 56; also at 74.

¹⁸ Vladimir Lossky, “Redemption and Deification,” in Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed., John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (NY 1974): 97-110, at 97.

¹⁹ Evdokimov, *op. cit.*, 58. He also quotes from Macarius of Egypt: “Between God and man there exists the greatest kinship,” *ibid.*, 60. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa: mortals are capable of rejoicing in God ‘because there is something of the divine in /human/ nature,’ quoted in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought. An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* (Ignatius 1995): 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-3. Marta Ryk also writes that “the anthropology of Eastern Christianity ...is called ‘the ontology of deification,’” in Ryk, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in the Deification of Man according to Contemporary Orthodox Theology (1925-1972),” *Diakonia* (Fordham University) 10 (1975): 24-39; 109-130, at page 109.

²¹ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Fortress Press 1993; German 1991): 299. See also the comments by Moltmann, quoted favorably, and interpreted as referring to *theosis*, by Lutheran writer Kenneth L. Bakken, “Holy Spirit and *Theosis*: Toward a Lutheran Theology of Healing,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994): 409-423, at page 411.

²² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus--God and Man* (Westminster Press 1968; 1st Germany 1964): 39-40, and 347, note 45.

²³ Reinhold Neibuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. Volume I: Human Nature; Volume II: Human Destiny (New York 1964; 1st 1941; 1943): I: 173. Clement of Alexandria is quoted at 1.144, 2.58, and 131; Irenaeus at 1.173; Gregory of Nyssa at 2.77, 132; Origen at 2. 131; Tertullian at 2.131.

²⁴ Patrick Gillespie Henry, “A Presbyterian Response to the Orthodox Agreed Statements,” in *Christ in East and West*, ed. Paul R. Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (Mercer Press 1987): 197-8; Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1996): 128; Rondet, *Grace*, *op. cit.*, 80. Karl Rahner, S.J., stated that the fundamental concept within Christian theology is “the divinization of the world through the Spirit of God, within which incarnation and redemption arise as inner moments,” quoted in David B. Burrell, “Incarnation and Creation: The Hidden Dimension,” *Modern Theology* (Oxford) 12 (1996): 211-220, at 215, and 218.

²⁵ Christoph Schonborn, *From Death to Life. The Christian Journey* (Ignatius Press 1995; 1st Germany 1988): 51.

²⁶ Robert W. Jenson, “*Theosis*,” in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* (St. Paul, Minn.) 32 (1993): 108-112, at page 112.

true significance, as unfortunately it too often has done.”²⁷ Robert Rakestraw, writing in the journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, after covering some of the evidence from the Greek fathers, as well as from Luther, and Charles Wesley, then writes: “Perhaps the most obvious deficiency is the terminology itself. To speak of divinization, deification, and human beings ‘becoming God’ seems to violate the historic Christian understanding of the essential qualitative distinction between God and the creation.... The strengths of *theosis* theology outweigh these weaknesses, however. The most significant benefit is that the concept as a whole, if not the specific terminology, is Biblical.”²⁸

Jesuit Brian E. Daley, Professor at the University of Notre Dame, has recently written a book on early Christian eschatological theories. While dealing with ‘the hope of the early Church’ he has a lot to say about the future deification of the Christian believer. He lists, in passing (!), some 32 such early writers who discuss deification (keep in mind that deification is not the motive for which Daley wrote this book): Athenagoras (177 AD); Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (180), Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (180), Tertullian (c. 220), Hippolytus (d. 235), Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (248-58), Clement of Alexandria (d. before 215), Origen (d. 253/4), Gregory Thaumaturgus, disciple of Origen and later Bishop of Neocaesarea in Pontus (d. before 270), Methodius, Bishop of Olympus (died a martyr in 311), Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra (d. ca. 374), Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (d. 379), Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390; known as “The Theologian,” consecrated a Bishop by Basil, but never took charge of his church), Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (brother of Basil; d. 394), Didymus the Blind (d. 398), Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers (d. 367), Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (d. 397), Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria (d. 444), Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia (d. 428), Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus, near Antioch (ca. 393-466), Macarius the Egyptian (d. ca. 390), Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, North Africa (d. 430), Quodvultdeus, deacon and probably later Bishop of Carthage, in North Africa (d. 453), Paulinus, Bishop of Nola (d. 431), Stephen bar Sudaili (d. 543), Dionysius the Areopagite, Severus, Bishop of Antioch (d. 538), Theodore Askidas, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (ca. 540), Cosmas Indicopleustes (550), Maximus the Confessor (d. 662), John of Damascus (d. 750), Julianus Pomerius (late fifth century), and Caesarius, Bishop of Arles (d. 543).²⁹ John Scottus Eriugena (mid-ninth century Irishman) taught that “by taking on human nature, Christ not only lifted it up ‘to a parity with the angelic nature...but also exalted it above all angels and heavenly powers’.... The soul ‘passes beyond every created heaven and every created paradise, that is, every human and angelic nature’.... Rising above equality with angels, he ‘enters into God who deifies him.’”³⁰ To the above list Michael Azkoul adds some further names: Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (d. ca 110), Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (d. 373), John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (d. 407), Pope Leo the Great (d. 461), Peter Chrysologus, Bishop of Ravenna (d. 450), and Ephraim the Syrian.³¹ Yves M.-J. Congar repeats some of these, and adds

²⁷ Allchin, *Participation in God*, 69.

²⁸ Robert V. Rakestraw, “Becoming like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of *Theosis*,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 266-7.

²⁹ Brian E. Daley, S.J., *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge University Press 1991), s. v. Notice how many of these were Bishops. Many of these are also discussed, with occasional reference to deification, in Quasten’s four volume study, *Patrology*. They are also referred to in many other articles and books. The bibliography at the end of this paper also identifies several articles or monographs on particular Fathers, as well as generalized studies on *theosis*. According to Daley, “John Damascene brings the early Church’s hope for human divinization to its final, unmistakable form as a vital part of the Christian tradition,” 204.

³⁰ Donald F. Duclow, “Isaiah meets the Seraph: Breaking Ranks in Dionysius and Eriugena,” in *Eriugena: East and West*, edited by Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten (University of Notre Dame 1994): 233-52, at pages 245, 247; citations in Duclow. In the same volume see also the paper by John Meyendorff, “Remarks on Eastern Patristic Thought in John Scottus Eriugena,” 51-68. Rudolf Schmitz-Perrin lists as sources for Eriugena’s writings Origen, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Hilary of Poitiers, Isidore of Seville and Gregory the Great, in Schmitz-Perrin, “‘Theosis hoc est deificatio’ Depassement et paradoxe de l’apophase chez Jean Scot Erigene,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 72 (1998): 420-445, at page 420-1. He also quotes several relevant passages from Eriugena at 433, 439-440, 444-445.

³¹ Michael Azkoul, *St. Gregory of Nyssa and the Tradition of the Fathers* (Edwin Mellen 1995), 15, note 6. Regarding Pope Leo the Great Gerhart Ladner writes: “Much as the Greek Fathers he sees the essence of redemption in the divinization of man, the possibility of which was brought about by Christ’s taking on

Simeon the New Theologian (d. 1022), Gregory Palamas (died 1359; frequently cited in Orthodox works); he also refers to the role of the Eucharist (Sacrament of the Lord's Supper) in the deification of the individual.³² Stephen Duffy also cites many of the above, and adds Justin Martyr.³³ Larchet adds Leontius, Bishop of Jerusalem.³⁴ Potvin, in a footnote taken from Congar, adds to the list the names of Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (died 395), Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe (d. 533), and Theophylactus.³⁵ J.N.D. Kelly refers to Irenaeus, Basil, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Athanasius.³⁶

human nature, 'so that we are found in the nature of Him, whom we in our nature adore,'" in Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (Harvard 1959): 287, citing Leo, *Sermon* 28.1; 82.2.

³² Yves M.-J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, translated by David Smith, three volumes in one (Crossroad Publishing 1997; 1st France 1979-80), Simeon: 1.95, with references; for more on Simeon, see Andrea Sterk, "Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church: Prayer in the Writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian," *Crux* 24 (Regent College, Vancouver, B.C 1988): 17-25; Palamas: 3.65-6: "We become God and therefore we become, by grace, uncreated;" notice that that which was created has become, albeit by grace, 'uncreated.' Is this the type of ontological change which Augustine was rejecting, and therefore, being taught at that earlier date, as well as during Palamas' lifetime? On the other hand, Mark Nispel has recently quoted Irenaeus as follows: "'Man cannot become uncreated but through ascension and eternal progress he can gain immortality and likeness to God;'" Nispel, "Christian Deification and the early *Testimonia*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999): 289-304, at page 300, quoting *AH* 4.38.3. On Palamas, see John Meyendorff, "Christ and Deified Humanity: Redemption, Deification and Ecclesiology," in Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, translated by George Lawrence (New York 1964; Paris 1959): 157-184; for a more recent discussion, see A.N. Williams, "Light from Byzantium: The Significance of Palamas' Doctrine of *Theosis*," *Pro Ecclesia* 3. (1994): 483-406. Congar refers to the deifying aspect of the eucharist at *Holy Spirit* 3.231. Regarding the Eucharist, the Anglican Joseph Frary writes that "it is in the Eucharist itself that our reception of divinity is focused and our deification is accomplished preeminently," in Frary, "Deification and Human Freedom," *Sobornost* 7 (1975): 117-126, at page 124. In an agreed statement between the Finnish Lutherans and the Russian Orthodox Church, on April 12-15, 1977 in Kiev, sections III.3-6 read in part: "We are justified in Baptism and deification begins.... Repentance of sin and fulfillment of God's commandments are an essential part of deification.... In the Holy Communion more than anywhere else the mystery of justification and deification is revealed to us," in Hannu Kamppuri, *Dialogue Between Neighbors: The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970-1986: Communiqués and theses* (Helsinki, 1986; Publications of Luther-Agricola Society B 17): 73-5. Some Catholic statements on the eucharist and deification are given below.

³³ Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace* (Liturgical Press 1993), 48-9, citing *AH* 5.34.2.

³⁴ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l'homme selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris 1996): 56-8. Larchet has a lengthy introduction in which he discusses the theory of deification as presented in several of the Church Fathers prior to Maximus the Confessor: Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch; Irenaeus (25); Clement of Alexander; Origen (30); "It is with Saint Athanasius of Alexandria that a true theology of divinization is developed" (31); Macarius the Egyptian; Basil; Gregory of Nazianzus; Gregory of Nyssa; it is "with Saint Cyril of Alexandria /that/ the doctrine of the divinization attains its fullest development" (46); Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite (also called Dionysius the Areopagite); Leontius of Jerusalem (56-8). Cf. the review of this work by George Berthold, *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 145-7. Cf. Larchet, "Le Baptême selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 65 (1991): 51-70, esp. 64 on the relationship of baptism to deification, and the influence of earlier Fathers on Maximus' position (Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Cyril of Alexandria, all of whom taught deification). Deification and divine filiation are discussed throughout the article.

³⁵ Thomas R. Potvin, O.P., *The Theology of the Primacy of Christ According to St. Thomas and its Scriptural Foundations* (Switzerland, 1973), 115-6, note 3; taken from Congar, *Jesus Christ* (Herder and Herder 1966; first published Paris 1965); Cardinal Congar writes, page 20: "we know how unwearingly the Fathers repeated: 'the Son of God became man so that men might become God.'"

³⁶ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London 1960): 172, 378, 486-7. Basil and the two Gregory's are known as the Cappadocians. On Athanasius, see also Jerry D. McCoy, "Philosophical Influences on the Doctrine of the Incarnation in Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria," *Encounter: Creative Theological Scholarship* 38 (Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis 1977): 362-391, at 365. Frances Young

Maximus, Bishop of Turin (d. before 423) wrote that “God has become a man so that man might become God.”³⁷ Henri Rondet wrote that “there is no doubt that the Apostolic Fathers, with the exception of Ignatius of Antioch, furnish rather meager information on the divinization of the Christian” and then in a footnote gives evidence from the *Didache*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, Clement of Rome and the *Shepherd of Hermas*.³⁸ Rondet then goes on to discuss ten Fathers on the subject. He also adds to the growing list the name of Thomas Aquinas, who is cited frequently in the bibliography below.³⁹ Rondet also refers to Denis Petau, a seventeenth century patristic scholar who “rightly reminds us of the texts of the Fathers which prove the divinity of the Holy Spirit from the divinization of the Christian.”⁴⁰ Various scholars have added the names of Zeno, Bishop of Verona (362-71),⁴¹ Evagrius Ponticus (d. 399),⁴² Diadochos, Bishop of Photice (d. 468),⁴³ Boethius the Christian philosopher (d. ca. 524),⁴⁴ Procopius of Gaza (died about 529),⁴⁵

quotes Gregory of Nazianzus: “Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become gods for him, since he became man for us,” in Young, “Panegyric and the Bible,” *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 195, quoting *Oration* 1.5. Cyril of Alexandria wrote: “We are made partakers of the divine nature [II Peter 1.4] and are said to be born of God; we are therefore called gods,” [*Commentary on John* 1.9], quoted in John Barton, “The Holy Ghost,” in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, arranged and edited by Canon George D. Smith, Volume I (New York 1949/1927):163.

³⁷ *The Sermons of Maximus of Turin*, translated by Boniface Ramsey (Newman Press 1989 = Ancient Christian Writers volume 50): 249; *sermon* 45.1. In his note to this the translator writes that “this is a classic statement of the doctrine of the divinization of the human person” and refers to Athanasius, as well as the article by Dalmais, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite* 3.1376-98 for “the patristic evidence in general.”

³⁸ Henri Rondet, *The Grace of Christ* (Newman Press 1967; first published Paris 1948): 69, with note.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 207 ff. For more references to Aquinas, cf. van Beeck, 86, with note i; Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford 1992): 251-2; Duffy, *op. cit.*, 150; John S. Dunne, “St. Thomas’ Theology of Participation,” *Theological Studies* 18 (1957): 487-512; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace. Commentary on the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas la Ilae*, q. 109-114 (Herder Books 1952): 403, 406; Idem, *Reality. A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought* (Herder 1950): 299; Kevin F. O’Shea, “Divinization: A Study in Theological Analogy,” *The Thomist* 29 (1965): 1-45, especially 1, 2; E. Towers, “Sanctifying Grace,” in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church. A Summary of Catholic Doctrine*, arranged and edited by Canon George D. Smith (1949; 1st 1927), I: 549-83, at page 553-4: “...echoing the constant teaching of the past, [Thomas] declares in a passage which the Church uses for the Feast of Corpus Christi: ‘the only begotten Son of God, wishing to make us partakers of his own divinity, took upon himself our human nature that having become man he might make men to be gods;’” and especially A.N. Williams, “Deification in the *Summa Theologia*,” *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 219-255; she tells us that “the doctrine of deification pervades the *Summa*,” at page 220; see now her recent book, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York 1999), *passim*, but consider the following: “Suffice it to say for now that because deification entails discussion not only of sanctification and theological anthropology generally, but also the doctrines of God and the Trinity, religious knowledge and theological method, it ultimately touches on almost every major branch of Christian doctrine. Because it is so all-encompassing...”, page 7. She also points out that, “with the possible exception of John Damascene, none of the Fathers presents a systematic exposition of deification, certainly not as a discrete theological locus,” 161; on John of Damascus see page 31.

⁴⁰ Rondet, *The Grace of Christ*, 367. Denis Petau is also known as Dionysius Petavius. He died in 1652.

⁴¹ Martin F. Stepanich, *The Christology of Zeno of Verona* (Catholic University of America 1948): 64. For a recent discussion of Zeno’s baptismal sermons see Gordon P. Jeanes, *The Day has Come! Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1995).

⁴² Yves M.-J. Congar, *History of Theology*, translated by Hunter Guthrie, S.J., (New York 1968; 1st Paris 1938-9, in *Dictionnaire de theologie Catholique*; revised): 31. See also Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books 1991): 73-4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 50-1, 54-5; Quasten, *Patrology* III: 512.

⁴⁴ Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford 1981): 211, who also provides us with several references to Augustine’s teachings; Pelikan, *Imago Dei* (Princeton 1990): 141, quoting *The Consolation of Philosophy* 3.10.23f = Loeb Classical Library, page 271; the passage is quoted in Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries. Her place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press 1996): 105. Pelikan writes that “the idea [of divinization] could lay claim to explicit biblical grounding” with reference to Psalm 82.6, John 10.35 and II Peter 1.4 (104-8).

John of Scythopolis (d. 548),⁴⁶ Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (died 638),⁴⁷ Anastasius Sinaiticus (died ca. 700),⁴⁸ Honorius of Autun (1100 AD),⁴⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153),⁵⁰ Peter Lombard (d. 1160),⁵¹ Roger Bacon (d. ca. 1292),⁵² Nicholas Cabasilas (d. 1363),⁵³ several renaissance humanists,⁵⁴ John of the Cross (d. 1591),⁵⁵ Suarez (died 1617),⁵⁶ and Cardinal Cajetan (died 1534), Luther's first nemesis.⁵⁷

⁴⁵ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*: 432.

⁴⁶ Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford 1998): 48, 177; cf. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (Oxford 1993).

⁴⁷ Schonborn, *From Death to Life*: 47-8.

⁴⁸ Schonborn, *op. cit.*, 63, note 49; Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Open Court 1995; 1st Sweden 1965): 427-32. Thunberg refers to, or quotes from, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Pseudo-Denis (i.e., Dionysius the Areopagite), Pseudo-Leontius of Byzantium, Procopius of Gaza, Anastasius Sinaiticus, as well as Maximus the Confessor. For more on Anastasius' christology, see Dominic J. Unger, "Christ the Exemplar and final scope of all Creation according to Anastasius of Sinai," *Franciscan Studies* 9 (1949): 156-164.

⁴⁹ Eugene TeSelle, *Christ in Context. Divine Purpose and Human Possibility* (Philadelphia 1975): 39. Jeremy Moiser, "Why did the Son of God become Man?," *The Thomist* 37 (1973): 288-305, at page 289; TeSelle and Moiser state that Honorius was the first Latin to affirm that the cause of the incarnation was the deification of man, not the fall of Adam.

⁵⁰ Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Conception of Deification," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 369-85, at page 371; Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (Westminster Press 1953): 655; Owen F. Cummings, *Coming to Christ: A Study in Christian Eschatology* (University Press of America 1998): 105, quoting Bernard, *On Loving God*, 10.27-8, 120.

⁵¹ Nygren, *op. cit.*, 655.

⁵² Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London 1920): 384, note 1.

⁵³ Mark O'Keefe, "Theosis and the Christian Life: Toward Integrating Roman Catholic Ethics and Spirituality," *Eglise et Theologie* (Ottawa) 25 (1994): 47-63, at page 49-50; Schonborn, *From Death to Life*: 51-2; Pope John Paul II, *Oriente Lumen* ('The Light of the East') in, *The Pope Speaks* 40 (1995): 357-79, at page 378, note 15; the Pope also quoted II Peter 1.4, Irenaeus, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus, and the Vatican II document *Unitas Redintegratio*, paragraph 15. See also Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 73: "The human being is 'Christified,' 'the clay is no longer clay when it has received the royal likeness but is already the body of the King,'" citing *Nicholas Cabasilas, The Life in Christ*, translated C. J. de Catanzaro (New York 1974): 113-4. For more on Cabasilas see Boris Bobrinskoy, "Nicholas Cabasilas and Hesychast Spirituality," *Sobornost* (London) 5.7 (1968): 483-510; Myrrha Lot-Borodine, "La grace deifiante des sacrements d'apres Nicolas Cabasilas," *Revue des sciences Philosophiques et Theologiques* 25 (1936): 299-330; 26 (1937): 693-717.

⁵⁴ John M. McManamon, S.J., "The Ideal Renaissance Pope: Funeral Oratory from the Papal Court," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 14 (1976): 9-62, with reference to Marco Vigerio, who later became a cardinal, died 1516 (28, 34); John W. O'Malley, S.J., "Preaching for the Popes," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (E.J. Brill 1974): 408-440; he refers to deification having been taught by Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria, 418-9; by Augustinus Philippus Florentinus, died 1518, 429: "we are transformed into Christ"; he also refers to Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Irenaeus as paraphrased by Florentinus, 430; refers to Petrarch, 430, note 1; to Bishop Stephanus Theglatius, who amplified the statement by Irenaeus to the Fifth Lateran Council (1512), 430, note 1; to Giles of Viterbo, 432. See also Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness. Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (London 1970) who refers to Petrarch, I. 191; to Bartolomeo Facio, I.209; to Aurelio Brandolini, I.301, 304, 312, 316, II.475-6; to Marsilio Ficino, II.475-6, 487, 739-43; Lorenzo Valla, II.635. Paul Oskar Kristellar, *Renaissance Concepts of Man and other essays* (1972) refers to Ficino, 10; Nygren, *op. cit.*, also refers to Ficino, 676-7; Schonborn, *From Death to Life*: "...found in one or other form in all the Church Fathers, in the Middle Ages, and into the modern period," 41, note 1; he cites Pico della Mirandola: 43-4.

⁵⁵ Bonner, "Conception": 371. See now David Bentley Hart, "The Bright Morning of the Soul. John of the Cross on Theosis," *Pro Ecclesia* 12.3 (Summer 2003): 324-344.

Indeed the doctrine of deification was so thoroughly embedded in Christian tradition, that it was not questioned by heretics within the Christian fold. The Jesuit Rondet wrote that it was a traditional possession, common to both heterodox and orthodox.⁵⁸ Another Catholic writer states that the “early writers...took this to be an admitted principle amongst Christians, for they made it a basis of argument against those who denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁹ Deification was accepted and taught by the Arians,⁶⁰ Pelagians,⁶¹ and Nestorius, who was the Bishop of Constantinople (died ca 451),⁶² as well as Apollinarius, who was the Bishop of Laodicea prior to being declared a heretic (died ca 390).⁶³

⁵⁶ Malachi J. Donnelly, S.J., “The Supernatural Person,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 30 (1963): 340-7, at page 346; Jose Pereira, “The Human Person, Ideal and Fallen, in Classical Catholic Theology,” *Dialogue and Alliance* 10 (1996): 41-55, at page 44.

⁵⁷ Jared Wicks, S.J., “Thomism between Renaissance and Reformation: the case of Cajetan,” *Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977): 9-29, at page 19. Cf. John W. O’Malley, S.J., *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450-1521* (Duke University Press 1979): 108-110, where O’Malley cites talks given by Cajetan, and others, before the Pope. He writes that other preachers before the papal court “do not insist on man’s excellence as created in God’s image and likeness but on his transformation and even deification as redeemed by Christ... He is in fact divinized,” 149. Another preacher is cited as teaching that mortals “will transform themselves into gods,” 150. He refers to Irenaeus’ statement, as well as statements by Augustine and Aquinas. Cajetan was the first papal legate to interview Luther. Cf. Wicks, *Cajetan Responds: A Reader in Reformation Controversy* (Catholic University of America 1978), introduction: 1-46. Cajetan was the Vicar General of the Dominican Order from 1508-18 and was made a Cardinal in 1517. He participated in the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517). He wrote a commentary on Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, and was much sought after as a scholar. He died in 1534. He is referred to in the 1983 declaration between Catholics and Lutherans, *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, ed. H. G. Andersen, T. A. Murphy and J. A. Burgess (Augsburg Press 1985), 131-142, paragraphs 32-4.

⁵⁸ Rondet, *The Grace of Christ*: 80. See also the statement by Joyce, quoted above.

⁵⁹ Towers, “Sanctifying Grace,” *op. cit.*, 551.

⁶⁰ Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism. A View of Salvation* (Fortress Press 1981): 66-7, 162. Cf. R. S. Franks, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London 1953): 103. Constantine Tsirpanlis wrote that “the /Arian/ heresy was, above all, a theory of deification, but a false one. It considered Christ the first creature who was deified in a very special way, though still like us.... St. Athanasius insists that indeed we are deified, and that through the Word; but that in itself proves that the Word is divine,” in *Greek Patristic Theology*, Volume I (New York 1979): 34. The same idea, in almost the same words, had been written earlier, by Dominic Unger, “A Special Aspect of Athanasian Soteriology,” *Franciscan Studies* 6 (1946): 30-53; 171-94, at page 41-2. Cf. Gerald Bonner, “Christ, God and Man, in the Thought of St. Augustine,” *Angelicum* 61 (Rome 1984): 268-94, at page 278 on Arians teaching deification.

⁶¹ Joanne McW. Dewart, “Christology in a Pelagian Context,” *Studia Patristica* 17 (1979): 1221-1244, at page 1226; Eugene TeSelle, “Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Prehistory of the Pelagian Controversy,” *Augustinian Studies* (Villanova) 3 (1972): 61-95, at page 92, with note 117.

⁶² Henri Rondet, *The Grace of Christ* (Newman Press 1967; Paris 1948): 82: “Cyril draws arguments against Nestorius from our divinization: If Christ is not really God, then we have not been divinized,” citing Cyril of Alexandria, *Adv Nestorius* 3.3.

⁶³ Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (Fortress Press 1983): 188; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago 1971): 233. A passage is quoted by R.A. Norris: “Christ became man ‘in order that we might receive the likeness of the heavenly One, and be divinized after the likeness of the true Son of God by nature,’” in Norris, *Manhood and Christology. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford 1963): 120; R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon. A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London 1961; 1st 1953): 132-3. A version of the creed attributed to Apollinarius reads in part: “We confess...one Holy Spirit by nature and in truth capable of sanctifying and deifying all things...”, in H.B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London 1912): 287. W.H. Bates also referred to the deifying aspect of the Eucharist in Apollinarius’ thought: “Participation in the holy and life-giving flesh of Christ results in the divinisation of all who partake.... By their participation in it, the communicants take its divinity into themselves.” Bates states that this “is well attested in the patristic age, and is also a living idea in the Eastern Church today.” Bates also

Admittedly, not all these Fathers used the terms *theosis* or *theopoiesis*, but they all used terms for glorified humankind which are more properly reserved for Deity. As Daley writes, with regard to a specific Father, “the fulfillment of the Christian hope is the gift by the Holy Spirit to human beings of immortality, incorruptibility and immutability, qualities that are naturally characteristic of God alone.... The qualities bestowed in this renewal [of mortal humans] are, in fact, qualities characteristic of God rather than of creatures.”⁶⁴ Further, as we shall see in our discussion of the attributes of deification, while not all of these Fathers use the same terms, they all use or refer in one way or another to terms which are applied by other writers to those who are deified. It should be kept in mind that the Fathers were not systematic theologians. The comments of Jules Gross in his study of divinization are therefore of significance: “[The Fathers] interest themselves in the notion of divinization less for itself than for the fact that it offers them arguments to prove the divinity of the Word and of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁵ We should not look for a systematic treatment of the concept of deification in the writings of the Fathers; but we should note its frequent occurrence. And we do! The Fathers all teach the doctrine of deification, and they teach it consistently. Jesuit Francis Clark in his exhaustive study of the Eucharistic debates during the early Reformation period wrote that “Athanasius in the East and Augustine in the West both consider that the foundation of the redemption and restoration of fallen man lies in this: that God became man in order that man might become divine.” That is, both East and West are represented.⁶⁶ Later he wrote that “the Greek Fathers believed as firmly as their Latin brethren that Christ’s sacrifice was offered on the cross; and their concept of ‘deification’ of men through the assumption of human nature was not absent from Latin theology.”⁶⁷

The Reformers

The concept of deification was so much a part of the universal Christian tradition that the Reformers did not dispute it. Franz Posset has recently studied Luther’s superior, Johann von Staupitz (died 1524). Luther claimed that everything he had came from Staupitz, who was a ‘preacher of grace and cross.’ Staupitz had stated in a sermon in 1512 that ‘Christ’s suffering deified man.’⁶⁸ Elsewhere Posset quotes Luther himself to the effect that “‘to be born of God is to acquire the nature of God;’ ‘God’s grace makes man deform and deifies him;’ ‘[Christ] becomes totally man and we become totally deified;’ ‘The person who is in the Father becomes deified. We are made ‘gods.’” Posset concludes: “Deification was for Luther the synonym for justification and sanctification.”⁶⁹ Not only has it been determined that Luther taught

indicates that the divinisation of humankind “is very common” in patristic literature, with specific reference to Athanasius, in Bates, “The Background of Apollinaris’s Eucharistic Teaching,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 12 (1961): 139-154, at page 140-1. His name is also spelled Apollinaris. Regarding Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia, Norris writes: “The pagan cried out for redemption *from* the body; the Christian writer sought a redemption *of* the body through its divinization” (154).

⁶⁴ Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 112-3. Cf. Boris Bobrinsky: “The very notion of incorruptibility which occupies such an important place in the concept of salvation in St. Irenaeus... is the equivalent of the concept of deification in the later Fathers,” in Bobrinsky, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, translated P. Gythiel (New York 1999; 1st 1986): 307, with reference to Ysabel de Andia, *Homo vivens. Incorruptibilite et divinisation de l’homme selon Irenee de Lyon* (Paris 1986): 395.

⁶⁵ Jules Gross, *La divinisation du Chretien d’apres les peres Grecs* (Paris 1938): 252, as paraphrased in Francis L. B. Cunningham, *The Indwelling of the Trinity. A Historico-Doctrinal Study of the Theory of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Priory Press, Dubuque, Iowa 1955): 43. The French text from Gross is quoted on page 63, note 55.

⁶⁶ Francis Clark, S.J., *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* (Oxford 1967; 2nd Edition): 103-4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 291-2. Clark also cites Harnack to the effect that the Catholic sacramental system “‘was rooted in the fundamental conception that religion is an antidote for the finiteness of man, in the sense that it deifies his nature’”: 105, citing Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (1910), III: 851.

⁶⁸ Franz Posset, “Preaching the Passion of Christ on the Eve of the Reformation,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (Fort Wayne, Indiana) 59 (1995): 279-300, at page 284-5.

⁶⁹ Posset, “‘Deification’ in the German Spirituality of the Late Middle Ages and in Luther: An Ecumenical Historical Perspective,” *Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993): 103-25, at page 125; abridged in *Luther Digest* 3 (1995): 135-141.

deification,⁷⁰ but so also has John Calvin,⁷¹ John Wesley,⁷² Menno Simon and the early Anabaptists,⁷³ the radical reformer Michael Servetus,⁷⁴ and Lancelot Andrewes,⁷⁵ Martin Bucer,⁷⁶ and Jonathan Edwards.⁷⁷

Roman Catholic Church

⁷⁰ See especially the works by the Finnish Lutheran scholars: Simo Peura, "Participation in Christ according to Luther," in *Luther Digest* 3 (1995): 164-8; *idem*, "The Deification of Man as Being in God," *Luther Digest* 5 (1997): 168-72 (English abridgment of "Die Vergottlichung des Menschen als Sein in Gott," in *Lutherjahrbuch* 60 (1993): 39-71); Risto Saarinen, "The Presence of God in Luther's Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 8 (1994): 3-13; *idem*, *Faith and Holiness: Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogues 1959-1994* (Göttingen 1997), *passim*; Tuomo Mannermaa, "Theosis as a subject of Finnish Luther Research," *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1995): 37-48; Jouko Martikainen, "Man's Salvation: Deification or Justification?," *Sobornost* (London) 7 (1976): 180-192; as well as Kenneth L. Bakken, "Holy Spirit and Theosis. Toward a Lutheran Theology of Healing," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994): 409-23; Posset, *op. cit.*; Carl E. Braaten, "The Finnish Breakthrough in Luther Research," *Pro Ecclesia* 5 (1996): 141-3; Henry Edwards, "Justification, Sanctification, and the Eastern Concept of Theosis," *Consensus. A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 14 (1988): 65-80 (abridged in *Luther Digest* 5 (1997): 166-7); Georg Kretschmar, "The Reception of the Orthodox Teaching of Divinization in Protestant Theology," in *Luther Digest* 3 (1995): 156-9; Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ*, translated by Edwin Robertson (Minneapolis 1982): 53: "One is not able to exclude entirely the idea that the theme of divinization was present to a certain extent in the mind of Luther," 121, 122, 123; Norris, *op. cit.*, 421; Klaas Zwanepol, "Luther en Theosis," *Luther-Bulletin. Tijdschrift voor interconfessioneel Lutheronderzoek* 2 (1993): 48-73, English abridgment in *Luther Digest* 5 (1997): 177-81; Carl A. Volz, *Faith and Practice in the Early Church. Foundations for Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis 1983); Martin Brecht, "Neue Ansätze der Lutherforschung in Finnland," *Luther* (1990): 36-40, casts a dissenting voice. The Finnish works in *Luther Digest* are actually English abridgments of larger works appearing in *Luther und Theosis. Vergottlichung als Thema der abendlandischen Theologie*, ed. Simo Peura and Antti Raunio (Helsinki 1990).

⁷¹ Calvin, *Institutes of Christianity* 4.16.7; Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit* (Harper 1992): 176; W. Thompson, "Viewing Justification through Calvin's eyes: an Ecumenical Experiment," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996): 447-66: "Calvin was imbued with the teaching of the Greek Fathers and he considered the teaching on divinization to be, rightly understood, biblically grounded," 454. Now see Carl Mosser, "The Greatest possible blessing: Calvin and deification," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55.1 (2002): 36-57. Although Calvin knows and cites several of the Greek Fathers (John Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Origen Cyril of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen), according to a recent study only 18% of his patristic citations come from Greek Fathers. Augustine alone garners some 1708 (45% of the total); Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin. Student of the Church Fathers* (Baker Books 1999): 41-2.

⁷² Ashanin, 90-1; Bassett; Christensen, 88, 91; Ford, 288; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*: 122; Kinghorn.

⁷³ Finger, 1987, 1994; F. W. Norris, 421.

⁷⁴ Jerome Friedman, "Christ's Descent into Hell and Redemption through Evil: a Radical Reformation Perspective," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 76 (1985): 223; Calvin, *Institutes* 4.16.7.

⁷⁵ Nicholas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher (1555-1626): The Origins of the Mystical Theology of the Church of England* (Oxford 1991): s.v. 'deification.' Kenneth Leech, *Experiencing God. Theology as Spirituality* (Harper and Row 1985): 258-9.

⁷⁶ Willem van 'T. Spijker, *The Ecclesiastical Offices in the Thought of Martin Bucer*, translated by John Vriend and Lyle D. Bierma (E.J. Brill 1996): 40: "...In his commentary on the letter to the Ephesians: we are restored to a much more elevated and glorious position. He does not even shrink in this connection of speaking of the deification [*deificatio*] of the human being."

⁷⁷ In a sermon in 1731 in Boston Edwards stated that the redeemed are not just *counted* as righteous, but are themselves *made* excellent "'by a communication of God's excellency' and made holy 'by being made partakers of God's holiness'. Anri Morimoto explains: "This vision of salvation is attested to in Scripture (II Peter 1.4) and is shared by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches," and refers to Thomas Aquinas, in Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (Pennsylvania State University Press 1995): 4-5; cf. 153: "Edwards's concern for the creaturely reality of salvation is thus embedded in the grand scheme of the theology of divinization (*theosis*)."

The Catholic Church has recently continued in that same tradition, though perhaps at a faster pace, and from a more official level. In 1943 Pope Pius XII issued his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* ('Mystical Body of Christ'). Paragraph 46 reads in part: "And Christ not only took our nature; He became one of our flesh and blood with a frail body that could suffer and die. But 'if the Word emptied himself taking the form of a slave,' it was that He might make His brothers according to the flesh partakers of the divine nature [II Peter 1.4]. . . . Let all those, then, who glory in the name of Christian, look to our Divine Savior as the most exalted and the most perfect exemplar of all virtues; but let them also, by careful avoidance of sin and assiduous practice of virtue, bear witness by their conduct to His teaching and life, so that when the Lord shall appear they may be like unto Him and see Him as He is [I John 3.2]."⁷⁸ Pope Paul VI, in a homily given 6 May 1973, on the 16th centenary of Athanasius' death, referred to the Saint as "the intrepid, undaunted defender of the faith!" and later wrote that the divinity of Christ is the central point of St. Athanasius' preaching to the men of his time. "He even declares, in a forceful expression, that the Word of God 'became man so that we might be divinized.'"⁷⁹ Pope John Paul II has made several relevant statements. In a general audience given December 9, 1981, he stated that "the state of man in the other world will not only be a state of perfect spiritualization, but also of fundamental divinization of his humanity. . . . The degree of his divinization [will be] incomparably superior to the one that can be attained in earthly life. . . . another kind of divinization. . . . This is because that divinization is to be understood not only as an interior state of man. . . . but also as a new formation of the whole personal subjectivity of man. . . . Divinization in the other world will bring the human spirit such a range of experience of truth and love such as man would never have been able to attain in earthly life." He concludes by referring to the "divinization in which man will participate in the resurrection."⁸⁰ In his encyclical *Domini et Vivificantem* ('Lord and Giver of Life,' 28 May 1986) he refers to the effect of the Holy Spirit on the individual's heart, and "there begins in the heart of all human beings that particular created gift whereby they 'become partakers of the divine nature [II Peter 1.4]."⁸¹ In a more recent statement the Pope again refers to II Peter 1.4, and then writes that "through the power of the Spirit who dwells in man, deification already begins on earth. . . . The teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers [Basil and the two Gregory's] on divinization passed into the tradition of all the Eastern Churches and is part of their common heritage. This can be summarized in the thought already expressed by St. Irenaeus at the end of the second century: 'God passed into man so that man might pass over to God.'"⁸² He goes on to say that "this theology of divinization remains one of the achievements particularly dear to Eastern Christian thought" and in the footnote to this he quotes Nicholas Cabasilas (died 1363), that "men become gods and children of God. . . . The dust is raised to such a degree of glory that it is now equal in honor and godliness to the divine nature."⁸³ In 1998 the Pope issued another statement in which he stated that "proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth, true God and perfect man, the Church opens to all people the prospect of being 'divinised' and thus of becoming more human."⁸⁴

⁷⁸ *Official Catholic Teachings: Christ Our Lord*, Amanda G. Watlington, editor (Consortium Books 1978): 179-228.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 440-444, at page 442-3.

⁸⁰ Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body. Human Love in the Divine Plan*, ed. John S. Grabowski, (Pauline Press 1997): 240-3.

⁸¹ *The Pope Speaks* 31 (1986): 199-263. See also Mark E. Ginter, "The Biblical Pneumatologies of Leo XIII and John Paul II Compared," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 5 (Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio 1998): 59-75. This article discusses the only two papal encyclicals dealing with the Holy Spirit. Pope Leo XIII died in 1903.

⁸² Pope John Paul II, *Oriente Lumen* ('The Light of the East'), May 2, 1995, in *The Pope Speaks* 40 (1995): 357-379, paragraph 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Incarnationis Mysterium* ('The Mystery of the Incarnation'), 29 November 1998, in *Briefing. The official documentation and information service of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales and Scotland* 28 (London 17 Dec 1998): 3-13. As the Pope's statements of 1981 and 1998 just quoted in the text indicate, by becoming deified one becomes more truly human; that is, the purpose of creation, as well as of the Incarnation, is the deification of humankind (see next paragraph). One is not fully human until one has become deified, and while the process begins in this life, it is only completed in 'the next world'. Catholic scholar Stephen J. Duffy has recently compared the Baptist and Catholic soteriologies. When discussing the latter he first cites II Peter 1.4, Gal 2.20, Irenaeus and Athanasius. He then writes: "paradoxically, the divinization of humanity (*theopoiesis, theosis*), which

Michael O'Connor has recently written that "the Orthodox theme of the divinization of humankind, introduced into Catholic thought most importantly in *Dei verbum* [Vatican II], is found in" the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁸⁵ In the new *Catechism* not only are both Irenaeus and Athanasius quoted, but Thomas Aquinas also, with reference to why Jesus was born: "The Word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature' [II Peter 1.4]; 'For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man; so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.' 'For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.' 'The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.'"⁸⁶ Paragraph 1988, dealing with Justification, also quotes Athanasius: "'God gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature [II Peter 1.4]. . . . For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized.'"⁸⁷ Paragraph 398 states that "created in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully 'divinized' by God in glory."⁸⁸ Clearly these statements indicate that the purpose of the incarnation was the deification of humankind. There are contrary views as to whether the Incarnation and Atonement were part of God's original plan, or were added as an afterthought following Adam's sin. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas wrote that without sin there would be no need for the Incarnation.⁸⁹ On the other hand, Franciscan scholar Dominic Unger has written that several of the early Fathers taught that the Incarnation was part of God's original plan.⁹⁰ Several writers, including John Henry Newman, believed that the Incarnation was

involves a genuine transformation and not a mere declaration or imitation, leads to the realization of genuine humanity. For Catholics, grace presupposes and perfects our humanity", citing Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2 and I, q. 19, a. 5. He continues: "We become by grace what God intended us to be" quoting Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* 19. He concludes this section: "To be fully human, one must become more than human," in Duffy, "Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic Soteriologies. A Comparative Study," *Pro Ecclesia. Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 9.4 (Fall 2000): 434-459, at page 436-7.

⁸⁵ Michael Patrick O'Connor, "The Universality of Salvation: Christianity, Judaism, and Other Religions in Dante, *Nostra Aetate*, and the New Catechism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 33 (1996): 487-511, at page 506, note 90, referring to paragraphs 51, 398, 460.

⁸⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori Publications, Missouri 1994) paragraph 460, citing Irenaeus *AH* 3.19.1; Athanasius, *De Inc* 54; and Thomas, *Opusc* 57.1-4. The same year Ignatius Press published *The Companion to The Catechism of the Catholic Church: A Compendium of Texts Referred to in The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The two volumes contain over 1600 pages of text material. The *Companion* includes the quotations to which the *Catechism* itself only refers, and is therefore a great source for additional quotations.

⁸⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1988, citing Athanasius, *Epistle to Serapion* 1.24.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Robert A. Sungenis, *Not by Faith Alone. The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification* (Queenship Publishing 1996): 273, note 60, where Sungenis also cites II Peter 1.4; I John 3.2 and Hebrews 8.10-13. At page 24, note 33 Sungenis writes that at the end "God will finish writing His will on our hearts and minds, and we will become completely divinized (Hebrews 8.10-11; II Peter 1.4). When our divinization is completely realized, sin will be no more, for we will be like God;" in the footnote to this statement he quotes from Irenaeus, Athanasius, Ambrose and Augustine, in Sungenis, *Not by Bread Alone. The Biblical and Historical Evidence for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Catholic Mass* (Queenship Publishing, Goleta, Calif. 2000): 69-70. He later quotes Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) who cited II Peter 1.4, 259-60.

⁸⁹ David Knowles, "The Middle Ages: 604-1350," in *A History of Christian Doctrine*, ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones (Edinburgh 1978): 229-286, at page 273: "St. Thomas held that without sin there would have been no Incarnation: in the wisdom and loving-kindness of God, Adam's fall was a happy mishap (*felix culpa*)." On the 'happy mishap' cf. C. A. Patrides, "Adam's 'Happy Fault' and XVIIth-century Apologetics," *Franciscan Studies* 23 (1963): 238-243. Augustine's position is cited in H.E.W. Turner, *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption* (London 1952): 108; Augustine, *Sermon* 174.2: 'If man had not sinned, the Son of God would not have come.'"

⁹⁰ Dominic Unger, "A Special Aspect of Athanasian Soteriology," *Franciscan Studies* 6 (1946): 30-53; 171-194, at page 44; Unger, "Christ Jesus the Secure Foundation According to St. Cyril of Alexandria," *Franciscan Studies* 7 (1947): 1-25; 324-343; 399-414, at 21, 328, 405. Germain Grisez has recently quoted

part of the original plan. Roderick Strange, in his study of Cardinal Newman, writes and quotes as follows: “Newman declared that Christ came because from the first [God] ‘had had it in mind to come upon earth among innocent creatures,’ to fill them with grace and prepare them for the heaven for which they were destined..... Christ came to redeem as well as to sanctify, but he was to have come in any case.”⁹¹ Strange further writes that “many of the Fathers, among whom Athanasius was prominent, had described this state [of salvation] as divinization. Newman followed suit.”⁹² Christ was the lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13.8). He was the Creator (under His Father: John 1.3; Heb 1.2; I Cor. 8.6; Eph 3.9; Col. 1.16), He spoke to the Prophets (Heb 1.1-2), and He was the promised, therefore foreordained, Messiah.⁹³

The Biblical Foundation of Deification

Hamilton Hess says that the idea of deification “possesses a long lineage prior to Athanasius” with roots in “II Peter 1.4, as Athanasius himself acknowledges.”⁹⁴ Kamppuri and the Lutheran scholars state that it is firmly based on the New Testament witness.⁹⁵ Larchet says that it “possesses a solid scriptural foundation.”⁹⁶ Evangelical scholar Rakestraw wrote that deification’s strongest point is that it is Biblical.⁹⁷ Orthodox writer Bilaniuk writes that “it seems that the sooner the whole of Christianity regains the biblical and theological tradition of *theosis*, the better for the renewal of Christianity and even for the progress of mankind as a whole because modern man needs firm hope and a positive approach to contemporary and eschatological reality.”⁹⁸ Catholic Louis Bouyer wrote that “we find ourselves at the term of the development in Patristics of a theme [divinization] currently presented as a typical borrowing from Hellenism. But a rigorous study of the lines of its development brings out the fact that, in the final analysis, this theme ... is much more biblical and Christian than Hellenistic.”⁹⁹ Bouyer goes on to state that it was Athanasius, “the doctor of our deification,” who effected the return of Christology back to “complete

from the exultant proclamation sung at the Easter vigil: “‘Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave you gave away your Son. O happy Fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!’,” in Grisez, *The Way of the Lord, Volume III: Difficult Moral Questions* (Franciscan Press 1999): 9.

⁹¹ Roderick Strange, *Newman and the Gospel of Christ* (Oxford 1981): 113.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 116-7. Strange writes that “the theme of divinization ... played so prominent a part in Newman’s understanding of man’s salvation,” 105. He quotes Newman: “‘Christ in rising, raises His Saints with Him to the right hand of power. They become instinct with His life, of one body with His flesh, divine sons, immortal kings, gods.... He is in them, because He is in human nature; and He communicates to them that nature, deified by becoming His, that them It may deify,’” 126. Newman translated a volume of Athanasius’ writings, and included a chapter on deification, see Newman, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius in controversy with the Arians* (Volume II, 1895; 1st published in 1841-2).

⁹³ Jesuit Avery Dulles has recently written that “according to Catholic tradition the essential goodness of human nature remains intact notwithstanding the grave consequences of the Fall. The liturgy proclaims the sin of our first parents as a ‘happy fault,’ since it provided the occasion for the sending of the divine Redeemer,” Dulles, “Principles of Catholic Theology,” *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (1999): 73-84, at 76.

⁹⁴ Hamilton Hess, “The Place of Divinization in Athanasian Soteriology,” *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993): 369-74, at page 372-3.

⁹⁵ *Dialogue between Neighbors. The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970-1986*, ed. Hannu T. Kamppuri (Helsinki 1986): 86.

⁹⁶ Larchet, *La Divinisation...*, 21.

⁹⁷ Rakestraw, *op. cit.*, 266-7; recall also the comment, by the Catholic scholar W. Thompson, regarding Calvin and the biblical basis of deification, above at footnote 71: “Calvin was imbued with the teaching of the Greek Fathers and he considered the teaching on divinization to be, rightly understood, biblically grounded”.

⁹⁸ Bilaniuk, *op. cit.*, 356; he also writes that “the teaching on *theosis* is a legitimate successor...to many New Testament expressions and ideas.... Therefore, the doctrine of *theosis* is a systematized theological elaboration of the biblical data including realized eschatology,” 358.

⁹⁹ Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers, Volume I: History of Christian Spirituality* (New York 1963; 1st France 1960): 416.

fidelity to the biblical idea of God.” This he did by teaching the principle of deification.¹⁰⁰ Orthodox scholar John Meyendorff agrees. He refutes those who state that the concept as found in Irenaeus and Athanasius was a “betrayal of a supposedly original, biblical understanding of the Christian faith in favor of a vague platonizing form of pantheism. Nothing is further from the truth.... The content of the doctrine of deification reflects the paradoxical Johannine affirmation that the ‘Word was God’ and that it ‘became flesh’ (John 1.1, 14).”¹⁰¹ Catholic Brian Davies says that “the language of deification is found in the New Testament” and cites I John 3.2 and II Peter 1.4.¹⁰² Franks finds “the influence of distinctively New Testament points of view [to be] strongly marked” in Irenaeus, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Cyril of Alexandria, all of them teachers of deification.¹⁰³ Morna Hooker refers to the ‘marvelous exchange’ referred to in Irenaeus: “Christ became what we are, in order that we might become what he is.” This is of course the same theme found in all those who write on the subject. Hooker’s paper cites the biblical foundation for such an exchange idea. She refers to II Corinthians 5.21; 8.9; Galatians 4.4 ff.; 3.13; Romans 8; Phil 3.10; I Corinthians 1.30; I Cor. 15. “[Believers] must identify themselves with his shame and death if they are to become what he is in his glorious resurrection life.”¹⁰⁴ With reference to II Peter 1.4 McDonnell writes “the bold expression ‘divine nature’ is found only here in the Scriptures. This biblical text attracted much attention from the early Christian and medieval authors, playing a large role in the development of the doctrine of Grace.... Similar ideas using other vocabularies are found elsewhere in Scripture” citing I John 3.2; John 17.22-3; Romans 8.14-7.¹⁰⁵ Church of Christ professor F. W. Norris writes that “poorly read Protestants have insisted that the Eastern Orthodox idolatrously make us all little gods or that they think of participation in the divine nature only in physical terms. These charges are false.” Norris discusses the early church use of II Peter 1.4; John 10.34-6, where Christ cites Psalm 82.6 (‘you are gods’), with further reference to Romans 6; I Corinthians 10; II Corinthians 8.¹⁰⁶ Catholic Professor Mark O’Keefe writes that “drawing on [II Peter 1.4] and other biblical passages, a number of Greek and Latin patristic authors affirmed that ‘God became human in order that humans might become divine.’” He later discusses the concept of *theosis*. “While a number of biblical passages (for instance, John 17.21; Romans 2.7; I Cor.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 418-9, quoting Athanasius, *De Incar* 54; *Contra Arianos* 1.70; *Epistle to Serapion* 1.24. Marta Ryk also refers to Athanasius as the ‘doctor of deification,’ in Ryk, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in the Deification of Man according to Contemporary Orthodox Theology (1925-1972),” *Diakonia* 10 (1975): 129, note 92. The significance of Athanasius’ and Nicaea’s rejection of Arius’ christology is borne out by Pannenburg: “The rejection of Arianism was primarily motivated by the soteriological interest of the substantial Christology: we can have full community with God through Christ, we can achieve deification, only if he is God in the fullest sense,” Wolfhart Pannenburg, *Jesus—God and Man*, op. cit., 124, citing Athanasius, *De synod* 51.

¹⁰¹ John Meyendorff, “*Theosis* in the Eastern Christian Tradition,” in *Christian Spirituality III: Post Reformation and Modern*, ed. by Dupre and Saliers (New York 1989): 470-6, at page 470-1. Meyendorff contrasts the Eastern patristic tradition of deification with the “Western, more legalistic, post-Augustinian, medieval conception of ‘original sin’ which makes every human *guilty* of the sin committed by Adam in paradise”: 471, italics in original. In an earlier volume of the same series Paul Meyendorff wrote that “the East did not accept Augustine’s notion of original sin and saw /the Fall’s/ consequences not as guilt but as mortality. Guilt is only acquitted through the personal exercise of the free will, through personal sin,” in Paul Meyendorff, “Liturgy and Spirituality I: Eastern Liturgical Theology,” in *Christian Spirituality I: Origins*, ed. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York 1985): 350-63, at page 356.

¹⁰² Davies, 251-2.

¹⁰³ R. S. Franks, “The Idea of Salvation in the Theology of the Eastern Church,” *Mansfield College Essays*. Presented to Rev. Andrew Martin Fairbairn (London 1909): 251. At the time of this article Franks was a lecturer in the Friends Settlement, Woodbrooke, England.

¹⁰⁴ Morna D. Hooker, “Interchange and Atonement,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 60 (1978), 462-81, *passim*; quotation from 479. Cf. Hooker, “Interchange in Christ,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971): 356f. The “marvelous exchange” is also referred to by Jacques Dupuis, S.J., *Who do you say I am? Introduction to Christology* (Orbis Books 1994): 77-8, who refers to Irenaeus and Athanasius. Cardinal Schonborn cites Cyril of Alexandria with reference to the ‘exchange principle,’ in *God’s Human Face*, 85-6, 91, and 130, where the humanization of God corresponds to the divinization of man.

¹⁰⁵ McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1996): 132.

¹⁰⁶ F. W. Norris, “Deification: Consensual and Cogent,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49 (1996): 418-24.

15.52; Eph 1.10; II Timothy 1.10) may suggest some aspect of *theosis*” it is primarily II Peter 1.4 that the early writers appeal to.¹⁰⁷ With reference to the sacraments, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “the sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist [the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper] the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.”¹⁰⁸ The Lutheran Rusch indicates that there are two main sources for the belief in divinization. From the Bible he refers to Psalms 82.6; II Peter 1.4; I Cor. 15.49; II Cor. 8.9; Romans 8.11; Genesis 1.26-7; Galatians 3.26; Matthew 5.48.¹⁰⁹ Rusch cites Maximus the Confessor who wrote that “salvation, defined as deification, [is] the chief theme of the Christian faith and the biblical revelation.”¹¹⁰ Rusch’s second source is the Platonic tradition, which is not totally surprising, considering that Plato is cited often by several of the early Fathers.¹¹¹ Kenneth Wesche, a Greek Orthodox, cites John 17.21, Gal 2.20, and then writes: “The concept of *theosis* roots the understanding of salvation in an earlier Old Testament meaning of ‘justification’ or ‘being made righteous.’”¹¹² Timothy Ware, in his study of deification in the Orthodox Church, cites II Cor 8.9; John 17.22-3; I Cor. 6.19; Rom 12.1, as well as II P 1.4.¹¹³ Marta Ryk writes that “the idea of deification has its roots in philosophy, the Scriptures, the Patristic writings and Liturgy.” She then refers to the following scriptures: John 10.34 (= Psalm 82.6); I John 3.2; II Peter 1.4; Matt 5.48, citing further support from the Johannine writings: John 1.3, 12-3; 3.5, 15-6, 19, 36; 5.26; 6.35, 39, 63; 7.39; 10.34; 13.35; 14.15, 20; 15.1-9, 23; 17.21-3, 26; I John 1.5; 3.2, 9; 4.8-17, etc. She also refers to the Pauline literature: Rom 5.3-5, 10; 6.4; 8.14, 17, 29; I Cor 3.16, 19-20; 12.12-3; 13.12; 15.52; Gal 2.20; 3.26;

¹⁰⁷ O’Keefe, *op. cit.*, 47, 56. Jaroslav Pelikan, after citing II Peter 1.4, quotes Clement of Alexandria, and refers to Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, in Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries. His Place in the History of Culture* (Harper and Row 1985): 68: “...one Greek father after another would say...”

¹⁰⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1212, quoting Pope Paul VI, apostolic constitution *Divinae consortium naturae*, (1971). Further references to II Peter 1.4 found in paragraphs 1265 and 1996.

¹⁰⁹ Rusch, *op. cit.*, 134-5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 140-1. Jaroslav Pelikan first quotes Russian scholar S. L. Epifanovic: “The chief idea of St. Maximus, as of all of Eastern theology, [was] the idea of deification,” and then writes the following regarding Maximus: “Like all of his theological ideas, it had come to him from Christian antiquity and had been formulated by the Greek fathers. Salvation defined as deification was the theme of Christian faith and of the biblical message. The purpose of the Lord’s Prayer was to point to the mystery of deification,” in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Volume Two: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (University of Chicago 1977): 10. Pelikan describes Epifanovic’s work (written in 1915) as “the basic work on the thought of Maximus,” *ibid.*, page 302; cf. Pelikan, introduction to *Maximus Confessor. Selected Writings*, ed. George C. Berthold (Paulist Press 1985): 10. George Berthold has written that “Maximus states that all history is divided into two: the incarnation of God and the deification of man. This is something that God decided on before creation,” in Berthold, “Levels of Scriptural Meaning in Maximus the Confessor,” *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993): 129-143, at 137, citing *Questions to Thalassius* 22. Joseph A Spiritu Sancto quoted another selection from the same text: “The Holy Ghost bestows perfection [*teleiosis*] by means of the lucid, simple, perfect wisdom on those who are worthy of deification [*theosis*],” in Spiritu Sancto, “The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost in Early Greek Theology,” *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 26.2 (1926): 820-27, 930-38, at 935, citing *Questions to Thalassius* 63.

¹¹¹ Plato, *Timaeus* 28c: “The Father and Maker of all this universe is past finding out, and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible.” Deirdre Carabine writes that this passage was cited more frequently by Christian writers than by non-Christian writers: Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Louvain 1995): 26, note 33; 224, note 6. See Justin, *Apology* II. 10, who quotes this passage from Plato.

¹¹² Kenneth Paul Wesche, “Eastern Orthodox Spirituality: Union with God in *Theosis*,” *Theology Today* 56 (Princeton, NJ 1999): 29-43, at page 30.

¹¹³ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books 1991; 1st 1963): 28-9; 236 ff., especially 240-242. Timothy Ware is also known as Bishop Kallistos, or as Kallistos Ware.

Ephesians 1.13-4; 2.16, 22; Phil 2.5-11; 3.21; I Thess. 4.17; I Tim 6.16. She also discusses several of the Church Fathers, referring to the “patristic adage: ‘God associates only with gods.’”¹¹⁴

There have been several references already to what is called the ‘exchange principle,’ the idea that God became what we are so that we may become what He is. In an interesting discussion Frans Jozef van Beeck has combined this concept with the problem the West has with the doctrine of deification in general. He first quotes from Clement of Alexandria: “Now the Word himself speaks to you in visible form, putting your unbelief to shame—yes, I mean the Word of God that has become Man, so that you in turn might learn from a man just in what way man can become God.”¹¹⁵ In a footnote to this quotation van Beeck refers to a French translation of the same passage, which he translates as “the Logos of God [that has] become man, so that it would be a man that would teach you in your turn how a God has become man.” He then writes: “This translation reduces the meaning of the subclause to a redundancy. Is this an example of theological trepidation before the boldness of the exchange principle?”¹¹⁶ Apparently there are those in the West who would mistranslate certain texts simply to avoid teaching certain principles which they did not accept or understand. The copyist who cannot read may not know what he is doing when he makes a mistake; but can the same be said of a translator? Rufinus (died 410) openly admitted that he changed some of Origen’s text when translating from Greek to Latin, to spare the sensibilities of his reading audience.¹¹⁷ In the preface to his translation of Origen’s *De Principiis* Rufinus wrote that he was

¹¹⁴ Ryk, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in the Deification of Man,” *op. cit.*, esp. 119-125; quotation, 122, with notes 88 and 90. Ryk gives no references here, but Gregory of Nazianzus is quoted by Ware, to the effect that “God is joined in unity with those who are gods and is known by them,” Kallistos Ware, “Christian Theology in the East 600-1453,” in *A History of Christian Doctrine*, ed. Hubert Cunliffe-Jones (Edinburgh 1978): 218, citing *Theological, Gnostic, and Practical Chapters* 3.21. Regarding the philosophical roots Dr. Ryk refers us to the article by the Greek theologian, Andrew Theodorou, in *Kerygma und Dogma 7* (1961): 283-310, cited below in the bibliography.

¹¹⁵ Frans Jozef van Beeck, S.J., *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology. Volume One: Understanding the Christian Faith* (Harper and Row 1989):84-5, citing Clement, *Protrepticus* 1.8.4. The verse is also quoted by J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Harper and Row, 1960): 184.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 299, note 40. The exchange principle has been cited frequently in the literature; see Morna Hooker and the references cited above. Jesuit Gerald O’Collins, *Christology*, 156-7 writes: “From Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses* 3.19; 4.20) and Athanasius, through to its high point in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, and beyond in the teaching of Augustine of Hippo, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great [Pope, 440-461], and others, the experience of becoming ‘godlike’ or being ‘deified’ through Christ in a ‘wonderful exchange’ (*admirabile commercium*) underpinned the conviction about his identity: ‘It was God who became human that we humans might become divine.’” At page 198 he refers again “to the way Irenaeus and many others interpreted the experience of salvation as a ‘wonderful exchange’ in which the Son of God’s incarnation brought our divinization.” Cf. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace*: 78-9; van Beeck, 63; 86, note i (on Aquinas).

¹¹⁷ See e.g., Quasten, *Patrology* II: 57-8; cf. Kilian McDonnell, “Does Origen have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?,” *Gregorianum* 75 (Rome 1994): 5-35, at page 14; cf. Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen. The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church* (Atlanta 1983): 91. Indeed, 17th century polemicist Jean Daille wrote that “Rufinus...took so much license with the writings of Origen, Eusebius, and others, which he translated from Greek to Latin, that there is not a page of his translations in which he did not excise, add, or interpolate something,” in Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis. Volume I: The Four Senses of Scripture*, translated by Mark Sebanc (Eerdmans 1998): 374, note 70. On Rufinus in general see Francis X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345-411). His Life and Works* (Catholic University of America 1945); and the articles by Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, “The last ten years of Rufinus’ life and the date of his move south from Aquileia,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1977): 372-429; *idem*, “A product of a fifth-century scriptorium preserving conventions used by Rufinus of Aquileia,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978): 366-462; *idem*, “Products of fifth century scriptoria preserving conventions used by Rufinus of Aquileia,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984): 347-393. On copyists deliberately changing the ideas of Cyril of Jerusalem, to agree with their own ideas of orthodoxy, see A. A. Stephenson, “S. Cyril of Jerusalem’s Trinitarian Theology,” *Studia Patristica* 11 (TU 108: 1972): 234-241, at 236-7. On nineteenth century Protestant aversions to translating the concept of *theosis* as ‘becoming divine,’ see Frederick W. Norris, *The Apostolic Faith: Protestants and Roman Catholics* (Liturgical Press 1992): 89-90. Robert F.

merely following Jerome's example by "emending theologically offensive passages in the process" of that translation. Jerome (died 420) had been at one time an ardent admirer of Origen and had even translated some of his works. But he had come to believe that Origen was a heretic, at least in some of his teachings. He took great umbrage at Rufinus' comments, and decided on a translation of his own of Origen's work. Unfortunately both the original Greek of Origen is lost (except for some fragments) as is the Latin translation by Jerome (except for some fragments). According to Joseph Trigg there is enough remaining to determine that Jerome was "as biased in [his] accentuation of Origen's alleged deviations from orthodoxy as Rufinus' was in its concealment of them."¹¹⁸ Rufinus was not the first to translate according to his own vision of orthodoxy, and certainly was not the last. Saint Augustine's doctrine of original sin was based on a faulty translation of Romans 5.12. He could not read Greek sufficiently, and had to rely on an earlier Latin translation, and commentary thereon.¹¹⁹

Brown also points to an attempt to clarify the text by a nineteenth century translator: Brown, "On the Necessary Imperfection of Creation: Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 4.38," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 19, note 1, although not on our theme.

¹¹⁸ Trigg, *Origen*, 252-3. Rufinus' comments are translated in Jean Danielou, *Origen* (New York 1955): xi-xii, citing *ad Heraclium*, and the preface to *De Principiis*, and the *De Adulteratione Librorum Origenis*. Rufinus believed that heretics had altered Origen's writings. He saw it as his job to 'correct' those alterations. See also the discussion in R.P.C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London 1954), especially chapter two: "Origen's Translators": 40-7. Cf. Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton University Press 1992): 15, 29, 172 (citing his *Apology to Pope Anastasius*, where he again admitted 'correcting' Origen's comments for more 'catholic' ones). Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan's comments on Rufinus' reliability, in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*: 109-110; 122. John Dillon has referred to the "circumlocutions and prevarications of the loyal but cautious Rufinus," in Dillon, "Origen's Doctrine of the Trinity and Some Later Neoplatonic Theories," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. D. J. O'Meara (1982): 19-23; reprinted in Dillon, *The Golden Chain* (Variorum Reprints 1990)

¹¹⁹ See David Weaver, "From Paul to Augustine: Romans 5.12 in Early Christian Exegesis," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983): 187-205; *idem*, "The Exegesis of Romans 5.12 among the Greek Fathers and its implication for the Doctrine of Original Sin: The 5th – 12th Centuries," in *ibid.* 29 (1985): 133-159; 231-257; Ross Aden, "Justification and Divinization," *Dialog* 32 (St. Paul, Minn. 1993): 102-7, at page 104-5. Cf. Theodore S. de Bruyn, "Pelagius's Interpretation of Rom. 5.12-21: Exegesis within the Limits of Polemic," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 4 (1988): 30-43. Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace* (Liturgical Press 1993): 62-3: "his interpretation [of Romans 5.12], mistaken as it was, and deriving from the erroneous Old Latin version, would play a crucial role in the development of the later doctrine of original sin." See Eugene TeSelle, "Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Prehistory of the Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies* 3 (1972): 61-95, at page 79-80 for Ambrosiaster's role in that faulty translation. David L. Smith has recently written that "much of the impetus for a doctrine of original guilt came from Augustine of Hippo. He was, unfortunately, using a Latin mistranslation of Romans 5.12 as the basis for his views," in Smith, "Modern Trends in the Theology of Sin: The Transmission of Sin," in *Didaskalia. The Journal of Providence Theological Seminary* (Otterburne, Manitoba, Spring 1998): 93-89, at page 85. Elaine Pagels, "The Politics of Paradise: Augustine's exegesis of Genesis 1-3 versus that of John Chrysostom," *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985): 67-99, at page 80; at page 68 she writes: "Astonishingly, Augustine's radical views prevailed, eclipsing for future generations of Western Christians the consensus of the first three centuries of Christian tradition." For the subject in general see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture. The effect of early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford University Press 1993). Bruce Metzger wrote that "the manuscripts of the New Testament preserve traces of two kinds of dogmatic alterations: those which involve the elimination or alteration of what was regarded as doctrinally unacceptable or inconvenient; and those which introduce into the scriptures 'proof' for a favorite theological tenet or practice," in Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford University Press 1968): 201. Compare Rev 22.18-20. In his recent 'clarification' of the *filioque* clause, the Pope (or whoever wrote it at his request) stated that the problem arose because of a mistranslation of John 15.26 from the Greek to the Latin, in *Eastern Churches Journal* 2 (1995): page 39, paragraph 13: "in this way, a false equivalence was involuntarily created." Compare however, Pope John Paul II, "The *Filioque* Debate," *The Pope Speaks* 36 (1991): 114-117.

Several of the Fathers above referred to the passage from II Peter 1.4 (“participation in the divine nature”). As a defense for the Christian doctrine of deification it was first used by Clement of Alexandria. It became the mainstay of the Fathers subsequent to that time. The fact that it was not put to that use until the early third century, long after the doctrine had become an accepted teaching, by having been taught by several previous Fathers, suggests that the doctrine was part of that tradition which was passed down from teacher to catechumen. It was part of what the student or potential convert was taught, prior to their being baptized, or at least shortly afterward. It was only later that it was deemed necessary to seek out scriptural ‘proof-texts’ for the doctrine. Regardless of what modern exegetes might make of the passage and its ‘original’ meaning in the text, the doctrine was already in place prior to its first use by Clement.¹²⁰

Mark Nispel has recently studied the extensive use of Psalm 82.6 (“ye are gods”) in early Christological contexts, and has suggested that this may be the origin of the idea of deification. “The evidence of the Latin authors, who know of ‘becoming god’ only in the context of the Christological argument of Psalm 82... indicates that the theology of Christian deification, while drawing upon Hellenistic ideas, arose chiefly out of the exegetical debate over Psalm 82.”¹²¹ Arthur Darby Nock writes that the concept of deification “admitted of a wide range of variations and was often expressed with a boldness which surprises moderns who have been brought up to think of the category of divinity as infinitely remote.... It had its roots in Gen. 1.26 and Psalm 82.6.”¹²² F. W. Norris states that “a second scriptural text provides a clear example of how we read scripture through some tradition. Conservative Protestants often use John 10.34-6. Most defenses of Biblical inerrancy employ the Johannine word from Jesus: ‘scripture cannot be broken.’ But few of those presentations notice that the phrase is an aside. The most striking line from this portion of the opera is elsewhere. According to John certain Jews accuse Jesus of blasphemy; he has allowed himself to be called God. His reply is simple and unexpected. In Psalm 82.6 God says to humans: ‘you are gods.’ What a remarkable reply to the charge of blasphemy. Scripture itself says people are gods.”¹²³ Stephen Duffy refers to Psalm 82.6 as “the well-worn patristic proof text for deification” and refers to its use by Irenaeus and Origen.¹²⁴ According to Eric Osborn “for Tertullian, the exclusive unity of God does not exclude, but

¹²⁰ For instance, see the comment by Anglican R.P.C. Hanson, *The Attractiveness of God* (John Knox Press 1973), 38: “One verse in II Peter is not a sufficient basis for the doctrine that we are all destined to share God’s nature rather than God’s life, as the rest of the New Testament teaches.” The same point is made by Evangelical Al Wolters, “‘Partners of the Deity’: A Covenantal Reading of II Peter 1.4,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (1990): 28-44, at page 44. Conversely, Orthodox scholar Nicholas Lossky has written recently with regard to “Westerners” who have trouble accepting the Orthodox view of salvation, which is based on this passage. He writes: “the argument of some biblical scholars, trying to refute the Orthodox view of salvation—that this is a unique occurrence in the New Testament—is not very convincing. ‘The Word became flesh’ is also unique! As everyone knows, St. Peter’s bold statement was expounded in the patristic adage that unsettles so many ‘Westerners’: ‘God became a human being that the human being may become God.’” He goes on to refer to Irenaeus, the Greek-writing Bishop of Lyons in France, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, the Wesley brothers, Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, “and others.” “Is this really only a ‘typically Eastern Orthodox’ view of salvation?,” in Lossky, “Theology and Prayer. An Orthodox Perspective,” in *Sacramental Theology in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*. Essays Presented to Geoffrey Wainwright on his Sixtieth Birthday, ed. David S. Cunningham, Ralph Del Colle, Lucas Lamadrid (Oxford University Press 1999): 24-32, at page 28-9. The present paper has cited many of the “western” catholic writers on the subject of deification. It is indeed not simply an Eastern Orthodox view of salvation!

¹²¹ Mark D. Nispel, “Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999): 302.

¹²² Nock, review article, *Journal of Religion* 31 (1951): 214-6.

¹²³ F. W. Norris, “Deification: Consensual and Cogent,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49 (1996): 418-9. Pelikan, in a chapter entitled “Humanity made Divine,” says that this psalm gives “explicit biblical grounding” to the concept of deification, and that Christ’s quotation of it affirms that interpretation; in Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, op. cit., 141-2.

¹²⁴ Duffy, op. cit., quotation from 55. Norman Russell has recently pointed out that Irenaeus was the first to equate Ps 82.6 with Paul’s teaching about the adoptive sonship of mortals. It was then taken over by Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius as a major defense for the teachings on deification, in Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London 2000): 229, note 17, and 240-1, note 28. Kilian McDonnell reminds us that “Origen

rather defines, the deification of men. What belongs to God belongs to him alone; all that we have of him comes from him alone. So, while ‘we shall even be gods’ (according to Psalm 82), ‘this comes from grace, not from some property of ours, since it is he alone who can make gods.’”¹²⁵ Johannes Quasten cites Clement of Alexandria’s use of Psalm 82.6.¹²⁶ Widdicombe cites Athanasius’ use of the same Psalm in his teaching regarding deification.¹²⁷ Gerald Bonner, who has written frequently about deification in Augustine, writes that “the text which Augustine, in common with the Greek Fathers, takes as specifically teaching deification is Psalm 82.6.... While no modern scholar could build a theology of deification on such a scriptural foundation and expect to be taken seriously, with the Fathers, however, the case was different.”¹²⁸ Walter Prineps has also cited Augustine’s use of Ps 82.6 as the grounds for his doctrine of

is the most influential theologian in the East during the first thousand years,” in McDonnell, “Does the Theology and Practice of the Early Church confirm the Classical Pentecostal Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit?,” *Pneuma. The Journal of the Society on Pentecostal Studies* 21 (1999): 133. Jaroslav Pelikan has referred to Origen as “the greatest Christian thinker in the first three centuries of the history of the church, perhaps in all of Christian history,” in Pelikan, *Imago Dei. The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton University Press 1990): 2. Catholic scholar Walter Kasper referred to Origen as “the most famous theologian of the third century and perhaps the greatest theologian of all time,” in Kasper, *Transcending All Understanding*, trans. B. Ramsey (Ignatius Press 1989): 37. Brian Daley, S.J., has referred to Origen as “the first fully professional thinker” in the Church; in Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 59. Johannes Quasten wrote that Origen “is the first scientific exegete of the Catholic church,” in Quasten, *Patrology*, II: 45. Didymus the Blind (d. 398) referred to Origen as “the chief teacher of the church after the Apostles,” quoted in Kallistos Ware, “Dare we hope for the Salvation of all? Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Isaac of Nineveh,” *Theology Digest* 45 (1998): 303-317, at 306. The fifteenth century Byzantine scholar George Scholarius wrote: “Where Origen was good, no one is better, where he was bad, no one is worse,” in Kilian McDonnell, “Does Origen Have a Trinitarian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit?,” *Gregorianum* 75 (Rome 1994): 5-35, at page 5

¹²⁵ Eric Osborn, *Beginning of Christian Philosophy* (Cambridge 1981): 113-4, quoting *Adversus Hermogenem* 5. Osborn also cites Augustine, Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria.

¹²⁶ Quasten, *Patrology* 2.28. Cf. Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria. A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford 1971); see also Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, I*: 164, 177-8.

¹²⁷ Peter Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford 1994): 233, citing *c. Arianos* 1.39; 1.9; 3.19; 3.25; for more on Athanasius cf. 97, 236-7, 226, 249; he also cites Origen, 86-7, 99, 239.

¹²⁸ Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification,” *Journal of Theological Studies* (1986): 369-385, at page 371. See also, Bonner, “Deificare,” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Mayer, Vol. 2 (Basel 1996): 265-7: ‘...an integral part of [his theology].’ Cf. Bonner, “Augustine’s Doctrine of Man: Image of God and Sinner,” *Augustinianum* 24 (1984): 495-514, at page 511: “He who was God was made man to make gods those who were men,” citing *Sermon* 192.1; also Bonner, “They Speak to us across the Centuries: 7. Augustine,” *The Expository Times* 109.10 (1998): 293-6; see now, Bonner “Deification, Divinization,” in *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (W.B. Eerdmans 1999): 265-6. In general, cf. Victorino Capanaga, “La deificación en la soteriología agostiniana,” in *Augustinus Magister* 2 (Paris 1954): 745-54. Michael Azkoul has written: “Some historians believe that Augustine’s ‘deification’ was simply a metaphor of ‘adoption’ or ‘justification’... an opinion with which Professor Gerald Bonner disagrees. Augustine’s [thought, Bonner] insists, meant precisely what the Greek Fathers indicated by deification,” Azkoul, *The Influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Orthodox Church* (Edwin Mellen 1990): 176, note 81, citing Bonner, 1986 (above); cf. Pelikan, *Imago Dei* (Princeton 1990): 141. Azkoul quotes Augustine, that God is God by nature, but ‘the rest are made gods by His grace, not of His substance, that they should not be the same as He; but that by favor they should come to Him and be joint-heirs with Christ;’ the ‘justified’ are deified by grace, not by birth, in Azkoul, *ibid.*, 176, note 81. Jesuit Earl Muller quotes Augustine: “‘For we are not God by nature, by nature we are men.... God, therefore, having been made a just man...and having been made a sharer of our mortality, He has made us a sharer of His divinity’”, in Muller, “The Priesthood of Christ in Book IV of the *De trinitate*,” in *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, edited by Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J. (Peter Lang 1993): 135, quoting *De trinitate* 4.2.4.

deification.¹²⁹ In Norman Russell's recent study of Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria (died 444), there are several references to his use of this Psalm as a defense of the deification of humankind.¹³⁰ It is evident that the early Fathers taught that the Old Testament, especially this particular Psalm, was sufficient to develop, or perhaps better, to defend, the doctrine of deification which they had inherited from their apostolic ancestors.

Irenee-H. Dalmais, in his article on 'divinisation' in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, begins with reference to Gen. 1.26-7, II Peter 1.4; I John 3.2 and Matthew 5.48. He then discusses the various Greek Fathers who taught the principle (Ignatius, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Evagrius Ponticus, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas).¹³¹ Those who have cited Matt 5.48 ("be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect") in their defense of deification include Origen,¹³² Athanasius,¹³³ Clement¹³⁴ and Augustine.¹³⁵ John Wesley also used the Savior's command to be perfect in defense of his own theology of perfection.¹³⁶ The fourth Lateran Council (1215) states that Christ says "'you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect', as though he were saying more explicitly: 'you must be perfect' in the perfection of grace 'as your heavenly Father is perfect' in the perfection of nature, i.e., each in his own way.'" ¹³⁷ Pope Paul VI in his *Profession of Faith* (1968) wrote that the Holy Spirit "'purifies [the Church] members if they do not refuse his grace. His action, which penetrates to the inmost of the soul, enables one to respond to the command of Jesus: 'you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.'" ¹³⁸ Pope John Paul II in his text *Dominum et Vivicantem* quoted Matt 5.48 as the "model of our

¹²⁹ Walter H. Prineps, *Introduction to Patristic and Medieval Theology* (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto 1982): 93. E. Przywara, S.J., *An Augustine Synthesis* (London 1945): 305, contains several passages from Augustine on deification.

¹³⁰ Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London 2000): 20-1 (=101), 107, 126. Deification is referred to throughout the book: 21, 30, 45-6, 235, note 44. Cyril also uses II Peter 1.4 for this purpose.

¹³¹ Dalmais, 'divinisation,' *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite* III: columns 1376-1389. On the Latin Fathers see Gustav Bardy, *ibid.*, columns 1389-98, with references to Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus, Bishop of Mileve in North Africa (ca. 370), and Augustine. For information regarding Optatus, see now, Mark Edwards, "Introduction," to *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, translated and edited by Mark Edwards (Liverpool University Press 1997): xi-xxxi, especially xvi-xxix.

¹³² J. Jose Alviar, *Klesis. The Theology of the Christian Vocation According to Origen* (Oregon 1993): 23-4, quoting *De Princ* 4.4.10; he quotes IIP 1.4 on page 27; "'The highest good is to become as far as possible like God'" (*De Princ* 3.6.1), on page 29, and 101; Frederick G. McLeod, S.J., "The Antiochene Tradition regarding the role of the Body within the 'Image of God,'" in *Broken and Whole. Essays on Religion and the Body*, ed. Maureen A. Tilley and Susan A. Ross (New York 1993): 23-53, at page 28, quoting *Homilies on Genesis*; he also cites Gregory of Nyssa (29-30) and the Cappadocians in general on deification (32).

¹³³ Widdicombe, *op. cit.*, 242, quoting *contra Arianos* 3.34.

¹³⁴ J. Zandee, 'The Teachings of Silvanus' and Clement of Alexandria. *A New Document of Alexandrian Theology* (Leiden 1977): 108, quoting *Stromateis* 7.14.88.4-6, wherein Clement also cites Plato, *Timaeus* 176a-b; Zandee also refers there to the influence on Clement of Albinus, *Did* 28; and Philo, *Fug* 63, *Spec Leg* 4.88; *Decal* 73, and *Op. Mund* 144.

¹³⁵ Raymond Canning, *Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Leuven 1993): 198-215.

¹³⁶ D. Marselle Moore, "Development in Wesley's thought on Sanctification and Perfection," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20 (1985): 29-53, at page 31. Tore Meistad, a Methodist minister, has recently stated that Wesley's "doctrine of sanctification should be interpreted in light of the Eastern Orthodox concept of *theosis*, relating salvation to the actual change of the Christian as they share God's nature (II Pet. 1.4)," in Meistad, *Martin Luther and John Wesley on the Sermon on the Mount* (Scarecrow Press 1999): 95; on Matt 5.48, see 156-9.

¹³⁷ The relevant part of the document can be found in J. Neuner, S.J., and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (sixth edition, 1996), paragraph 320.

¹³⁸ Neuner-Dupuis, paragraph 39.6. Pope Paul's *Credo* is also found in its entirety in *Vatican Council II. More Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1982): Volume II. 387-96, at 390; cf. *The Pope Speaks* 13 (1968): 273-82, at page 278.

perfection.” Matthew 5.48 is also quoted, paraphrased, or referred to several times in the new *Catechism*. It is written there that “the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect.’ In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired: ‘Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state—though each in his own way—are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect.’”¹³⁹ Another paragraph (1693) reads in part that “Christ’s disciples are invited to live in the sight of the Father ‘who sees in secret,’ [Matt 6.6], in order to become ‘perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.’” Paragraph 1968 states that “the Gospel brings the Law [of Moses] to its fullness through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father, through forgiveness of enemies and prayer for persecutors, in emulation of the divine generosity.” Another paragraph reads: “All Christians in any state or way of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.’ All are called to holiness: ‘Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.’”¹⁴⁰ With reference to that portion of the Lord’s prayer which reads “...as we forgive those who trespass against us” the *Catechism* reads: “This ‘as’ is not unique in Jesus’ teaching: ‘you, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;’ ‘Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful’ [Luke 6.36]; ‘a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another’ [John 13.34].”¹⁴¹ Clearly Matthew 5.48 is a significant text for the concept of deification, even in the modern Catholic Church.

In addition to the sources primarily outlined above, that is Psalm 82.6, II Peter 1.4 and Matthew 5.48, there is also “the Pauline teaching on adoptive filiation and re-creation in the likeness of Christ (I Corinthians 15.49, on bearing the image of the heavenly; II Corinthians 8.9, through Christ’s poverty we may be made rich; Romans 8.11, etc).”¹⁴² Kilian McDonnell adds Ephesians 4.22-4, on putting on the new man; Romans 6.5; 8.14-7, on adoption as sons.¹⁴³ Ephesians 2.6 indicates that Christ will raise us up and give us a place at the right hand of God.¹⁴⁴ Jesuit Frans Jozef van Beeck has recently written that “there are a hundred ways to become better, more just, and more humane, but only one way to become gods,” referring us to John 14.6: ‘Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’¹⁴⁵

Church Tradition and Deification

It should be evident that the early church taught some concept of the deification of the human person, beginning during this life but only being perfected in the life to come. It has been taught through the Middle Ages and into the Reformation; indeed, the Orthodox churches have taught it from the beginning to the present; and it appears to be gaining prominence in Roman Catholic literature. All of them base it on at least a certain amount of scripture, but not entirely so. Tradition passed down from the earliest Christians also played a large part in the development of the concept. The fact that the first Father to quote scripture in defense of the concept was Clement of Alexandria (citing II Peter 1.4) suggests that some of it was oral or written tradition, rather than strictly scripturally based.

¹³⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 825, quoting a document from the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, paragraphs 48.3 and 11.3. *LG* 11 is also referred to at 1251, footnote. *Lumen Gentium* in its entirety is found in Flannery, I: 350-426.

¹⁴⁰ *Catechism*, paragraph 2013, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, 40.2. *LG* 40 is also cited in the footnote to paragraph 1426.

¹⁴¹ *Catechism*, paragraph 2842, which goes on to cite Gal 5.25, Phil 2.1, 5 and Eph 4.32.

¹⁴² Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1993): 65. Peter Widdicombe writes that Athanasius “argues that our adoption as sons and divinization was prepared in the eternal purposes of the Father in anticipation of the Fall”, Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God*: 235-6, citing Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 2.75-76.

¹⁴³ Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1996): 132.

¹⁴⁴ Schonborn, *From Death to Life*: 40, note 45, quoting John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Genesis* 2.1.

¹⁴⁵ van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 1.168.

W.E.G. Floyd quotes Clement of Alexandria: "Divinization is a learning process..... The soul 'studies to be God'"¹⁴⁶

Robert Arida concludes his study of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), which dealt with the iconoclastic controversy, by stating that "What has been accomplished in Christ's deified humanity is what all of us are called to grow into for all eternity."¹⁴⁷

George Schurr has stated that "very early in Christian tradition the end and goal of Christian life was called, among other things, 'deification.'" He then makes reference to Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus and Athanasius. He continues: "This Greek affirmation of the transformation of human life, and its apparent elevation to divinity, if not deity, is the steady background of the ontological problems involved in the Christological debates of the fourth through sixth centuries." Then notice the following: "Since Leo I [Pope from 440-461], however, the notion of the 'deification' of man seems to have been unintelligible to Western Christians.... From Leo on, Western theology has interpreted salvation more in moral than in ontological terms. The presumption of a fixed 'infinite distance' between God and man has made the idea of the 'deification' of man at best problematic, and at worst blasphemous, to Western Christians down to the present day."¹⁴⁸ Schurr refers the change to the person of Pope Leo the Great. It could just as easily be placed on the shoulders of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which was held under Leo's influence. As Morna Hooker will tell us below, since that time scholars, both east and west, have studied the scriptures through "Chalcedonian spectacles." The West especially has continued to have problems with the concept of deification, despite the fact that so many of them did in fact talk about it, at least in passing. In the second half of the ninth century Irish philosopher and theologian John Scottus Eriugena visited the East, and gained a great deal of insight into their thinking by means of their own writings. The writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor especially excited him. In the works of those Fathers he found much on the concept of deification. It troubled him that his own Roman tradition did not talk much of it. He wrote, as a possible explanation of that fact: "'This use of this word, Deification, is very rare in the Latin books.... I am not sure of the reason for this reticence: perhaps it is because the meaning of this word *theosis*...seemed too profound for those who cannot rise above carnal speculations, and would therefore be to them incomprehensible and incredible."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ W. E. Gregory Floyd, *Clement of Alexandria's Treatment of the Problem of Evil* (Oxford 1971): 86, citing *QDS* 7.3 and *Strom* 6.113.3.

¹⁴⁷ Arida, "Second Nicaea: The Vision of the New Man and New Creation in the Orthodox Icon," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987): 417-24, at 424. Earlier he had written that "Christ has opened the way for the deification of all humanity.... This deified humanity of the historical Christ is the model and goal of our humanity" (422).

¹⁴⁸ George M. Schurr, "On the Logic of Ante-Nicene affirmations of the 'Deification' of the Christian," *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 97-105, at page 97-8. Over a hundred years ago German theologian Albert B. Ritschl wrote about the Eastern concept of deification, and the fact that several in the West had also taught it (Augustine, Aquinas and Luther). "Nevertheless the combination has remained on the whole unproductive for the Western Church, because the latter, since Augustine, has pushed into the foreground the human personality of Christ and His corresponding activity as mediator between God and man.... It followed that the result of the mediatorial activity of the man Christ could not be described as the bestowal of Godhead upon men," in Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, translated by H.R. Mackintosh (Edinburgh 1900; 1st 1874; 2nd 1883): 389-90.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in John Meyendorff, "Remarks on Eastern Patristic Thought in John Scottus Eriugena," in *Eriugena: East and West*, edited by Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten (University of Notre Dame 1994): 51-68, at page 56; the quotation is from Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, Book 5. The statement by Eriugena is also referred to by Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena* (Oxford 2000): 22, and more fully on 101-2, where she also quotes Eriugena's comments regarding the Latins: "'weak eyes cannot bear the brilliance of the light.'" Eriugena wrote that only Ambrose, among the Latins, could see clearly. According to Peter Brown, "unlike Augustine, [Ambrose] could read Greek fluently. He could comb the books of a brilliant new generation of Greek bishops and a whole tradition of Greek Christian scholarship, to give his congregation some of the most learned and up-to-date sermons in the Latin world," in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Dorset Press 1967): 82-3; Brown's statement is quoted in William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Liturgical Press 1995): 85-6. For more on Ambrose and deification see the statement in

The fact that deification was taught so openly and widely by the early Church was the work of the Fathers. If it was taught so consistently, and by so many of the Fathers, why is it not the ‘official doctrine’ of the Church; why is there nothing about it in the major creeds, or in the conciliar statements? Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) wondered the same thing. Maximus was one of the last of the Fathers who was conversant in both the Eastern and the Western systems.¹⁵⁰ With reference to the creed Maximus has the following to say, as reported by Jaroslav Pelikan: “In a remarkable passage in his *Ambigua*, Maximus raised, but left to ‘wise men’ to answer, the question why ‘if this dogma [of *theosis*] belongs to the mystery of the faith of the Church, it was not included with the other [dogmas] in the symbol expounding the utterly pure faith of Christians, composed by our holy and blessed fathers.’ The symbol had declared that the Son of God came down ‘for the sake of us men and for the purpose of our salvation,’ but it had not specified the content of that salvation as healing, forgiveness, and divinization. Yet this content clearly belonged to the faith and doctrine of the church. But dogma was not very well equipped to define it.”¹⁵¹ It is not the purpose of a Council to define the doctrines of the Church; as Bishop (and later Cardinal) Christoph Schonborn said, “it is the role of a Council to profess the Faith, not to explain it; this would be the task of theologians and doctors of the Church.”¹⁵² This was of course part of the problem that Maximus was dealing with: the Fathers clearly taught the doctrine, even if the Councils and Creeds did not. Thirty years after Maximus died a council did in fact have something to say about deification. It was mentioned above

Rowan A. Greer, *The Fear of Freedom. A Study of Miracles in the Roman Imperial Church* (Penn State University Press 1989): 37.

¹⁵⁰ Bernard McGinn, “Introduction: Eriugena, East and West,” in *Eriugena: East and West*, ed. Bernard McGinn and W. Otten (Notre Dame 1994): 4: “The last common Father in the sense of one whose experience and teaching reflected both parts of Christendom.” On the significance of the Fathers for Maximus, and for Maximus as one of those Fathers, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Volume Two: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, chapter one: “The Authority of the Fathers”: 8-36.

¹⁵¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, “‘Council or Father or Scripture.’ The Concept of Authority in the Theology of Maximus Confessor,” in *The Heritage of the Early Church. Essays in honor of the Very Reverend Georges Vasilievich Florevsky*, ed. David Nieman and Margaret Schatkin (Rome 1973): 277-88, at page 287-8, quoting *Ambigua* 42; also in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (University of Chicago 1977): 286. Also cited by Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Rome 1955): 59. Elsewhere Pelikan refers to the same question asked by Maximus; there Pelikan gives an answer, taken from another text, wherein Maximus states that the Councils and Creeds did not deal with deification because the liturgy of the earthly Church is done in imitation of the heavenly liturgy performed by the angels, and therefore brings salvation; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*: 30 and 34-5, citing *Questions to Thalassius*, prologue; and *Scholia on the ‘Celestial Hierarchy’ of Dionysius*, 1.3. Norman Russell, “St. Maximus the Confessor. An Eastern Guide to the Spiritual Life,” *Chrysostom* 5.2 (1978): 51-4; 73-86, at pages 84-5. P. Rousselot has written that “perhaps, if the dogma of deification had been consecrated by a Council, Lutheranism would not exist,” in “La grace d’après s. Jean et s. Paul,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 18 (1928): 96-7, quoted by P. T. Wild, *Divinization of Man according to St. Hilary of Poitiers* (Mundelein 1950): 5.

¹⁵² Christoph Schonborn, *God’s Human Face* (Ignatius Press 1994): 8. The major canons of all the Councils have recently been translated, with text, into two volumes edited by N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London 1990). On the first eighteen general councils (through Lateran V [1512-7]), see H.J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils. Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Herder 1937); on the Council of Trent, see *idem*, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Tan books 1978; 1st 1941), includes translation only. Trent was called to deal with the issues provoked by Martin Luther; it met in three separate sessions from 1545-1563. It was to be three hundred years until the next ecumenical council, Vatican I (1869-70); another hundred till Vatican II (1962-5). The 21 Ecumenical Councils, and their major themes, are listed in McGinn, *The Doctors of the Church*, 186-7. For an in depth study of the first four general councils (Nicaea [325], Constantinople [381], Ephesus [431], Chalcedon [451]) see now Archbishop Peter L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils. The Disciplinary work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York 1996). For a study of the first six councils (adding Constantinople II [553]; Constantinople III [680-1]) see Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Foundations of Social Order. Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (1968).

that one of the means by which the faithful begin their process of deification is the Eucharist. The Council of Trullo (in Constantinople, in 692) stated that “God deifies those who receive Him” in the Eucharist.¹⁵³ As noted, the Council of Trullo was an Eastern Council (with decidedly Eastern biases).¹⁵⁴ Deification for the ancients began with baptism, continued through the eucharistic participation, and found its fulfillment, or better perhaps, its continuance, sometime in the eternity that followed. This brings up the subject of the role of the priest in the deification of the mortals who participated in the Eucharistic celebration. Cardinal Schonborn quotes and discusses the following from Gregory Nazianzen: “One must first purify oneself before one purifies others; one must be formed before one forms others.... One must be sanctified in order to sanctify.’ Here is the greatness of the priesthood: the priest is ‘the defender of the truth, who stands together with the angels, gives glory together with the archangels...shares the priestly office with Christ, models anew the creative clay, preparing it for the world above, and—more than all this—the priest becomes God and deifies others.’”¹⁵⁵ Father Polycarp Sherwood cites a similar passage from Maximus the

¹⁵³ Cited in Matthias J. Scheeben, S.J., *Mysteries of Christianity* (St. Louis 1946): 488. The introduction to the canons reads: “For everywhere has reasonable worship been ordained and the perfect sacrifice is offered; and God, as he is sacrificed and distributed for the care of both bodies and souls, makes divine those who partake of him,” in *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, ed. George Nedungatt and Michael Featherstone (Rome 1995): 46-7. The term *in trullam* means ‘in the dome’; the council took place at the Imperial Palace, in Constantinople. Kenan Osborne, after citing several third century writers, writes that “we are divinized in the eucharist....,” in Osborne, *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist* (Paulist Press 1987): 182-3. This deification takes place due to the unique Catholic belief that the substance of the bread and wine are literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374, quoting the Council of Trent; cf. the quotations from the Lateran IV Council (1215) and Trent, in Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*: 44. Cf. Paul Meyendorff, “Liturgy and Spirituality I: Eastern Liturgical Theology,” in *Christian Spirituality I: Origins*, ed. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York 1985): 356: “This process of divinization fulfills itself in the Eucharist;” Lorenzo Valla (ca. 1450) preached a sermon in which he stated that the eucharist provides for “man’s divinization,” in Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness* (London 1970): 635; cf. P. T. Wild, *The Divinization of Man according to St. Hilary of Poitiers* (Mundelein 1950): 19: “The Eucharist also divinizes us because it makes us partakers of God’s immortality.” For more on the deifying power of the eucharist see the comments mentioned above.

¹⁵⁴ For the attempt, and failure, of the Eastern Emperors to secure Roman compliance to the canons of that Council, see J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford 1996; 1st 1986): 82-6 (Popes Sergius I, John VI, John VII, Sisinnius, and Constantine all refused to sign the document). Cf. Jeremy Williams, “Use of sources in the canons of the Council *In Trullo*,” *Byzantion* 66 (1996): 470-488. Archbishop Peter L’Huillier has written that “the entire legislation issued by the Council *in Trullo* became the fundamental source of Byzantine canon law,” in L’Huillier, “The Development of the Concept of an Ecumenical Council (4th-8th Centuries),” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36 (1991): 243-262, at page 254. Although the Council called itself ‘ecumenical’ it is generally referred to as a continuation of the fifth and sixth council (‘quinisextum’), *ibid.*, 250-1. The Council of Florence in 1439 stated that the Eucharist had the same effect on the spiritual body which food had on the physical body: sustaining, increasing, repairing, delighting. Jonathan Morse interpreted the term ‘increasing’ in this statement as meaning *theosis* or deification “since it is the increasing of divine life and grace within us,” in Morse, “Fruits of the Eucharist: *Henosis* and *Theosis*,” *Diakonia* 17 (Fordham University 1982): 127-42, at page 139; Florence statement in Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, paragraph 1511. Part of the prayer used at the consecration of the emblems of the Eucharist reads: “By the mystery of the water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” Commenting on this prayer Father Stephen Boyle writes: “The Holy Spirit communicates this life, makes us capable of being divine, makes it possible for us to become ‘God-like,’ to have salvation. He renders the saying of St. Athanasius true, that God became man, so that man can become God,” in Boyle, “The Holy Spirit in the Plan of Salvation,” *Faith Magazine* 30 (1998): 6-10, at page 6. Towers, “Sanctifying Grace,” in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church I*: 553-4 quotes the same prayer, and then cites Augustine and Aquinas on deification. The same phrase is also mentioned by Ronald Lawler, et al, *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Indiana 1976): 379. Cf. P. Deseille, “L’eucharistie et la divinisation des chretiens selon les Peres de l’Eglise,” *Le Messager Orthodoxe* 87 (1981): 40-56.

¹⁵⁵ Schonborn, *From Death to Life*, 55-6, quoting Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 2.71.

Confessor: “Maximus...says that the end of the priesthood is ‘to be deified and to deify.’”¹⁵⁶ Marta Ryk quotes the following from Greek liturgical texts: “‘In my Kingdom I will be God and you will be gods with me;’” and “‘Christ offered to God the first fruits of new humanity and the Holy Spirit gave the first fruits for divinity to human nature.’”¹⁵⁷

On the Redeemed

There is more to be said about the condition of the redeemed. Clement says regarding those who become deified that “‘they will be enthroned along with the other gods, who are set first in order under the Savior.’”¹⁵⁸ Melvin Lawrenz writes that a primary image of salvation for John Chrysostom is “that of human nature itself seated on the royal throne of Christ: ‘It is a great and wonderful thing, and full of amazement that our flesh should sit on high, and be adored by angels and archangels.’”¹⁵⁹ Christoph Schonborn quotes from another Homily of John Chrysostom: “‘God gave us a share in his throne. The sitting at the right hand is the greatest honor, with nothing to equal it. This statement holds true of us also: we too are to sit with him on thrones.... Think of where Christ sits on his throne! ‘Above all principalities and powers! And with whom are you to sit on the throne? With him!’”¹⁶⁰

Clement of Alexandria is said to have taught that God had created other worlds prior to the creation of this one.¹⁶¹ Origen, in response to the question of what God was doing before He created this world, responded that “we say that God did not begin to work only when he created this visible world; rather, just as there will be another world after the end of this one, so other worlds, in our opinion, existed before this one.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Polycarp Sherwood, *St. Maximus the Confessor. The Ascetic Life and the Four Centuries on Charity*, edited, translated, with introduction (Newman Press, 1955; Ancient Christian Writers, volume 21): 232, note 313.

¹⁵⁷ Ryk, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in the Deification of Man,” *op. cit.*, 120. Paul Meyendorff writes the following regarding the Eastern liturgical practice: “Baptism was the means by which one was made a member of the Church, and the Eucharist was the means by which one affirmed this membership and experienced it. For the experience of the liturgy was precisely the experience of Christianity, and thus it became the very possibility and source for the knowledge of God and for participation in divine life itself. This is the meaning of the Eastern concept of *theosis*, or divinization,” in Meyendorff, “Liturgy and Spirituality I: Eastern Liturgical Theology,” in *Christian Spirituality I: Origins*, ed. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York 1985): 350-363, at page 350-1; 356: “divinization fulfills itself in the Eucharist.”

¹⁵⁸ George W. Butterworth, “The Deification of Man in Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1916): 157-69, at page 161, quoting *Stromateis* 3.41.23-5. Note that the “other gods” are clearly subordinate to the Savior, but yet are still entitled to be designated “gods.”

¹⁵⁹ Melvin E. Lawrenz, *The Christology of John Chrysostom* (Mellen Press 1996): 153, quoting *Homily on Hebrews* 5.1. Notice that worship by the angels is offered to those deified mortals on their thrones.

¹⁶⁰ Schonborn, *From Death to Life*, *op. cit.*, 39-40, quoting *Homily on Ephesians* 4.2. Once again, notice that the principalities and powers are subject to these deified mortals.

¹⁶¹ See Quasten, *Patrology*, II. 17, citing fragments from Photius. According to Lilla, Clement believed in the pre-existent nature of matter, in Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria. A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford 1971): 193f, 230.

¹⁶² Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume Two: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604), Part Four: The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451*, translated by O.C. Dean (Westminster John Knox Press 1996; 1st German 1990): 190-1, citing *Peri Archon* (or *De Principiis*); he also wrote that “there were earlier worlds and will be later worlds.” Earlier, Irenaeus had answered the same question by simply stating that “no scripture reveals to us what God was employed about before this event,” referred to in Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (New York 1967): 35; citing Irenaeus, *AH* 4.38.1. Augustine was later to respond to the same question by saying (if only in jest) that God was creating a hell in which to place those “pryers into mysteries,” in *Confessions*, book 11; *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, translated by Edward B. Pusey (New York 1964): 222-3. Augustine’s concern was that if God were the Author of Time itself, then it cannot be said that there was a “time before” the creation of this world wherein He might be “doing” something at all. See the discussion of this passage in Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (London 1991; 1st 1989): 159-63. Origen and Augustine are discussed relative to this statement, in Jean Danielou, *Origen* (New York 1955): 255-6. John Calvin

John Wesley said in a sermon that if God loves this world, did He not love a thousand other worlds; did He not care for the inhabitants of other planets as much as those of this.¹⁶³ Evangelical Thomas Oden, in the first volume of his three volume Systematic Theology, has a section entitled “other worlds.” He refers to Origen, Tertullian, Lactantius, and John Wesley. Oden writes that “Christian teaching does not presuppose that our universe is the absolute center of God’s creation, even though the only revelation of God that we know is on this particular earth through its history. Everything we know is known only from the vantage point of creaturely existence.... Suppose there is another world, entirely unknown to and unknowable by us. Why would it not be reasonable to hypothesize, on the basis of our own salvation-history memory, that the same God who has become self-revealed as loving Parent in this world would also become revealed as loving Parent in that world? If so, that Word of revelation would not be of a different God than the one that is made known in this world.”¹⁶⁴

God the Father did not create the world by Himself, of course. The New Testament, as well as the Creeds, make it clear that it was through God the Son (Jesus Christ) that the Father created all. It should also be recalled that They created the world for humankind, not the other way around.¹⁶⁵ Evangelical scholar Loraine Boettner wrote some time ago, with reference to the Redemption, that “through a covenant voluntarily entered into, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each undertake a specific work.”¹⁶⁶ Origen said

taught the principle which Augustine had suggested in jest, that God was preparing a hell for those who asked about such matters; in William A. Christian, “Augustine on the Creation of the World,” *Harvard Theological Review* 46 (1953): 1-25, at page 5, citing Calvin, *Institutes* 1.14.1. See also Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin. Student of the Church Fathers* (Baker Books 1999): 221, where he points out that both Calvin and Luther were familiar with the discussion by Augustine; Calvin also attributes it (mistakenly) to Cassiodore. The Emperor Justinian in 543 wrote that one of the heresies taught by Origen was “the plurality of worlds which God created before ours and will create after ours,” in Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume Two, Part Two: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century*, Translated by Pauline Allen and John Cawte (Westminster John Knox Press 1995; 1st German 1989): 392; the relevant documents by Justinian are translated in *On the Person of Christ. The Christology of Emperor Justinian*, translated by Kenneth P. Wesche (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York 1991). This is one of the complaints Jerome found against Origen also; see Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (1992): 12, citing Jerome, *Epistle* 124.5. The Council of Constantinople II (553), which officially condemned some of Origen’s ideas, was called by the Emperor Justinian, partly because his letter of 543 had failed to do the job; *ibid.*, 403-4. The fifteen anathemas are listed by Grillmeier in *ibid.*, 404-5. Nothing is said in them, however, regarding Origen’s teaching regarding previous creations. See further on this in Kallistos Ware, “Dare we hope for the salvation of all? Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Isaac of Nineveh,” *Theology Digest* 45.4 (1998): 303-317, at 306-7, and 316, note 9.

¹⁶³ William Ragsdale Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York 1946): 182, citing Sermon 103.28. Thomas C. Oden quotes a previous writer to the effect that Christ’s atonement also saved the inhabitants of “innumerable worlds,” in Oden, *Life in the Spirit. Systematic Theology Volume Three* (San Francisco 1992): 253, quoting Thomas N. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity* (New York 1924): 231.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God. Systematic Theology Volume One* (San Francisco 1992): 267-9.

¹⁶⁵ E.P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity. De Trinitate 1.1-19; 2; 3* (E.J. Brill 1982): 154, with reference to Tertullian, *Adv Marc* 1.13.2; 2.4.3; 2.4.5; *De Spec* 2.4; *De Put* 5.5; Irenaeus, *AH* 2.41.1; 4.14; 5.29.1; 4.8; Theophilus of Antioch, 2.10; *Epistle to Diognetus* 10 (“If you too yearn for this faith, then first of all you must acquire full knowledge of the Father. For God loved men, and made the world for their sake”); Lactantius, *De Ira* 13 (“the world was arranged for our benefit”); 14 (“He fashioned the world for the sake of man”); *Epit.* 24. 63 ff.; *Divine Institutes* 7.4. Oden quotes Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* Ixviii ff. “God made all things on account of man,” in *The Living God*, 268. Gerard Watson cites Celsus’ complaint that Christians “assert that God made all things for man,” in Watson, “Celsus and the Philosophical Opposition to Christianity,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992): 165-79, at page 173, citing *contra Celsum* 4.74. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote (*Catechesis* 12.5) that “the universe was made for the sake of mankind”, in Edward Yarnold, S.J., *Cyril of Jerusalem* (London 2000): 142.

¹⁶⁶ Loraine Boettner, “The Trinity,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 10 (1938), Part I: 321-351; Part II: 55-92, at page 71. Irenaeus wrote: “The Father sanctions and orders, the Son acts and fashions, the Spirit nourishes and increases’ [*AdvHaer* 6.38.3],” in Nicholas N. Gloubokowsky, “Grace in the Greek Fathers (to St. John of Damascus) and inter-church union,” in *The Doctrine of Grace*, edited by W. T. Witley (London 1932):

that God could, if He chose, create others after this one.¹⁶⁷ Theodore Askidas, Bishop of Caesarea (ca. 540 AD) went so far as to suggest that those who are deified, thereby becoming equal to Christ, will join in creating other worlds.¹⁶⁸ Over one hundred years ago J. D. Davis wrote an intriguing article on the possibilities of sanctification after death. He concluded by writing: “who shall say that God may not safely go on creating new beings whom the host of those who are already perfected by trial and experience shall teach and train, thus filling up the great universe of God, whose limits no human eye has ever yet discovered? Nay, more, may he not go on forever enlarging and forever peopling this universe with happy beings?”¹⁶⁹ Dionysius the Areopagite suggested long ago that nothing could be more divine than to become ‘a fellow worker with God.’ Some are purified, he wrote, some purify others; some are being perfected, while others complete the perfecting initiation for others.¹⁷⁰ In 1967 Pope Paul VI stated that the saved in heaven may “cooperate in saving their brothers.”¹⁷¹ The idea that the redeemed may help to save others is common in the patristic writings.¹⁷²

61-86, at page 64. Catholic scholar Charles R. Meyer wrote that original sin “had to be real and voluntary. Its voluntary character, however, emanated not from the personal will of the party affected, but from Adam’s will. But in the individual this sin is not merely Adam’s; it is also his very own, for which he can be justly punished because of the original covenant arrangement between man and his Creator,” in Meyer, *A Contemporary Theology of Grace* (New York, Society of St. Paul, 1971): 177. One would ask when this “original covenant arrangement” was made; most, if not all, normative Christian denominations reject the idea of a pre-existent state in which such a covenant might be made.

¹⁶⁷ See Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, translated by Charles E. Hay (Michigan 1958; German 1895, 1898): I: 160, citing *de principiis* 3.6.3 on the possibility of future creations; Ashton L. Townsley, “Origen’s *ho theos*, Anaximander’s *to theion* and a Series of Worlds. Some Remarks,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41 (Rome 1975): 140-149: “God did not begin his activity with the creation of this visible world, but just as after the dissolution of this world there will be another world, so also before this world there were, we believe, other worlds,” page 144, quoting *Peri Archon* 3.5.3.

¹⁶⁸ In Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 189-90, with note 65, page 260; also in Daley, “What did ‘Origenism’ mean in the Sixth Century?”, in *Origeniana Sexta*, ed. Gilles Dorival et al (Leuven 1995): 635; also in Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 2, Part 2: 409.

¹⁶⁹ J. D. Davis, “Sanctification after Death,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 50 (1893): 544-8, at page 548.

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Louth, *Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1983): 170, citing Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy* 3.1f.

¹⁷¹ Pope Paul VI, ‘Indulgentiarum doctrina’ 5, in Neuner and Dupuis, *The Christian Faith* 1688; also in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1477.

¹⁷² Fortino quotes John of Damascus who says that the oil used during baptism makes us “anointed” [*christous*], transforming us into Christs, *op. cit.*: 197, citing *The Orthodox Faith* 4.9; for more on John of Damascus see Dominic Unger, “The Incarnation—a Supreme Exaltation for Christ according to St. John Damascene,” *Franciscan Studies* 8 (1948): 237-49; Ronald Heine, in his study of Gregory of Nyssa, states that such a one “becomes able to help others to salvation,” Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, Introduction, translation and notes (Oxford 1995): 77; Turner, *op. cit.*, 86, quotes Methodius: “Those who are deified become not merely Christians, but Christs,” citing *Symposium* 8.8; James T. O’Connor quotes the same from Augustine: “Not only do we become Christians, we become Christ,” in O’Connor, *The Hidden Manna. A Theology of the Eucharist* (Ignatius Press 1988): 61; Thomas Hopko quotes Basil: “Spirit-bearing souls, illumined by Him, finally become spiritual themselves, and their grace is sent forth to others. From this comes knowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of hidden things, distribution of wonderful gifts, heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of angels, endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and, the highest of all desires, becoming God [*theon genesthai*],” in Hopko, “The Trinity in the Cappadocians,” in *Christian Spirituality I: Origins*, ed. B. McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York 1985): 260-76, at page 273-4, quoting *On the Holy Spirit* 23; Donovan: “Are we also to be redeemers?... What does it mean to be Christed?,” in Donovan, “Seminar on the Trinity,” in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 36 (1981): 180; Cipriano Vagaggini quotes Cyril of Jerusalem: “Baptized and clothed in Christ, you are engrafted on the Son of God.... Since you have become sharers with Christ, you may rightly be called christs,” *The Flesh. Instrument of Salvation: A Theology of the Human Body* (Society of St. Paul 1969): 85-6, citing *Mystical Catechesis* 3.1; Cyril of Alexandria wrote that one who is redeemed “shall come close to God and be of His family, and prove capable of saving others in time to come,” in Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., “Cyril of

Jesus taught that “he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do” (John 14.12). Thomas Oden remarks that this is “one of the most astonishing statements reported of Jesus.”¹⁷³ If the redeemed are to be enthroned with Christ, and do greater works than even Christ Himself did, is it not possible to conclude that they will at least also do the works of Christ—create additional worlds as He had done, and is still doing? May they not people those new worlds, and teach their inhabitants, and ultimately redeem those who are willing to keep the commandments, and live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God? Maximus the Confessor wrote that “all that God is, except for an identity in *ousia* [substance], one becomes when one is deified by grace.”¹⁷⁴

Philip A. Khairallah presents some interesting thoughts on the above ideas. He is a priest of the Melkite Rite, of the Holy Orthodox Church of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem, in communion with the Church of Rome. He cites II Peter 1.4, and Athanasius, and then writes that “the one and only aim of human life on earth is union with God and deification.” “Marriage is eternal.... [and] is another channel God has given to us for our deification.” He writes that “parents have a responsibility to their children in aiding them to grow in faith and wisdom, to achieve responsible adulthood, so that they too may seek their deification.”¹⁷⁵

Donald Winslow in his study of Gregory Nazianzus has a great deal to say about deification as taught by all the Fathers, and this one in particular. His conclusion is instructive: “*Theosis*...is not solely a soteriological term ...[nor yet a] christological or anthropological [term].... It is more properly understood as a theological term. That is, it helps us the better to know who God is; what God has done for us, and therefore who we are and can be.”¹⁷⁶ Gregory Nazianzus wrote that the Incarnation was accomplished “in order to make men God to the same extent that He was made man.”¹⁷⁷ The Creeds make it clear that in the

Alexandria on ‘Wool and Linen,’” *Traditio* 2 (1944): 486; Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (June 29 1943) wrote, in paragraph 46, that we are to “look to our Divine Savior as the most exalted and the most perfect exemplar of all virtues... [and to] bear witness by their conduct to His teaching and life;” he then cites I John 3.2. Paragraph 59 states that “it is for us to cooperate with Christ in this work of salvation, ‘from one and through one saved and saviors,’” quoting Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 7.2. Martin Luther defined the Christian as ‘a Christ to the other,’ that is, to his neighbor, in Tore Meistad, *Martin Luther and John Wesley*, op. cit., 44; also in Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (Westminster Press 1953): 734-5.

¹⁷³ Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit. Systematic Theology Volume Three* (San Francisco 1992): 62.

Justin Martyr wrote that the Father teaches us “by the word to do the same things as Himself,” *Apology* 2.9, in *ANF* 1.366-7.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Jouko Martikainen, “Man’s Salvation: Deification or Justification?,” *Sobornost* 7.3 (London 1976): 180-192, at page 185.

¹⁷⁵ Philip A. Khairallah, “The Sanctification of Life,” *Emmanuel* 96 (1990): 326, 395, 396-7. Cardinal Danielou wrote that one of the two purposes of creation is the “divinization of man,” *Christ and Us* (New York 1962; 1st Paris 1961): 62. Marta Ryk wrote that “Orthodoxy believes that God out of love created man for deification and *theosis* is the goal of every Christian without exception,” in Ryk, “The Holy Spirit’s Role in the Deification of Man,” *Diakonia* 10 (1975): 120. *Lumen Gentium*, a document from Vatican II, stated that “the eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of his wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe, and chose to raise up men to share in his own divine life,” *LG* 2; quoted by Pope Paul VI, “Original Sin and Modern Science,” July 11, 1966, in *The Pope Speaks* 11 (1966): 230. In 1987 a group of Eastern Orthodox theologians wrote: “The value of the creation is seen not only in the fact that it is intrinsically good, but also in the fact that it is appointed by God to be the home for living beings. The value of the natural creation is revealed in the fact that it was made for God (something which is beautifully expressed in Orthodox iconography), i.e., to be the context for God’s Incarnation and humankind’s deification, and as such, the beginning of the actualization of the Kingdom of God. We may say that the cosmos provides the stage upon which humankind moves from creation to deification,” in Gennadios Limouris, *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism. Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement 1902-1992* (WCC Publications, Geneva 1994): 117.

¹⁷⁶ Donald F. Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation. A Study of Gregory of Nazianzus* (1979): 198-9.

¹⁷⁷ Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration* 29.19, quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Yale University Press 1993): 318. Anglican Ross Thompson wrote that “if the divine Christ was human, it is not

Incarnation God was made “true man.” Indeed, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 defined Jesus, “following the holy Fathers,” as “the same one in being [*homoousios*] with the Father...and one in being [*homoousios*] with us as to the humanity, like unto us in all things but sin.”¹⁷⁸ We have seen that the creation was for the deification of mortals; we have seen that God became man so that mortals could become God; can we, then, assume anything regarding the future destiny of humankind other than that they will also then become “true God?” The ‘marvelous exchange’ cannot be said to have taken place unless that becomes the reality, for us as it was for Him.

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in principle impossible for a human to be divine,” in Thompson, “Christian Initiation as a Trinitarian Process,” *Theology* (London) 97 (1994): 90-98, at page 93, italics in original.

¹⁷⁸ Neuner-Dupuis 614; *Sources of Catholic Dogma* 148. One might ask: if we are *homoousios* with Jesus; and if Jesus is *homoousios* with God, are we then also *homoousios* with God? Would this not then suggest that there is a relationship between God and mortals on earth which is much closer than the terms Creator and creature would imply; that perhaps after all mortals are of the same race as God, that He is in reality the Father of the spirits of all humankind (Heb 12.9; Numbers 16.22; Acts 17.28; John 20.17; Ephesians 4.6; Romans 8.16).

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