

Preface

Deification has been a subject of interest for me for some time, beginning when I was a Master's student at Lincoln Christian University and I was given my first introduction to the Cappadocian Fathers by my major professor, Dr. Robert Rea. He was himself rather fascinated with Eastern patristic theology and had written his dissertation on John Cassian, who, while a Western theologian geographically, only holds sainthood in the East and was a translator of the Egyptian desert and its monks to a Western setting. My interest in deification, from the first, was both historical and contemporary—that is, I wanted to know what patristic and medieval theologians said about the subject because I had come to believe it as the end for which we as humans were made. Yet, during all this time, I never stopped reading the works of fiction and poetry I loved so much, especially those post-enlightenment authors who sought a return back to a pre-enlightenment way of thinking—whether they were Romantics such as Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth or the more orthodox such as MacDonald, Chesterton, Lewis, and Tolkien. In them, I found a desire to turn away from the colder cosmos of modernity and both back, and forward, to a pre-enlightenment understanding. In a sense, these authors, and others like them, serve as a kind of literary and poetic renaissance. As I continued to carry out research and write during my PhD, I found myself connecting these two topics—deification and human creativity. This book is a coming together of two parts of myself that have been, until this book, rather separate: the lover of literature

and poetry and the lover of theology. In writing this book, I finally found my way of wedding these two halves of myself.

In bringing together deification and human creativity, I focus my attention primarily on poetry and fantasy as my examples of human creativity. I chose these two genres for three primary reasons. First, while I will go into more detail about this in the introduction, I chose poetry and fantasy because they work toward wonder and desire by way of the strange or the different. That is, in a poem, language itself is often altered from our normal usage of it to tell us something new or to reveal something hidden. In fantasy, often, the very world itself is so altered before our eyes so that we can see it in a new light. Second, the language of poetry, I found to be helpful as it relates etymologically to *theopoesis*, one of the earliest words for deification. Third and finally, I chose these genres not simply because they happen to be the genres I enjoy reading, but also, because I write in these genres as well. Working through the theology of deification looking toward the importance of human creativity is an attempt to understand one aspect of the theology behind my own creativity as well as that of all humanity. Therefore, this book is an attempt to create and discover something of a theological foundation for my work in writing fiction and poetry by working through the theology and the creativity of those who have come before me.

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