

BECOMING GOD

by Ron Kangas

Becoming God: This is an astounding subject, is it not? To many it is astonishing to suggest, and to actually believe and teach, that, according to the Bible, the redeemed, justified, regenerated believers in Christ will eventually become God in the sense of being the same as God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead, that is, not in rank or position, and not as an object of worship. This will take place without any essential change in the Godhead, in the eternal, immutable, triune being of the one true and unique God. We are mindful of the fact, however, that many will react in dismay, perhaps in horror, to find themselves confronted with the assertion that in Christ and through God's complete salvation we who believe in Christ and are in Christ will become God in the limited sense posited here. Some may immediately judge this to be a pagan notion that blasphemes the transcendence and majesty of God. Others may insist that "Scripture forbids this as idolatry and blasphemy" (Martin 101). Perhaps some, without due consideration, will choose to agree with R. C. Sproul in repudiating "the crass view that salvation imparts some measure of deity to us" (43). Yet others may follow Sproul in misunderstanding the biblical truth concerning deification as "the heresy of Apotheosis ('becoming God') and then set out to warn believers that this "ghastly heresy" of "Apotheosis threatens the very essence of Christianity" (45)¹. Without proceeding beyond this opening paragraph, certain readers may accuse us of heresy or blasphemy or of yielding to and then perpetuating the word of the serpent in Genesis 3: "You will become like God" (v. 5). Of course, as the open, objective, and fair-minded reader will see, we do not harbor or promulgate heresy; we would never utter blasphemy against the unique true and living God, whose name is blessed forever; and we repudiate both the satanic impulse in Isaiah 14 and the satanic lie in Genesis 3. In the face of certain opposition, some of which may be rash, unreasonable, and unprincipled,² we intend to present as clearly as possible a complete and balanced testimony to the divinely revealed truth in the Scriptures that in Christ, through God's salvation, and according to God's economy, we, the believers in Christ, can and will

become God in life, in nature, in constitution, and in expression but not in the Godhead and never as an object of worship. We therefore wish to devote this edition of *Affirmation & Critique* to the marvelous matter of deification in Christ.

This article is intended to serve a dual purpose. As the first essay in an issue of *Affirmation & Critique* devoted to the theme of deification, it serves as an introduction to our subject—the deification of the believers in Christ according to God's economy, based on God's judicial redemption, in the organic union with Christ, through God's organic salvation, and for the eternal, consummate, corporate expression of the Triune God in His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. This article is intended to establish the boundaries and set the tone for our discourse on a matter of utmost importance to God and to the people of God. This essay, however, may be regarded as standing on its own in an attempt to provide an informed, judicious, and biblical overview of the amazing truth, revealed in the Scriptures, that in Christ we, the believers in Christ, may become God in life, in nature, in constitution, in appearance, and in expression but not in the Godhead and not as an object of worship.

Any endeavor to present an overview of the truth concerning deification should appeal first for an open mind, like that of the Bereans, and then both exhibit and call for an irenic spirit in considering a topic of this nature and magnitude. A proper survey should then discuss the criterion of truth, declare the governing and controlling scriptural revelation regarding the one, unique, true, and living God, expose and denounce the satanic counterfeit of deification, examine and reject spurious notions of deification, pay respect to views of deification similar to the one propounded, and then set forth, as clearly and