The doctrine of deification, although a feature of Luther's own theology—as has been brought more clearly to light by the work of Tuomo Mannermaa and the Finnish interpretation of Luther—has not had a central place in the Lutheran dogmatic tradition. For this reason it is perhaps best to start a review of Adam Cooper's book with a statement of the doctrine that he puts in summary form at the conclusion of the work:

The doctrine of deification consists essentially in the proposition that humanity is made for God. By nature and by calling, human beings are properly ordered to loving union with God the Father through a gracious adoption constituted by the Holy Spirit in the crucified and risen flesh of Jesus Christ the incarnate Son. Such a union, which tradition has regarded as nothing less than the human creature’s becoming God by grace, utterly transcends human capabilities, yet only this destiny fulfills human beings and brings them the fullness of joy they, by virtue of their creation, naturally and universally seek. (217)

In *Naturally human, supernaturally God*, Cooper examines the treatment of this doctrine by three pre-eminent twentieth century Catholic theologians who represent three main currents or traditions of theology in the pre-conciliar Catholic Church: Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP (1877–1964), Karl Rahner, SJ (1904–1984), and Henri de Lubac, SJ (1896–1991). Cooper characterises their different theologies in this way: ‘Garrigou-Lagrange represents an emphasis on reason, Rahner on relevance, and de Lubac on revelation … Garrigou-Lagrange relies on systemisation, Rahner on resolution, and de Lubac on paradox’ (5). These three theologians continue to have an influence in what may loosely be called the traditionalist, progressive, and conservative impulses in contemporary Catholic theology, and therefore Cooper’s study helps in giving an understanding in the points of difference—and even conflict—not only between Garrigou-Lagrange, Rahner, and de Lubac, but also among contemporary theologians who are influenced by these different theological approaches.

Perhaps the most engaging aspect of the book—especially from an ecumenical perspective—is the way it highlights the fact that Garrigou-Lagrange, Rahner and de Lubac had a fundamental unity in treating the doctrine of deification as central to their theological projects. Cooper’s book is thus at heart an ironic work that, in treating in a sophisticated and historically sensitive manner the writings of the different theologians, brings into focus the centrality of the doctrine of deification, especially as it has found expression in the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church.

In the opening chapter, Cooper locates the contrasting theologies of the three theologians in the wider currents of Catholic theology and European culture in the period leading up to and following the First Vatican Council (1869,1870). He makes the case that the doctrine of deification was regarded by theologians just prior to and contemporary with Garrigou-Lagrange, Rahner and de Lubac as a central Christine
doctrine that had 'somehow been neglected and needed urgent recovery' (9). In the second chapter Cooper then gives a brief biographical and theological overview of the three theologians, before moving in chapters three to five to deal in detail with the work of Garrigou-Lagrange.

Cooper's examination of Garrigou-Lagrange's treatment of the doctrine of deification assumes familiarity with the main categories of Thomistic theology, and as such may make demanding reading for those unschooled in this tradition. Nevertheless Cooper brings out with clarity the way that Garrigou-Lagrange was ultimately a 'theologian of love' (73), whose spiritual theology was premised wholly on God's grace in Christ Jesus. Thus in Cooper's evaluation, Garrigou-Lagrange's 'litmus test' for authentic union with God is 'cruciform humility' that is willing to share in the sufferings of Christ: 'If the final object of contemplation is the infinite essence of God, that essence is rendered accessible to creatures in no other way than in and through Jesus Christ, the divine Word made flesh, and his indwelling Spirit. Final union with God by direct vision is thus anticipated and embodied in this life in the mode of union with Christ by love-formed faith' (56).

In chapters six to eight, Cooper turns to the treatment of the doctrine of deification in the work of Karl Rahner. Cooper situates Rahner's work in the wider context of the 'subjective turn in modern thought' that came to birth in the anthropocentric theological system of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), and that has 'undergone a noticeable ascendancy to central prominence in contemporary theological reflection' (98). Cooper, in giving a clear explication of Rahner's theology of deification, raises some critical questions of Rahner's theology as a whole, including whether Rahner's development of the concept of transcendental experience 'tends to manipulate the data of revelation to fit an already-worked-out philosophical and anthropological framework' (103). For Cooper, the unresolved question regarding Rahner's theology is whether God's self-communication in Christ 'fits or governs the shape of human transcendence' (103). Thus Cooper questions whether Rahner's theology not only overly relativises the means of grace (140), but also is too agnostic regarding the perennial claim of Christianity that such things as the humanity of Christ and the triune name do 'grant access to the innermost being of God' (141).

In chapters nine to eleven Cooper turns to de Lubac's treatment of the doctrine of deification. Cooper underscores the significance of de Lubac's 'Chalcedonian logic' by putting to his theology such questions as: How does Christ's activity on the cross illumine and modify what we know about being human? Why must this nature which has been deified in an inseparable personal union with the divine nature die? And if it must, what does this mean for all the members of humanity who are united as one in him, the second Adam? All these questions, for Cooper, lead to the more fundamental question: What precisely is redeemed? (164). Cooper sees in de Lubac's teaching on the doctrine of deification a way of defining what it means to be human that is Christ-focused, so that in de Lubac's thought God's creation of human beings and their deification in Christ 'both bear the nature of gift' (215). Cooper also highlights de Lubac's emphasis
on the social and ecclesial aspect of deification, along the way giving a treatment of de Lubac's reading of the credal sanctorum communio (that has much in common with the work of Sasse, This is My Body, second edition, 351–70).

Cooper's work could help pastors and theologians working in the Lutheran church to become more sensitive to the theme of deification running through their own tradition. In the Lutheran liturgical tradition, for example, the proper preface for Ascension, which picks up on 2 Peter 1:4—a text that, as Cooper makes clear, has been of significance since the patristic period for the doctrine of deification—includes these words prayed by the pastor to the Father: 'After his [Jesus'] resurrection he appeared openly to his disciples, and before their very eyes was taken up into heaven, so that by your grace we may share in his divine nature'. Here in the Lutheran liturgy we celebrate the incorporation of humanity in the life of the Trinity through the ascension of Jesus, and we confess that the ascension of Jesus has its ongoing fulfilment in our participation in the divine nature, as we are incorporated into Christ by baptism and the life of faith.

In the Lutheran theological tradition there are teachings that could be fruitfully examined in the light of the doctrine of deification. For example, in the Formula of Concord's 'Concerning the Person of Christ' we receive this teaching, 'Christ is and remains for all eternity God and a human being in one inseparable person, which is the highest mystery after the mystery of the Holy Trinity, as the Apostle testifies [1 Tim 3:16]. In this mystery lies our only comfort, life, and salvation' (FC Ep 18 italics mine). This teaching raises the question: What does Christ's ongoing humanity as eternal God mean for us who, in the resurrection of the body, will remain as human beings incorporated into him?

Cooper's book could be of help to Lutheran theologians in teasing out the implications of their own tradition, and in engaging in an ecumenical conversation on what it means for human beings, justified by grace, through faith, on account of Christ, to be partakers of the divine nature.

Note: There is a serious editorial error on page 115, with one paragraph of the text finding its way into footnote 1.

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