

churches are much more oriented to supernatural experience than their parent churches in the west. Rather than following the lead of the west, these churches must assert themselves, and stand firm in the area of Pentecostal doctrine and experience (270).

Robert P. Menzies
Asian Center for Pentecostal Theology, Kunming, China

David Bentley Hart, *You Are Gods: On Nature and Supernature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022). xi + 139 pp. \$25.00 paperback.

David Bentley Hart's new essay collection, *You are Gods: On Nature and Supernature*, is the second volume in a one-two punch against traditionalist Thomism, the first having arrived a few months earlier in his *Tradition and Apocalypse*. While these texts signal Hart's selection of a new opponent, *You are Gods* also serves as a tapered point wherein the seemingly disparate strands of Hart's recent research are gathered and unified. A deeper examination reveals that this current polemical campaign is just the latest in a demonstration of martial artistry that began all the way back in *The Beauty of the Infinite*.

In *Tradition and Apocalypse*, Hart provided an argument against defining tradition historically, the approach favored by traditionalist Thomism. As an alternative, Hart argued that tradition ought to be defined in reference to its eschatological horizon. *You are Gods* takes this eschatological perspective and applies it to a metaphysical and phenomenological revision of theological anthropology broadly speaking. In doing so, Hart takes aim at the hard distinction between the natural and supernatural, a distinction safeguarded by the same traditionalist Thomists critiqued in *Tradition and Apocalypse*.

The chief implication that Hart draws from this eschatological framing is that humanity's nature must always be considered according to its telos in deification. From this perspective, nature and supernature as discrete concepts lose all meaning. Framed by theosis, human nature is defined by its supernatural culmination and is thereby shown always to be a supernatural trajectory. Hart argues that this metaphysical reality correlates to a phenomenological one. Rational volition and cognition subsist as an orientation toward Being as such. And rational desire, therefore, is fundamentally a desire for union with God, which can only be properly understood and satisfied eschatologically. This undermines

the phenomenal distinction between natural and supernatural desire. All conditional desires are proleptically derived from the unconditional desire for God, which is fully realized only in deification.

In the first two essays of *You are Gods*, Hart sketches the metaphysical and phenomenological rationale summarized above, the latter doing so through an extended engagement with Nicolas of Cuza. The third essay takes this eschatological anthropology as a starting point for aesthetics. Hart argues that the unity of the transcendentals in God means that aesthetic judgments are always moral judgments. Eschatological union with God entails being subject to the judgment of Christ's beauty, a beauty that makes transformation possible. All contingent aesthetic judgments are, therefore, reflexive, revealing the character of the judge. The fourth essay applies Hart's eschatological logic to ethics by way of a Kantian inversion: might love for God's truth ever lead one to deceive another person intentionally? Hart argues that within the contingencies of history, the Good, True, and Beautiful, which are eschatologically one, become manifest in the fragmented forms of the ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic. This can lead to situations in which a contingent truth must be violated to honor Truth's metaphysical identity with the Good. Service to Truth transcends service to mere facts, and ethics is the endeavor of discerning that difference within fallen time. The fifth essay is a prolonged engagement with Cyril O'Regan, or, more accurately, a critique of the connection he draws between German idealism and Gnosticism. Hart provides a historical counternarrative, wherein the ancient schools often called "gnostic" adhere more closely to the cosmology of the New Testament than do Hegelian notions of God's becoming in history. This leads Hart to posit a miniature version of his argument from *Tradition and Apocalypse*, that the discernment of legitimate doctrinal tradition cannot be accomplished through a merely historical method. It must instead be determined by its eschatological culmination, which means considering all doctrine in light of deification. The implication is that perhaps Gnosticism is preferable to German idealism as a mine for theological resources. The last chapter, which is fragmentary and experimental in its form, places Hart's phenomenological and metaphysical musings into a systematic trinitarian context. Dizzily dense, this final piece primarily argues that all of creation is inseparable from the triune life as its origin and goal. God's manifestation of himself to creation is inextricable from his eternal manifestation to himself as Son and delight in himself as Spirit. The incarnation is the telos of all creation, as the union of divine kenosis and creaturely ascent. God's fullness, which entails God possessing all possibility as actuality, is necessarily expressed as other than God. Creation, therefore, intrinsically follows from divine nature just as

theosis intrinsically follows from created nature. Hart again demonstrates the teleological meaninglessness of the nature-supernature distinction, this time from the divine side of the deific union.

Many readers are likely familiar with Hart's rhetorical particularities, so I will not waste time relitigating them other than to say that this volume will likely leave opinions unchanged. Hart's characteristic glibness is intact, and despite its verbosity, this volume is eminently readable. A more serious issue is Hart's tendency to leave his opponents unnamed and uncited. Throughout the book, he decries traditionalist Thomism with ferocity but rarely cites specific arguments or texts. This does not necessarily mean that Hart is wrong or misleading but merely that his arguments lose some rhetorical force when deployed against unnamed phantasms rather than concrete figures. In addition, while Hart shadowboxes with the notion of "Hegelian theologies," his final summation of creation as endemic to the fullness of divine nature beckons a reevaluation of his theological relationship with Robert Jenson. Hart's chief quarrel with Jenson in his early work was that by making creation intrinsic to the triune God, Jenson grants evil a determinative role within the divine life. To sidestep this implication in *You Are Gods*, Hart treats evil as the residue of deified creation's protological nothingness, the crust of nihilo that progressively falls away as creation draws ever nearer to God in theosis. While this is a different metaphysical perspective, it does not make evil totally superfluous as Hart wants it to. While it keeps evil out of the divine life evil remains an unavoidable part of history, albeit one that subsists in creation's eschatological victory over it. In this context, Hart's Christology is merely revelatory rather than metaphysically definitive.

For anyone who has been following Hart's work, *You Are Gods* serves as a helpful summation and extension of his overall project. Since his initial systematic endeavor in *Beauty of the Infinite*, Hart has operated mostly through smaller topical projects, dabbling in topics like the doctrine of God (*The Experience of God*), soteriology (*That All Shall Be Saved*), and New Testament translation. *You are Gods*, despite feeling a bit fragmentary, helps to clarify how these separate projects fit into Hart's broader theological vision. His eschatological perspective echoes his earlier work's focus on creation ex nihilo, bookending his metaphysical vision of the triune God as all in all. The essay format forces him to restate some of his ideas in helpful ways that allow the reader to gain a wider perspective on the larger shape of his thought. The final piece, in an enigmatic and circuitous way, handily situates Hart's various explorative ventures within systematic loci.

As a constructive partner for Pentecostal theology, Hart's work here has quite a bit to offer. Pentecostal theologians such as Amos Yong have

already begun to evaluate the ways that Pentecostal spirituality might problematize the natural-supernatural distinction. Additionally, Daniela Augustine has done rigorous work on integrating an emphasis on Pentecost into the soteriological matrix of theosis. Hart provides a source that could be used to develop these conversations in metaphysically and phenomenologically rich ways. Most importantly, perhaps, Hart defines the supernatural as fundamentally rooted in eschatology. This perspective could enrich Pentecostal theological reflection as a reminder that all of God's works are bound together in the broader work of the kingdom of God. Additionally, Hart's unique aesthetic provides fertile ground for the construction of a Pentecostal aesthetic. In focusing on the convertibility of the transcendentals he provides a rationale for the correlation between beauty and holiness.

Hart's writings are rarely interested in making friends with, or ingratiating him to, his interlocutors. But *You Are Gods*, despite its bravado, has an alluring audacity. In an academic world rife with relitigating method, a book so full of bold arguments as this one is energizing. Hart's writing is as dense as ever, but his vision has never been clearer. And the possibilities opened by that vision are compelling enough that theologians of all traditions should ask what they can make of it.

Michael Austin Kamenicky
Lee University, Cleveland, Tennessee, USA

Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There*, second edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021). xi + 386 pp. \$43.46 paperback; \$36.00 kindle.

Douglas Jacobsen, co-director of the Religion in the Academy project and distinguished professor of church history and theology at Messiah University (Pennsylvania, USA), offers a concise and inclusive second edition of his textbook, *The World's Christians*. Initially published in 2011, his famous work provides a guide to understanding the complex world religion of Christianity. Interestingly, unlike his first edition, which offered an empathetic and fair introduction, this second edition is grounded on an increased involvement in the discussions surrounding "World Christianity" as a field of study (xxii). Using a religious study approach, he demonstrates a depth of knowledge and awareness of contemporary developments that sustains the description and explanation of a multifaceted religion in clear, readable terms.