

You Are Gods: On Nature and Supernature

David Bentley Hart

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In his new theological essay collection *You Are Gods*, David Bentley Hart issues a rebuttal against the resurgence of the manualist tradition found mainly in the Thomist theology of the Catholic Church.

Arguing that the manualist tradition is an anomaly in the history of Christian thought that should be put to rest once and for all, the book asserts that the two-tier understanding of nature and supernature is “irreparably defective,” a false dichotomy that stems from “inept reading of Paul,” and is diametrically opposed to everything that the Christian story has to say about God and God’s relation to creation.

The book draws on the Orthodox doctrine of theosis—a transformative process with the aim of becoming the likeness of God—as its foundation. It asserts that the nature of God is so entwined with the nature of humanity that it is impossible to separate the two. And while Bentley Hart admits that his essays will not lay Thomist tradition to rest, he does hope to get in a few good jabs at it.

Bentley Hart’s prose is unrelenting, pointed, and at times controversial. He is unflinching in taking aim at a tradition that is hundreds of years old, which will undoubtedly leave some with a bitter taste in their mouth. Still, his arguments are forceful. While Bentley Hart can point a canon at a flower at times, the text is also peppered with humor and wit: “Even God could not create a rational will not oriented toward deifying union with himself, any more than he could create a square circle ... or a morally and intellectually competent supporter of Donald Trump.”

You Are Gods is a challenging but rewarding theological text whose contents are confessedly radical, and whose end point is to advance the idea that nature and supernature are, in reality, one.

ERIC PATTERSON (March / April 2022)

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