

Persons in Relation: An Essay on the Trinity and Ontology. By Najib George Awad. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. Pp. xi + 341. \$39.

Awad centers his book on two theses. The first is substantive: person and relationship are two concepts that, while necessarily related, must be kept distinct in order to properly understand the Trinity and human beings. The second is methodological: theology and the other intellectual disciplines of any cultural period must remain in a correlation that allows each to maintain its integrity by bringing its insights and questions to the other in a mutual dialogue. The burden of the book deals with the second thesis. A. argues that the method of correlation has become the occasion for metaphysics and theology to surrender to the presuppositions of those disciplines with which they have been in dialogue. The result is the loss of the distinction between the notion of person and relationship that he believes needs to be recovered to maintain a proper theology of the Trinity.

A. spends the first two lengthy parts of his book looking at that collapse in modern and postmodern theology. In both periods theology surrendered to the intellectual and cultural milieu, allowing philosophy and other disciplines to set the agenda, raise the questions, and dictate themes for theological thought. The results were disastrous for theology, especially for the concepts of person and relationship that are so key to the theology of the Trinity and to philosophical and theological anthropology. The modern period absolutized the subject to the detriment of the relational side of the divine and the human. A. claims Paul Tillich may argue that the self develops in correlation with another (the subject–object correlation is constitutive of human being), but the self–other correlation eventually collapses into self-relatedness and self-centeredness. Even God is reduced to the ultimate *for us*, the correlate of our infinite self-transcendence that brings to the human person groundedness, meaning, and fulfillment. Karl Barth may argue the primacy of revelation for theology, but his view of God is anchored in such modern themes as “decision making” and “free electing.” A. concludes that Barth’s God is the modern self-made absolute in its freedom.

The postmodern period moved to the other extreme: the self is lost in its relationality. Human beings are no longer substantial beings but are the sum of their relationships. A. sees the roots of this line of thought in Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, but it blossoms in Foucault, Derrida, and Levinas. A. finds this collapse of the self into its relationships in the thought of such theologians as Robert Jenson and Ted Peters. There eternity is reduced to temporal relationships. It connects the past and the present, allowing time to reach its perfection. The Trinity’s relationship to the temporal is such that only through time does God reach God’s eschatological perfection.

A. finds the proper relationship of person and relationship in Aristotle and Aquinas, who maintain that a person is a substance, a subsistent being, and that relationality is a quality of that substance. This proper relationship has been lost in modern and postmodern theological reflection on the Trinity. According to A., Karl Rahner’s identification of the immanent and economic Trinity has tied the Trinity too closely to creation and led to Peters’s reduction of the Trinity’s eternal reality to something to be realized eschatologically through time. Rahner’s modalistic, anhypostatic view of the Trinity has fallen into the postmodern trap of making the Trinity into a set of relationships and

lost the subsistent Persons who have those relationships. A. finally turns to Moltmann and Pannenberg as exemplars of theologians who maintain a proper balance between person and relationship and between theology and its dialogue partners in correlation. Moltmann strongly advocates a nonmodalistic emphasis on the community of the three subsistent Persons rather than viewing the three as modes of subsistence. Pannenberg maintains the distinction between personal substance and the external actions of the person and thus between God's essence and actions. Both avoid making theology subservient to the cultural and intellectual currents of the day.

A. is correct in both his main theses. Person cannot be reduced to relationship, and while theology must enter into a correlative dialogue with other intellectual disciplines, it still has its own truth claims to maintain. There are problems with this book, however. Those who know the thought of Barth, Tillich, or Rahner well would be hard pressed to recognize A.'s conclusions about their theologies. The main thrust of his own thought seems to shape his reading of them. He misquotes David Tracy (208), and a number of his footnotes to Tracy's *Plurality and Ambiguity* are to pages that do not exist. He misses aspects of theologians' thoughts that might contest his reading of them or even help the development of his own thought. Tillich's polarity of individualization and participation and his emphasis on the fact that another person cannot be reduced to the object of another could be resources that would help develop his main theses. While A. maintains a solid stance against modalism, he does not address the threat of tritheism, the Scylla to modalism's Charybdis. A.'s main theses are spot on, but the road to them is fraught with problems.

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The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology. Edited by Robert Kolb, Irena Dingel, and L'Ubomír Batka. New York: Oxford University, 2014. Pp. xvii + 661. \$150.

As the Reformation anniversary year 2017 approaches, scholars and church leaders across a wide ecumenical front are gearing up for commemoration and reassessment of the life and impact of the one-time Augustinian friar Martin Luther. Not that there has been any shortage of work on Luther to date. Indeed, the present volume joins the rank of a reference shelf already bulging with broad evaluations and presentations of Luther's theology, including the *Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (2003) and the *Luther Handbuch* (2nd ed., 2010), as well as more comprehensive surveys such as Bernhard Lohse's *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (1999) and, more recently, Hans Martin-Barth's *The Theology of Martin Luther: A Critical Assessment* (2012). In addition, new biographies on Luther published within the last ten years by the leading German historians Thomas Kaufmann, Volker Leppin, and Heinz Schilling have precipitated a wide-ranging reassessment of Luther's life, person, and theological development.