

*Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church*, by Matthew Levering. Baker Academic, 2016. 440 + viii pp. Hb., \$36.44 CDN. ISBN: 978-0-80-104992-7.

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Matthew Levering holds the James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr. Chair of Theology at Mundelein Seminary, University of Saint Mary of the Lake. In this book he develops an understanding of the Holy Spirit as love and gift, drawing substantially on the pneumatology of Thomas Aquinas. His proceeds dialogically. Each chapter summarizes and discusses the thought of several theologians, ancient or modern, on some aspect of the Spirit's nature or work. Their views are then brought into dialogue with those of Aquinas, whose views are sometimes modified slightly, but generally affirmed. The result is a conversation about the Spirit involving many theologians from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

Levering begins by briefly noting various ways in which Christians have sought to understand the Holy Spirit. He surveys criticisms of what he will argue and three recent alternative approaches, then launches in to a study of Augustine's exegetical argument that "love" and "gift" are the proper names of the Holy Spirit. He concludes that a sufficient number of New Testament texts describe the Spirit in this way to support accepting these terms as describing the distinctive characteristics of the Holy Spirit that distinguish it from the other two persons of the trinity. Chapter 2 takes up the question, given the transcendence of God, can one speak of inner-trinitarian relations, and if so, to what extent? After surveying how the Holy Spirit has been named in Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Levering concludes that the Holy Spirit can be described as the love that proceeds from the communion of the first two persons of the trinity, as "their coequal Gift." Chapter 3 discusses the filioque. As this is an ecumenical concern between Orthodox and Western churches, Levering surveys ecumenical and denominational statements about it, and several Orthodox criticisms of it, before examining and endorsing Aquinas' understanding of the filioque: the Holy Spirit proceeds from the infinite communion, the fecundity of the love of the first and second persons of the trinity for each other. Attention then shifts from the inner-trinitarian relations to salvation history. Chapter 4 looks at the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Jesus. In the New Testament Jesus is portrayed as empowered and inspired by the Holy Spirit, but also as the source of its saving presence. Levering draws upon Aquinas' teaching that the Holy Spirit had both visible and invisible missions to Jesus. The Holy Spirit's invisible

mission to Jesus took place at his conception. This established his unique relationship to God which was later apparent in his public ministry. The Spirit's two visible missions to Jesus, at his baptism and transfiguration, gave public witness to the uniqueness of his person and his saving significance. Chapter 5 looks at how the Holy Spirit binds the church to Jesus Christ. Following Jesus' death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon those who gather in his name, constituting the church as the community over which Jesus reigns and orienting it towards its eschatological fulfillment. The Holy Spirit, through the church's sacraments, teaching and worship, binds the church to Jesus in love, and infuses it with Jesus' self-giving love. Chapter 6 argues that while the Holy Spirit fosters a diversity of gifts, it aims at uniting people with the triune God and with each other, and therefore works to unify the church. Chapter 7 argues that while the church is always in need of repentance, yet it is holy through the Spirit's presence within it that is celebrated in the sacraments and that continually revitalizes the church.

The variety of voices brought into the conversation here makes this book useful for theologians working on pneumatology. But the number of viewpoints discussed and the sparsity of clearly emphasized conclusions make this book unsuitable for seminary students, who would probably get lost in the many details of different viewpoints. While this book is big on dialogue, it is a dialogue restricted to voices within the church. There is no dialogue with the natural sciences as to how the Spirit's presence might be discerned in nature, or with the social sciences as to how the Spirit's work can be discerned in social movements and self-help groups. This book celebrates the Holy Spirit as the divine love that comes to the world as a life-giving and saving gift. But it doesn't say much about how and where that gift can be discerned in the world, and how it can be participated in amidst the many conflicts, struggles and developments of the present.