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Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), pp. viii + 440. \$44.99.

In this impressive study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Matthew Levering engages in a lengthy defence of the Latin trinitarian tradition. His claim is that both the temporal mission and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit can best be understood through the concepts of Love and Gift. Though this idea was famously first worked out by Augustine in *De Trinitate*, Levering's account examines the theme chiefly through the theology of Thomas Aquinas. In a wide-ranging analysis covering a range of Thomas' texts, and in dialogue with a generous range of his friends and enemies, Levering maintains that the particular advantage of Thomas' theology at this point is that it represents a theologically reverent and ecclesiological engaged position that does justice not only to scripture and tradition, but that also speaks with authority to the life and work of the church.

The argument, as such, requires that Levering defend Thomas against a range of standard criticisms. He pays special attention to a strand of Eastern Christian critique that has become something of a stock argument in contemporary trinitarian thought, to the effect that Thomas' account (and Latin trinitarian theology generally) is overly rationalistic, having the character more of a puzzle than of something supremely alive and divine. The upshot is that Thomas and the Latins are said to be insufficiently cautious about what can and cannot be said of the triune God. Levering, by contrast, argues that Thomas maintains an entirely appropriate reserve in his theology, while also saying what is needed for us to be able to articulate a life-giving pneumatology. This theme is handled with exceptional care, and given the way that the intricate detail of the case in question is commonly overlooked amid much generalisation, it is refreshing to have in Levering's work such a careful examination of Thomas' position.

Broadly speaking, the study falls into two parts, the first of which is concerned with the trinitarian question, and the second with its ecclesiological implications. After an introduction and first chapter in which Levering makes an initial case for the concept of the Spirit as Love and Gift, drawing on Augustine and mainly Thomas against medieval and modern objection, he moves on through chapters 2–3 to treat the characteristic differences in the way the Spirit is named in Eastern and Western theology. Levering, though noting in detail a range of Eastern Orthodox objections, upholds the Western *filioque* doctrine, contending that it actually reinforces rather than contradicts the key concerns of the Greek Fathers about the limits

of theological language. These chapters are not easy going, but they make an important technical contribution to ecumenical theology generally and to the flowering of pneumatology that has characterised recent decades. While Levering's treatment is not exhaustive (to give three examples, the clear influence of Anselm's *De Processione Spiritus Sancti* is scarcely mentioned, Heribert Mühlen is all-but-absent and Karl Barth is present only very peripherally), the argument of these chapters is supported by extensive references. This is material that ought to significantly advance scholarly treatment of pneumatological questions.

The ecclesiological chapters (4–7) are less impressive, but serve to flesh out key implications of the trinitarian position developed earlier in the study. Levering first examines the idea of the eschatological gift of the Spirit by Christ to his ecclesial body, attempting a reconciliation of modern biblical scholarship of the likes of James Dunn with Thomas Aquinas (an unlikely juxtaposition, but a stimulating one). He then moves on to treat *seriatim* the central place of the Holy Spirit in ecclesiology, the theology of unity and the problem of the church's holiness. To take only the last two questions, on Levering's account, the kind of Christian unity needed is visible and institutional, as the thrust of ecclesiology generally is to bring the mission of the Son in the power of the Spirit to concrete fruition in the world. The fabric of the church in the world thus matters – a claim echoed in the final chapter of the book, where holiness is said to belong to the church in an objective sense, by virtue of what we might call its pneumatological-historical constitution, despite the sinfulness of its members. Positive things are even said about the vexed claim to indefectibility.

Levering's defence of Thomas' position thus has far-reaching implications, and sets him against the broad tendencies evident in most recent trinitarian theology, which tends to claim that the classical tradition is defective in important respects. As already noted, there is at points a certain selectivity in the account, so that some of the most powerful alternatives to the tradition are left unexamined. What we have here is an important book, therefore, and one that pneumatologists, ecumenists and ecclesialogists in particular need to grapple with – not least because it clears away so much misunderstanding by careful analysis of core texts. What it is not, however, is a signpost to something new that might emerge in the future. The pleasure of writing that work still falls to others.

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