

Feminist Theologians and Pneumatology: An Enrichment of Vatican II

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Abstract: *This article first explores two pneumatological elements within Vatican II's four major Constitutions, namely, the Spirit's role in enabling the gift of koinonia and in accompanying human beings into truth. The second part then examines the ways that Catherine M. LaCugna and Elizabeth A. Johnson have expanded the Council's expressions of the Spirit's role within koinonia and within truth-making by engaging with the pneumatological themes from a feminist perspective. LaCugna's interaction with the Cappadocian theologians and Johnson's positioning of the Spirit as the divine person accompanying creation and humanity into the triune mystery witness to one hope from Gaudium et Spes, namely, that "revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated" (GS n.42).*

Key Words: Second Vatican Council; Koinonia/communion; pneumatology; Catherine LaCugna; Elizabeth A. Johnson; feminist perspective

Today, theological engagement in pneumatology is diverse and enriching.¹ In this article, I will first argue that one rich fruit from the Second Vatican Council has been a heightened awareness of pneumatology within conciliar theology. Then, in the second and major part of this article, I will argue that one element of the Council's legacy of pneumatology—namely, the Spirit's role in enabling "koinonia" and "truth"—has been greatly enriched and extended by contributions from feminist theology.

PART ONE

For the purposes of this article, I will restrict my discussion on the role of the Spirit to the four major Constitutions which the Council enacted.

¹ Within the past decade a selection of writings in pneumatology testify to this: Bradford Hinze, ed., *The Spirit in the Church and the World* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004); Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature* (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005); Doris Donnelly, Adelbert Denaux, and Joseph Famerée, eds., *The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation Held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy 2002* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium: Leuven University Press, 2005); Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006); Donald Goergen, *Fire of Love: Encountering the Holy Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006); Michael Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006); Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007); Velli-Matti Karkkainen, ed., *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Diarmuid O'Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit: Science, Religion, and Indigenous Spirituality* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012).

While there are many references to the Spirit and the Spirit's work in *Lumen Gentium*, *Dei Verbum*, and *Gaudium et Spes*,² there are only four Spirit references in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Completed early in the Council,³ SC describes the enthusiasm for "the promotion and restoration of the liturgy" as "a movement of the Spirit."⁴ This description seems pertinent today when once again we grapple with changes to translations of Eucharistic and other Sacramental texts. It is reassuring that attention to the Spirit's "movement" gets picked up several times in LG, one specific mention expressing the hope that the church "moved by the Holy Spirit may never cease to renew herself."⁵

At the outset, we can note the presence of five possible pneumatological themes in the Council constitutions, all of which have had greater or lesser impact on subsequent theology. These are: the Spirit and *koinonia*; the Spirit and truth; the Spirit and the Word/Logos; the Spirit and the charismatic structure of church; and the Spirit in relation to other religious traditions. This article will focus on the first two mentioned themes, namely "the Spirit and *koinonia*" and "the Spirit and truth." Both themes lie at the heart of pneumatology and both have influenced post-conciliar Catholic theology. I will begin by exploring the theme of the Spirit as "principle of *koinonia*" within the Christian community.

The Spirit as "principle of koinonia" within the Christian community in the Conciliar Constitutions

"*Koinonia*" in the first instance refers fundamentally to God who is communion *per se*. In the second instance, the triune God who has lovingly committed Godself to the world through the Spirit in the incarnate Jesus has also invited humanity into an intimate and living relationship of personal and infinite love-*koinonia*. The gift of living in communion—both the triune God's communion with humanity and the triune God's communion with creation—are often linked in conciliar constitutions with the presence of the Spirit.⁶

The principle of *koinonia* is expressed in a number of focal points, or themes. The following five themes all connect the Spirit and the Christian community.

The *first* theme refers to the Spirit bringing disparate people together into communion within space and time. Early in LG, one reads of the Spirit forming Christians to be the body of Christ.⁷ The Spirit within the church is acknowledged as the same Spirit

² Vatican II Council: *Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (hereafter LG) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (Geoffrey Chapman: London/Dublin, 1966), fifty references to the Spirit; *Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (hereafter DV) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, eighteen references to the Spirit; *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (hereafter GS) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, fifteen references to the Spirit; *Sacrosanctum Concilium, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (hereafter SC) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, four references to the Spirit.

³ SC was promulgated in November 1963.

⁴ SC n.3.

⁵ LG n.9. Other references are LG nn.7, 41, 45.

⁶ See especially LG nn.4, 7, 9, 13, 15, 22, 23, 26, 28, 40, 49, 50 and GS nn.11, 32, 38, 39, 40, 42, 45, 92 which demonstrate frequent mention of such a Spirit.

⁷ LG n.7.

within Christ—working within the body “to vivify and make [it] one,”⁸ doing so with love, and encouraging members of the body to receive the Spirit’s love and communicate it.

As assurance that a love which leads to communion is historically possible, LG mentions that centuries ago Jews and Gentiles were formed into one people both through the death of Jesus and then the gifting of the Spirit which transformed this new community.⁹ Not long after Pentecost, the early Christians then came together around Peter—as LG says “under the influence of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ Thus, the Spirit was indispensable in drawing people into communion in the early church, and is indispensable in continuing that role in history.

A *second* theme of *koinonia* in relation to the Christian community is that of the Spirit as encourager of growth within the community. In early articles of LG, the Spirit invites human beings to enter communion through baptism, to engage with the living body of Christ,¹¹ to become one with Christ in Eucharist,¹² to be aware of the Spirit drawing people together in the present¹³ and to trust, that ultimately in the eschaton, all will be gathered into the mystery of God.¹⁴ Thus, the conciliar constitutions highlight the reality of communion shared among Christian communities “scattered throughout the world.”

A *third* theme of *koinonia* in relation to the Christian community is to be found in LG. This constitution invites Catholic Christians, by responding to the Spirit, to strive to bring all back to unity under Christ.¹⁵ The document at the same time acknowledges that a certain unity already exists with other Christians since the Spirit graces Christian sisters and brothers such that they “in some real way are joined with us in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶

A *fourth* theme, also found in LG, exhorts Catholics to express *koinonia* on a structural level, namely in the communion of parish leaders and priests with their people, of priests and people with their bishop, and in the local and world-wide communion of bishops with one another and with the Bishop of Rome. In these instances,¹⁷ the Spirit strengthens, harmonises or leads each specific group towards unity and harmony with the others, and thus strengthens the structural bonds of ecclesial *koinonia*.¹⁸

A *fifth* theme describes the communion experienced between living and deceased members of the church. This theme, which brings together divine communion and creaturely communion, returns us to the initial and ultimate meaning of communion—the union of all within God. LG n.49 states:

⁸ LG n.7.

⁹ LG n.9.

¹⁰ LG n.19.

¹¹ LG n.7.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ LG n.13.

¹⁴ LG n.6.

¹⁵ LG n.13.

¹⁶ LG n.15.

¹⁷ See LG n.28 on communion among priests; LG n.22 on communion among bishops and the pope.

¹⁸ See LG nn.22, 24, 25, 27.

For all who belong to Christ, having his Spirit from one church and cleave together in Him (cf. Eph. 4:16). Therefore the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least interrupted. On the contrary, according to the perennial faith of the Church, it is strengthened through the exchanging of spiritual goods.

The document then encourages the prayerful union of the living with the dead because, as the same article states, “all sing the same hymn of glory to [our] God.” Since the ultimate destiny for all is communion with one another and with God—all are exhorted to remain “in communion with one another in mutual charity” in praise of the Trinity.¹⁹

One might note the growth in explicit pneumatology between the constitution on the Liturgy (1963) and the constitution on the Church (1964). SC in saying of the Eucharistic community that “they should be drawn day by day into ever closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all”²⁰ is likely referring to the Spirit who gathers all into communion.²¹ Yet, mention of the Spirit as divine “Gatherer” or as divine “Communion-builder” is absent in this first of the Council’s Constitutions.

In summary, we see that the Spirit (especially in LG) is depicted as the One bringing people together into communion, the One through whom the community is encouraged to grow and develop, the One enabling Christians to strive for unity around Jesus, the One inviting Catholics to incarnate unity within its expressions of leadership and the One enabling the living and deceased to experience a mutually enriching communion. Pneumatology, while often only implicitly acknowledged in Council documents, is indispensable to Vatican II theology.

Both God’s unity and God’s being-in-communion are apparent in the Spirit’s role as creator of *koinonia* in the church. However, the Spirit also guides and enables the Christian community towards an ecclesial integrity and authenticity willed by Jesus Christ. It is to the Spirit’s relationship with truth that we now turn.

The Spirit and Truth in the Conciliar Constitutions

That the Spirit accompanies individuals and communities into truth is not new (see Jn 16:12-15). While only minimally expressed in GS,²² the link between the Spirit and truth is developed richly in both LG and DV. For our purposes, three pneumatological aspects of truth expressed in these constitutions are especially worth noting.

¹⁹ LG n.51.

²⁰ See SC n.48.

²¹ See LG nn.13, 19 where the Spirit brings people together.

²² There is one but significant reference to the Spirit and truth. GS n.42 describes the Holy Spirit as enabling the whole church “to hear, distinguish, and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word. In this way, revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.”

First, the constitutions emphasise the human ability to hear and recognize God's word as God's Word. This is one fundamental aspect of the Spirit drawing humans more deeply into the perception and discernment of truth. LG n.12 states:

For by the sense of faith which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God's People accepts not the word of [humans] but the very Word of God (1Th. 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life.

The above quotation suggests that the people of God can not only recognise and accept God's word as truthfully originating from God but that members of God's community will continue to reflect and mine God's Word in order to engage in ongoing discipleship.

Aloys Grillmeier, in commenting on the community's "sense of faith" in the above passage, describes Christian life as "a dynamic reality fuelled by the Spirit of God" to which he adds, "All levels of the people of God have an active share in this work and reality."²³ It is apparent here that while the Spirit enables humans to know God's Word truly as God's Word and encourages Christians to keep plumbing the Word, such a search includes both the hearing and recognising of God's Word as truly "of God." The enabling of the community's ongoing and faithful hearing of God's Word is one task of the Spirit in history.

However, the Spirit's enabling of Christians to hear God's Word is incomplete without tangible expressions of such hearing. As the following Article notes, Jesus' mission included concrete offers of salvation. Thus, as the community keeps accepting the Spirit of truth Jesus' mission continues within history. In DV n.4, the Spirit of truth climaxes Jesus' life and ministry.

Jesus has "perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting Himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth."

In each age, the Spirit of truth enables the incarnate Word to continue to be heard, received and known as God's Word within time.

A *second* pneumatological element relates to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God in history. Regarding the teaching of bishops with the pope, LG n.25 states: "Under the guiding light of the Spirit of truth, revelation is [thus] religiously preserved and faithfully expounded in the Church." In the task of teaching it is the enlightening and accompanying Spirit of truth who is invoked.²⁴

It is likewise so, in the task of preaching the gospel, which in each age is the responsibility of successors to the apostles. DV n.9 states: "led by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known." Contemporary preachers take up this task under the aegis of the first preachers of the gospel who were gifted with insights into the Christ-

²³ Aloys Grillmeier in Herbert Vorgrimler, ed. *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Lalit Adolphus, Kevin Smyth and Richard Strachan (London: Burns Oates/Herder and Herder, 1966) Vol. 1/5 164.

²⁴ That local episcopal conferences sometimes experience disquiet when local cultural and religious traditions are not fully appreciated by popes and papal representatives is not unusual.

event through the illumination of the Spirit. DV n.19 describes the fledgling apostle-preachers and associates handing on the message of Christ after the resurrection. As they reflect together they receive, in DV's words, "a clearer understanding" of the total Christ-event and they are taught "by the light of the Spirit of truth."

That human beings can be encountered by God's Word, therefore, depends on the presence of the Spirit of truth. Similarly, the reality that human beings can also teach and preach God's Word likewise depends on their enlightenment by the Spirit of truth.

A *third* pneumatological element specifically links Scripture with tradition. The Spirit as the One accompanying the community into truth is linked with numerous mentions, especially in DV, of the Spirit as the One who assists in the ongoing understanding and development of tradition.

In this regard, DV n.8 speaks of the "teaching, life and worship" which "develops in the church with the help of the Holy Spirit." The article then speaks of "a growth in understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down." Such understanding includes both believers who contemplate what has been handed down and bishops who preach with the "gift of truth." The same Article ends by referring to the Holy Spirit who "leads into all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them (cf. Col. 3:16)." One notes here the ongoing, dynamic role of the truth-giving Spirit who encourages understanding and fruitfulness, within individuals and communities.

Joseph Ratzinger, commenting at the time on DV n.8, suggests the likelihood of this "organic and dynamic" understanding of tradition as having been influenced at least by the theology of Yves Congar and of the Tübingen School. Moreover, in noting positively "the pneumatological character of the idea of tradition" within DV, Ratzinger applauds the enrichment of Christology which in his view had become "too narrowly incarnational." He comments, "Only if the [this] pneumatic dimension is taken into consideration, can Christology be seen in its full New Testament breadth."²⁵

In light of our two major pneumatological themes, the Spirit who creates *koinonia* and the Spirit who leads towards truth, I wish now to explore the impact of this conciliar pneumatology upon the theological writings of two well-known women theologians.

PART TWO

In this second and major section, I will focus on ways that the pneumatological themes of *koinonia* and *seeking truth* have been explored by Catherine M. LaCugna²⁶ and Elizabeth A. Johnson. Both theologians have engaged with these themes from a feminist perspective. They have raised questions about absentee voices within Christian *koinonia* and have been fostering truth that is only slowly being heard and received. I will begin by engaging with their understanding of *koinonia*.

²⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, in Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* Vol. 3/5 184.

²⁶ Sadly, Catherine Mowry LaCugna died in 1997.

The Spirit and Koinonia or Communion

LaCugna addresses the theme of *koinonia*, in “God in Communion with us”²⁷ where she discovers theological allies among 4th century Cappadocian theologians. Particularly, in the theology of Gregory of Nazianzus, who argued for the inter-personal equality and unity of the trinitarian persons, LaCugna finds material for developing feminist, Christian principles.

For LaCugna, God is essentially “Being in relationship” such that relationships are not secondary to the being of God! She refers to God as going out of Godself towards the other and yet at the same time remaining “one”. Both God’s unity and divine tri-unity are captured in the following statements:

the unoriginate God is by nature originating and related;²⁸
The identity and unique reality of a [divine] person emerges entirely in relation to another person.²⁹

And, of particular interest for our topic, LaCugna says,

Persons, whether divine or human, are not first who or what they are and then have relationships to another.³⁰

LaCugna contends that human persons [like divine persons] are sourced in and exist fully only within relationships. In referring specifically to Christian human persons, LaCugna notes that “God’s Holy Spirit remains the sole means by which authentic personhood is achieved” and in claiming that all Trinitarian theology is intrinsically “christological and pneumatological,” LaCugna links divine communion and history.³¹ For her, *koinonia* among divine persons, among human persons, among human persons and God, or between God and creation is impossible without the involvement of the Spirit.³² In fact, LaCugna stresses the distinctive role of the Spirit as enabler of communion when she says, “the uniqueness of the Spirit’s personhood (the Spirit’s *proprium*) lies in what the Spirit does: uniting everyone and everything with God through Jesus Christ.”³³

In regard to divine life, LaCugna takes up Gregory’s insight that “divine unity and divine life [are] located in the communion among equal though unique persons, not in the primacy of one person over another.”³⁴ This theological and political insight she judges as

²⁷ Catherine M. LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us.” In *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine M. LaCugna (U.S.: Harper Collins, 1993) 83-114. A much fuller discussion of divine personhood and communion appears in LaCugna’s earlier work *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1973) 243-317.

²⁸ LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us” 87.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² LaCugna, *God for Us* 298: “The achievement of communion (*koinonia*) is the proper work of the Spirit of God, Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

³³ Ibid. 298.

³⁴ LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us” 87-88.

especially “relevant to the program of feminism.”³⁵ Applauding a Cappadocian emphasis on relationality at the heart of being, LaCugna links their concerns with feminist interests. She expresses a strong feminist critique in regards to lack of proper relationality among human beings when she states:

Feminism ... directs the energy of its critique and its theoretical perspective to the concrete exercise of relationality, particularly to those modes of being in relationship that harm, exploit, or in any other way inhibit the full humanity and full personhood of women.³⁶

While aware of the need to maintain a distinction between the realities of divine and human personhood, LaCugna expands Vatican II’s interpretations of *koinonia* when, in a creative move, she brings them together with Cappadocian and feminist understandings of God. She says of the Cappadocian direction, “The priority of communion among persons over being-in-itself is on the same trajectory as the feminist concern for the equality of women and men.”³⁷ For LaCugna, the church needs to look within its fourth and fifth century theological tradition to recognize possible grounds for new insights and new ways of being human today.

In addition, LaCugna includes in her understanding of communion not only God and human beings but also God and human beings in relation to the wider creation. For LaCugna, human fulfillment will be “living in authentic communion with God, with other persons, and with all God’s creatures.”³⁸ Or, as she had earlier stated, “the Spirit leads all creatures into an ever-deeper communion with each other and with God.”³⁹ Such a vision which includes the wider creation expands what LG earlier described as humanity’s final destiny in which all hope to be “in communion with one another in mutual love,”⁴⁰ in praise of the Trinity.

LaCugna is realistic about the often slow process by which communion among human beings, creation and God is realized and maintained. But, she sees such an end as possible with the Spirit’s assistance. She highlights baptism as one fundamental premise. She sees it newly constituting each person in relation to God. She says, “Through baptism we open ourselves to transformation by the Spirit of God who restores in us the blemished image of God, male and female.”⁴¹ And such transformation can lead to communion in the power of the same Spirit. In a simple phrase that tellingly identifies the person and role of the Spirit, LaCugna says:

It is impossible to speak of the Spirit except as the Spirit-of. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of the Christian community ... The Spirit is the principle of union and communion.⁴²

³⁵ Ibid, 88.

³⁶ LaCugna, *God for Us* 268.

³⁷ LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us” 91.

³⁸ Ibid. 92.

³⁹ LaCugna, *God for Us* 302.

⁴⁰ LG n.49.

⁴¹ LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us” 106.

⁴² LaCugna, *God for Us* 298.

It seems that LaCugna's description of the Spirit as "the Spirit-of" may indeed have enabled feminist theologies to flourish along with other liberating theologies in which the aim is to bring into communion with God, the earth itself and all its living creatures.

In noting that late twentieth century society was slow to develop "an awareness of the unacceptable nature of inequality between women and men," LaCugna reflects on the evident lack of communion when she says that "the church, as much as society has shored up the sexist arrangement in which men dominate and eclipse women." Her conclusion is that, "we must change the pattern of relationships in the Christian community as well as depatriarchalize the concept of God."⁴³

For LaCugna, there are multiple dimensions to *koinonia*—but all of them relate to the enabling of authentic communion especially among human beings. Towards the end of "God in Communion with us," she says "prayer and the giving of praise to God should create an inclusive community of persons who in their communal life are the icon of the Trinity."⁴⁴ This statement seems to echo the goal of the church as expressed in SC when it invites our prayer that, at the end of time, "God may finally be all in all."⁴⁵

I now turn to Elizabeth A. Johnson's theology. She also includes the theme of "communion" in relation to the being of God, to the Christian community and to God and creation (including humanity). We have seen how LaCugna links Cappadocian theology with feminist interests in order to stress the equality of the Spirit with the other two divine persons and also in order to emphasize the indispensable role of the Spirit in effecting *koinonia* or communion. Johnson too reclaims the role of the divine Spirit as agent of communion. For her, Spirit-Sophia is the divine person who opens up the divine mystery into Jesus-Sophia and Mother-Sophia. Likewise, it is Spirit-Sophia who accompanies human beings to encounter the Trinitarian mystery. Johnson highlights the equality of the divine Spirit within the Trinity and also the indispensable role of the Spirit in creating communion both within God and within creation. However, we shall see how Johnson takes the theme of *koinonia* further than LaCugna.

In 1993, in a major work on the Triune God, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*⁴⁶ Johnson describes God as "a relational, dynamic, tri-personal mystery of love,"⁴⁷ as "interpersonal and transpersonal in an unimaginably rich way,"⁴⁸ and as "a communion marked by overflowing life."⁴⁹ Thus, for Johnson, the core of relating among humans and God, and among humans and other than human creation, derives from God, the source of all life. Such a God expresses in a particular three-fold divine manner that relationality exists at the heart of all being. To this point, LaCugna and Johnson are in agreement about the Spirit as enabler of communion. But, it is in the

⁴³ LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us" 106.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 108.

⁴⁵ SC n.48.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

⁴⁷ Ibid. 192.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 203.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 222.

placement of the Spirit in Johnson's re-telling of the Trinitarian story that she offers something new.

For Johnson, the Spirit plays a clearly articulated role in regards to divine mystery. Johnson speaks of God's "livingness" and God's "touch" which she attributes to the Spirit⁵⁰ leading human beings towards Jesus and thus towards the fullness of divine mystery. In inverting the traditional ordering of the three divine persons, starting with Spirit-Sophia who leads to Jesus-Sophia who leads to Mother-Sophia, Johnson accentuates God's Spirit as the divine person first to encounter creation and human beings. In a feminist articulation of Trinity, not only is the Spirit linked with female expression, but so too are the first and second persons of the Trinity. All three divine persons are grounded in God's Wisdom or Sophia. Aware of the importance, in Jesus' life, of the Spirit guiding, enlightening and teaching the Christian community, Johnson pictures the Spirit as the divine person enabling human beings to recognise the divine, first within Jesus and then beyond.⁵¹

Johnson dismisses any perception of the Christian God as "an isolated, ruling monarch."⁵² The God known by Christians is dynamically interpersonal. Such a God is expressed both in Jesus who came among creation but also in the Spirit who moves around within creation, making connections among people, enabling friendships to occur and enabling mutual love. In short, the Spirit of God is recognised in *koinonia* or in "communion with all of reality."⁵³ The role of the divine Spirit is to assist in the building of community among Christians and among people everywhere.

The "Epilogue" to *She Who Is* speaks of the triune God as "a living communion of mutual and equal personal relations"⁵⁴ thereby reminding all, especially Christians, of the invitation to model mutuality and equality at the heart of Christian faith. It is here that Johnson raises questions to the Christian community on behalf of women and of others whose voices and lives have been, and often still are, unacknowledged. In Johnson's pneumatological starting point for Trinity, a challenge is offered to Christians to give equal acknowledgement to the Spirit within the Trinity and to women within humanity. Johnson's highlighting of the Spirit is one major reminder of the Council's invitation to Christians to build *koinonia* or communion. In different ways, all of creation is to be included in the response.

Later in 1997, Johnson says "If ... the holy mystery of God is ... an incomprehensible, three-fold *koinonia*, then the symbol of the Trinity functions to call forth loving relationships in the community and in the world as the highest good."⁵⁵ Ten years further on in 2008, Johnson invites the church "to be a living symbol of divine communion turned towards the world in inclusive and compassionate love."⁵⁶ Johnson's constant

⁵⁰ Ibid. 122.

⁵¹ Ibid. 123.

⁵² Ibid. 192.

⁵³ Ibid. 131.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 273.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Johnson, "To Let the Symbol Sing Again," *Theology Today* 54 (1997): 299-311 at 300.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, *In Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2008) 223.

understanding of God, of humans in relation to God, and of the universe in relation to God is that of “a communion of love.”⁵⁷

In attempting to express God’s nature, Johnson points to profound inter-relationality or *koinonia*.⁵⁸ The latter pertains not only to God as communion but to the communing God who invites humanity into a divine-human encounter. At another level, the communion modelled by Jesus Christ is made real by human beings in loving inclusivity and compassion towards all creation. Such communion witnesses to the effects of the divine Spirit present within the whole of creation.

As one fruit of “liberation theology” Johnson’s feminist contribution offers an invitation to women to keep reaching out—not for themselves alone, but for groups traditionally excluded from public discourse (human and other than human) so that all might be included in communion and might then become makers of communion.⁵⁹ Strongly aware of the power of all God-symbols, Johnson perceives the Trinity as challenging both “human relations and structures that subordinate and marginalize”⁶⁰ and affirming the implementation of “a life and love of communion with others” as a necessary entry point into knowing God.⁶¹

In my view, feminist theologians, such as LaCugna and Johnson, have honoured and taken up the pneumatological resurgence of the Council by presenting with new eyes and in fresh ways the person and role of the Spirit within the Trinity and within the life of the Christian community.

The Spirit and Truth

In addressing the second theme of the Spirit as “accompanier into truth,” I wish to point first to words from *Gaudium et Spes*. Art. 42 states:

With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish, and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word. In this way, revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.

This statement seems eminently applicable not only to Council fathers but also to LaCugna and Johnson. Both theologians have sought to know, express and enable truth to surface amidst the many voices of their age. While the Council document refers to God’s revelation of truth, there ought to be no dissonance between the latter and genuine truth-seeking which aims to correspond to divine truth made visible in the person of Jesus

⁵⁷ Ibid. 214.

⁵⁸ British theologian, Janet Martin Soskice drawing on Aquinas and Cappadocians, also highlights inter-relationality as the nature of God when she says, “it is through being-to-other, being related, that God is one.” Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 123.

⁵⁹ See Johnson, *She Who Is 222*: “The Trinity as pure relationality epitomizes the connectedness of all that exists in the universe.”

⁶⁰ Johnson, “To Let the Symbol Sing Again” 309.

⁶¹ Johnson, *In Quest for the Living God* 223.

Christ. Likewise, both theologians have sought to judge their findings “in light of the divine Word.”

In this section, I will focus on the significant role of truth within the theologies of LaCugna and Johnson. Then, I will conclude by briefly summarising the contribution made by these theologians to furthering what was begun at Vatican II.

In LaCugna’s expressions of truth-seeking, one particular phrase recurs, namely, “authentic communion.” In speaking about Christian feminism, LaCugna states, “Christian feminism is Spirit inspired inasmuch as it is a movement toward authentic communion among persons.”⁶² For her, the means to authenticity as Christians is immersion in the person and mission of Jesus. LaCugna holds that for human relationships to be mutual, reciprocal and respectful, persons and their actions need always to be “rooted in the stories of salvation through Jesus Christ.”⁶³ For her, Jesus is “the sole criterion of human personhood”⁶⁴ so that the first criterion of whether Christian human beings are living rightly, fully and with integrity depends on the impact of Jesus’ person and mission within their lives.

However, there is something more. As previously hinted, LaCugna describes the Holy Spirit as “the sole means by which authentic personhood is achieved.”⁶⁵ In seeking to be genuine human beings, Christians are dependent also on the person and power of the Spirit. Christology and Pneumatology are here held tightly together. Authenticity, or living truthfully, is not easily achieved. It describes the extent to which human beings can first grow into their particular and unique selves and second whether they can build genuine and life-giving relationships with and for others.

When LaCugna describes the proper destiny of human beings as “to subsist in communion with other persons,” she adds, “This communion, in order to be authentic and “of God”, presupposes not just equal dignity but freedom from the biological and social determinants of race, sex, and standing.”⁶⁶ In such a statement, authenticity points both to God’s desire for the flourishing of each human being and it is also linked with the individual’s desire to live as humanly freely as possible.

Yves Congar stated many years ago that what the church needed was “really adult Christians, free [human beings] who have been set free by Truth (Jn 8:32).”⁶⁷ I suggest that what LaCugna proposes by “authentic communion” is directly related to truth as that reality which sets people free. In such cases, authenticity is about encouraging integrity (truthfulness) within each person for the ultimate enrichment of communion among the many and with God.

Thus, LaCugna chides the church when it has in many ways prevented possibilities of authentic communion among human beings. In particular, she speaks of unacceptable

⁶² LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us” 92.

⁶³ Ibid. 92.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 92.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 92.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 98.

⁶⁷ Yves Congar, *Yves M.-J. Congar, OP* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1972) 36.

ways in which the church has been complicit in retaining inequalities between women and men. She says:

the church, as much as society, has shored up the sexist arrangement in which men dominate and eclipse women ... we must change the pattern of relationships in the Christian community as well as depatriarchalize the concept of God.⁶⁸

Communion with others is not easy. Yet, LaCugna highlights the transforming gift of baptism through which those who have been united in Christ and in the Spirit have been brought intimately close to one another. Consequently, any practices that threaten the unity of the Body of Christ are judged to be inauthentic and detrimental to both perpetrator and community. Such actions gainsay the truth present within each individual and within the human community. They also deprive the wider community of the gifts of human transparency, witness and truth.

LaCugna's understanding of truth is expressed in the authenticity or genuineness of human beings both individually and within relationships. Authenticity may be gauged by human beings revealing signs of the fullness of life to which Jesus continually invited his disciples.

We turn now to Johnson's perception of the role of truth in regard to pneumatology. We note in her understanding of truth a quite radical theological perspective. It is reflected first in her understanding of the Spirit's role within the Trinity and within creation, and second, in the structuring of her Trinitarian project. Ultimately, it involves a "re-righting" of Trinitarian language.

First, as formerly mentioned, Johnson, in *She Who Is*, makes experience of the Spirit the starting point for her Trinitarian theology. She thus proposes a pneumatological direction as a pathway for one's being encountered by the triune God. Johnson invites readers to journey chapter by chapter "with" the Spirit (Spirit-Sophia) "towards" the Son (Jesus-Sophia) and ultimately "into" the fullness of divine Mystery (Mother-Sophia).

Johnson highlights the role of the Spirit by proposing that the Spirit accompany the reader into the mystery of God. By constructing such a framework, Johnson articulates what Scripture and human experience have often sensed, namely, that "the movements of the Spirit" (about which Council documents also speak)⁶⁹ derive from God who touches human hearts, minds, imaginations and even bodies, prompting human beings to attend newly to some aspect of their lives. In *She Who Is*, pneumatology is given a heightened position within Trinitarian theology and in so doing calls readers' attention to consider afresh the doctrine of the Trinity. Johnson mentions that it was not easy for her to begin her Trinitarian theology with the person of the Spirit. However, she admits that when she reflected on human life, she recognised that it is often in daily situations, especially in struggles, that people are encountered by the Spirit. This reality eventually led her to begin this particular work with the person of the Spirit.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us" 106.

⁶⁹ See SC n.43.

⁷⁰ See Johnson, *She Who Is* 122. "There is a sense in which we have to be touched first by a love that is not hostile (the 'third' person), before we are moved to enquire after a definitive historical manifestation of this

Second, Johnson's attempt to balance female speech about God and female imaging of God alongside traditional expressions of Trinity (which for centuries have nourished and still nourish) millions of Christians was clearly a challenge. In a later article, Johnson articulates her reason for so doing. She states,

This [God-naming] has profound implications for the truth about God, for women's equal human dignity, and thereby for the self-understanding and polity of the church and wider society.⁷¹

In dialogue with theological discussion which throughout the ages has affirmed God as "really" beyond gender, Johnson has courageously stimulated much-needed reflection on this particular element. Within her project, lies a search for truth and fidelity not only in regard to God, but in regard to women's reality and, as a consequence, in relation to other human beings and human structures. Her task may arouse discomfort for some, but it is courageous.

Johnson's opening question in *She Who Is*, "What is the right way to speak about God?",⁷² confirms not only that she is open to discovering the most suitable and worthy speech for God but that in so doing she also aims to speak "rightly" in relation to women, men and creation. All are intricately connected. Johnson was, and still is, on a journey of theological truth-seeking.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have argued that feminist theologies such as those of LaCugna and Johnson have been inspired by, and influenced by, the pneumatology of Vatican II. In so doing, they have called on the Catholic church to seek out and include the voices, acumen, gifts, longings, imagination and wisdom of women in order that the *koinonia* within the Christian community might truly represent more fully the "people of God."

As a challenge consequent upon LG, the Spirit's stated role of bringing disparate people together, encouraging growth, bringing all Christians back to unity in Christ and encouraging communion on a structural level, is yet incomplete. Both LaCugna and Johnson have indicated fundamental directions for enriching the Christian *koinonia* by their focus on Trinitarian theology. If one were to take seriously their instincts about the Spirit within the Trinity, the effects of their pneumatologies would further enrich the church today.

In terms of our second theme of "truth-seeking", they have also called on the church to keep attending to the Spirit of truth since the Spirit enables God's Word in Scripture to nourish, challenge, comfort and speak into the lives of human beings in every era. And, in order that the preaching and teaching (especially of those mandated with such tasks) be life-giving and appropriate in its time and place, women scholars and feminist biblical

love (the 'second' person), or point from there toward the mystery of the primordial source of all (the 'first' person)."

⁷¹ Elizabeth Johnson, "Naming God She: The Theological Implications" in *Boardman Lecture XXXVII (Centennial Lecture)*, ed. Sandy Russell. (University of Pennsylvania: Dept of Religious Studies, 2000) 19.

⁷² Johnson, *She Who Is* 3.

scholars need to be continually heard and consulted in order that faith communities be fed and challenged by God's Spirit. Finally, in order that the Christian tradition—witnessed in the daily life, teaching and worship of the church—be vibrant and empowering, it needs to engage continually with human beings who are the subjects of all liberation theologies be they persons of different ethnic, gender, or cultural groups.

I conclude this article with a final reference to *Gaudium et Spes*. The following words strongly confirm that the feminist, pneumatological contributions of both LaCugna and Johnson are rich and creative responses to the Second Vatican Council. The document states: "Indeed, whoever labours to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, is, even unawares, being led by the hand of God."⁷³ This "hand of God", I contend, is the Holy Spirit.

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⁷³ GS n.36.