

**The Board of Directors of the College Theology Society  
Addresses the Critique of Sister Elizabeth A. Johnson's book  
*Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*  
By the Committee on Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

The officers and board of directors of the College Theology Society endorse the statement issued by The Catholic Theological Society of America on April 8, 2011. While affirming the distinctive vocations of bishops and theologians, the CTSA statement raises important and widely shared concerns about (1) the bishops' failure to follow their own procedures as delineated in their 1983 statement on *Doctrinal Responsibilities*, (2) the misrepresentation of Professor Johnson's position, and (3) the statement's restrictive characterization of the nature of theology. The board of the College Theology Society shares each of these concerns.

The College Theology Society is a professional society of theologians, solidly rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition and with a strong commitment to ecumenical collaboration, dedicated to teaching theology at the undergraduate level. With this mission in mind, we believe that Elizabeth Johnson's book *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* exemplifies a compelling style of Catholic theology that engages many different kinds of undergraduate students populating college and university campuses. Her theology is credited with plumbing the depths of the received Catholic tradition as found in diverse scriptural and historical witnesses of faith while investigating pressing issues and searching for ever deeper understanding. This book illustrates what has been a hallmark of all of Johnson's work: a dedication to exploring the living faith of the Church as it is conveyed in communities in various cultures and contexts in the United States and throughout the world. Her gifts and talents as a highly effective theological educator are clearly displayed in this book.

Since the membership of the College Theology Society includes a high percentage of younger faculty members and graduate students in theology, we are particularly concerned about the chilling effect the statement by the Committee on Doctrine will have on our younger colleagues. Instead of cultivating a culture of open collaboration and mutual dialogue between bishops, theologians, and the people of God in the advancement of a deeper understanding of the faith, the document of the Committee on Doctrine, as well as the process by which that document was formulated, breeds disillusionment, fear, and mistrust among younger theologians in their relation to bishops and increasing sadness and fatigue among more seasoned scholars.

Finally, the members of the College Theology Society are engaged in ecumenical and interfaith education and scholarship aimed at promoting mutual understanding among ourselves and with our students of diverse faiths and worldviews. In both substance and process, the statement by the Committee on Doctrine threatens to undermine the credibility of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy among many of our respected collaborators and students of different faiths and worldviews.

We are honored to have Professor Elizabeth Johnson as a member of the College Theology Society. We fully support her during this period when the arguments advanced by the Committee on Doctrine are debated among theological faculties and in the Church and public at large. We implore the Bishops' Committee on Doctrine to recognize the deep commitment of this faithful servant of the Church and to adhere to its own processes in seeking clarification about methodologies used or conclusions reached in the work of this highly respected Catholic theologian.

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