

RESPONSE TO OBSERVATIONS BY SR. ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON, C.S.J.,
REGARDING THE COMMITTEE ON DOCTRINE'S STATEMENT
ABOUT THE BOOK *QUEST FOR THE LIVING GOD*

Committee on Doctrine
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

On 24 March 2011, the USCCB Committee on Doctrine published a "Statement on *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*, by Sister Elizabeth A. Johnson." In June 2011, the Committee received a letter from Sr. Elizabeth Johnson dated 1 June 2011, which accompanied a thirty-eight page text entitled, "To Speak Rightly of the Living God: Observations by Dr. Elizabeth A. Johnson, CSJ, on the Statement of the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops about Her Book *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*." Both the letter to the Committee on Doctrine and the accompanying Observations were published immediately in the *National Catholic Reporter* and a month later in *Origins*. In the intervening months the Committee on Doctrine carefully studied the Observations. Having completed its study, the Committee herewith presents its conclusions.

The Committee on Doctrine acknowledges that in the Observations Sr. Elizabeth Johnson agrees that theological investigation should begin and end with the faith of the Church. The Committee commends Sr. Elizabeth Johnson for her stated intention to help the Church progress in her understanding of divine realities as described by the Second Vatican Council in *Dei Verbum*, no. 8:

For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth.

While recognizing the legitimacy (and, indeed, the necessity) of such a theological endeavor, the Committee on Doctrine remains convinced that the book *Quest for the Living God* in fact fails to fulfill this task, because it does not sufficiently ground itself in the Catholic theological tradition as its starting point. The Observations insist repeatedly that all the ideas in the book flow from the faith of the Church and that the bishops have misinterpreted the book. In defense of the book, the Observations discuss the nature of theological research and contain many true assertions about what theology is supposed to be, citing a number of authoritative sources, from St. Augustine to Pope John Paul II to Second Vatican Council to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Observations insist that *Quest for the Living God* expresses the same faith in a new way, "in different words but with same meaning" (Observations, 19).

It would seem, however, that the multiple readings of the words themselves point at least to serious ambiguity in the book. When it examined the particular points at issue, the Committee on Doctrine was confirmed in its judgment that these "different words" do not in fact adequately express the faith of the Church. We wish to emphasize that just as in its March statement, the

Committee on Doctrine is offering an assessment of the words of the book, *Quest for the Living God*, but no judgment of the personal intention of the author. Just as in its March statement, however, the Committee finds itself coming to the same conclusion, that although "the book at times displays an engagement with the Catholic theological tradition and remains in continuity with it, it also departs from that tradition at a number of crucial junctures," and that "the doctrine of God presented in *Quest for the Living God* does not accord with authentic Catholic teaching on essential points."

While it is not possible here to address all the issues raised in the Observations, we shall treat a few prominent examples. Since the understanding of analogous and metaphorical language is a crucial topic both in the book and in the statement by Committee, we shall address this in some detail and other matters more briefly.

ANALOGY AND METAPHOR

The Observations maintain that the *Quest for the Living God* upholds the Church's conception of analogy and that the Committee has misunderstood and misrepresented the book. They point out that the book never states that all names for God are metaphors. It is true that this is never stated explicitly. Nevertheless, whatever the intention may have been, the argument of the book in fact leads the reader to conclude that all names for God are metaphors or the functional equivalent.

The book's "Second Ground Rule" reads as follows: "no expression for God can be taken literally" (*Quest*, 18). The Observations object to the subheading in the Committee's statement, "A False Presupposition: All Names for God Are Metaphors," pointing out that this statement never appears in the book (Observations, 16). The Observations concede, however, that "to say that all names for God are metaphors is one way to paraphrase the second ground rule in ordinary, everyday language" (Observations, 16). The Committee's interpretation is not artificial, but is in fact the natural reading of the text.

The context of the book as a whole supports this interpretation. Throughout the book the terms "literal" and "literally" are repeatedly used to describe the way in which our names *do not* apply to God. The book's rejection of the terms "literal" and "literally" naturally leads the reader to assume that what the author means is "metaphorical" and "metaphorically."

There is nothing in the text that would lead the reader to a different conclusion. When analogical and metaphorical God-language are discussed, they are treated as equivalent. The crucial difference between them is never explained. In the book, three ways of understanding God-language are presented in succession, namely, those based on analogy, metaphor, and symbol (*Quest*, 18-20). The book indicates no preference for any of these ways. As the Observations concede, the author does not claim analogy as her own position (Observations, 17). Rather, all three are presented as various ways of adhering to the "Second Ground Rule." The reader, not only the non-specialist, for whom the book is written, but even one well versed in theology, can be forgiven for concluding that according to the book there is no significant difference among analogy, metaphor, and symbol.

The Observations fail to clarify the position on analogy and metaphor contained in the book. The Observations maintain that the understanding of analogy presented in the book is indebted to twentieth-century Thomistic scholarship that "stresses the apophatic character of all concepts used analogously of creatures and God" (Observations, 17). It is true that every analogous concept has an apophatic character in that it involves negation, namely, of the *modus significandi*. Yet the *apophasis*, the negation, is not the essence. Beyond the negation there is the positive element, the *res significata*. A crucial function of analogy is to provide a way of expressing knowledge about God that is not just negation of what is unsuitable to God. We know that God is good, not just that God is not bad. The focus on negation with no recognition that some names can be said properly (*proprie*) of God only reinforces the impression that all names are reducible to metaphor.

The assertion in the Observations that "God remains in essence conceptually inapprehensible" (Observations, 18), without proper qualification, is more reflective of the thought of Kant than that of Aquinas. Aquinas indeed affirmed that a creaturely intellect cannot comprehend the essence of God, even in the beatific vision. Human concepts certainly cannot *comprehend* the essence of God. To assert without qualification that concepts do not even *apprehend* the essence of God, however, seems to imply that we have no knowledge at all about God. Here again the focus is only on negation and without the necessary reference to the positive element in analogy.

It is true that a clear recognition of role of negation in analogy is crucial to avoid the temptation to be too satisfied with our concepts. Yet there must also be a clear recognition of the positive element in analogy in order to help differentiate analogy from metaphor and to distinguish a salutary acknowledgment of the limits of creaturely knowledge from metaphysical agnosticism. This recognition is provided neither in the book nor in the Observations.

The Observations point out that the book does acknowledge that our words do affirm something of God on page 18 where it asserts that analogy "affirms, negates, and then negates the negation itself. This third step brings the mind through to a new affirmation of God, who transcends both assertion and negation 'in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence' (Pseudo-Dionysius)." The next paragraph applies analogy to the example of goodness and indeed reaches the correct conclusion: "God is good; but God is not good the way creatures are good; but God is good in a supereminent way as Source of all that is good" (*Quest*, 18).

In the following sentence and paragraph, however, this affirmation is again negated: "At this point our concept of goodness cracks open. We literally do not understand what we are saying. Human comprehension of the meaning of 'good' is lost, for we have no direct earthly experience of anything that is the Source of all goodness" (*Quest*, 19). If there is no human comprehension of the concept that is affirmed of God, then the affirmation is meaningless and there is no analogy. According to the Catholic understanding of analogy, we do in fact know what "good" means and that "good" applies to God. The way in which God is good, however, surpasses our understanding because God is good in a way that surpasses that of all creatures.

The same problem appears in the next paragraph, where the example of the personhood of God is discussed. "At this point we've lost the literal concept. We don't really understand

what it means to attribute personhood to God" (*Quest*, 19). With such repeated negation, however, the book fails to recognize that analogy expresses some kind of knowledge of God. We must have at least some understanding of the concept that we are affirming of God for there to be an analogy.

In the book's description of analogy, negation always has the final word. The book never explains to the reader the positive and affirmative aspect of analogy that separates it from both metaphor and metaphysical agnosticism. The Observations cite the teaching of the *Catechism* on this subject and claims that the book is presenting this very teaching "in different words but with the same meaning" (Observations, 19). The Committee on Doctrine finds itself obligated to point out that here, as on other matters, the Observations fail to acknowledge important differences between the position presented in the book and the Catholic theological tradition.

NAMES FOR GOD

The Observations assert that the Committee has misunderstood and misrepresented the book by failing to recognize that the intention behind the book was not to *replace* the Church's traditional masculine language for God but only to *expand* it to include female images. It is true that the book does not assert that male metaphors should never be used. Indeed, it acknowledges that it is possible for male metaphors to signify the divine (*Quest*, 99). When the book speaks of the traditional masculine language for God, however, it is to denounce it as a tool of patriarchal oppression "religiously inadequate" for our times (*Quest*, 96). According to *Quest*, when this language is used exclusively, it is taken literally and becomes an "idol" (*Quest*, 98-99, 110). The counterpart to the critique of male names and metaphors is the extended discussion of the theological fittingness of female names and images and the importance of using them in order to release "divine mystery" from "its age-old patriarchal cage so that God can be truly God" (*Quest*, 99). Is it unreasonable for the reader to find in these pages a call to replace inadequate, though traditional, language for God with feminine language?

While one could say that the book does not call for the replacement of traditional language in the narrow sense of proscribing the use of male imagery at any time and in any context, it clearly advocates the replacement of traditional masculine language in certain unspecified, but evidently important, contexts. The problem is that there is no recognition of the central role that the names of "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" play in the divine revelation given to us about the relationship among the three Persons of the Trinity.

The Observations ask whether the Committee believes it is permissible to use female imagery for God. In its statement, the Committee does not exclude all possibility of using feminine imagery. The concern of the Committee was not the use of female or feminine imagery but the insinuation that traditional language based on divine revelation, such as "Father," obscures the truth about God. Certain language belongs to the deposit of divine revelation and may not be replaced, even if human reason might find some indications that to do so might be socially useful.

Perhaps in its statement the Committee could have given a fuller treatment of the question of what language cannot be replaced and in what contexts. The names mentioned in the

book are father, lord, and king (*Quest*, 96). All three figure prominently in Scripture, in the sacred liturgy, and in the teaching of councils and popes. Such names cannot be discarded as "religiously inadequate" and replaced with other names judged to be more suited.

The term "Father" is particularly important, as it reflects the usage of Jesus himself. There are contexts in which it simply cannot be replaced. For example, in the eyes of the Church, a baptism is not valid unless it is done in the name of the "Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Names such as "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" have a special place among the names given by divine revelation because they refer to the relationship among the three Persons within the Trinity. These terms are different from names such as "good" and "wise" that tell us of the attributes of God and from names such as "Lord" and "King" that tell us of the relationship between God and creatures. Indeed, they function as proper names for the Persons of the Trinity and cannot be replaced with other names of human devising. They tell us who God is: The one God *is* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are not humanly created analogies for which other names can be substituted at will. Rather, God has provided names that by analogy truly reveal who he is.

Neither in the book nor in the Observations is there an acknowledgement that there is a crucial issue of the theology of revelation at stake here. The reader is given no indication that certain names cannot be replaced in critical contexts because of their origin in divine revelation.

MODERN THEISM

The Committee agrees that modern theism, strictly defined, does not represent classical or traditional Catholic theology. The book, however, does not offer a precise and clear definition of modern theism and is confusing about the relationship of modern theism to the longer Catholic theological tradition going back to the patristic and medieval theologians. At some points the book acknowledges that modern theism results from ideas from certain Enlightenment thinkers. At other points, however, it describes "traditional Catholic doctrine" and "traditional preaching and theology" as having the same faults that are attributed elsewhere to modern theism (*Quest*, 73, 80).

Most importantly, in the book certain concepts are ascribed to modern theism that in fact belong properly to the core of the Catholic theological tradition, concepts such as divine omnipotence, omniscience, immutability, and impassibility (*Quest*, 15, 52, 54). These concepts are discredited as being associated with modern theism, when in reality they have been constants in the tradition since the time of the Fathers of the Church and founded not on Greek philosophy but on what they considered to be a right reading of Scripture.

This confusion of modern theism with the Catholic theological tradition serves to make the alternative ideas proposed in the book seem more attractive. In the book only two alternatives are presented, modern theism or the new trends celebrated by the book. This is a false alternative. Furthermore, the true extent of the discontinuity between these new theological proposals and the Catholic theological tradition is obscured.

THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN BEINGS

The Observations maintain that the book "has listened carefully to the scientific account of the evolution of the human species. This account sees human emergence as being of a piece with the whole story of the evolution of life on this planet, *scientifically speaking*" (Observations, 31). This is true in that science by its very nature has no other way of looking at the evolution of human beings than as the result of the interplay of material forces. The next sentence, however, repeats the same misunderstanding that the Committee found in the book, namely, that about what can be explained in scientific terms and what cannot be explained in scientific terms: "Matter evolves to life and then to consciousness and then to self-consciousness, and this can be accounted for without positing divine intervention, *scientifically speaking*" (Observations, 31). Science could account for life, consciousness, and self-consciousness, however, only if these were wholly the result of the interplay of material forces. While an adherent of a materialist philosophy would readily agree that material factors account for all reality, this accords neither with Catholic teaching, nor with sound philosophical argumentation.

Although a scientific explanation of life in purely material terms already presents considerable difficulties that could be discussed, the crucial issue is that of self-consciousness. Simply put, human self-consciousness cannot be wholly explained as the result of material causes. The multiple neurons of the physical brain cannot account for the unitary self-consciousness of the human person. The functioning of the brain cannot of itself explain human acts of knowing and willing. This has been amply demonstrated by various philosophical arguments. There is therefore one stage in evolution that cannot be fully accounted for by scientific explanation, that of the appearance of self-conscious intelligence and free will.

Human beings necessarily come to be as part of the material universe. Bodily existence is an intrinsic part of human nature. Consequently, scientific investigation has a great deal to teach us about the human person and human society. At the same time, there is something about the human person that transcends material realities and that escapes the grasp of scientific investigation. There must be another, a non-material explanation for the existence of this aspect of the human person. There is a range of philosophical attempts to provide an explanation. The Catholic Church teaches that the human soul is not the result of material forces, such as the bodies of the parents, but is created immediately by God.

Neither in the book nor in the Observations is there any recognition of these philosophical and theological issues.

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

The Observations assert that the "panentheistic" model advocated by the book was not intended to make the world ontologically constitutive of God's own being: "Examining this chapter again, I see that perhaps it would have forestalled its misunderstanding of panentheism if *Quest* had stated explicitly that creation is God's free gift, a gratuitous act of love thus not necessary" (Observations, 30). While such a clarification would have been helpful, it would not

have resolved the question as to whether or not the pantheism proposed in the book is adequate for preserving the transcendence of God. Both the book and the Observations assert that this is the case, yet neither provides solid grounding for this claim. The metaphors offered in explanation, such as the "mutual abiding" represented by the "pregnant female body" (*Quest*, 188) or the "finite sponge floating in an infinite sea, necessarily filled in its every pore with water" (*Observations*, 30; see *Quest*, 198), are based on material relationships and are insufficient to express the transcendence of God.

Furthermore, the metaphor of the sponge, taken from Augustine's *Confessions* and presented as an example of pantheistic thought in the heart of the Catholic theological tradition, is not advocated by Augustine as a suitable image of God. In this passage Augustine is recounting his earlier inadequate conceptions of the divine. At this point a major representative of the Catholic theological tradition is presented as an advocate for a position which he rejects.

Similarly, in the section on "Divine Agency" Thomas Aquinas is presented as endorsing a view according to which "it is incoherent to think of God working in the world apart from secondary causes, or beside them, or in addition to them, or complementary to them, or even in competition with them" (*Quest*, 193). While Thomas certainly rejected the idea of creaturely and divine agency being in competition with each other and viewed the ordinary exercise of divine providence as being through secondary causes, he argued that precisely because of God's relationship to the world as creator, God can produce the effects of secondary causes without these causes or effects beyond those of secondary causes (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 105, a. 6). This is the case of a miracle. Thus Thomas does not argue that it is always the case that "events both ordinary and extraordinary take place according to the rhythms and dynamisms of nature's own capacities" (*Quest*, 193). Here Thomas's actual position is dismissed as belonging to Modern Theism. "Modern forms of theism assume that God intervenes in the world at will to accomplish divine purpose apart from natural processes" (192). It is Thomas's recognition of the transcendence of God vis-à-vis creation that prevented him from tying all divine agency to secondary causes and his recognition of the transcendent end of creation that prevented him from limiting divine purpose simply to what nature can produce by its own inherent processes and causes.

In both the book and the Observations the full extent of the divergence between the description of pantheism advocated therein and the Catholic theological tradition is obscured for the reader.

SUFFERING IN GOD

In its statement, the Committee pointed to the book's willingness to posit suffering in God as another example of the failure to uphold the divine transcendence with respect to creation. The Observations claim that the book's "presentation of the God who suffers is well within the parameters of this contemporary Catholic theological discussion" (*Observations*, 23). The book focuses on three German theologians, Jürgen Moltmann, Dorothee Soelle, and Johann Baptist Metz. The book makes no choice among the three positions and presents them all as viable alternatives. The chapter ends with the following: "Whether one adopts the symbol of the crucified God [Moltmann], or the silent cry of life [Soelle], or the compassionate God of promise

to whom one laments [Metz], their work brings divine presence indelibly into the darkness of suffering that cries to heaven" (*Quest*, 68). Yet of the three only Metz upholds traditional Catholic teaching by rejecting the idea of a suffering God or of suffering in God.

The book points out quite correctly that "Christian reflection has always held that there is a real sense in which the cross reveals a crucified God. Insofar as Jesus who is crucified is the Word incarnate, his suffering is the suffering of God with us" (*Quest*, 60). The key distinction is that the Word suffers not as God but as man. The Second Council of Constantinople taught that Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity, was crucified "in the flesh" (*sarki*). Continuing on, the book brings out clearly how Moltmann denies this distinction: "But this same theology also traditionally holds that the Word of God suffered only in his human nature, the divine nature being infinitely beyond such passion. Moltmann pushes beyond this limitation to locate suffering in the very being of God" (*Quest*, 60-61). The book is misleading by presenting this position as a viable alternative for a Catholic theologian.

TRINITY

The Committee criticized the book for having effectively limited our understanding of God to the economy of salvation and for being ambiguous about the relationship among the three Persons of the Trinity. The Observations contend that the Committee has misinterpreted the book. It is true that the book never explicitly states that theologians can speak only of the economic Trinity, and not of the immanent Trinity. The Observations assert: "To start with the economy of salvation in no way means that theology cannot move to consideration of the immanent Trinity, the two being deeply intertwined" (Observations, 32). The book, however, contains no consideration of the immanent Trinity at all, as the Observations concede (Observations, 32). This omission renders the presentation of the economic Trinity inadequate, as the economic Trinity cannot be understood in isolation from the immanent Trinity. There is only one Trinity. In the economy God reveals himself to us as Trinity, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To speak of the economic Trinity presupposes that one has learned that God in his inner being--immanently--is Trinity, is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To speak of "Three" whom we encounter in the economy of salvation, while refusing to speak of "Three" who truly belong to the very being of God, leaves the door open to modalism, the view that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are merely three ways or "modes" in which the one God expresses himself in the economy. The omission of a consideration of the immanent Trinity renders *Quest for the Living God* seriously deficient as a presentation of the doctrine of God.

Furthermore, while there are no positive discussions of the immanent Trinity, the book emphatically rejects traditional theological concepts and terminology for the immanent Trinity, lumping them together with "neo-scholastic theology," which is itself chiefly characterized by infection from "Modern Theism." "While it gave lip service to divine incomprehensibility, Catholic neo-scholastic theology done according to this method engaged in luxuriant technical description of God's inner self-differentiation through relationships of origin, employing specialized terms" (*Quest*, 207). According to the book, this theology "presented its thinking in highly obtuse prose; scholars today take issue with its 'abstruse analysis,' 'irrelevant abstractions,' 'philosophical mazes,' 'elaborate theological maneuverings,' 'complex celestial mathematics,' and 'obscure language,' along with its 'sheer long-windedness'" (*Quest*, 208).

The chief grounds for such criticism is that this type of thought pays only "lip service to divine incomprehensibility" and presents "its findings as they were a literal description of a self-contained Trinity of three divine persons knowing and loving each other. This, of course, is not the case, no such literal description being possible" (207, 208). Here again we see an emphasis on negation that rules out any analogy that would truly apply to God. Moreover, we also see again ideas being dismissed as being infected by Modern Theism that are in fact integral parts of the Catholic theological tradition.

It does not infringe on divine incomprehensibility to attempt to describe "God's inner self-differentiation through relationships of origin." The only way to speak of a Trinity is in terms of the relationships of origin among the three Persons. The Council of Nicaea speaks of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the "only-begotten generated from the Father." The Council of Constantinople adds that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father." Theological discussion of the relationships of origin among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did not begin with Post-Enlightenment neo-scholasticism, under the influence of Modern Theism.

Even more fundamentally, such discussion is not an example of human hubris, a foolish attempt to capture the infinite God in finite concepts, but is made possible because of divine revelation. Jesus Christ has revealed himself as Son of the Father, who will send the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of believers. To speak of the Son as generated by the Father is to use an analogy, but an analogy provided by divine revelation.

While the book never asserts that the analogy of generation — that of the Father and the Son — is entirely untenable, it never uses this analogy to describe the Trinity. Even when reporting the confession of faith from the Council of Nicaea, the affirmation that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, generated from the Father, is omitted (*Quest*, 205). Instead, the book mentions this analogy at another point only in order to dismiss it as belonging to a defective neo-scholastic theology that neglected divine incomprehensibility (*Quest*, 207). The same is true of the other main analogy for the Trinity used in the Catholic tradition, that of knowing and loving, based on the New Testament description of Jesus as the *Logos* (*Quest*, 207).

The book's misunderstanding of the incomprehensibility of God has effectively ruled out even divinely revealed analogies for the relationship among the Persons of the Trinity. The result is that the book can only speak in vague terms about the Trinity, for example, as "the living God made known through Jesus and the Spirit" (203) or as the God who acts in history "through incarnate Word and renewing Spirit" (210). It is not possible to give an adequate account of the Trinity without recourse to the revealed analogies of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Moreover, it is likewise impossible to understand who Jesus is as pre-existent *Logos*, as ontologically the eternal Son of the Father, and what the incarnation means without an understanding of the relations among the persons of the Trinity.

CONCLUSION

The Observations "To Speak Rightly of the Living God" argue that in its statement the Committee on Doctrine has "thoroughly misunderstood and consistently misrepresented" the book *Quest for the Living God* (Observations, 36). "Ideas are taken out of context and twisted to

mean what they patently do not mean. Sentences are run to a conclusion far from what I think or the text says. False dilemmas are composed. Numerous omissions, distortions, and outright misstatements of fact riddle the reading" (Observations, 36). After studying these Observations, however, the Committee has found that they have not in fact demonstrated that the Committee has misunderstood or misrepresented the book. Rather, the Committee on Doctrine finds itself confirmed in its judgment about the book.

The Observations propose that the Committee's chief objection to *Quest for the Living God* is that the book does not repeat certain traditional formulas (see Observations, 3-4, 33-35, 38). "Theological research does not simply reiterate received doctrinal formulas but probes and interprets them in order to deepen understanding" (Observations, 3). It is true that the task of theological reflection is never accomplished by the mere repetition of formulas. The real issue is whether or not new attempts at theological understanding are faithful to the deposit of faith as contained in the Scriptures and the Church's doctrinal tradition. All theology is ultimately subject to the norm of truth provided by the faith of the Church. It is the responsibility of bishops to judge works of theology by that standard, in terms of how adequately they express the faith of the Church. As Pope John Paul II explained,

since theology seeks an understanding of revealed truth whose authentic interpretation is entrusted to the Bishops of the Church, it is intrinsic to the principles and methods of their research and teaching in their academic discipline that theologians respect the authority of the Bishops, and assent to Catholic doctrine according to the degree of authority with which it is taught (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, no. 29).

The Observations argue the Committee has failed to appreciate the accord of the book with the faith because the Committee was operating with a narrow neo-scholastic conception of theology, whereas *Quest for the Living God*, along with the theologies presented therein, operates with a different "model" of Church and of divine revelation. In fact, however, it is not the position of the Committee that "works of theology must always and everywhere express their thinking in certain predetermined formulas taken from neo-scholasticism" (Observations, 35).

The problem is not that the book attempts to express the faith of the Church in terms that have not previously been used and approved, rather than repeat traditional formulas word-for-word or use the language of a particular theological "model." The problem is that the language used in the book does not adequately express the faith of the Church. On several points, as the Committee has noted, the "different" language used in the book does not in fact convey the faith of the Church.

The Committee on Doctrine wishes to make it clear that its statement concerned only the text of the book and involved no attempt to judge the intention of the author. Nevertheless, the Committee is convinced that a careful investigation of the case reveals the soundness of its decision to issue a statement about the book *Quest for the Living God*. For bishops, the book is a particular pastoral concern because it is written for a "broad audience" rather than a more narrow scholarly audience (*Quest*, 2). Furthermore, whether or not the book was originally designed specifically to be a textbook, the book is in fact being used as a textbook for the study of the doctrine of God.

Having examined both the book and the Observations in detail, the Committee on Doctrine believes that it is its duty to state publicly that on several critical points the book is seriously inadequate as a presentation of the Catholic understanding of God.

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