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## Review of the book Transforming Christianity and the world

Sarot, M.

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**Preprint**

John B. Cobb, Jr., *Transforming Christianity and the World: A Way beyond Absolutism and Relativism* Edited and Introduced by Paul F. Knitter (Faith Meets Faith), Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1999; v + 189 pp., ISBN 1-57075-271-0.

In this book Paul Knitter collects John Cobb's main articles on interreligious dialogue; several of these had not previously been published. Knitter also wrote introductions both to the entire collection and to each individual article. Cobb himself reacts in his 'Concluding reflections' (179-186). Thus, this book is not merely about dialogue; it is itself a dialogue. The title reflects one of Cobb's main concerns; from 1969 onwards, the impending 'global crisis' (consisting in the threats of environmental collapse and social violence) has been among Cobb's main concerns. His theology is aimed at preventing global catastrophes; this aim has brought this process theologian close to liberation theology, and is also reflected in his writings on interreligious dialogue. The subtitle of this collection pinpoints Knitter's interpretation of the shift in emphasis which Cobb's writings on dialogue have in the course of years undergone. Coming from the dialogue with Buddhists, Cobb initially was concerned about the danger of absolutism, because it blocked genuine openness towards the other. Nowadays he is concerned rather about the threat of relativism, an openness that is no longer securely rooted. This shift is also mirrored in the way the book is divided into two parts: 'beyond absolutism' and 'beyond relativism.' This combination of radical openness and firm rootedness distinguishes Cobb's position from that of many other authors on interreligious dialogue. 'For me, faith in God as we know God in Jesus Christ requires that I be open to truth wherever that may be found and wherever it may lead. If that leads me to deny God's reality or reject the centrality of Jesus Christ, then in faithfulness to God and to Christ, I must go there too. But my own judgment and experience does not lead me to expect anything of this sort' (184). This is a welcome volume; Knitter's interpretation of Cobb's writings (Cobb: 'He has helped me to understand myself better' [179]) succeeds in giving an additional value to this collection of Cobb's scattered writings on interreligious dialogue. It is to be hoped that Cobb's writings on Buddhist-Christian dialogue, which are not included here, will soon be collected in a similar way.

Marcel Sarot