

Preface

John Cobb is, as Thomas Altizer points out herein, a university theologian. He received his theological education at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He has taught in university settings: after a brief stint at Emory University (1953–1955), his teaching career has been at Claremont, where he has from the outset taught at Claremont Graduate School of the Claremont University Center as well as at the School of Theology. Since 1973, besides continuing as Ingraham Professor of Theology at the School of Theology, he has been Avery Professor of Religion at Claremont Graduate School, a position he will continue to hold for a few years after his retirement in 1990 from the School of Theology. More important, Cobb practices the kind of theology that is described as appropriate within a university by several of the contributors to this volume: a critical rather than an authoritarian theology. And he has addressed issues that are, or at least should be, central in the university's thinking, issues such as the nature of life, the intrinsic value and rights of nonhuman species, a sustainable economic order, the falsity and destructiveness of modern individualism, the possibility of affirming pluralism without relativism, and the way in which the disciplinary ordering of knowledge, research, and teaching defeats the central aim of the university: to educate for the common good.

Because Cobb is a university theologian in all these senses, we decided, when asked by the faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont to edit a *Festschrift* for Cobb upon the occasion of his retirement from this faculty, that the theme should be "theology and the university." Our aim was to produce a volume that would not only nominally be composed of "essays in honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.," but would actually honor him by being an important book on a topic at the center of his concerns.

Most of the essays herein were written specifically for this volume, and all of them are published here for the first time. Con-

tributors were invited to write on any topic of their choice under the general theme of "theology and the university." Three of the essays speak to the question of the way in which theology can help the university better contribute to the common good, which is especially appropriate in the light of the fact that one of Cobb's recent books is entitled *For the Common Good*. Three of the essays are grouped under the unexciting heading "Historical-Descriptive Analyses," but readers should find each of these essays stimulating as well as illuminating. Five of the essays address the question of "the place of theology in the university," especially the question of whether theology, at least theology of a particular sort, is appropriate within a secular university. This question is in fact the central issue of the volume: the essays under the other headings speak to this question, even if not as centrally as do the essays in the first section. The volume as a whole, then, challenges the widespread assumption that theology is out of place in the contemporary university. The combined message is that theology, at least theology of a particular sort, is not only appropriate in the university, but vital.

Those interested in Cobb's own thinking may turn to Marjorie Suchocki's essay (Chapter 8), which deals with certain aspects of his theology, and to Appendix A, which is a slightly revised reprint of an essay originally published in *A Handbook of Christian Theologians*, edited by Dean G. Peerman and Martin E. Marty (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984). Those who want to pursue discussions of Cobb's theology in more depth may turn to *John Cobb's Theology in Process*, edited by David Ray Griffin and Thomas J. J. Altizer (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977; the book is out of print, but can be obtained from the Center for Process Studies, 1325 North College, Claremont, CA 91711). Appendix B offers an updated (through the first half of 1990) bibliography of Cobb's writings.

We give thanks to the School of Theology at Claremont for supporting this volume, to William Eastman of the State University of New York Press, to the various authors for taking time from their busy schedules to contribute, and most of all to John Cobb for inspiring us all.

D. R. G. AND J. C. H., JR.

I. THE PLACE OF THEOLOGY
IN THE UNIVERSITY