The appearance of this volume, at a time when the world is moving from cold war polarization to a more congenial, multicultural and pluralistic liberal worldview, is very timely, as it invites the academicians to get prepared to review their approaches to Middle Eastern problems.

M. Khalid Masud


John Hick is a philosopher and Christian theologian of international repute. A Professor of theology at Birmingham University, England, and a Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Religion at Claremont Graduate School (California). Hick has recently retired from these positions, yet he continues to enrich both philosophical and theological literature by producing enlightening studies on his favourite themes, Christ’s incarnation, and global religious culture issues, etc. His earlier book, *An Interpretation of Religion* (Macmillan, 1989), won him a Grawemeyer Award in Religion worth a hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) U.S. dollars. It was declared five years’ best book on religion. *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* is a continuation and elaboration of a theme expounded in his earlier edited work *The Myth of God Incarnate* (SCM, 1977). On publication of this earlier book which contained seven articles by reputed New Testament Scholars who exploded what they call, “the myth” of Christ as God Incarnate, there was much uproar in the General Synod of the Church of England. Articles appeared in British newspapers for several weeks condemning the authors for heresy and demanding from them resignation from various positions which they occupied in the Church. The recently published *Metaphor of God Incarnate* is a sustained work of John Hick on the theme of *The Myth* book. The arguments against Christ being the incarnation of God have been summarized by Hick in the Preface in the following words:

In this book I criticize this set of ideas and point to an alternative. I argue (1) that Jesus himself did not teach what was to become the orthodox Christian understanding of him; (2) that the dogma of Jesus’ two natures, one human and the other divine, has proved to be incapable of being explicated in any satisfactory way; (3) that historically the traditional dogma has been used to justify great human evils; (4) that the idea of divine incarnation is better understood as metaphorical than as literal—Jesus embodied, or incarnated, the ideal of human life lived in faithful response to God, so that God was able
to act through him, and he accordingly embodied a love which is a human reflection of the divine love; (5) that we can rightly take Jesus, so understood, as our Lord, the one who has made God real to us and whose life and teachings challenge us to live in God's presence; and (6) that a non-traditional Christianity based upon this understanding of Jesus can see itself as one among a number of different human responses to the ultimate transcendent Reality that we call God, and can better serve the development of world community and world peace than a Christianity which continues to see itself as the locus of final revelation and purveyor of the only salvation possible for all human beings.

The thesis expounded by John Hick in The Metaphor of God Incarnate and The Myth book has been of interest to Muslims in general and Muslim scholars in particular since the advent of Islam. The doctrine of Tawḥīd (unity of God) has been central to Islam. The Christian doctrines of Trinity and of Christ being Incarnation of God were declared false by the Qurʾān, and the Muslims subsequently developed arguments against these dogmas and used historical evidence and rational arguments to refute them. However, to watch this myth being exploded by the Christian theologians themselves is something of interest to the Muslims. From this perspective The Metaphor of God Incarnate makes an interesting reading to Muslims, and a important one too.

The difference in approaches between The Myth book and The Metaphor book are basically two:

(1) The Myth book studies and explores the dogmas of Christ as incarnation of God and of Trinity from various theological, sociological, historical and philosophical perspectives by seven authors declaring these dogmas in the final analysis as myths, whereas the Metaphor of God Incarnate is the work of a single author, John Hick, who is both a philosopher of high rank and a Presbyterian theologian belonging to the Church of England. As a philosopher of religion John Hick belongs to the tradition of British analytical philosophy. Subscribing to the logical positivistic stance in his early career, John Hick had been able to suggest a legitimate way based on sound reasoning for theistic interpretation of religion through developing a concept of verifiability which would validate religious experience also. His ideas changed over the years regarding Christianity (which he no more regards as the final and unique revealed religion) as would of any good philosopher-theologian and John Hick became the philosopher spokesman of the pluralistic approach in religion, a thesis to which W.C. Smith also subscribes as a historian. Thus remaining himself a devoted Presbyterian Christian, Hick preaches open-hearted acceptance of other world religions, and is keen to develop a global perspective on religion. However, his earlier arguments for verifiability of religious experience still
remain valid and valuable as they support the point of view of religiously experiencing the world.

(2) In The Myth book John Hick and his fellow colleagues had used, somewhat purposely, a provocative title to astound readers and invite criticism and comments which would add to the popularity of the book. In the Metaphor of God Incarnate, John Hick seems to put an end to this amusing game of provocation, since his and his colleagues’ purpose has already been achieved, as the theme of the book has found acceptability in Anglican theological and other Christian religious circles to which it was primarily addressed. In the present work he concentrates on explaining in a modest tone the meaning of what he now calls “Metaphor of God Incarnate”. In the meantime, Hick develops a whole philosophy of what one should understand by “myth”, “metaphor”, etc. and, how these linguistic devices function in religion. In The Metaphor book and in various other essays in his other books such as An Interpretation of Religion, one finds illuminating discussions on the meaning of “myth”, “metaphor” etc. However, it is interesting to note that Hick replaces the expression “myth” by “metaphor” to soften his tone while rejecting incarnation. Similarly, he is reluctant to discard the epithet “Trinity”, again, to express loyalty to his Presbyteriian Christian faith, despite his conviction about the unity of Godhead. Such expediency may be theologically justifiable but is hardly expected of a philosopher of Hick’s stature.

The students of theology and philosophy as well as lay readers will find the book very interesting and highly readable. Hick’s insights in the development of Christian culture and, for that matter, in other religious cultures will certainly broaden the vision of the readers, and modify their perspectives about religion.

The book contains valuable material supporting the montheistic doctrine. Muslim readers will welcome this book for its contents supporting their stance regarding Christ, and inviability of Trinitarian Christianity, as they did his earlier edited book The Myth of God Incarnate.

ARIFA FARID

Anees Jung, Night of the New Moon: Encounters with Muslim Women in India, Penguin, Delhi, India, 1993, pp. 127, price Rs. 85 in India.

This slim book is a collection of thirty-three very short essays tied together with an equally succinct Foreword and Afterword. Each essay is a pen sketch or