Testament”, the author demonstrates, does not mean the same thing. In discussion on the New Testament, however, one misses the mention of gospels other than those codified four which hold an acclaimed and sanctioned status in today’s New Testament, for example the Gospels of Barnabas, Hugh and Thomas which were, at times, given the same status by a considerable number of people over a length of time.

Chapters six to nine of the book enlarge the subject, not in a conceptual sense, but in an historical sense by examination of Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese “scriptures” and a brief consideration of the Classics, both Western and Chinese. The study concludes with a well-articulated final chapter (“Conclusion”) which sums up the arguments. The index is helpful in locating various thematic and conceptual references in the book.

It is an intriguing study by an exceptional western thinker who has, throughout his long career, presented an outsider’s view in the general scholarship prevalent in the West. His long and varied life (association with Universities of the Panjab, Toronto, Dalhousie, McGill, Harvard...), familiarity with western classical as well oriental languages, sound historical data and, above all, a sensitive approach, are remarkably obvious in the style, diction, concept and presentation of the main thesis.

Muzaffar Iqbal


This is a selection of papers from the 1992 conference of the Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies. The Society, formed in 1989, is an association of scholars working on the Middle East in humanist and social sciences in universities and research institutions in Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. It has so far held two conferences: 1989 (Uppsala), and 1992 (Copenhagen). Papers from the first conference were published under the title: The Middle East Viewed from the North (Bergen: Alma Mater Forlag AS, 1989. 211 pages, price NOK 165). A common theme of the first conference was the dialogue between the “Islamic” and the “Modern”.

The general theme of the second conference was diversity and unity in the Middle East and Islam. Generally, variations and differences found in the
Middle Eastern cultures posed a problem for scholars who studied it as one unit. To solve this problem they interpreted it as a diversity in unity. The methodological problem however remained unsolved because the scholars tended to treat both diversity and unity as static. Variations were seen as territorial and horizontal concepts but not as temporal concepts. The people, the concepts and the institutions keep changing continuously but the methodological parameters of the scholars treated them as unchanging entities. This Conference stresses this new insight and this theme runs through almost all chapters in this book.

The papers in this volume have been arranged into the following sections: “Middle Eastern Unity and Diversity”, “The Political faces of Islam”, “Christians in the Middle East”, “Sufism and Society”, “Studies in Arabic Literature and Nomadic, Tribal and Urban Groups and Identities”. This arrangement while reflecting the expanse of the academic interests of the Nordic Society and the conference, also point to the difficulty of the editors to find common theme of the volume. Consequently, the volume has been presented more as proceedings of the conference than as a coherent book. That also explains the inclusion of the valuable extra material in the second part of the book which deals with the current research work on social sciences and humanities.

The first section in the first part of this volume brings out the common theme of the second conference. John Voll’s opening paper explains the theoretical aspect of this problem and stresses that the description of reality depends on the conceptual structuring of information. An effective conceptualization has, however, been marred by the powerful views that emerge from the structured concepts developed to identify elements of the lifestyle in this area. These concepts need to be constantly revised. Failing this, we have an image of an “unchanging orient”. Comparing, for instance, the static concept of ‘peasant’ in the scholarly discussions about Egypt and the changing state of the Egyptian peasant in real life, John Voll concludes that these discussions have failed to see the realities in the Middle East politics. Papers by Tryggve Kronholm, Mehdi Mozaffari and Utvik have analysed the constructs of “Arab culture”, “Islamism” from the same perspective.

The section on political faces of Islam consists of papers dealing with Egyptian Labour Party, gender and culture and Algeria’s Islamic Party. Here again, the theme of changing identities emerges as a common theme. For example Utvik’s paper reveals that Egyptian Labour Party which may apparently be considered a leftist group has in fact turned into an Islamist political party. On the other hand the FIS of Algeria, according to Melasuo is in fact more a reaction of disgruntled economic groups to the policies of the liberal governments, than a purely religious movement.
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