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Ayedh S. Aldosari, Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion in the Department of Islamic Studies at King Saud University, Riyadh, aimed with his study “to fill the gaps in early Māturīdī studies, as there is yet no recent study which presents the rise and development of this kalām tradition and its heritage from the time of its founder until the seventh century AH “(p. 2). For this purpose, he prepared a critical edition of the Kitāb al-Hādī, a systematic-theological text written by Jalāl al-Dīn ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Khabbāzī (died 691/1292), who is to be located in the Ḥanafite-Māturīdite tradition and is primarily known as a jurist, in Arabic. The edition is preceded by an English commentary section in which Aldosari provides details about the author and his historical and intellectual environment. Aldosari does not establish al-Khabbāzī’s classification in the Māturīdite tradition based on dogmatic criteria. Rather, he only notes, “As he followed Mātūrīdī (sic) creed and the Ḥanafi madhhab, it can be inferred that he was teaching Ḥanafi jurisprudence and perhaps Mātūrīdī (sic) creed in Khwārizm” (p. 108). The following part deals with the Ḥanafite roots of the Māturīdite school, before individual Ḥanafite authors after Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (died 333/944) and Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (died 321/933) are presented chronologically. After considering the further development of the Māturīdite school up to the Ottoman period, Aldosari presents the edited work. An appendix shows photocopies of the manuscripts, another one reproduces “Miscellaneous Documents” related to al-Khabbāzī. A bibliography concludes the English-language part of the study.

It would go too far to reflect even summarily on the information Aldosari provides. I will therefore consider only a few distinctive features. The edited text is not so much an independent theological treatise as a summary of the Māturīdite doctrine of faith, such as that of Abū l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (died 508/1114) in his Tabṣirat al-adilla and al-Ṣaffār al-Bukhārī (died 534/1139) in Talkhīṣ al-adilla. Al-Khabbāzī explicitly names both texts as

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his sources. The edition of the text offers clear improvements compared to that by Adil Bebek (Istanbul 2006). The vocalizations are often helpful; the apparatus indicates text variants of the other manuscripts as well as evidence for quotations from the Koran—which were not always recognized as such—and prophetic traditions. Explanations of technical terms and persons or collectives named in the text are summarized in a separate appendix (p. 632–671). A corresponding index (p. 686–695) can be found after the Arabic bibliography (p. 672–685). This index could have been worked out more differently; a list of the quoted Koran passages and prophetic traditions would have been helpful. This would facilitate working with the Arabic text just as an Arabic table of contents, which the reader will miss as well, would have done.

If the edition of the Arabic text can nevertheless be described as overall successful, some objections must be made regarding the English part of the study. At first glance, the sheer number of sources is impressive. Almost every sentence in a chapter endnote is provided with a reference to sources. On closer inspection, however, it turns out that the author only reproduces or cites these sources uncritically in most cases. For example, he claims that al-Māturīdī studied with four teachers; a glance at the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition,¹ would have been enough to realize that two of these alleged teachers could not have taught al-Māturīdī, as Ulrich Rudolph then discussed in detail.² Therefore, despite the author’s assertion that he is pursuing an “analytical-critical approach” (p. 4), it is hardly possible to speak of it as truly scientific. Sentences like “al-Juwaynī was wise and just and loved the pursuit of knowledge and the company of scholars” (p. 110–111) have no place in a critical study. The same applies to the assumptions Aldosari often expresses, for example about the choice of the book title (p. 242–243), or about why al-Khabbāzī, although Ḥanafite and Māturīdite, was able to teach at the Niẓāmiyya in Damascus (p. 113). Even when introducing the protagonist of his study, the author lacks a critical distance from the sources. The book abounds with assurances that al-Khabbāzī was the most famous jurist and the most important teacher of his time—if one wanted to take such hymns of praise in the older *Ṭabaqāt*


works or later treatises at face value, the Islamic world would have been overrun with most important and famous personalities. A little restraint would have been appropriate here. The same applies to the stereotypical introductory formulas to the various works: Most authors found the existing books inadequate in their discipline, or they were asked by companions to write a work that should be neither too long nor too short, etc. It would be a mistake to infer actual historical facts from these formulas.

If the author notes, “Much of the literature of the Māturīdī school has neither been edited nor verified, and its prominent figures have not been studied. Today, information about its founder and most of its key figures is still rare and obscure, with the result that it remains little known” (p. 139), he is clearly not up to date. Several editions and studies have been published since 2012; for example, the Kitāb al-Tamhīd fī bayān al-Tawḥīd of Abū Shakūr al-Sālimī, “not yet been edited” according to the author (p. 175), has in the meanwhile been critically edited three times. Moreover, in the last few years, the examination of the Māturīdite tradition has developed into a “fad” in theological faculties, especially in Turkey and Central Asia. With eight years having passed since the completion of the dissertation an update would have been urgently required. For example: the English translation of Ulrich Rudolph’s important study on al-Māturīdī was published in 2014, which is certainly more helpful for international research than the German original, which Aldosari exclusively cites. When compiling the bibliography, the author could otherwise have taken a bit more care; it would not have been too much to ask for the names of European authors and editors such as Claude Salamé or Hans Peter Linss to be given in their correct form. Finally, it is completely incomprehensible that the edition of the Hādī by Adil Bebek mentioned above is not indicated at all.

Apart from these comments, which relate more to formal and methodological details, there are also concerns about the content. Aldosari complains, for example, that al-Khabbāzī has so far been largely ignored by Māturīdī studies. However, he neglects to say that the research focused primarily on the Māturīdiyya in its constituent phase, in which developments within Māturīdite doctrine still occurred. He admits that al-Khabbāzī has nothing new to offer, but merely reproduces the teachings elaborated in the classical texts - sometimes even verbatim. Reconstructing a third phase in the history of the Māturīdite literature from this, which is supposed to be characterized by “explanation, elaboration, and supporting of the founder’s thought” (p. 257), seems to be just as misguided as the
assertion, “Where Maymūn al-Nasafī and other Māturīdī scholars arguably failed to write a summarized volume that represented this school, al-Khabbāzī succeeded” (p. 257). For example, the al-Kifāya fī l-Hidāya of Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī (died 580/1184) is by no means longer and more confusing than al-Khabbāzī’s work. The special “scholarly value of the book” that Aldosari states (p. 255–256) cannot be understood, at least on this basis.

The author ignores the first scholar after al-Māturīdī, who as a grand-student of al-Māturīdī wrote in his tradition, namely Abū Salama al-Samarqandī (late 4th/10th Century) and his Jumal (min) Uṣūl al-Dīn, edited twice. Apart from that, his study offers a comprehensive overview of the theological writings in the succession of Abū Ḥanīfa, be they Māturīdite kalām-oriented or traditionalist in the manner of al-Ṭaḥāwī. What the reader should not expect is a study in which details of the Māturīdite teaching are systematically presented and analyzed in their context. Foundations of Māeturīdite theology appear rather sporadically and marginally. The author seems to be at war with these details, for example when he writes, “Although Madelung deduces that the statement that ‘God is the creator in pre-eternity’ refers to the Māturīdī madhhab, it is rather the belief of the majority of Muslims before and after al-Māturīdī” (p. 221). This is definitely not the case; on the contrary, this is a key issue in which the Hanafite theologians differed from the Ash’arites, for whom God could only be designated as the creator with the actual creation of things. This key issue appears already be in the early sources, regardless of when their authors are explicitly referred to as “Māturīdites”. It does not matter from when the successors of al-Māturīdī referred to their master by name. Al-Samarqandī and Abū Shakūr al-Sālimī (5th/11th Century) were clearly in his tradition. As Rudolph has shown, Abū l-Yusr al-Bazdawī and Abū l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī called al-Māturīdī’s name to fend off accusations of being merely “innovators” by the Ash’arites. Hence, Aldosari’s assumption that al-Bazdawī’s Uṣūl al-Dīn is “the first known book that adopted al-Māturīdī’s scholastic theological thought” (p. 220) is not correct. In other cases, the author is also using inaccurate terminology, e.g., he mentions the “attributes of God” several times, but always names the anthropomorphisms alone, which are a special category of these attributes (p. 170 and more).

Undoubtedly, the volume reviewed deserves credit for the extensive source work that went into its completion. Aldosari based his edition not only on a larger number of codices than Belek, but also seems to have struggled through an immense amount of biographical and historical
sources. Even if the volume is unlikely to contribute new knowledge to the established research on Māturīdism, since after all, the edited text of the Hādī has been available for several years it can, with the limitations mentioned, serve as a basic introduction to the Māturīdī literature for readers without prior knowledge and enable them to find out more about the basic beliefs of this dogmatic direction by means of a catechetical text.