Muslims tend to believe, has been deliberately cast aside as it does not suit the established Christian view. One of the quoted verses from Deuteronomy (8:15) reads: “The Lord thy God will raise unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto Me; unto him ye shall hearken”.

Other important topics that reveal a human side of Islam — something not covered by the sensation-prone Western media — include answers to questions like “How do Muslims treat the elderly? and “How do Muslims view death?” There is the very topical “How does Islam guarantee human rights?” All this of followed by “Islam in the United States”. Of course, given the events following 9–11, the last topic is now quite out of date even though it states the basic facts.

All considered, a more comprehensive but brief volume would be hard to put together. And for this Garnet Publishing, which has already established itself as a major publisher on Islam, deserves our complement.

Syed Akif


Mustafa Ćeríc, the popular Reisu-l-Ulama of Bosnia and Hercegovina, wrote this work as his doctor’s thesis under Professor Fazlur Rahman at the University of Chicago some years after completing his undergraduate diploma from al-Azhar. War in Bosnia interrupted his subsequent teaching at ISTAC with the result that this important study on some crucial aspects of the history of Islamic theology could be published only after the cessation of hostilities.

Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmud al-Ḥanāfī al-Mutakallim al-Sarwarzandī al-Maṭurīdī (333/944), of Persian or Turkic descent, was one of the most important Transoxanian Muslim laywers, philosophers, and theologians of the classical ‘Abbāsid period. However, with most of his books lost and his magnum opus, Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, only discovered in Cambridge, by Joseph Schacht in 1952 and first published in 1970, his real
career only began after a millenium. (Neither did Ibn al-Nadim list him in his *al-Fihrist*, nor did Ibn Khaldun mention him in his *Muqaddimah*).

It appears by hindsight that Maturidi (in the Islamic far east), along with al-Ash'ari (in the centre) and al-Tahawi (in the far west), was instrumental in formulating the middle of the road synthetic Sunnī theology that reconciled tradition/revelation/dogma (*al-naql*) with reason (*al-'aql*). He did so by shunning both extremist and obscurantist literalism (on the right) and extremist ultra-rationalism (on the left). He could do so because he remained loyal to the Qur'an and the Sunnah while remaining exposed to Greek philosophy and its Islamic offshoot, Mu'tazilism. In particular al-Maturidi insisted that what is present (*shahid*) or known (*m'alum*) or given is a root (*'asl*) or a sign (*ayab*) of what is absent (*ghayb*) or unknown (*majhul*) or searched for (*matliub*). Thus in his epistemological theory of knowledge he not only called for an intellectual approach to revelation but also defined the limits of such reasoning. That, according to the author, makes Maturidi most relevant for our age of intellectual stalemate in which Muslims must learn from their legacy rather than merely glorify it meaninglessly (p. 234).

Maturidi's *Kitab al-Tawhid*, a veritable exposition of *usul al-din* in the tradition of Hanafī *kalam*, is heavily indebted to Aristotelian concepts and distinctions. He deals with God (His existence and attributes), the world (as divine revelation to be studied through sense perception), and major issues that have faced Man such as the eternity (or not) of the universe and the dichotomy of free will and predestination.

Maturidi rejected the idea of a world without beginning (or one as an emanation) by maintaining that God was Creator even before creating. He treats the question of why God created the world (*lima khalaqa al-khalqa?*) as inadmissible, counselling — like Ash'ari — to accept the transcendental statements of the Qur'an *bi-lakayf* — without asking “how?”. For Maturidi, to posit the world's eternity was a form of *shirk*: allowing for a subsistent entity besides God. And the Mu'tazili trend of stripping God of all attributes he labelled as anthropomorphism in reverse — for reserving all attributes to man alone.

On the insoluble issue of free will versus predestination — implying that God was either unjust or limited — Maturidi argued against puritan Kharijism which threatened the *ummah* as well as against the permissive Murji'ism which was a menace to morality by simply submitting that God invests man with the power to act — a formula which simply begs the question. All of it is, of course, the kind of scholasticism which has been considered amusing ever since post-Kantian analytical-linguistic philosophy destroyed metaphysics.
Mustafa Ćeric must be congratulated for unearthing all this in a dense yet lucid manner. Indeed, there are only minor shortcomings to be noted. As is typical for a doctor’s thesis, the author makes a display of as much knowledge, whether relevant or not as possible. (Do we ever know more than during our doctoral exam?). Less typical it is that our author refers to himself mostly as “we”. This is tricky because it can be taken as modesty or, on the contrary, as pluralis majestatis.

The book needed some more editing: Footnotes should not repeat publication data available in the bibliography. On the other hand, the bibliography should list all publications that are mentioned in the footnotes or have been referred to elsewhere in the book. This concerns, for instance, the books by English, Davidson, Murtada, and Sezgin, all of which are missing in the bibliography. Also, a second edition should not describe “Gotha” as a library in Berlin, but as a city in the German federal state of Thuringia, famous for its ancient Islamic library (p. 37).

Murad Wilfried Hofmann


The book under review is by a former Catholic scholar who accepted Islam in 1986. The stature of the writer, who is a trained theologian and has taught Trinitarian Theology and Biblical Studies for over three decades, is evident from the erudition, penetrating analysis and scholarly grasp of the subject displayed by the book. The extensive information, lucid style and sound treatment of the subject by the author fully bring out the skill of an experienced teacher and an able writer.

Much has been said and is still being said on the origins of the Christian Church and its founder, the latter being generally believed to be Jesus. From the advent of the Messiah to the present day there have lived millions of Christians and non-Christians who have entertained a variety of beliefs and doctrines, and have raised numerous questions as to who Jesus Christ was, what his original teachings were, what actually happened to him during the