John indiscriminately used different sources – written texts (be they part of the Quran or not), oral traditions and ritual performances. Having his Christian readers in mind, John did not care whether a ridiculous story (like that about the she-camel) was reported in the Quran or elsewhere. In John's view, the Quran was not a holy book or a canonical work, but a compilation of the alleged prophet himself, and therefore its text is not sacrosanct. One detail suffices to illustrate this. Right at the beginning of his description of Islam a central dogma is quoted, namely Q. 112: 3 *lam yalid wa-lam yūlad* ("God has not begotten nor was he begotten"). The Greek runs the other way round: μήτε γεννηθέντα μήτε γεγεννηκότα ("that he was neither begotten nor had he begotten"). Schadler argues that the reverse order of the verbs points to a different (or not fixed) Quran text. This is quite unlikely, since this anti-Christian dogma is written most prominently at the Dome of the Rock (692) and is attested to have been engraved in a tomb as early as 650. The explanation is, rather, that John – deliberately or not – restores the logical and chronological order one would expect in a theological dogma on God's transcendence (first that he himself was not begotten, second that did not beget). Of course, John is not scrupulous to alter an – in his view – unholy text.

Generally, the book represents an outdated state of research. In the bibliography and in the footnotes, items from after 2010 are absent, and even for the years 2009–10 some important titles are missing: A.Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike* (Berlin, 2010) is not cited; B. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā*, is referred to as an unpublished PhD thesis from 2007, although it was published in 2009 in the very same Brill series. On further titles, see my article on John of Damascus in EI^3 (Schadler cites only EI^2).

In addition, the book should have been typeset more carefully, especially with regard to Greek characters (there are many false accents and aspirates: αἵρεσις, for example, occurs several times). Arabic has been transliterated, but mostly without diacritical signs.

In sum, Schadler has made an important contribution to the understanding of John's place in the theory and history of heresiology. He also offers interesting insights into how Christianity saw the early stages of Islam, at least in Syria/Palestine. However, it is a serious shortcoming of the book that it has not been updated since 2009–10 (Schadler was awarded his PhD at the University of Oxford in 2011), especially regarding the early history of the Quran text, a field of research evolving rapidly. In the light of recent scholarship, Schadler's interpretation of John's *De haeresibus* ch. 100 needs some rethinking.

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DAMARIS WILMERS:

Beyond Schools: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr's (d. 840/1436) Epistemology of Ambiguity.

x, 396 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2018. €129.00. ISBN 978 90 04 37835 3.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000399

Damaris Wilmers' *Beyond Schools* is a fascinating and original study of two prominent Yememi Zaydi religious scholars from the turn of the fifteenth century. One is Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1436), a proponent of Bahshamī

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Muʿtazilism and the superiority of Zaydism as a distinctive legal school. Wilmers uses Ibn al-Murtaḍa as a foil for the primary focus of her work, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436), who is often seen to stand at the beginning of a Sunnization-of-Zaydism genealogy that culminates in Muḥammad al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834).

Chapter 1 reconstructs the biographies of Ibn al-Wazīr and Ibn al-Murtaḍā (more about this chapter below), and chapter 2 describes Ibn al-Wazīr's writings in generous detail. Chapter 3, on epistemology, makes clear that the key difference between the two scholars concerns the scope of knowledge (*ʿilm*). As a *kalām* theologian, Ibn al-Murtaḍa divides knowledge into two kinds: necessary (*ḍarūrī*) and acquired (*muktasab*). Necessary knowledge imposes itself upon the human subject without discursive reasoning. Acquired knowledge is likewise certain but follows on from inference and discursive reasoning. Certain knowledge of God's existence derives from rational speculation (*naẓar*) on the nature of the created world. By way of contrast, Ibn al-Wazīr radically narrows the scope of certain knowledge by consigning everything known by rational processes to the realm of conjecture (*ẓann*). So-called acquired knowledge and rational speculation never provide certainty, and *kalām* proofs for God are no more than conjectural. Only a few things shared by all Muslims come under the rubric of necessary knowledge, things such as the Pillars of Islam based on multiple transmitted (*tawātur*) reports and certain basic Islamic doctrines about God grasped immediately by the original human disposition (*fiṭra*).

What Wilmers calls Ibn al-Wazīr's "epistemology of ambiguity" greatly limits the grounds for intra-Muslim conflict and for charging rival Muslim currents with unbelief. As Wilmers writes, "Ibn al-Wazīr reduces almost every doctrine and theological problem to a minimum. Then he claims essential agreement on this minimum in the sense of a lowest common denominator" (p. 170). Differences among Muslims do not concern anything essential. They are merely matters of conjecture and ambiguity. The result is remarkably similar to the minimizing spirit of modern liberal Protestantism, and Wilmers herself notes at the end of the book that Ibn al-Wazīr "provides an answer to the challenge of theological and legal diversity that is even more compelling today than it was in Ibn al-Wazīr's lifetime" (p. 366).

Wilmers takes up Ibn al-Wazīr's theology in chapter 4. One thing that Ibn al-Wazīr does know necessarily is that God wills and acts for wise purposes. It is not for humans to know exactly what those wise purposes are, but it is necessary knowledge that God acts wisely. Ibn al-Wazīr criticizes Ashʿari argumentation against purposes in God's will. Beyond that, however, he harmonizes Ashʿarism and Muʿtazilism by explaining that the Ashʿarī Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and the Muʿtazilī Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) both posit a motive or preponderator causing human acts. Ibn al-Wazīr achieves this harmonization by glossing over fundamental Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī differences on the degree of independence in the human act. Wilmers observes that Ibn al-Wazīr "paints a vague picture of a good God" (p. 258) and keeps his foot inside the door of the Zaydī community by laying claim to the heritage of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. A strand of non-Bahshamī Muʿtazilism originating in Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī held some sway within Zaydi circles.

The question of legal authority is at the core of chapter 5, the last major chapter. Both Ibn al-Wazīr and Ibn al-Murtaḍā are infallibilists in *ijtihād*. That is, they both maintain that all *mujtahid*s are correct so long as they follow recognized procedures of *ijtihād* when considering questions of law falling into the realm of conjecture. The subjective character of infallibilism can lead to legal confusion and instability.

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Ibn al-Murtaḍā controls this by narrowing the range of acceptable *mujtahid*s to those who adhere to Zaydi theological precepts and follow specifically Zaydi legal principles and rulings. The result is a distinctive Zaydi school of jurisprudence that considers itself superior by virtue of its Shii affiliation to the *ahl al-bayt*. Ibn al-Wazīr takes infallibilism in a far more open direction by lowering the bar for engaging in *ijtihad*, adopting the authority of Sunni *hadīth*, and rejecting the authority of legal schools. Wilmers concludes that Ibn al-Wazīr does not so much "Sunnize" Zaydism as follow his evidence wherever he sees it leading.

We might ask why the two Yemeni Zaydis, Ibn al-Wazīr and Ibn al-Murtaḍā, adopted such different intellectual paths, but Wilmers curiously frustrates this question in chapter 1. Here, Wilmers presents a richly detailed study of Ibn al-Wazīr's biography along with a shorter examination of the life of Ibn al-Murtaḍā. Wilmers shows that the two scholars received similar educations and wrestled with the same challenges posed by Sunni influences. From this she concludes, "No external element in Ibn al-Wazīr's development renders him more prone to initiate or endorse a 'Sunnisation' of the Zaydiyya than his contemporaries, since Sunni texts and teachers as well as alternatives to the Bahshami-Muʿtazili theology were already present in the Zaydi heartland" (p. 59). Having ruled out external causes to explain the differences between Ibn al-Wazīr and Ibn al-Murtaḍā, Wilmers might have turned to psychological factors to explain their diverging views. The two figures were clearly of differing temperament, but Wilmers does not appeal to this to explain their intellectual divergences either. She is rather more interested in highlighting the radical contingency of Ibn al-Wazīr's theological and legal positions than explaining their historical origins and causes. Wilmers' book is a superb piece of ground-breaking work and without doubt a major milestone in the study of theology and legal theory in medieval Zaydism, but it does leave the historical question unanswered.

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ALAIN GEORGE and ANDREW MARSHAM (eds):
Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites.
xx, 348 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN 978 0 19 049893 1.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000405

These eleven articles, subdivided in three parts, teach us much because their approach is offbeat: they transcend the literary sources about the Umayyads. The Introduction situates the Umayyads as Islam's first dynasty (ruling from 661 to 750 AD) while summarizing and contextualizing the book's contributions. The editors stress that recent textual evidence reveals how foundational the Umayyads were, a hitherto underrated consideration. The study of material products of the Umayyad past – the fields of archaeology, art, architecture, and numismatics – coupled with texts, yields new insights, hence the two foci of this collection: (1) Umayyad material culture; and (2) Umayyad historiography. The result is an exciting read, the more so if you, like me, are a text-based historian.

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