Ziad Bou Akl,
*Une doxographie sunnite du iv/ve siècle.
« Kitâb al-Maqâlât » d’Abû al-`Abbâs al-Qalânîsî


Mots-clés : théologie islamique, sunnisme, al-Qalânîsî, al-Asḥ’âri, Ahmad ibn Hanbal

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Ziad Bou Akl provides an edition with translation and commentary of a reconstructed statement of containing theological positions apparently from the 10th century CE. His text comes from the margins of a 543/1148 Escorial manuscript of Gazâlî, *al-iqṭisâd fi al-`tiqâd*. They seem to be quotations from an earlier work, arranged as a sort of commentary on Gazâlî. Their concern strays often enough from Gazâlî’s to reassure us that they do faithfully reproduce passages from an earlier work. Regrettably, they cannot be depended on to reproduce the whole of the earlier text. On the basis of some poor joins, Bou Akl thinks they probably do preserve the original sequence of topics. However, he also points to the imamate as a topic absent from the marginal quotations but doubtfully from the earlier text. Other early controversies not covered include whether faith increases or decreases, whether one should say ‘I am a believer, God willing’, whether Abû was created in the image of God, and whether one should say one’s pronouncement of the Koran is created.

As for the authorship and title of the earlier text, al-Nasâ’î, *Tabûsrat al-adilla*, quotes Abû al-`Abbâs, *Kitâb al-Maqâlât*, as saying that mercy and generosity may be counted among the divine attributes of action, matching a sentence in the margin of *al-iqṭisâd*. The latest authors cited are the Mu’tazila Abû al-`Usayn al-`Aṣwa` in (d. ca 300/912-13) and Abû `Allâ al-`Ughbâ` in (d. 303/915-16), apparently furnishing a terminus post quem. Abû al-`Abbâs al-Qalânîsî’s name and dates have both been hard to pin down. However, Bou Akl stresses a passage quoted by various later authors from al-`Aṣwâ`î al-Naysâbûrî, *Târîkh Naysâbûrî*, remarked by Gimaret and others as well, according to which someone consulted Abû al-`Abbâs al-Qalânîsî about a theological dispute that had erupted in Nîsâpur in 309/921, which clearly implies that he died some time later than this. (1)

By far the most prominent name in the text is the Basran `Abd Allâh ibn Kullab (d. ca 240/854-5), spotted by Josef van Ess as an early advocate of Sunni *kalâm* in a pathbreaking article of the late 1960s. The text also refers to *ashâb Ibn Kullab*, which agrees with the prominence of the Kullâbiyya as a negative reference group for Ibn Ạhizzyama on the occasion of that dispute in Nishapur. Two positions (*qawwâlan*) are attributed to Ibn Kullab concerning whether God can be in some place and not another. Bou Akl infers that the second position was a retrospective attribution by followers who wished to dissociate Ibn Kullab from Mu’tazili ideas.

Indeed, Bou Akl characterizes al-Qalânîsî in the end as the last representative of the Kullâbiyya. Hanbalî leadership led to the extinction of the school after him, giving way to the more self-effacing Abû al-Hasan al-`Aṣwâ`î and his followers. Gimaret has argued for regarding al-Qalânîsî as a predecessor of al-`Aṣwâ`î, and Dâwûd l-`Iṣba`hâni (al-`Aṣwâ`) as to whether the Koran is *muḥdât*, meaning that there was a time when it was not. They are separated by al-Qalânîsî (§§ 34, 41) but brought together by al-`Aṣwâ`î in the same words (*Maqâlât*, ed. Ritter, 583).

It is striking that the text never mentions Ahmad ibn Hanbal. True, his usual position was that if the Companions did not discuss something, neither need those who have come after. Al-Qalânîsî doubtfully would have attributed to him any of the six creeds quoted centuries later in Ibn Abî Ya`lâ, *Ṭabaqât al-hanâbîla*. Still, it should have been easy to add his name to the two Companions, two Followers, and three later authorities cited as agreeing with `Abd Allâh ibn Kullab that the speech of God is increate; yet al-Qalânîsî submerges Ahmad among *kul ahl al-hadît*.

Al-Qalânîsî seems generally reluctant to name adherents of the ninth-century Şâfi`i school, as well. Al-Muhâsibî is cited not for his theological positions but only once as reporting the position of some Ġahmirîa. Abû `Awar, al-`Aṣwâ`arî, and Ibn Sûrayq are completely missing. Dâwûd l-`Iṣba`hâni is named a few times, including for the proposition, otherwise unattested, that what God speaks is a language. Al-Karâbîsî is named only once, as

maintaining alongside Dāwūd that the speech of God is pronounced (yulfiṣu bihi, when someone recites the Koran). He does not mention their more notorious position that one’s pronunciation of the Koran is create.

As for terminology, ʻashūb al-ḥadīṯ is ubiquitous. Ahl al-ḥadīṯ sometimes comes up as, apparently, an alternative name. There are also mutakallimū ʻashūb al-ḥadīṯ but no mention of ahl al-ʻtbāt, the term van Ess proposed (used by al-Ašʿārī, among others) for the middle party prepared to use kalām to defend traditionalist theological tenets.\(^{(2)}\) Ahl al-qadar come up, once mutakallimū al-qadariyya, the former once as an apparent sub-group of the muʿtazila. This documents the absorption of the Qadariyya by the Muʿtazila but not how distinct they were early in the ninth century.

The translation looks good. Baʿd is consistently interpreted as ‘some’ rather than ‘a certain one of’, but admittedly it never clearly must be one or the other. Bou Akl generally maintains a high standard of accuracy, but there are a few questionable transliterations; e.g., saḥī rather than suḥṭ, suḥṭ, or saḥṭ, al-Raqāšī rather than al-Raqāshī (Samʿānī). Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938) the Sunni traditionist is repeatedly confused with Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/933-4) the Ismaʿīli propagandist. Names in the text and commentary are indexed separately with some omissions; e.g., al-Talḥī. On the whole, the text and commentary are both highly valuable, so that this work belongs in every library that includes the longer Maqālāt of al-Ašʿārī.

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