

BOOK REVIEWS



Al-Muhassin ibn ‘Alī Al-Tanūkhī, *Stories of Piety and Prayer: Deliverance Follows Adversity*, edited and translated by Julia Bray, Library of Arabic Literature (New York: New York University Press, 2019), Kindle edition.

This book is a recent translation of the manuscript by Al-Muhassin ibn ‘Alī Al-Tanūkhī, a medieval Muslim judge and literary scholar in tenth-century Iraq. *Deliverance Follows Adversity* is part autobiographical and part academic; it is a spiritual reflection of the Qur’an and Hadith, the Tradition of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. Al-Tanūkhī belonged in the rationalist Mu’tazili religious movement of his time. The book gives readers rare insights into the complexities of lives and religious practices in the tenth-century Islamic kingdom of the Abbasids. The book’s format offers the Arabic text followed immediately by its English translation, including quotations from the Qur’an and Hadith or other sources. For readers not familiar with the Islamic methodology of Hadith collection, the book gives a taste of the vital evidence of quoting sayings in the Islamic ancient tradition by citing the chains of transmitters prior to the story.

This book is three chapters from a longer collection, focusing on the concept that “our lives are full of tribulations and reversals, but if we trust in God’s kindness and love Him steadfastly, He will make everything come right.”(loc 95 of 10002). The chapters tell stories of moral choices in times of hardship, the necessity of faith, and the efficacy of prayers. The translator decided in translating specific words in the text for emotions, such as loss, hurt, constraint, hardship, grief, affliction, ordeal, sorrow, anxiety, and fear, and identified acceptance as the attitude that one should ideally maintain in adversity as one hopes for deliverance. I especially enjoyed reading the sto-

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ries of prophets mentioned in the Qur'an and the prescribed supplications that were said in many stories of adversities that befell ordinary persons. The whispers begging for God's immense mercy, greatness, and power were very moving, and I found myself memorizing and reciting them myself.

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