

Ibrahim Mohamed Zein and Ahmed El-Wakil

*The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad*

(London: Routledge, 2022). 326 pp. ISBN 9781003008989

**Reviewed By:**

Dr. Sekou Marafa Toure\*

The goal of this study's reviewer is to evaluate the book titled: *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad*, authored by Ibrahim Mohamed Zein, and Ahmed El-Wakil. The reviewer intends to highlight the content of the book, the methodology of the study, and an overview of the topics of the book using the descriptive and analytical approaches, and then analyze the text by evaluating it, shedding light on the reason for authoring it, and relating it to the relevant studies and existing literature.

Ibrahim Zain is a Professor of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religion at the College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (Doha, Qatar). He was previously Dean of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

And Ahmed El-Wakil is a researcher on the covenants of the Prophet Muhammad at the College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (Doha, Qatar).

**First: Overview of Content and its relevance to the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of the "Religions" reviewed journal:**

The book is published by Routledge, in London on 30 December 2022, It contains of 326 pp. The documented ISBN for the book is 9781003008989.

This book provides an in-depth analysis of the covenants attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, exploring their historical context and theological significance. Zein and El-Wakil dissect several key covenants, examining how they established principles of coexistence and governance in a diverse society. The authors structure the work thematically, progressing from

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historical background to contemporary implications, effectively illustrating the enduring relevance of these texts.

The book comprises several important topics following the introduction:

1. The Covenants as a Shared Historical Memory
2. The Prophet's Covenant with the Monks of Mount Sinai
3. The Prophet's Covenant with the Christians of Najrān
4. The Prophet's Covenants with Other Christian Communities
5. Covenants with the Samaritans, Jews, and Magi
6. The Covenants of the Prophet during the Caliphate of 'Umar
7. Epilogue: Developing a New Criterion for Assessing the Veracity of the Covenants.

The book is consistent with the Doha International Centre of Interfaith Dialogue's goal of focusing on faith and conflict resolution issues in its upcoming major activities in 2024 and 2025. The 19<sup>th</sup> issue of the "*Religions*" reviewed journal addresses *Faith and Conflict Resolution*; I realized that it is crucial to review this book and present it to the audience, readers, and researchers.

The book *The Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad* by Ibrahim Mohamed Zein and Ahmed El-Wakil indeed aligns well with themes explored in the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of the journal *Religions*, which focuses on Faith and Conflict Resolution. This connection is significant, as the authors examine the covenants as foundational texts that promote principles of coexistence, justice, and interfaith dialogue—key components in addressing conflict.

In their work, Zein and El-Wakil argue that the covenants provide not only historical insights but also contemporary frameworks for resolving conflicts and fostering understanding among diverse communities. This thematic resonance enhances the book's relevance within the broader discourse on religion and conflict resolution, making it a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners interested in these critical issues

## **Second: The purpose of authoring the book and its Methodology:**

The authors aim to highlight the covenants as foundational documents that not only shaped early Islamic society but also offer valuable insights for

modern discussions on interfaith relations and multiculturalism. Their intent is to reclaim these covenants from marginalization and to present them as vital resources for contemporary ethical frameworks.

In *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad*, Ibrahim Mohamed Zein and Ahmed El-Wakil employ a multi-faceted methodology that includes:

1. **Historical Analysis:** The authors conduct a thorough examination of primary historical texts, such as the Constitution of Medina and the treaties with various tribes. They analyze these documents to establish their context, highlighting how they laid the groundwork for governance and inter-community relations in early Islamic society.
2. **Theological Interpretation:** Zein and El-Wakil explore the theological implications of the covenants, particularly how they embody principles of justice and protection for minorities. For example, they discuss specific clauses that guarantee rights and protections for non-Muslims, arguing that these reflect the broader Islamic values of mercy and justice.
3. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** By integrating insights from religious studies, history, and ethics, the authors create a comprehensive framework. They draw on contemporary ethical theories to illustrate how the covenants can inform modern discussions about interfaith dialogue and coexistence, making connections to current issues of religious pluralism.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** The authors compare the covenants with other historical agreements, such as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, to underscore common themes of negotiation and mutual respect. This comparative lens enriches the reader's understanding of the covenants' uniqueness within the broader landscape of conflict resolution in history.
5. **Contextualization:** The book situates the covenants within the socio-political dynamics of 7th-century Arabia, considering the diverse communities involved, such as the Jews and Christians of Medina. By examining the covenants' impact on these groups, the authors highlight their relevance in fostering peace and cooperation in a pluralistic society.

Through these methodological approaches, Zein and El-Wakil successfully present a nuanced understanding of the covenants, arguing for their significance both in historical and contemporary contexts. This depth of

analysis invites readers to reconsider the implications of these foundational texts for modern interfaith relations.

### **Third: Critical Analysis:**

#### **Strengths:**

- One of the book's strengths is its thorough research and careful interpretation of primary sources. The authors provide a balanced view, integrating historical and theological perspectives, which enhance the academic objectivity of the work. The writing is clear and accessible, making complex ideas understandable to a wider audience.
- This work situates itself within a growing body of literature on Islamic governance and interfaith dialogue. It engages with other scholarly works that discuss the historical role of covenants in Islamic thought, positioning itself as both a continuation and a critical advancement of existing scholarship.
- The authors effectively use specific examples from the covenants to illustrate their points, such as the principles of justice and protection of minorities outlined in these documents, reinforcing the argument for their contemporary applicability.
- The book is suitable for scholars and students of Islamic studies, religious studies, and interfaith dialogue. It will also appeal to general readers interested in understanding the complexities of early Islamic governance and its implications for contemporary society.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- However, the book could benefit from a deeper engagement with critiques of the covenants, particularly from various Islamic traditions that may interpret these texts differently as well as the arguments posited by those who assert that the Prophet Muhammad ended these covenants with Jews and Christians, advocating for the expulsion of non-Muslims from Arabia before his death.

- The absence of discussion around these critical perspectives limits the scope of the analysis and leaves the reader wanting a more comprehensive examination of opposing viewpoints.
- Additionally, some sections could be more concise, as certain arguments tend to be repetitive. Addressing these critiques could have strengthened the authors' arguments and showcased the covenants' enduring relevance amidst contemporary debates.

**Overall,** *The Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad* is a significant contribution to the field, offering a fresh perspective on a vital aspect of Islamic heritage. It invites readers to reflect on the historical roots of interfaith cooperation and its relevance today. I highly recommend this book for anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings on coexistence.

Reading this book helps to create understanding of the complexities surrounding Islamic covenants and their potential as tools for promoting dialogue and coexistence in our increasingly pluralistic world.