

BOOK REVIEW

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Book: Qur'anic Covenants: An Introduction (A Believer's Perspective)

Author: Ahmer Bilal Soofi, Advocate

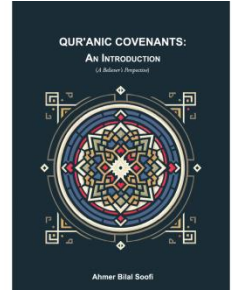
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Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, is a social contract between the people of Pakistan wherein their rights and duties are prescribed along with the structure, power and limits of government and the State. The Preamble of the Constitution includes, among other elements, the following three significant paragraphs that articulate the 'will' of the people of Pakistan to establish a just and equitable order:

Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed;

Wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres

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in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah;

And

Wherein adequate provisions shall be made for the minorities to freely profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures;

The purpose of establishing such an 'order' is reflected in the following words:

So that the people of Pakistan may prosper and attain their rightful and honored place amongst the nations of the World and make their full contribution towards international peace and progress and happiness of humanity.

This resolve or will is embedded in the Objectives Resolution of 1949. Therefore, since inception of Pakistan, a duty is cast upon people of Pakistan at one side and the State on the other, that reasonable efforts are made to explore Islamic way of doing things. As the Constitution is not only to cater for internal relations between the people of Pakistan among themselves or the State of Pakistan but also to see how the State of Pakistan has to conduct globally among the comity of nations, therefore, its Article 40 is of utmost relevance to be given due attention. It reads:

40. The State shall endeavor to preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic unity, support the common interests of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America, promote international peace and security, foster goodwill and friendly relations among all the nations and encourage the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.

Article 2 of the Constitution says that “Islam shall be the State Religion of Pakistan” while Article 227 says that “all existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah, in this part referred to as the Injunctions of Islam, and no law shall be enacted which is repugnant to such Injunctions.” The key to above deliberation is to show that Pakistan is to be a state modeled upon the philosophy of Qur’an and Sunnah, which are the center for every act of a Muslim, and as per the above ‘will’ of the people of Pakistan.

In the above backdrop, the book in hand is a timely effort to find covenants, their kinds and species as understood by the author, as a believer, from the very words of Holy Qur’an. The author first defines as to what is covenant (p. 16) in general and then explains as to what are the Shari‘ah’s Covenants (p. 18). He then explains that the architecture of Qur’an is ‘legal and *covenant*-based’ (p.19). Then the author attempts to divide Qur’anic covenants into five kinds: (1) Covenants Authorized under the Qur’an (pp. 22-27); (2) Covenants of Allah with Believers (pp. 28-82); (3) Covenants between Allah and Non-Believers (pp. 83-86); (4) Social Covenants (pp. 87-109); and (5) Overarching Covenants (pp. 110-122). In Ch. 6, the author made general discussion about Qur’anic Covenants with reference to Covenant’s Exhibits (pp. 124-125); Enforcing Covenants (p. 126); Covenant of the Rope (p. 127) and Do Covenants Limit Allah’s Powers? (pp. 128-129). Chapter 7 of the Book deals with the subject of ‘Utility of the Study’ (pp.130-131). The opening words of this chapter are important:

The present work has explored numerous levels at which Allah connects with both believers and non-believers and how each connection is a separate legal arrangement. The believer is expected to ensure course correction through free will in their

conduct, for which they are declared to be answerable directly to Allah. (p. 130)

An important example is given by the author that how the Qur'anic 'covenant framework induces avoidance of bitterness and deterioration of relationship at work with friends, relatives, and even strangers', and it reads:

The covenant with voluntary arbitrators incentivizes resolving disputes at the earliest stages. It is supplemented by the covenant of forgiveness, encouraging people to move on and leave any unpleasant incidents behind. If people start practicing this covenant, it will drastically reduce formal litigation and bring relief to the overburdened judicial apparatus in many countries (p. 130).

The author has beautifully concluded his book in the following words:

The conclusion is that the covenant framework emerges as one of the basic structural feature of the Qur'an. That has consequences; for the believer, it is the satisfaction of directly having a contractual relationship structured and offered by the Creator, and for the society, state, and international community, it will be challenging to raise faith-based reasons to reject modern laws, treatise, local and international order, unless the law or treaty is an outright violation of a specific verse of the Qur'an. Thus, the present covenant work for all practical purposes is at the intersection of domestic law, international law, and Divine law. (p. 132)

The Book also have an Author's Introduction (p. 10), Acknowledgments (p. 11), Foreword by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud (p. 12); Author's Note (p. 13); and References (pp. 133-136). It is published in good quality by Sang-e-Meel Publications and the Qur'anic Covenant Research Center (QCRC). Its Urdu translation is also published by the International Research Council for Religious Affairs, Islamabad.³

This book is recommended for judges, magistrates, mediators, advocates, transactional lawyers, law teachers, legal and constitutional researchers, and law libraries.

³ قرآنی معابدات: اللہ اور انسانوں کے تعلق کے قانونی زاویے