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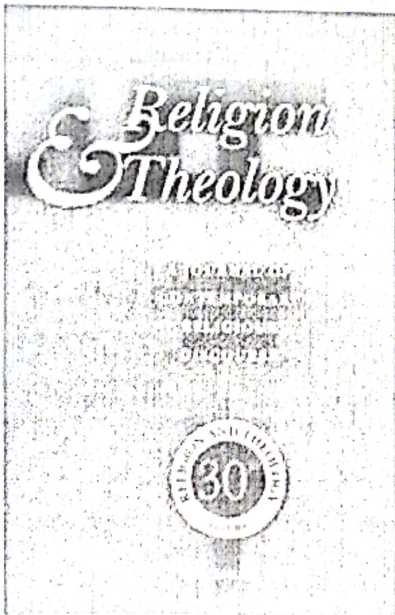
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Islam and the Discursive Landscape of Globalisation

Knowledge and Disjunctures of Authority

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Abstract

Globalisation is a multidimensional process, involving both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, playing out simultaneously within the domains of economy, politics, technology—particularly media and information communication technology (ICT)—culture and environmental change. By contrast, the spread of knowledge that transforms global Islamic authority in heterogeneous forms, challenging conventional understandings, location and mode of articulation of authority, is considered to be a distinct process. This paper attempts to investigate the role of knowledge in the construction of globalised Islamic authority in Islam. It explores the evolution of Islamic authority *vis-à-vis* the rapidly developing network of interconnections and interdependencies. Focusing on identifying the element of consensus (*ijmā*) in sustaining and upholding religious authority in Islam, the paper examines how modernist critiques of consensus take various forms in light of what modernists consider to be “true” and how they see the challenges and opportunities of global transformations. While shedding light on a growing fragmentation and decentralisation of religious authority in the Muslim world, this paper argues that the authoritative religious knowledge was established and sustained down to 18th century when new methods of interpretation emerged challenging the authoritative corpus of religious structures. Consideration is also given to the causes, spectrum, and effects of increasingly diverse, and disjointed transformations of religious authority in Muslim societies, the outcome of which is a spectacularly wild growth of interpretation.

Keywords

globalisation – Islamic authority – knowledge – Muslim world – Islamic law – *ijmā* – ICT

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