

The Classical Islamic Laws of Apostasy in the Present Context

Authors : Ali Akbar

Abstract : The main purpose of this essay is to examine whether or not the earthly punishments in regards to apostates that are often found in classical Islamic sources are applicable in the present context. The paper indeed addresses how Muslims should understand the question of apostasy in the contemporary context. To do so, the paper first argues that an accurate understanding of the way the Quranic verses and prophetic hadiths deal with the concept of apostasy could help us rethink and re-examine the classical Islamic laws on apostasy in the present context. In addition, building on Abdolkarim Soroush's theory of contraction and expansion of religious knowledge, this article argues that approaches to apostasy in the present context can move away from what prescribed by classical Islamic laws. Finally, it argues that instances of persecution of apostates in the early days of Islam during the Medinan period of Muhammad's prophetic mission should be interpreted in their own socio-historical context. Rereading these reports within our modern context supports the mutability of the traditional corporal punishments of apostasy.

Keywords : apostasy, Islam, Quran, hadith, Abdolkarim Soroush, contextualization

Conference Title : ICCTCR 2018 : International Conference on Comparative Theology and Comparative Religion

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : June 25-26, 2018