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The Qur'ān's Opening Chapter: Its Epistemological Significance for Scientific Exegesis
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Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to discuss the concept of the Qur'ān as *umm al-Kitāb* kitāb (mother of the book) and its epistemological significance for scientific exegesis (*'ilm al-tafsīr*). A fundamental conceptual derivative of this concept is the doctrine of the Opening Chapter (*Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*) of the Qur'ān as the essence and summary of the sacred Scripture. This article discusses some of the implications of this doctrine for the theory and practice of scientific exegesis. Among the issues raised in the discussion are the question of whether all major themes of the Qur'ān are essentially contained in the Opening Chapter, the question of the possibility of *mutashābihah* verses carrying scientific meanings, and the possibility of the Opening Chapter serving as the foundation of both *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihah* verses. Also examined is the extent to which the Opening Chapter serves as the foundation for a discourse on the scientific theme. This includes clarifying the relevance of the Opening Chapter to the understanding of the epistemological structure of a true science as so much emphasised in Islamic intellectual tradition. This article establishes a finding that identifies sixteen most fundamental ideas embodied in the Opening Chapter. © 2024, International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.

Author Keywords

Epistemology; Muḥkamāt and Mutashābihah; Sūrat al-Fātiḥah; Umm al-Kitāb; 'Ilm al-Tafsīr

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