

ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE

DIMENSIONS OF THOUGHT

Edited By
THAMEEM USHAMA



IIUM Press

**ISLAMIC REVEALED
KNOWLEDGE**
Dimensions of Thought

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Approaches to Studying Religions through Sacred Texts

Haslina Ibrahim

Introduction

Sacred texts of religions are among the sources for religious teachings and explication of doctrines. Studies on sacred texts have been conducted by scholars of religions, Muslims and non-Muslims alike wish to enhance their understanding of particular religions. Accordingly, works on sacred texts have been written in the form of translations and anthologies, as well as in the forms of exegetical interpretations and criticisms.

Two general approaches within the researcher's purview are the theological and the modern scientific approaches. The theological approach is widely adopted within Muslims' study of religions and sacred texts. The theological approach has been regarded as polemical as it involves value judgments, making normative claims and refuting other religions. In this regard, the works of Muslim scholars that seek to refute doctrines, dogmas and creeds of religions other than Islam to defend the Islamic faith against foreign accusations, have been regarded as biased, normative and non-objective. Such accusations are apparent in the works of William Montgomery Watt, David Thomas and Jacques Waardenburg.¹

The scientific approach emerged and has thrived in the West since the mid-nineteenth century. At the very outset of the