

## The Usage of Interpretation Methodology of Ambiguous Verses in the Ancestors's Exegesis

Penggunaan Manhaj Takwilan Ayat-Ayat Mutasyabihat dalam Kitab Tafsir Salaf

MAZLAN IBRAHIM<sup>\*.1</sup>, MUHAMMAD SYAHMI MOHD KAMIL<sup>2</sup>, MUHAMMAD NUR HAKIM ABD MALIK<sup>2</sup>,  
MOHD FAIZ HADI MOHD SANADI<sup>2</sup> & ABD WAHID<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fakulti Usuluddin dan al-Quran & Sunnah, Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra (KIAS), Nilam Puri 15730 Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Research Centre for Theology and Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

<sup>3</sup>Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Filsafat, UIN Ar-Raniry, Kota Banda Aceh, 24415, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author; email: mibrahim@kias.edu.my

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### ABSTRACT

*The interpretation of these ambiguous verses has been a longstanding issue that commenced during the time of the Prophet's companions, continued through the successors and the three generations, and persists into the contemporary century. A variety of deviant factions emerged, causing confusion and error within the Muslim community, particularly regarding the proofs for the nature of ambiguous passages found in the Qur'an and hadith. Early scholars were noted for not interpreting ambiguous sources, indicating that tafsir exegetes, such as Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, who lived during that period, refrained from such interpretations. Likewise, Imam Ibn Kathir adopted the method of his ancestor. To determine the extent of accountability for the allegations regarding the matter, a thorough review of their tafsir books should be conducted to provide an answer. Therefore, this journal article will analyse the book of Tafsir al-Thabari, titled Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran, and the book of Tafsir Ibn Kathir, titled Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azim, focusing on ambiguous verses and whether they require interpretation or vice versa. A qualitative study was conducted to examine this phenomenon. The study observed that scholars from earlier generations, including Imam Tabari, and those who follow traditional methodologies, like Imam Ibn Kathir, often use affirmation and relegation methods. Some of these scholars also employ succinct interpretation techniques. Therefore, the claim that states the ancestor scholars do not interpret ambiguous verses needs to be thoroughly researched to ensure its accuracy.*

**Keywords:** Ancestor; interpretation; ambiguous; Tafsir al-Tabari; Tafsir Ibn Kathir

### ABSTRAK

*Persoalan mengenai takwilan ayat-ayat bersifat mutasyabihat ini merupakan isu lama yang bermula pada zaman para sahabat, tabiin, tabi' tabiin dan ia berlarutan sehingga ke abad kontemporari ini. Muncul pelbagai firqah yang menyeleweng sehingga menimbulkan kekeliruan dan kesesatan dalam kalangan masyarakat Islam, khususnya berkaitan ayat-ayat bersifat mutasyabihat yang terdapat di dalam al-Quran dan hadis. Ulama salaf dikatakan tidak mentakwil ayat-ayat mutasyabihat, ini menunjukkan ulama tafsir seperti Imam Ibn Jarir Thabari yang hidup pada zaman tersebut tidak melakukan takwilan terhadap ayat-ayat mutasyabihat. Sejauh manakah dakwaan mengenai perkara itu boleh dipertanggungjawabkan, maka semakan terhadap kitab tafsir beliau perlu dilakukan bagi menjawab persoalan tersebut. Justeru itu, artikel jurnal ini akan melakukan analisis terhadap kitab tafsir Thabari, yang bertajuk Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran menumpukan kepada ayat-ayat mutasyabihat samaada beliau melakukan takwilan atau sebaliknya. Kajian kualitatif dilakukan bagi melakukan kajian ini, hasil daripada kajian ini mendapati bahawa ulama salaf seperti*

*Imam Thabari cenderung melakukan metod secara ithbad wa tafwid dan ada sebahagiannya beliau melakukan metod takwil secara ijmalī. Jadi dakwaan yang menyatakan bahawa ulama salaf tidak melakukan takwil kepada ayat-ayat mutasyabihat perlu diteliti dengan menyeluruh untuk memastikan bahawa ia betul atau sebaliknya.*

*Kata kunci: Salaf; takwil; mutasyabihat; Tafsir al-Thabari; Tafsir Ibn Kathir*

## INTRODUCTION

The Quran is a gift from Allah SWT to all mankind. It is not just a gift, but it also contains guidance that must be studied by all Muslims. Therefore, in the process of understanding the verses of the Quran, it is the obligation of Muslims to learn the sciences because it involves a sense of connection with Allah SWT that are closely related to it (Ahmad Fakhrurrazi Mohammed Zabidi & Wan Nasyrudin Wan Abdullah, 2019), such as learning Arabic language, grammar, morphology, and many more. This is because with these sciences, a Muslim can understand the verses that are being conveyed in the Quran, especially those related to the ambiguous verses. These vague verses are sometimes misinterpreted by some irresponsible parties, either in the form of liberal interpretation, literal meaning only, and many more that lead to misguidance (Wan Kamal, Ahmad Munawar & Nurfida'iy Salahuddin 2020: 91).

If there are questions regarding the ambiguous verses, most of the community tries to understand them by referring to the books of interpretation (tafsir) of the Qur'an. However, the problem is, as explained earlier, the occurrence of misinterpretation in some of the books of interpretation (tafsir) of the Qur'an. Among them are those who follow methodologies that are based on Mu'tazilah, Wahhabi, liberal and many more ideologies. Therefore, a cautious approach in choosing to the books of interpretation (tafsir) of the Qur'an is encouraged. It is important to know and refer to the books of interpretation of the Qur'an written by scholars who interpret the verses of the Quran without following their desires. This is to avoid deviant ideologies, as well as to identify the methodologies brought by various of the books of interpretation (tafsir) of the Qur'an scholars such as ancestor, successor, Mu'tazilah, and hermeneutics. Thus, through this study, the focus will be on the books of interpretation of the Qur'an, *Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran* by Imam Thabari and *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azim* by Imam Ibn Kathir, in interpreting the ambiguous verses.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in conducting the study on the writings of Imam Thabari's book of interpretation (tafsir) on ambiguous verses. This writing uses a qualitative approach through content analysis from authentic primary and secondary sources. The data for this study, including books, theses, articles, and others, which focuses on the analysis of the method of interpretation of the ambiguous verses according to the exegesis of ancestor scholars in term of *age* and *method*. Data will be collected and analysed one by one to obtain the correct answer to the issue at hand. Emphasis will be given to Imam Thabari's book of interpretation entitled *Tafsir Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran* and *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azim* by Imam Ibn Kathir as important primary sources. Moreover, references from research journals related to the books of interpretation (tafsir) of the Qur'an, belief, and discussions related to the topic will be used as secondary sources to support the findings obtained from the primary sources.

### ALLEGATION OF ANCESTOR SCHOLARS NOT DOING INTERPRETATION AGAINST THE AMBIGUOUS VERSES

This study aims to analyse both tafsir books, *Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran* (al-Thabari 2001) and *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azim* (Ibn Kathir 1999). This is in response to two claims and labels given to the two groups of Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah tafsir scholars, ancestor and successor. The first group, ancestor, is accused of not doing interpretation on ambiguous verses, while successor is accused of doing so (Rashidi Wahab and Syed Hadzrullathfi 2012: 78). This study focuses more on the ancestor group, specifically two tafsir scholars, Imam al-Thabari and Imam Ibn Kathir, as they use the methodology of "min haisu salaf" (from the way of the ancestor) in matters of faith. Both scholars belong to the Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah group, which consists of al-Athariyyah, al-Ash'ariyyah and al-Maturidiyyah

(Zakaria Stapa 2011: 39). The claim that ancestor did not do interpretation is mostly made by the Wahabi group, also known as Contemporary Salafism. They claim to be from the al-Athariyyah group. This movement was introduced by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, who was the successor to the teachings of Sheikh Ibn Taymiyah in the 7th century Hijrah. Basically, this movement is a group of Hanbalis who follow Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, then developed to Sheikh Ibn Taymiyah and finally to Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab. They are known as the pioneers of Contemporary Salafism (Norasimah & Mazlan 2019: 102). According to them, ancestor is a group that believes in the Quranic verses and concludes as they are, without the need for interpretation (al-Ash'ari 2005). They claim that Ahli Kalam or Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah groups are people of innovation and deviation for doing interpretation, and they are not considered scholars (Aminah Muhammad Nasir 1983: 102). For example, the discussion of the heading verse in Surah al-A'raf (7:54) by al-'Uthaymin (2001: 11), a Salafi scholar:

ونؤمن بأنه تعالى مع خلقه وهو على عرشه يعلم أحوالهم ويسمع أقوالهم ويرى أفعالهم ويدبر أمورهم يرزق الفقير ويحير الكسير، يؤتي الملك من يشاء وينزع من يشاء وينزع الملك ممن يشاء ويعز من يشاء ويذل من يشاء بيده الخير وهو على كل شيء قدير، ومن كان هذا شأنه كان مع خلقه حقيقة وإن كان فوقهم على عرشه حقيقة.

Meaning: "And we believe that the Most High is with His creations, and He is above His Throne, aware of their situation, hears their words, sees their actions, manages their affairs, provides for the poor, and restores what is broken. He is with His creations in reality, although He is above them on His Throne in reality. From this discussion, it is found that the Salafi, a member of a strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim view has used a contextual method in interpreting the meaning of heading, which means that Allah is above His Throne and leads humanity even though He is above His Throne. This statement also affirms that the essence of Allah is truly above the Throne without any resemblance to creatures. This claim anthropomorphizes and elevates Allah to the level of creatures, whereas Allah is not like any creature. This happens because they refuse to discuss the ambiguous verses and hadiths and only interpret their meanings based on the apparent context in the Quranic text (Norasimah & Mazlan Ibrahim 2019: 105). However, claiming that this is the true methodology of the ancestor and that any other interpretation is contrary and deviant from the actions of the Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah scholars who interpret the ambiguous verses (Aminah Muhammad Nasir 1983: 102)."

فالأشاعة وأشباههم لا يدخلون في أهل السنة في إثبات الصفات لكونهم قد خالفوه في ذلك وسلوكوا غير منهجهم وذلك يقتضي الإنكار عليهم وبيان خطئهم في التأويل،

In Majmu 'Fatawa by Ibn Baz (1999:74), it is quoted: "That the Asha'irah group and the like are not included in the Ahli Sunnah group because they made mistakes in the interpretation discourse."

In addition, the opinions of contemporary Salafi scholars are as follows:

وُثِّبَ لِلَّهِ مَا أُثْبِتَ لِنَفْسِهِ أَوْ أُثْبِتَ لَهُ رَسُولُهُ مِنَ الصِّفَاتِ مِنْ غَيْرِ تَحْرِيفٍ وَلَا تَأْوِيلٍ، وَمِنْ غَيْرِ تَكْيِيفٍ وَلَا تَمْثِيلٍ،

Similarly, Soleh Fawzan (n.d.: 417) also stated: "They attribute to Allah and the Prophet what has been attributed to them regarding His attributes, without deviation and without interpreting, defining, or likening them."

At the same time, Malaysian scholars also stated that the Salafi Contemporary or Wahhabi group has deviated and been deemed deviant for only understanding ambiguous verses literally without detailed explanations and rejecting interpretation on ambiguous verses, leading to take shape and anthropomorphism. This includes fatwas from the Johor State Government Gazette (2016), Sabah State Fatwa Department (2017), and others. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the validity of their claims that Salafist exegetes did not engage in interpretation. Thus, this study focuses on two tafsir books by Imam al-Thabari and Imam Ibn Kathir.

## INTRODUCTION TO IMAM AL-THABARI AND IMAM IBN KATHIR

The author of the book of Tafsir *Jami 'al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran*, known as the book of Tafsir Thabari, is Muhammad Ibn Jarir Ibn Yazid Ibn Kathir Ibn Ghalib al-Thabari. He and the scholars of his time called him by the title of Abu Ja'far (Asep Abdurrohman 2018: 69). The history behind this title is not because he had a family member with that name, in fact, it is said that he never got married. If one were to look through his writings, such as his Tafsir book, there would surely be many writings that start with "*Abu Ja'far said*" (al-Thabari 2007). He called himself by this title because, according to Islamic scholars, this title is given in order to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who often gave good titles to his companions. This can be seen in the history of the companions such

as Sayyidina Abu Bakr with the title of As-Siddiq (the truthful), Umar al-Khattab with the title of al-Farouq (the separator between truth and falsehood), and many others. Similarly, Imam Thabari was called Abu Ja'far, which means a wide and flowing river, symbolizing his knowledge during that time (Asmadi Rahman & Abdul Rahman 2021:33).

In addition, he was also known as al-Thabari, named after his birthplace in 224H or 839M in Tabristan, a region in Amol, Iran. Like many Islamic scholars, he was raised by a family who loved knowledge, such as his father Jarir Ibn Yazid, who was also a scholar. He was responsible for introducing Imam Thabari to the world of Islamic knowledge by bringing him to study with teachers in his area, starting from the study of the Quran to other subjects. Based on studies, it is said that Imam Thabari spent his youth pursuing knowledge from the age of 12, moving from place to place until he was 35 to 40 years old. It is said that he studied under at least 42 scholars of religion, and his studies took him to Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Syria. Imam al-Zahabi listed several teachers that Imam Thabari studied under, such as Imam Abbas Ibn Walid, Ayub bin Tamim, Al-Hamid Ibn Bikar, Ishak Ibn Abi Israil, Ahmad Ibn Murni, Muhammad Hamid al-Razi, and many more. He passed away at the age of 85 in his home in Baghdad, Iraq in 310H or 923M, after years of traveling to seek knowledge. Among the fields of knowledge that Imam Thabari specialized in were fiqh, in which he referred to the views of imams such as Imam Shafi'i and Hanafi, *al-Adar fi al Ushul*, *Adab al-Manasik*, *Ikhtiyar min Aqawil Fuqaha*, and others. He also specialized in hadith, and among his works were *al-Musnad al Mujarad*, *Syarih al-Sunnah*, *Musnad Ibn Abbas*, and others. His expertise in the field of Quran and tafsir was also remarkable and dense with knowledge, and it remains a reference to this day, especially his most popular work, the *Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran* or the book of Tafsir Thabari (Srifariyati 2017: 324).

Meanwhile, Ibn Kathir, also known as Ismail bin 'Amr bin Kathir bin Daw bin Kathir, was given the title Imad al-Din Abu al-Fida'. He was born in 700H or 1300M in Basra. After his father and elder brother passed away when he was seven years old, he moved to Damascus. He delved into various disciplines of religious knowledge and had many teachers such as Abd al-Wahhab, Ibn al-Suhnah, al-Amidi, Ibn 'Asakir, Ibn al-Muzzi, and Ibn Taymiyyah. (Mohd

Zawawi 2020: 2). Among his areas of expertise were hadith, fiqh, and history. This shows that he deserves to be called a al Quran interpreter, hadiths interpreter, Islamic law expert, and historian (Maliki 2018: 76).

Imam Ibn Taymiyyah was a very influential teacher to Ibn Kathir in terms of knowledge and character. This caused Ibn Kathir to love his teacher more than his other teachers. In the book "*Tabaqat*" by Ibn Qadi Shuhbah, it was mentioned that Ibn Kathir had a special relationship with Ibn Taymiyyah to the extent that he often defended his views and followed a large portion of Ibn Taymiyyah's opinions. The fame of Imam Ibn Kathir in various fields of knowledge has been proven as he was considered a well-known scholar in his time. He passed away in Damascus in the year 774H. Before he left this world, he requested to be buried next to his teacher Ibn Taymiyyah in the Sufiyyah cemetery. Additionally, Imam Ibn Kathir wrote many works in various fields of knowledge, including his famous works such as *Tafsir al-Quran al-'Azim*, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, *Ikhtisar 'Ulum al-Hadith*, *Jami' al-Masanid waa al-Sunan*, *Risalah fi al-Jihad*, *Kitab al-Ahkam*, *Kitab al-Muqaddimah*, *Takhrij Ahadis Mukhtasar Ibn al-Hajib* and *Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*.

#### THE USAGE OF INTERPRETATION METHODOLOGY OF AMBIGUOUS VERSES IN TAFSIR AL-THABARI AND IBN KATHIR

If we observe the interpretation of Imam at-Thabari, he used the approach of the Salaf group. This is due to his birth date in 224H until 310H, which also made him a scholar of interpretation from the Salaf group. To describe the generations of the ancestor and successor scholars, it is more appropriate to say that the Salaf group actually refers to those who lived during a specific period of time, or more precisely, the first three centuries of Hijrah (Rashidi Wahab & Syed Hadzrullathfi 2012: 78). As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in hadith 3651, as narrated by al-Bukhari (2001:171):

خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قَرْنِي، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ

Meaning: "The best of people are my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them".



One generation is equivalent to 100 years. Imam at-Thabari lived during the third generation. It is also said that the ancestor group refers to those who lived during a specific period of time, specifically the first three centuries after Hijrah (Rashidi Wahab & Syed Hadzrullathfi 2012: 78). As the Prophet Muhammad stated in hadith 3651, al-Bukhari (2001: 171): *'The best of people are my generation'*. This means that Imam at-Thabari was among the best scholars who ever lived during that era. Therefore, the methodology or approach to interpret the ambiguous verses brought by Imam at-Thabari is the methodology held or brought by the ancestor scholars, and the term that can be used is the ancestor scholars of that time (Rashidi Wahab and Syed Hadzrullathfi 2012: 79). This is the methodology that has been agreed upon by all ancestor scholars, including the companions and followers. All ancestor scholars followed this methodology because it still adheres to the essence of the Quran and Sunnah (Mohd Haidhar 2019: 70). Then, Imam Ibn Kathir was a scholar of tafsir who lived after the time of the ancestor scholars, specifically in the 7th century. According to him, the tafsir of Imam Ibn Kathir is based on the Quran and the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad. In the view of Imam Ibn Kathir, he consistently follows the approach of ancestor scholars in interpreting the ambiguous verses. This is the methodology applied by Imam Ibn Kathir, who always maintains consistency in his interpretation and constantly refers to the views of the ancestor scholars. The most important thing is to analyze the Quran using the approach used by the ancestor scholars and introduce this approach widely in interpreting the ambiguous verses (Hasban Ardianshah 2018: 45). However, Imam al-Thabari passed away beyond the third generation as stated in the period of three ancestor generations, and the same goes for Imam Ibn Kathir who was born later. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that their use of the interpretation methodology is the methodology towards the ancestor or ancestor methodology.

The ulama ancestor, according to Hasan al-Banna, accepted and believed in the ambiguous verses in the Quran. He emphasized that the ancestor would leave the interpretation of these verses to Allah SWT, and this method is known as affirmation and relegation. This method is used for verses such as those containing words like "hand," "eye," "rest," and others, accepting their meanings as they are without seeking alternative interpretations. Imam Thabari and Imam Ibn Kathir also adhere to this

approach. They tend to use a general interpretation method that accepts the agreed-upon general meanings of the ambiguous verses, which denies any notion of imperfection in Allah SWT and rejects any form of anthropomorphism and take shape with His creation. This method is commonly used by the ancestor because they believe that any interpretation that matches the content of the ambiguous verses can only be speculative and interpretation tool used to avoid theological problems that arise due to a literal approach in understanding hadith (Rashidi Wahab & Syed Hadzrullathfi 2012: Umar Muhammad Noor 2022).

#### DISCUSSION OF THE AMBIGUOUS VERSES IN THE TAFSIR OF AL-TABARI AND IBN KATHIR

According to Nasron Yaacob (2020: 55), he cited the views of Imam Baihaqi in categorizing the attributes of verses. According to Imam Baihaqi, the verses and hadiths of attributes are divided into two types, namely self of Allah and acts attributes. Firstly, self of Allah attributes exist since eternity, Allah SWT has self of Allah attributes that are not related to the will or power, namely His power in a certain state. Examples of these attributes are life, knowledge, power, strength, glory, dominion, greatness, arrogance, exaltation, and magnificence. Baihaqi characterized these attributes as indicatives of His rational essence qualities because they are supported by both rational and textual evidence, namely the intellect and the text. Additionally, Baihaqi stated that verses such as face, eyes, and hands, which have been previously explained, are part of a valid textual source, and they are called indicative of His essence attributes because they are proven by textual evidence and require a clear methodology before they can be accepted by reason. On the other hand, acts attributes are actions related to His will, namely Allah SWT's will and power, based on time and circumstance, occurring according to His will and power. Examples of these attributes are provision, revival, death), forgiveness, creation and retribution. Furthermore, Imam al-Baihaqi also classified indicative of His actions and rational attributes based on textual and rational evidence. These attributes include *nuzul* (descent), *maji'* (coming), *ityan* (presence), *dahik* (laughter), *reda* (satisfaction), *karahiyah* (dislike), *mahabbah* (love and affection), *ghadab* (anger), and many more attributes that are not mentioned here. All of

these are indicative of His actions attributes that are based solely on textual evidence.

In this section, we will examine the interpretation of the attributes of Allah, whether they are His essence or His actions, found in the books of Tafsir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran*, and Tafsir Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azim*. This is to see how Imam al-Tabari and Imam Ibn Kathir interpreted the verses of ambiguous related to the attributes of Allah SWT. We will also see whether they employed the method of (interpretation) or not, based on their status as Salafi scholars.

#### AYN OR A'YUN (EYES)

One of the ambiguous verses that is taken related to the concept of *Ayn*, which means “eye” in Arabic, as mentioned in the Quran in Surah At-Tur (52:48):

وَأَصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ۖ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ

Meaning: “So be patient with your Lord’s decree, for you are truly under Our Eyes. And glorify the praises of your Lord when you rise”.

Based on the tafsir of Imam al-Thabari regarding the verse of Allah SWT “بِأَعْيُنِنَا” which, if translated literally, means “under Our eyes or some eyes”. It can also be translated as “with Our vision or sight”, which is not like human vision. Therefore, in his tafsir, Imam Thabari explains the meaning by providing the following answer (al-Thabari 2001: 605):

قال أبو جعفر رحمه الله: يقول تعالى ذكره لنبية محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم: واصبر لحكم ربك يا محمد الذي حكم به عليك، وامض لأمره ونهي، وبلغ رسالته، {فإنك بأعيننا} يقول جل ثناؤه: فإنك بمرأى منا نراك ونرى عملك، ونحن نحوطك ونحفظك، فلا يصل إليك من أراذك بسوء من المشركين.

Meaning: Abu Ja'far said: The meaning of this verse is that Allah said to the Prophet Muhammad, “O Muhammad, be patient in waiting for the decree of your Lord and continue to fulfill His commandments, and convey the message that has been mandated to you, for We will continue to monitor you. We see you and all your actions. We will always guard and protect you from the evil deeds that the polytheists (*musyrikin*) actually want to do to you”.

Imam al-Thabari (2007: 78) explains that in this verse, Allah SWT is directing the Prophet to be patient in waiting for His decree and to continue carrying out

his prophetic duties, while also assuring him that He is constantly watching over and protecting him from the deceitful and harmful actions of the polytheists. Similarly, Imam Ibn Kathir also interprets this verse as a form of divine surveillance, as expressed in the following statement (1999: 438):

اصبر على أذاهم ولا تباهم، فإنك بمرأى منا وتحت كلائتنا، والله يعصمك من الناس.

Meaning: “Be patient with their (*musyrikin*) actions and do not pay attention to them, for indeed you are under Our surveillance and protection. And Allah will protect you from the evil deeds of people”.

Based on the interpretation from the two tafsir books, it can be seen that Imam al-Thabari and Ibn Kathir explain the phrase “with Our eyes” (بِأَعْيُنِنَا) as the surveillance, protection, and guardianship of Allah SWT. Therefore, this interpretation is the most appropriate to be used in the Quran because the phrase has many meanings such as eyes, sight, surveillance, and others. This interpretation is derived from the critical thinking of the Quran which focuses on a synthesis of activities involving contemplation, sight, and hearing. This critical thinking emphasizes a focused, serious, and in-depth thinking process through research and observation of evidence, information, proofs, and supporting arguments (Zainorah Kadri 2015: 90). Therefore, it is fair to say that both interpretations from the tafsir books regarding the attribute of Allah SWT with the word “eyes” are appropriate and do not involve any form of anthropomorphism.

#### NUR (LIGHT)

Then, the next ambiguous attribute is related to light, based on Allah’s verse in Surah an-Nur, verse 35:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ

Meaning: “Allah is the light of the skies and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp”.

This verse in Surah an-Nur is a parable mentioned by Allah SWT, where al-Thabari (2001: 295) interprets it as follows:

”اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ : هَادِي مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ، فَمَنْ بَنُوهُ إِلَى الْحَقِّ يَهْتَدُونَ وَبِهَادِهِ مِنْ حَيْرَةِ الضَّلَالَةِ يَعْتَصِمُونَ”

Meaning: "He is the guide for all that is in the skies and the earth, so they are guided by His light to the truth, and with His guidance they hold fast from disturbing errors".

Imam al-Thabari explained the verse "Allah is the light of the skies and the earth" by bringing many interpretations, as scholars have different opinions in interpreting the attribute of light in the verse. The same goes for its continuation, *"like the example of guidance from Allah, like a lamp (misyykah) enclosed in glass."* One of the conclusions drawn from the interpretations of the verse is based on the narrations found in the Tafsir of Imam al-Thabari, such as the narration of Ibn Abbas:

حدثني عليّ ، قال : ثنا عبد الله ، قال : ثني معاوية ، عن عليّ ، عن ابن عباس قوله : «اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ» . يقول : الله سبحانه هادي أهل السماوات وأهل الأرض .

Meaning: "Ali informed me, he said: Abdullah informed us, he said: Muawiyah narrated, from Ali, from Ibn Abbas, he said: 'Allah is the light of the skies and the earth.' He said: Allah has guided the inhabitants of the skies and the inhabitants of the earth" (al-Thabari 2001: 295 & 296).

Furthermore, there is also a narration from Anas bin Malik and others (al-Thabari 2001: 296):

حدثني سليمان بن عمر بن خالد الرقي ، قال : ثنا وهب بن راشد، عن قرقد، عن أنس بن مالك، قال : إن إلهي يقول : نُورِي هُدَايَ . وقال آخرون : بل معنى ذلك : الله مدبر السماوات والأرض .

The meaning is: "Sulaiman bin Omar bin Khaled Al-Ruqi told me, he said: Wahab bin Rasyid narrated to us, from Farqad, from Anas bin Malik, he said: Verily Allah has said, 'My light is My guidance'".

Some others said: On the contrary, the meaning is: "Allah is the ruler of the skies and the earth."

The meaning of 'His light' which is the pronoun "ha" in the verse *اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ* has various interpretations regarding whom it refers to. First, the pronoun "ha" is addressed to the believers who possess the "lamp" which is a metaphorical representation of a heart filled with the Quran and faith in their chests, which becomes a source of light for the believers as narrated by Ubay bin Ka'ab:

حدثنا عبد الأعلى بن واصل ، قال : ثنا عبيد الله بن موسى ، قال : أخبرنا أبو جعفر الرازي ، عن الربيع بن أنس ، عن أبي العالية ، عن أبي بن كعب في قول الله : (مَثَلُ نُورِهِ) . قال : ذكر نور المؤمن ،

فقال : مَثَلُ نُورِهِ . يقول : مثل نور المؤمن . قال : وكان ، أبي يقرؤها كذلك : ( مثل المؤمن ) . قال : هو المؤمن قد جعل الإيمان والقرآن في صدره .

Meaning: Abd al-A'la bin Wasil told us, he said: Ubaidillah bin Musa narrated to us, he said: Abu Jaafar al-Razi informed us, from al-Rabi bin Anas, from Abi al-Aaliyah, from Ubay bin Ka'ab regarding the verse of Allah: *اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ* (His light). He mentioned the light of the believers. The meaning of "مَثَلُ نُورِهِ" (His light) in this verse is the light of the believers. My father recited it like that *مثل المؤمن* , *The believers (mu'minin) are those whom Allah has made the Quran and faith a light in their hearts*" (al-Thabari 2001: 298).

In this verse, Allah SWT begins with His own light, then mentions it, and only then mentions the light of the believers. Secondly, some have stated that the "parable of Allah's light" refers to Prophet Muhammad SAW, as mentioned in the narration of Kaab al-Ahbar (al-Thabari 2001: 299):

حدثنا ابن حميد ، قال : ثنا يعقوب الفهمي ، عن حفص ، عن شمر ، قال : جاء ابن عباس إلى كعب الأحبار ، فقال له : حدثني عن قول الله عز وجل : (اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ) الآية . فقال كعب : (اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ) : مثل محمد ﷺ كمشكاة .

Meaning: Ibn Humaid told us, he said: Ya'qub al-Qummi told us, from Hafsh, from Shamr, he said: Ibn Abbas came to Ka'ab al-Ahbar, and he said to him: Tell me about the verse of Allah SWT: "Allah is the light of the skies and the earth." Ka'ab said: *اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ* "Allah is the light of the skies and the earth." Ka'ab said that the example of the light of Allah is like that of Muhammad, which is like a *misyykah* (lamp).

This narration implies that Allah sent Prophet Muhammad to guide those who believe in Him. Thirdly, the pronoun "ha" refers to Allah, because He is the One who guides the inhabitants of the skies and the earth with clear evidence, the light that illuminates the skies and the earth (al-Thabari 2001: 299).

حدثني عليّ ، قال : ثنا أبو صالح ، قال : ثني معاوية ، عن عليّ ، عن ابن عباس : (مَثَلُ نُورِهِ) . مثل هُداه في قلب المؤمن .

Meaning: Ali narrated to me, he said: Abu Soleh narrated to us, he said: Muawiyah narrated from Ali, from Ibn Abbas: (مَثَلُ نُورٍ) ‘the parable of His light’. The parable of guidance from Him is like a lamp within the heart of the believer (*mu'minin*).

This verse describes how Allah guides His servants through the Quran, and the reminder in the hearts of the believers is like a lamp, a light that illuminates the heart, which is the Quran. From these interpretations, it can be concluded that there is no element of anthropomorphism or resemblance between Allah and His creations. The term “*nur*” (light) does not refer to the essence of Allah, as light is a creation of Allah, and it is impossible for Allah to resemble His creations. However, the “*light of Allah*” can be explained as a guidance for all of His servants, the inhabitants of the skies and the earth, through the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (Ath-Thabari 2007: 158). Furthermore, based on this verse about “*nur*” (light), the interpretation presented by Imam Ibn Kathir is the same as that of Imam al-Thabari, who took narrations from Ibn Abbas, Anas bin Malik, and others related “*Allah is the light of the skies and the earth. The example of His light*”, the narration that is not mentioned here is like that of Ubay bin Kaab:

هو المؤمن الذي قد جعل الله الإيمان والقرآن في صدره

Meaning: “That is, the believer (*mu'minin*) who makes Allah and the Quran his faith in his heart”.

Ibn Kathir then explained what is meant by ‘His light is like the heart of a believer (*mu'minin*) as follows:

فشبه قلب المؤمن في صفائه في نفسه بالقنديل من الزجاج الشفاف الجوهري ، وما يستهديه من القرآن

والشرع بالزيت الجيد الصافي المشرق المعتدل ، الذي لا كدر فيه ولا انحراف .

Meaning: “So the heart of the believer (*mu'minin*), in the purity of its soul, is likened to a lamp made of clear glass, and which is guided by the guidance of the Quran and the Shariah with good, pure, bright, simple olive oil, which is without blemish or deviation” (Ibn Kathir 1999: 58).

Based on the previous context, it can be inferred that Imam Ibn Kathir also took quotations of narrations that interpret the verse of *Nur* (Allah) by giving various metaphors that correspond to the meaning of *Nur* (light) Allah SWT. Moreover, he

also provided a conclusion that refers to the word *Nur* (light) Allah SWT to the heart of the believers (*mu'minin*) who make guidance from the Quran as a sign from Allah SWT.

### YAD (HANDS)

The discussion then moves on to the ambiguous attributes of Allah SWT related to the term “*yad*” (hand), which is often discussed by the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah such as al-Ash'ari (1977: 126) without questioning the manner. In the verse of the Quran in Surah adh-Dhariyat (51:47), Allah SWT says:

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ

Meaning: “And We have built the universe with Our own hands. And verily, We are indeed expanding it.

The book of Imam Thabari (2001: 545), he made an interpretation of the word “*yad*” by stating the following:

قال أبو جعفر رحمه الله: يقول تعالى ذكره: والسماء رفعناها سقفاً بقوة.

Meaning: Abu Ja'far said: The meaning of this verse is that Allah said, “We built the skies as a high and firm roof”.

Imam Thabari provided an interpretation of this verse *وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ*, the interpretation given by Imam Thabari on the phrase “*We constructed the sky with [Our] hands*” is that it means “*We built the sky in a high and firm place as a roof*”. His opinion is then supported by other commentators through various narrations such as the narration of Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and others (al-Thabari 2001: 545 & 546):

حدثني علي ، قال : ثنا أبو صالح ، قال : ثني معاوية ، عن علي ، عن ابن عباس قوله : “وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ” . يقول : بِقُوَّةٍ .

Meaning: Ali narrated to me, he said: Abu Soleh narrated to us, he said: Muawiyah narrated to me, from Ali, from Ibn Abbas, he said: “*And We made the sky with [Our] hands, and it is We Who are steadily expanding it.*” He said: “*With strength*”.

حدثني محمد بن عمرو ، قال : ثنا أبو عاصم ، قال : ثنا عيسى ، وحدثني الحارث ، قال : ثنا الحسن ، قال : ثنا ورقاء ، جميعاً عن ابن أبي نجيح ، عن مجاهد قوله : هو بِأَيْدِهِ . قال : بِقُوَّةٍ .



Meaning: Muhammad bin Amr told me, he said: Abu Asim informed us, he said: Isa told us, and al-Harith told me, he said: al-Hasan told us, he said: Waraqa' told us, all of them from Ibn Abi Najih, from Mujahid who said: "And We made the sky with [Our] hands." He said: "With strength".

"They explained the word *بِأَيْدِيهِ* (*yad*) in the verse which means "And We made the sky with [Our] hands." to mean 'firm' and 'strong' (Ath-Thabari 2007: 1028). So overall, Imam Thabari interpreted the meaning of *yad* (hand) as referring to the power and strength of Allah SWT. Furthermore, the interpretation of Imam Ibn Kathir regarding the hand of Allah was also interpreted by him in his tafsir book on Surah al-Fath (48:10):

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمِنْ أَجْرٍ أَعْظَمًا

Meaning: "Verily, those who pledge allegiance to you (Muhammad), indeed they are pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So whoever breaks his pledge, he breaks it only to his own harm, and whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, He will bestow on him a great reward".

The following is a quotation of the interpretation given by Imam Ibn Kathir (1999: 329) in his tafsir, which explains that the *yad* (hand) of Allah is as follows:

{يد الله فوق أيديهم}: أي: هُوَ حَاضِرٌ مَعَهُمْ يَسْمَعُ أَقْوَالَهم وَيَرَى مَكَاتِلَهُمْ، وَيَعْلَمُ صَمَائِلَهُمْ وَظَوَائِرَهُمْ

Meaning: "The knowledge of Allah is always with them, hearing their words, seeing their places, and knowing what they conceal in their hearts and what they reveal".

Besides, this interpretation is related to Allah's presence with the Muslim community in the covenant made with the Prophet Muhammad (Ibn Kathir, 2004). Then, in Surah al-Tawbah, verse 111, Ibn Kathir provides further explanation on the term *yad* based on the verse (9:111):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ هُمْ لِحُجَّتِهِ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي الْكُورَةِ وَالْأَنْجِيلِ وَالْفُرْآنِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Meaning: "Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers (*mu'minin*) their lives and their properties [in exchange]

for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment".

Ibn Kathir (2004) interprets that Allah SWT will grant victory and help to the believers (*mu'minin*) who always remain on His path and are mindful of Him. From the meaning of the phrase "Allah's hand is over their hands", it indicates that Allah SWT's power and help are with His servants who are on the right path and strive solely to establish the religion of Allah SWT. Ibn Kathir then brings forth several hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to further explain the meaning of *Yad* in the surah (Ibn Kathir 1999: 330):

عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم - من سل سيفه في سبيل الله، فقد بايع الله

Meaning: "Whoever unsheathes his sword in the way of Allah has made a pledge of allegiance to Allah".

عن ابن عباس، قال: قال رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - في الحجر: "والله ليبعثه الله يوم القيامة له عينان ينظر بهما، ولسان ينطق، به ويشهد على من استلمه بالحق، فمن استلمه فقد بايع الله"، (ثم قرأ: إن الذين يبايعونك إنما يبايعون الله يد الله فوق أيديهم)

Meaning: The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said to the stone, "By Allah, may Allah send it forth on the Day of Judgment with two eyes to see, and a tongue to speak, and bear witness to those who received it in truth, and whoever receives it has pledged allegiance to Allah." In conclusion, Imam Ibn Kathir refers to the meaning of *yad* (hand) in Surah al-Fath (48:10) as the knowledge of Allah SWT, and this verse is also linked to the event of the treaty of Hudaibiyyah.

#### ISTAWA (STANDING OR HEADING)

In the issue of theology, the verses with ambiguous attributes are the most frequently discussed by scholars. This includes the verse of Allah SWT in al-Baqarah (2:29):

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Meaning: "He (Allah) is the One who created for you all that is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the

sky, and made them into seven skies, and He is the All-Knower of everything”.

Imam al-Thabari explained that it means Allah Regarding the phrase *ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ* “*directed Himself to the sky*” by giving the interpretation that Allah “*has with power*”. Then he explained that the most appropriate interpretation of the phrase “*ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ*” is as follows (al-Thabari 2001: 457):

قال أبو جعفر: وأولى المعاني بقول الله جل ثناؤه: {ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ} : علا عليهن وارتفع، فدبرهن بقدرته، وخلقهن سبع سماوات.

Meaning: Abu Ja’far said: And the first meaning of Allah’s statement “*Allah directed Himself to the sky*” is ascending and rising up to it, then ordering it by His power, and then creating it into seven skies.

Thabari further explains that it is not appropriate to interpret that Allah was previously located beneath and then moved up. What is meant by Allah directing Himself to the sky is not a physical movement, but it carries the meaning of ordering. It can also be said that Allah ascends, not by action but by His sovereignty and regulation. Then, in Surah al-Baqarah verse 29, according to Imam Ibn Kathir, he interpreted it as follows (Ibn Kathir 1999: 213):

والاستواء هاهنا تضمن معنى القصد والإقبال، لأنه عُدِّي بِإِلَى

Meaning: “heading here contains the meaning of ‘will’ and ‘approach’, as it uses the conjunction ‘to’.”

In addition, regarding the heading of Allah, it is also discussed by Imam Ibn Kathir in Surah al-A’raf (7:54):

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

Meaning: “Verily, your Lord is Allah who created the skies and the earth in six days and then rose above the Throne”.

In the above verse, (ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ) means Allah rose above the Throne. Scholars have different opinions on interpreting the ambiguous verses. However, Ibn Kathir takes the approach followed by

the pious predecessors scholars, such as Imam Malik, al-Auza’i, ats-Tsauri, al-Laits bin Sa’ad, asy-Shafi’i, Ahmad, Ishaq Ibn Rahawaih, and other imams, both past and present. He leaves it as it is relegation, without questioning its manner, anthropomorphism or denial. And any literal meaning that comes to the mind of those who hold onto the ambiguous, then that meaning is furthest from Allah, because there is nothing in Allah’s creation that resembles Him, as stated in Surah al-Shura (42:11) (Ibn Kathir, 2004):

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

Meaning: “There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing”.

The issue at hand is as stated by the imams, including Na’im bin Hammad al-Khuza’i, the teacher of al-Bukhari, who said: “*Whoever compares Allah to His creation is a disbeliever. And whoever denies the attributes that Allah has given Himself, then he is also a disbeliever.*” And nothing that Allah SWT attributes to Himself or through His messenger, Prophet Muhammad SAW, is a form of anthropomorphism. Whoever establishes for Allah everything that is mentioned in clear Quranic verses and authentic hadiths, with an understanding that is appropriate to the greatness of Allah, and denies any deficiencies in Him, then he has followed the path of guidance (Ibn Kathir, 2004). Additionally, Surah Hud (11:7) also narrates about the Throne:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتُمْ إِنَّكُمْ مَرْجِعُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ

Meaning: “And He is the One who created the skies and the earth in six days and His Throne was upon the water, that He may test which of you is best in deed. And if you say, “Indeed, you will be resurrected after death,” those who disbelieve will surely say, “This is not but obvious magic”.

Ibn Kathir explains that Allah SWT describes His power over everything. Allah is the One who created the skies and the earth in six days, while His Throne was above the water before the creation of everything. As narrated by Imam Ahmad from ‘Imran bin Hushain, he reported that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

عَنْ عِمْرَانَ بْنِ حُصَيْنٍ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا . قَالَ دَخَلْتُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَعَقَلْتُ نَاقَتِي بِالْبَابِ ، فَأَتَاهُ نَاسٌ مِنْ بَنِي تَمِيمٍ فَقَالَ ”اقْبَلُوا الْبُشْرَى يَا بَنِي تَمِيمٍ“ . قَالُوا قَدْ بَشَّرْتَنَا فَأَعْظِمْنَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ، ثُمَّ دَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ نَاسٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْيَمَنِ فَقَالَ ”اقْبَلُوا الْبُشْرَى يَا أَهْلَ الْيَمَنِ ، إِذْ لَمْ يَقْبَلْهَا بَنُو تَمِيمٍ“ . قَالُوا قَدْ قَبِلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، قَالُوا جِئْنَاكَ نَسْأَلُكَ عَنْ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ قَالَ ”كَانَ اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْءٌ غَيْرُهُ ، وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ ، وَكَتَبَ فِي الذِّكْرِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ“

Meaning: “Receive glad tidings, O Bani Tamim.” They replied, “You have given us glad tidings, so give us something.” The Prophet then said, “Receive glad tidings, O people of Yemen.” They said, “We have received it, so tell us about the beginning of the matter. How did it happen?” The Prophet replied, “Allah existed before all things, and His Throne was over the water, and Allah wrote everything in the Book of *Al-Mahfuzh*.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the interpretations of heading by Imam Thabari (2001) and Ibn Kathir (1999) refer to the power, governance, and will of Allah SWT and not Allah physically moving towards the skies or sitting on the Throne.

Based on the interpretation of the ambiguous attributes mentioned above, such as hands, eyes, heading, and light, it can be explained that Imam Thabari belongs to the group of ancestor who use a general approach to interpretation and relegation, and so does Imam Ibn Kathir, who made ancestor as his method of interpretation, especially in interpreting the ambiguous verses. This distinguishes between those who truly belong to ancestor and those who claim to be ancestor, while their approach in understanding the words of Allah SWT is very different from those who are known as contemporary Salafis. This group is more extreme in denouncing the attributes of Allah SWT found in the Quran, which can lead to equating the Creator with the creatures (Norasimah & Mazlan Ibrahim 2019: 99). This will cause confusion and threats, as mentioned by the Johor State Government Gazette (2016), the Sabah State Mufti Department (2017), and other state fatwas about the threat of Wahhabism. This concern is directed towards those who are less knowledgeable and ignorant about religion, as it leads to more severe implications if someone believe that Allah SWT has new attributes, and attributes Allah's acts found in ambiguous verses and hadiths, similar to the actions of creatures, but with the proper manner that is appropriate for Allah SWT. They are the group who interpret the Quran according to their whims and falsely accuse the

scholars of Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah of deviation, while according to the study of Mohd Haidhar (2019: 83), Imam al-Ash'ari, who was a successor scholar, also referred to and agreed with ancestor scholars on the issue of Allah's attributes, which is a continuity among them. Even successor scholars like al-Ash'ari made ancestor methodology a principle and basis in matters related to ambiguous verses, especially related to the attributes of Allah SWT. Therefore, the interpretation made by the religious scholars together with those who are familiar to the same content would be a tool for one to understand Qur'an in more detailed (Ahmad Yunus Mohd Noor et al. 2022)

## CONCLUSION

In summary, based on the study of the interpretation of the ambiguous attributes through the books of *Tafsir Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil fi al-Quran* by Imam Thabari and *Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim* by Imam Ibn Kathir, it can be concluded that this is specifically a representation of the interpretation of the ancestor group or the ancestor method of interpretation when faced with the ambiguous verses, because Imam Thabari himself was a group of scholars who lived in the time of the ancestor. Therefore, the discussion and interpretation of the verses of the Quran, especially the attributes, follow the methodology used by the ancestor scholars, which includes the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and the Tabi'in. The succinctly interpretation method used by Imam Thabari and Imam Ibn Kathir in understanding the ambiguous attributes is the basis that is also held by the successor scholars. Most of the relegation and interpretation methods used by Imam Thabari and Imam Ibn Kathir reject any anthropomorphism and refuse to attribute human characteristics to Allah SWT. The methods of Imam Thabari and Imam Ibn Kathir were the best in their time and closest to the successor scholars. They were far from the methodology and understanding claimed by those who identify themselves as ancestor but in reality, they confuse many Muslims in Malaysia. Therefore, it is important to expose the Malaysian Muslim community to the real ancestor and successor methods of interpreting the ambiguous verses as a form of clarification for those who live in a time far from the time of the Prophet, his companions, and the Tabi'in, as well as in a time where various thoughts and outcomes have emerged from the influx of non-Arabic-speaking Muslims into the Islamic religion,

which has led the successor group to explain these ambiguous verses in the form of interpretation to protect the faith of the laypeople, so that they do not deviate from their beliefs by thinking that Allah has human attributes.

#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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