ABSTRACT

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Indonesian Religious Scholar (1908-1961)

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This thesis studies Moenawar Chalil's reformist thought, as it was patterned after that of earlier reformists. Issues which have been long formed the heritage of religious reform appear therein, ranging from a call to return to the original sources of Islam to condemnation of popular religious practices. In his approach to Qur'un-interpretation. Chalil stripped the texts of legendary traits, rejected the principle of maskh, offered a particular approach to the interpretation of the mutashābihāt verses and emphasized the 1 jäz agli. His aim was to revitalize the Qur an's function as a guide for modern life and to stress its compatibility with present modes of thought. Chalil's call for the emulation of the Prophet's sunnah was designed to reestablish the latter's direct link to rulings of a legal nature. He urged greater scrutiny of the authenticity of hadiths in order to restore the simplicity of faith and to halt inappropriate practices falsely attributed to the Prophet's example. This attitude was the logical outcome of his puritan stance, which was also manifested in the scope of his ijtihad which he restricted only to matters related to the purification of 'agiduh' and 'ibāduh. Similarly, Chalit's total rejection of the practice of malid shows his puritan agenda which went beyond even that of the early reformists. This extreme position, however, led him to misunderstand the true meaning of and its role both in the procedures of the judicial system and in shaping the faith of the 'awamm. Chalil's concept of ituba' did not assess the intellectual state of the 'awamm, whose inability to detect the reasons behind the proofs meant that they would inevitably have to helped to foster a new taglid in response to this position. Also central to Chalil's reformist thought was his revision of the understanding of the basic tenets of Islam and his correction of the traditional celebration of religious occasions. This revision was pursued in order to promote the concept of the absolute divine unity of God as well as the purity of helped. While his attacks on popular religious celebration were basically aimed at rejecting the idea of the merit or demerit of time, which could, otherwise, lead to a reliance on powers other than God, his reconsideration of the concept of the basic belief of Islam attempted to address the distorted understanding of Islam and Imān.