## CHAPTER FOUR Moenawar Chalil and the *Qur'an*: His Approach to Exegesis

Muslim reformists of the modern period, who always upheld the supreme authority of the *Qur'ān*, emphasized the necessity of its reinterpretation in response to the dynamic evolution of life and the emergence of new ideas and perceptions, which are constantly being formed and reformed. They felt that if the progress of Muslim society was to be realized, rigorous efforts had to be exerted in reinterpreting the divine message according to the new challenges and developments of the modern era. It was not a coincidence, therefore, that reformists tended to follow a particular method of elucidating the *Qur'ān*, which differed from that of the early mulassirs (Qur'ān commentators).

The chief example of this new trend in exegesis was Muḥammad 'Abduh. 'Abduh's interest in tafsīr was reflected in a series of lectures that he delivered on the Qur'ān. Apart from his contribution on Tafsīr al-Manār. 'Abduh also composed another tafsīr on Juz' 'Amma as well as a number of works which interpreted individual āyāt (verses). The method 'Abduh adopted became the archetype upon which subsequent mutassirs modeled themselves, thus making 'Abduh the "founding" father of the modern school of tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Qur'ān exegesis).

Another figure in the field was Sayyid Ahmad Khān, who while he did not produce a book on rafsīr: nevertheless wrote an extensive commentary on selected verses of the Qur in in the form of essays. Although Sir Sayyid's contribution is not to be measured

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>J. M. S. Baljon, Modern Muslim Kornn Interpretation, (1880-1960) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 1-2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>See his writings on the controversial issue of *al-gharānīq*, *al-vmmah* and *al-khalīfah* and others. Muḥammad 'Abduh, "Mas'alat al-Gharānīq," in *Durūs min al-Qur'ān al-Kurīm* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, 1980), 121-129; idem, "Fī Ma'nā al-Ummah," "al-Ummah al-Wasat, and "al-Khalīfah," in *al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh* (eds.) Adūnīs and Khālīdah Sa'id (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-al-Malāyīn, 1983), 37-56; idem, *Mushkilūt al-Qur'ān al Karīm wn Tufsīr al Fācihah* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat bi-al-Ḥayāh, n.d.); idem. *Tufsīr al Qur'ān al -Azīm Juz' 'Ammu* (Cairo, al-Matba'ah al-Amīrīyah, 1322).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabī, al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufussirūn, vol. 3 (Cairo Dār al Kutub al Hadīthah, 1962), 214

penghulu (musti) of Kepatihan Surakarta and as a senior instructor in the Surakarta Sultanate's Madrasat Manba'al-'Ulum' Amin's tafsir, which embraced the whole Qur'an, was written in a script known as Arab pegon or Arab Jawi.8 Arab pegon had been employed in Javanese literary works and in translation of Arabic grammar, stylistics and figh. This script was particularly useful, because at the time many Javanese Muslims could not read Roman script. Bishri Mustafā, a kiyni who ran a pesantren in Rembang, central Java, wrote his al-Ibrīz li-Ma'rifat al-Qur'an al-'Azīz in Arab pegon. His tafsīr was probably among the most widely read, since his method exemplified the approach to talistr commonly employed by the traditionalists. Mustafa's al-Ibriz was an exposition of all thirty juz' of the Qur'in and was published in 1959.9

Before the works of Amin and Mustafa were written, there appeared Tafsir al-Quran Suci Basa Jawi, which was written by Raden Muhammad Adnan in Arab pegon. Adnan's work was first published in 1924 and dealt with individual sūrnhs. Later, in the early 1950s he resumed his work and completed his translation of the whole Qur'an. Unfortunately, the work was not published until 1981. Interestingly, even though it was finished in the 1950s the published version of Adnan's Talsir employed Roman script and not Arab pegon. 10 Adnan was the first director of the Madrasat Manba' al-'Ulum, the penghulu of the Sultanate of Surakarta and a professor at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (L.A.I.N.) in Yogyakarta, 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Mahmud Junus, Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia (Jakarta: Mutiara, 1979), 286-

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, the first juz' which was published in 1932 and the thirtieth juz' which was published in 1936. Mas Ngabehi Muhammad Amin, Kur'un Djuwen, vol. 1 (Solo: Siti Sjamsijah, 1932); Kur'na Jawea, vol. 30 (Solo: Siti Sjamsijah, 1936).

<sup>9</sup> Bishri Muştafa, al-Ibriz li-Mu'rifut Tufsir al-Qur'an al-'Aziz bi-ul-Lughah al-Jawiyah. vol. 1 (Kudus: Maktabat wa Matba'at Manara Quds, 1959).

<sup>10</sup>See the introductory assessment by Adnan's son in Muhammad Adnan's Tufsir ul-Qur'un Suci Busu Jawi (Bandung: Almaarif, 1981), 5. 1 I Junus, Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, 286-87.

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The Javanese were fortunate in having translated into their language not only the Qur'in. but also the Talsiral-Jalālayn. The latter version was produced by Bagus Arafah of Surakarta and was published in Arab pegon in 1913. 12 More importantly, a unique way of translating the Qur'in was developed using Javanese rhymed verse known as mocopat. 13 The so-styled literary version of mocopat talsir had a strong appeal for those who maintained a strong cultural bond with traditional Javanese tembangs (recited poetical songs). The mocopat followed a set of metrical rhymes which served as the prosody for the Javanese tembang composition. Finally, Al-Huda: Talsir Qur'an Basa Jawi written by Bakri Syahid should be mentioned in any list of talsirs written in Javanese. Syahid, who served in the Indonesian armed forces, occupied the post of Rector of the Institut Agama Islam Negeri. Yogyakarta, between 1972 and 1976 after his retirement from the army. 14

It was in the above-mentioned tradition of translating the *Qur'an* that Chalil's *Tufsir Quran Hidanjatur-Rahmann* was published in 1958. It was written in Javanese, but employed Roman script. He had intended to write a multi-volume *tufsir*, 15 but his death in 1961 put an end to this plan. Accordingly, he was only able to produce a *tufsir* on the first *surah* of the *Qur'an* and almost two thirds of the second, occupying 367 pages. His *tufsir* together with his other *Qur'an*-related books and articles provide us with the raw material from which we can discern his opinions and analyze his approach to *Qur'anic* exegesis.

In the introduction to his *tassir*, Chalil complains of works on *tassir* that are flat and tasteless and which do not bring out the comprehensive teaching of the *Qur'an*. His words carry a couched criticism of the tradition of *Qur'anic* translation and express a need for *tassir* instead. 16 What is more, he explicitly attacks the works of the *susts* and *ahl al-*

<sup>12</sup> Adnan, Tufsir al-Qur'an Suci. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Moenawar Chalil, Tufsir Quran Hidanjacur-Ruhmana, vol. 1 (Solo: Ab. Siti Sjamsijah, 1958). 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Bakri Syahid, *Al-Huda: Tufsir Qur'na Basa Jawi* (Yogyakarta: Percetakan Persatuan,

<sup>15</sup> Federspiel, Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'un. 14.

<sup>16</sup>Chalil. Tufsir Queña Hidnnjutur-Ruhmuna, vol. 1, 33-34.

bid'nh (the heretics). To him, the so-called sūfī, bāṭinī and ishārī taſsīrs, which explain the hidden mystical meaning behind the text of the Qur'ān, are nothing but unlawful taſsīr (taſsīr palsu). He criticizes taſsīr bāṭinī and ishārī and denounces such books as Ḥaqā iq al-Taſsīr by Abū 'Abd Raḥmān al-Sulamī and Lubāb al-Taſāsīr: Kitāb al-'Ajā ib wa al-Charā ib by Maḥmūd Ibn Ḥamzah al-Kirmānī. 17 Moreover, citing Ibn Ṣalāḥ's opinion, Chalil holds that considering such works as taſsīr is kufr (infidelity). He also rejects the taſsīr ishārī, which formulates ideas and concepts contrary to the explicit teachings of the Qur ān and sunnab. Chalil refers also to the work of Ibn 'Arabī, which he believes should be attributed to 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, who, according to Chalil, was also a renowned bātīnī scholar. 18

It should be borne in mind that neither tassīr bāṭinī nor tassīr ishātrī was accepted by the orthodox faction of the sunnī community. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī and al-Suyūṭī, for instance, condemned al-Sulamī's tassīr and while the former considered it to be the product of infidelity, the latter dubbed it as heresy. 19 Nonetheless, some kinds of sūsī tassīr were unquestionably accepted in the sunnī milieu. 20 Although Chalil might not have realized it, he himself had quoted the opinion of Sahl al-Tustarī, a sūsī mustassīr, when desining the requirements of Imān, as discussed above in chapter three. 21 By treating the sūsī, bāṭanī and ishātī tassīrs indiscriminately, Chalil adopted the typical reformist stance

<sup>17</sup> For the verification of al-Kirmāni's work on talsīr as stated by Chalil, see ul-Fibris ul-Shāmil li ul-Turāth ul-'Arubī ul-Islāmī ul-Mukhtūt, vol. 1 (Oman: al-Majma' al-Mulkī, 1989), 130.

<sup>18</sup> Moenawar Chalil. Al-Qur-na Duri Musu Ke Musu (Solo: Ramadhani, 1985), 213-214; lbid. 3. Chalil refers to Tutsir Iba 'Arabi which is in fact should be attributed to 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshāni who compiled the most widely known suff tutsir. Andrew Rippin. Tafsir. (ed.) Mircea Eliade, Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 14 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 242.

<sup>19</sup> Mahmud Basuni Fawdah. Nash'at al-Tafsir wa Munahijuh si Daw' al Madhuhib al Islāmiyah (Cairo Matba'at al-Amanah, 1986), 399.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>I. H. Azad Faruqi, The Tarjumun nl-Qur'un: A Critical Analysis of Maulanu Abu' l-Kalam Azad's Approach to the Understanding of the Qur'un (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982), 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Sahl al-Tustari wrote an important commentary of the *Qur'an* with suffistic approach entitled *Tufsic al-Qur'an al-'Azim* Ibid. 19.

which never entertained the idea of a mystical dimension giving shape to the *Qur'in* and embodying its meaning.<sup>22</sup>

Chalil, however, goes a step further in equating bajain talsis with those written by the traditionalists (whom he refers to as "heretics) on the ground that both types of talsis could prove deleterious to the Muslim faith. This is despite the fact that his preoccupation with the "danger" of heresy could not be substantiated by empirical evidence or proofs. 23 In fact, there were no substantial differences between the traditionalists and the reformists' talsis. in so far as the Javanese works were concerned. Furthermore, the traditionalists could even claim some uniqueness in their approach to talsis by virtue of the fact that their methodology was nurtured by the Javanese environment, which allowed them to discover the deep (meaning) and surface (syntax) structure of the Qur'ān, as illustrated in Mustafā's talsis 24

Although Chalil does not provide us with a clear definition of what he means by flar and tasteless, we are able to arrive at an understanding of this qualification by considering his criticism of the tradition of *Qur ānic* translation. As such, Adnan's work could be considered "flat" and "tasteless", since his technique of direct translation of the *Qur ān* was frowned upon by Chalil. 25 Adnan's taisār, however, is not a word by word translation, but

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>The task of identifying Javanese works on *tafsir* that contained *soff* elements was embarked upon by Adnan who, quoting the views of Sahl al-Tustari, claims that the *Qur'ila* contains hidden and esoteric meanings, which can only be interpreted by wong sing khusus (people of distinction). Adnan, *Tufsir al-Qur'an Suci Busu Jawi*, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup>Chalil, Tufsir Qurān Hidaujutur-Rahmuna, vol. 1, 33, 39 and 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Mustafā's al-lbrīz li-Ma'rifut al-Qur'īta al-'Azīz employs a method which originally serves as a guide to the study of Arabic and which had been developed in the pesuatren over the course of a century or so. Following this technique, Mustafā gives an annotated meaning under each word as well as an identification of its grammatical function by providing fixed signs under words, whereby each stands for the grammatical category of the word. In this way, a reader will immediately recognize if a word is a subject, a predicate, an object, a genitive or others. This method was invented to serve the needs of the suntris (students) of the pesantren and was called makna gandul. Thus, two dimensions were simultaneously provided by this method, i.e. both the syntactic and morphological functions of words were elucidated by the same method. Mustafā, ul-lbrīz li-Mu'rifut ul-Qur'īta ul-'.4zīz, vol. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Moenawar Chalil, Al-Qur'anul Hakim," Abadi (October, 3; 1953).

is rather a translation of the integral meaning of each verse. The fact that Adnan called his work a tassir and not a tarjumah suggests that he did not believe that a tarjumah (translation) could never accommodate the glorious meanings of the Qur'an. Tarjamah implies a mechanical translation of words from one language into another, whereas tassir takes cognizance of all the meanings that a word evokes. In this respect, tassir goes beyond the act of translation and is a more suitable medium of illustrating the (approximate) meaning of the Qur'an.26

No matter what title Adnan applied to his work, it could not hide the fact that his culsir was essentially a translation. Indeed, translation became the preferred mode of Our in interpretation, as we have seen in our previous survey of Javanese works. Another Javanese culsir similar to that of Adnan was Muhammad Djauzie's Turdjumuh Qurin Basa Djiwi. Unlike Adnan. Djauzie called his work a curjumuh (translation). The only differences between the two works is that Adnan provides the meaning of individual words which he considers ghuribuh (uncommon). Apart from that Adnan's translation was almost identical to Djauzie's Turdjumuh. So close in fact are the two translations that an analysis of the translation of both Sūnut al-Fūtchah and Sūrat al-Buquruh yields no major difference between them. Minor differences certainly exist, but these are insignificant. Not only may similarities be found in the choice of words and sentence structures, but also in the use of Javanese particles. The main difference between the two rests in the inconsistency in the use of popular and refined Javanese. Adnan's diction is less refined than Djauzie's, although such a discrepancy does not exist in the translation of Sūrat al-Buqarah, since both use popular Javanese with the same frequency 27

<sup>26</sup> Adnan. Tafsir al-Qur'nn Suci Busu Juwi. 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>See Adnan's interpretation of Sūrut al-Fātibab in his Tulsir al-Qur'an Suci Busa Jawi.
13. and Muhammad Djauzie's in his Turdjamah Qurān Busa Djawi. vol. 1 (Djogdjakarta: Penjiaran Islam, n.d.), 7.

Syahid's Tufsir Qur'un Basa Jawi is also comparable to that of Adnan in that both are translations with explanatory footnotes attached to the verses. Syahid's footnotes appear to be more verbose, so much so that they sometimes provide remarks which apply particularly to certain verses. In Sūrat al-Baqurah, for instance, Syahid briefly mentions the significance of the name of the sūrah and relates it to the themes appearing in different verses of the sūrah. Moreover, Syahid sometimes links the meaning of particular verses to recent social developments, such as the paramount role of religion in the process of nation-building and the necessity of cooperation in the maintenance of peace in human society. 28

These (Javanese) works did not meet Chalil's expectations, since they were mere translations and did not supply the opinions of other scholars along with the authors' own interpretation. Moreover, they did not discuss the relevant asbāb al-nuzūl (occasions of the revelation of the Qur anic verses) nor the quality (manner of vocalization of the Qur anic texts). It seems these works were written as guides for simple believers and were not compiled for use by the learned 29 Not surprisingly, translations were generally not welcomed by reformists. A case in point is Rashīd Ridā, whose tafsīr became the archetype of Chalil's tafsīr and who considered the translation of the Qur an to be impermissible. 30 Even commentaries, which were considered a legitimate means of presenting the message of the Qur an, were not thought capable of rendering the Qur ans full sense. Rather, they could only reach an approximation of its ultimate meaning. Thus, the need was not to translate, but to explain (in the form of commentary) the Qur an. It was to meet the need for an "authoritative" tafsīr which could serve the needs of both the

30J. J. G. Jansen, The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 77-78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See footnotes 6, 15 and 16 in his Tufsir Qur'un Busu Juwi, 7, 9.

<sup>2 9</sup>Religious scholars have long believed that the writing of a tassir is a noble duty. This despite the fact that Indonesian traditionalist religious scholars were thought to consider the translation of the Qur'in as unlawful (hardm). Adnan, who could be classified as a traditionalist, wrote his tassir as early as the 1920s and declared that the 'ulama' were obliged to translate the Qur'in. otherwise, religious teachings and principles would be concealed. He condemned the 'ulama' who did not want to share their religious knowledge with laymen by producing a tassir of the Qur'in. Adnan, Tassir al-Qur'un Suci, 9.

learned and the common people that Chalil's work was composed. By writing such a training certain aspects of the Qur'anic teachings would be better elucidated and an enhanced picture of the Qur'an as a viable source of law, dogma and ideas would be presented for the edification of society. 31

Chalil intended his tafsir for a public wider than the professional theologians among whom, he believed, superstition had become predominant and whose need for a reformist talsir could not be answered by the other Javanese works. 32 Muslims continued to misuse the Qur an for irrelevant practices, such as making amulets. remedying the sick, taking oaths of allegiance and the like, in spite of their belief in the Our in as the supreme guide for human life. 33 Apart from that, Chalil argued, they treated the Qur'an as a Book of recitation rather than the Book of guidance. Chalil accepted the concept of al-ta'abbudbi-tilawatih (worship through the recitation of the Qur'an) and the setting up of rules and etiquette of its recitation, which starts with the chanting and ends with the heightened inner feelings of the reader. Thus, he did not deny the reward gained from its recital, but emphasized that the utmost intention of its revelation was to be learned and observed in real acts and not in verbal recitation. 34 The mistreatment of the Our in by Muslims had in time taken its toll and led to a relaxation in the observance of its teachings. This relaxation had to be avoided and effective measures taken to combat this negligence. Such measures included resort to Qur itnic tulsir, since exeges is the most competent tool in spreading the message of the Qur'an.35

<sup>3 1</sup>Chalil, "Al-Qur'anul Hakim."

<sup>32</sup>When occasion arose. Chalil often attacked such practices as *cawassul* (intercession). khurāfāt (superstitions) and the like. Chalil, Tafsir Qurān Hidunjatur-Rahmnan, vol. 1, 164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Moenawar Chalil, "Al-Quraan," *Abadi* (February, 12; 1960); idem, "Islam Tinggal Nama, *Abadi* (March 5; 1954).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Moenawar Chalil, "Keutamaan dan Kesunahan," *Abadi* (March, 4; 1960); idem, "Al-Qur'anul Hakiem," *Abadi* (February, 4; 1953); idem, *Al-Qur'an Dari Musu Ke Musu*, 124-130.

<sup>35</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Al-Qur'anul Hakiem," Abadi (November, 27; 1953).

As had been the practice in the Javanese works on the Qur an. Chalil too chose to produce a verse by verse translation. However, his commentary differs from the Javanese commentaries by providing several interpretations for each of the verses. In some instances, he favors the views of some mulassics which he considered to be akin to his own. After the translation, he usually paraphrases the Qur'an in his own words and when appropriate supplies a reasonable argument to uphold the validity of his theory. In paraphrasing, Chalil does not maintain the dialogue form, when this appears in the original text, nor does he adhere to the flow of narration set in the Qur'and. Instead, he acts as a narrator in order to have the freedom of directing the argument in any way he likes and to provide whatever explanatory notes he feels are needed in his argument. More often than not, when explanations of the Qur inic verses are offered, the authority from which the explanation was obtained was faithfully cited. His talsīr sometimes provides the asbāb al-nuzūl in an attempt to furnish the historical background for the particular reports of the Qur'an.36 Like all modernist endeavors, each hadith is quoted very cautiously and its reliability is meticulously examined. Moreover, care is taken in supplying the commentary with necessary supporting materials, which are usually taken from prominent mulassirs. Almost all of the major classical and medieval exegetical works appear in Chalil's quotations. including Jāmi al-Bayān li-Aḥkām al-Qur an by al-Tabari, al-Kashshāf by al-Zamakhshari, al-Jāmi' li-Ahkām al-Qur'ān by al-Qurtubi, Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wil by al-Baydawi, al-Tufsir al-Kabir by al-Razi, al-Julalayn by Jalal al-Din al-Suyūti and al-Mahalli and Fath al Qudir 'an Haqā'iq Ghawāmid al-Tanzīl by al-Shawkānī.37

In addition to the previously-mentioned books, Chalil made use of 'Abduh's *Tulsīr* al-Manār. His judgment of its superiority over the other tulsīrs suggests his high respect

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>For his opinion on *usbāb ul-nuzūl*, see "Al-Qur'anul Hakiem," *Abudi* (February, 4; 1953).

<sup>37</sup> Chalil. Tafsir Quran Hidanjatur-Rahmana, vol. 1, 7.

and unreserved faith in 'Abduh's scholarship. He considered Talsir ul-Murighi by Musiafa al-Marāghī and ul-Juwāhir sī Tussir ul-Qur'im by Tantāwi Jawhari among the most important modern commentaries, but he held that 'Abduh's tassir was superior to either of them. 38 Chalil's citations of 'Abduh's comments on various typic are not confine to a particular subject area. Indeed, the citations cover various aspects, such as the elucidation of the meaning of letters and words, the theological and ritual explanations and the rejection of supernatural and miraculous stories. By observing Chalil's citations, we will notice that 'Abduh's objections to the supernatural and miraculous stories are among the most frequently cited. 39 In other words, 'Abduh's tassir was held to be the most authoritative commentary by Chalil and constituted his most important source of references. 40

Whenever Chalil quotes the opinion of any mulassir, he faithfully indicates where the quotation begins and ends by writing the name of the mulassir whose views are being cited. However, due to his extensive use of quotations, it is hard to judge whether their abundance affects the originality of his tulsir or not, particularly since he also offers his own independent opinions. This practice of quoting the views of others was, however, a common practice among the mulassics. Abduh, for example, frequently refers to previous tulsir works, especially when confronted by an obscure grammatical or semantic point. 41 Chalil's consistency in mentioning his sources makes it easy to identify which opinions are his and which not.

<sup>38</sup>lbid., 46.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 97-98, 111, 112, 132, 133, 139-140, 142, 160, 171, 182, 197, 217, 341, 363.

<sup>40</sup> Abduh's cafsir was very popular in Indonesia and was highly esteemed by the reformists. Hamka, who was utterly fascinated by ul-Manar, not only found it rich in the [conventional] religious sciences from hadith, figh, history and others, but also appreciated its awareness of contemporary social and political issues. On the contrary, the reformists held that 'Abduh's tafsir was not welcomed by the traditionalists. This statement may be true, since the traditionalists were not pleased with 'Abduh's treatment of the verses and his interpretation of them in the light of modern perception. A. Halim Hasan, "Tafsir Al-Manar dan Pengaruhnja, 1," Pandji Masjarakar (February 1; 1960): idem, "Tafsir Al-Manar dan Pengaruhnja, 2," Pandji Masjarakar (February 15; 1960); Hamka, Tafsir Al-Azhar, vol. 1-2 (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983), 41.

In Chalil's view, any exegesis should encompass all aspects of the *Qur'in*. from its legal statements, moral instructions and spiritual commands down to its social and political injunctions. Without undermining the immense contribution of earlier commentaries, Chalil declares that a shift must be made from the approach followed by the medieval scholars, an approach which sometimes made their talsits reference works for particular sciences. He argues that some mulassits devoted an exorbitant amount of attention to the secondary aspects of the Qur'in, whether these involved grammatical and stylistic points or stories and legal issues. This trend succeeded in diverting all attention from the objective of the Qur'in which, according to Chalil, was that of providing comprehensive guidance to mankind. A2 Chalil's view was typical of the reformist stance, which sought to revitalize the "lost functions" of the Qur'in. 'Abduh for his part maintained that the Qur'in is not merely a source for Islamic law or dogma or even an occasion for philologists to display their ingenuity, but is the Book from which Muslims ought to derive their ideas about this world and the world to come. 43

Chalil's attitude towards talsir was exemplified by his view of a mulassir's duty, which he considered a heavy one. His aim was to impose a set of requirements that must be fulfilled by anybody writing a talsir work. Chalil expected a mulassir to be a scholar capable of complying with these requirements and may even have seen himself in the role of that scholar. As a consequence of the absence of such "talsir", he believed that people had no choice but to resort to particular figh books known as al-figh al-mu'mbar. 44 By

<sup>42</sup>In his discussion on the approach of the *mufassirs*, Chalil lists a number of tufsirs, some of which, namely Tufsir al-Wasit bayna al-Wajiz ul-Maqbud al-Busit by Abū al-Hasan al-Wāḥidī, al-Kashshāf by al-Zamakhsharī and 'Arā'is al-Majālis by Abū Ishāq al-Tha'labī, discussed a few aspects of the Qur'in extensively and out of proportion with their importance. Chalil, Al-Qur'an Dari Musu Ke Musu, 196-199. 27.

<sup>43</sup> Jansen, The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt. 24; 'Abduh's Mushkilāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa Talsir al-Fātiḥah. 10; al-Dhahabī, ul-Talsir wa al-Musassiron, vol. 3, 221; for a specific discussion which presents 'Abduh's view that the Qur'ān must be treated as a source of reforming the condition of the ummah and bringing forth a modern civilization and not as a source of particular sciences, see Yvonne Haddad, "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform," in Pioneers of Islamic Revival, (ed.) Ali Rahnema (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994), 46-49.

<sup>44</sup> Chalil. Tufsir Quran Hiduajutur-Rahmana. vol. 1, 34.

relying on the figh books written by al-'ulamā' al-mum' akhirun ('ulamā' who had lived from the fifth century of the Hijnth onwards), the religious life of Muslims had fallen prey to the authority of the 'ulamā' and not to the Qur'ān. Not surprisingly, he laments on the scarcity, if not the non-existence, of a standard "talsār" which could enhance the "scholarly" quality of the Javanese works on talsār as discussed above. Complaints about strict adherence to the figh books had also been heard long before those of Chalil when 'Abduh criticized the 'ulamā' for promoting the study of figh rather than that of the Our in.45

Citing 'Abduh's opinion, Chalil states that what was codified in the fight books was but a small part of the endless instructions of the Qur'in. Those who study fight will never find in it the real figh (figh haqiqi) as embodied in the Qur'in and expounded in the talsir. Similarly, Chalil expresses doubt regarding the motives of the traditionalists in studying talsir for they, according to him, were not stimulated to learn by any real desire for knowledge but rather for the sake of barnkuh (blessing). 46 It should be noted, however, that barnkuh was not in most cases their chief motive. The traditionalists efforts to maintain the study of talsir went beyond the mere idea of such a barnkuh and should be given credit as such. Chalil must have known that it was only in the traditionalist pessattens that the teaching of talsir, in Arabic, was provided.

In Indonesia, the study of the *Qur itn* is introduced at the start of one's educational life. The nucleus of Islamic learning begins with the practice of giving *Qur itn*-reading lessons to children in a *langgar* or *surnu* (village mosque). Pursuing further knowledge of the *Qur itn* is later conducted through the *pesantrens*. The main goal of reading *tufsir* in the *pesantren*, however, is not to build a fresh understanding of Islam from its primary sources. Rather, it is to supplement the already acquired Islamic sciences, notably *figh* and

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 45-46.

the highest level of achievement are usually "eligible" to study the primary sources. Among the most widely studied tasser books are Tasser al-Jalalayn, Tasser al-Janall, Tasser al-Sāwi and Tasser lbn Kathir. These tasser books, which Chalil himself draws upon in his Tasser Questa Hidanjatur-Rahmaan, receive no attention in the modernist educational institutions. 47

Chalil calculates that out of hundreds of talsir books only five or six were known to Indonesian Muslims. The suggestion is that this number was not good enough to create a "Qur'inic environment". What is interesting to note is however, that five of the talsirs he lists are those used by the traditionalists as text-books. Furthermore, he says that even among the five to six talsirs, only Tulsiral-Initiaya was the most widely used. In making such statements, he indirectly acknowledged that the pesantren was the center for talsir studies in Indonesia, since it was only in the pesantren that al-Jalilaya was taught. Indeed, the pesantren circle determined which Arabic talsirs were to be circulated the most, since it was the only educational institution where classical Arabic books made up the body of the curriculum. Even in the 1980s, when individual purchase power increased substantially and "reformist" talsirs, such as al-Manār, al-Manāghī and al-Jawāhīr were more available, al-Jalālaya continued to be the most widely purchased talsīr in the bookstores. 48

It should be kept in mind that the modernists abandoned the intellectual heritage embodied in the syllabus of the traditionalist *pesantrens*, as almost none of the text-books employed in the *pesantren* milieu was used in the modernist educational education. This is

<sup>47</sup>See the syllabus of the *Persis Pesantren* in Bangil and Bandung and compare them to those of the *Manba' al-'Ulum* in Surakarta and the *Pesantren Rejoso* in Jombang. While in the former none of those tafsir are mentioned, in the latter at least two of them, namely al-Jalulayn and al-Baydūwī are included. Indeed, those tafsirs are still being taught in the pesantrens, although there is no written source that can be referred to support this claim. Junus, Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia, 247, 286-287 and 298-299.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup>Chalil, Al-Qur'un Duri Musu Ke Musu, 209-210; Abdul Djalal, "Tafsir Al Maraaghi dan Tafsir An Nur: Sebuah Studi Perbandingan," (Ph.D. dissertation, I.A.I.N. Yogyakarta, 1986), 531-532.

despite the fact that they did not have alternative material for teaching their students. As a result, they found themselves in a quandary, having renounced the classical works in various fields, such as figh, tawhid and tafsir, because they constituted the literary references of the traditionalists. 49 This is not to say that reliance on the classical works is the best mechanism for dealing with current problems. 50 It must be borne in mind that a sound approach should recognize good elements from any scholarly tradition. Indeed, unlike the modernists, the traditionalists adopted a flexible approach based on the concept of the preserving the good that the past had to offer and adopting the best that the present prefers (ul-muhāfaznh 'ulā ul-qudīm ul-sālih wa ul-'akhdh bi-ul-indīd ul-uslah) 51

In elucidating his theory. Chalil mentions a number of requirements that should be observed by a musiassir. The first is that he should rely on the sunnah of the Prophet, which he considers to be the best tool for shedding light on the Our inic injunctions. This was in line with his rigorous campaign to purify the Our in of the Isra illivate. He states that only through a complete mastery of the sunnah can the Isra illivate be detected. He also regards the traditions as the best authority in explaining the reports of the Our in and not the Isra illivate as some musiassies might have done. It is often overlooked that the Our in is the story book purexcellence, since it teaches through the narration of its stories. However, for a reformist like Chalil, de-mythologizing its stories was of paramount importance in penetrating the inner layers of the Our in and understanding it in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup>For the promotion of the classical heritage by the traditionalists and its abandonment by the modernists, see Nurcholish Madjid's comment cited in Hamid Basyaib, "Muhammadiyah dalam Perspektif Pembaharuan: Harapan Pasca Muktamar," in Muhammadiyah dulum Kritik dan Komentar (ed.) Amien Rais (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1986), 313.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup>Nurcholish Madjid, "Aktualisasi Ajaran Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah," in *Islum Indonesiu Menutup Musu Depun* (ed.) M. Dawam Rahardjo (Jakarta: LP3M, 1989), 64.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>This formula was often heard in the traditionalists' pengajinas (religious gatherings). However, Nurcholish Madjid does not attribute the saying to them, when he uses this formula to introduce the phrase cnqlid yang kritis dan kreatif (critical and creative imitation). Ibid., 63; for the use of the formula by the traditionalists, see Ahmad Siddiq "Pokok-Pokok Pikiran Nahdlatul Ulama Tentang Tajdid'," Asy Sir'ah. 1 (1988), 45.

<sup>52</sup> Chalil, Tufsir Qurun Hidaujatur-Rahmuan, vol. 1, 29.

<sup>53</sup>A. H. Johns, "The Quranic Presentation of the Joseph Story," in Approaches to the Our ita (eds.) G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993). 40

a more rational manner. This can only be done by reconstructing the *Qur'anic* tales by means of *hudith*, he argues. This is not to say that Chalil unconditionally accepted the traditions, as he had strong reservation concerning many *Isra îliştât* which he believed had penetrated into the *hudith*. His critical attitude towards any tale reported in the *hudith* was expressed through his scrutiny of its transmission and content.

In the story of Hārūt and Mārūt, for example, Chalil, after narrating the story at length, declares that Ibn Kathir had mistakenly attributed it to Ibn 'Umar. Chalil makes this accusation, since such a story cannot be traced back to Ibn 'Umar or from him to the Prophet. 54 Commenting on chapter 2: 51 of the Qur  $\bar{n}n$ . Chalil mentions three false hadiths which attribute the practice of sihr (magic) to the Prophet Sulayman. He also cites Rida's opinion, on this matter, and condemns the attribution of magical works to Sulayman accusing the Jewish people of having intentionally spread such fabricated stories among Muslims.<sup>55</sup> Also, when mentioning the Fir awn's order to kill all Jewish male babies, Chalil reiterates 'Abduh's criticism of al-Suyūtī's report that the Fir awn did so on the advice of his magicians. In this case, Chalil's rejection was not based on the weakness of the transmitters of the *hadith* quoted by al-Suyūtī, but rather on its content. Similarly, with regards to the story that Muhammad was taken ill when Lubayd Ibn al-A'sam practiced black magic on him, Chalil categorically rejects the content of this hadith, in spite of its citation by al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Ibn Mājah. 56 His doing so is an indication of his desire to minimize the role of magicians in the Qur'anic reports as well as the role of magic in general.

Chalil was, therefore, forced to restrict himself to the central narrative of the *Qur'an* and did not delve into its details, unless a *fnatth* sound in both its transmission and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>Chalil, Tufsir Queun Hidunjucur-Ruhmana, vol. 1, 282.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>Ibid. 279-280.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup>Moenawar Chalil, "Peristiwa Nabi Muhammad s. a. w. Disihir oleh Orang Jahudi atau Munafiq," *Alian Islam*. (July-August; 1949), 531.

content was available. His stance was akin to 'Abduh's approach towards the ayal mubhamāt (ambiguous verses), which the latter refrained from commenting upon in any great detail. 'Abduh, for example, tries to avoid any discussion of the ghaybah (supernatural truth), since all efforts to explain them had been futile and were a violation of the nass, which purposely gave no detailed remarks about them. 57 Although Chalil rejected an unconditional obedience to the Prophetic traditions, he was not as radical as some Indo-Pakistani modernists, who held that the explanatory and historic details of the hadith were pure human fancies. 58 Chalil's repugnance for the use of the Isrā iliyāt in expounding Our inic tales was a common feature in the modernist approach towards trasūr. Chalil was fascinated by the power of reason and must have believed that any senseless statements attributed to the Our in would only expose Islam to ridicule and contempt. He, therefore, tried to strip the text of legendary traits and primitive notions, so that the greatness of the Our in would remain undisturbed.

Chalil's hostility towards the *Isrā ilīyāt* did not prevent him from making use of Judeo-Christian scripture to explain certain stories reported in the *Qur'ān*. This sort of inquiry was of particular use in commenting upon those sections of *Sūrat al-Baqurah* that deal with the liberation of the Jews by Prophet Mūsā, the formation of the Jewish community and the revelation of their scripture. In comparing the *Qur'ānic* reports with those of the Old and New Testaments, Chalil most often cites verses from the latter in support of the former. Like Riḍā, he also makes use of original Biblical materials in his attempt to refute some *Isrā ilīyāt* traditions. 59

<sup>57</sup>al Dhahabi, ul-Tulsir wu ul-Mulussirua, vol 3, 226.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>According to Sayyid Ahmad Khān, the *Qur ūa* itself hints at the disparity between manmade stories and the divinely communicated intelligence. Baljon, *Modera Muslim Korun Interpretation*, 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Chalil, Tufsir Qurān Hidanjutur-Ruhmuun, vol. 1, 136, 169, 170, 180, 183-84, 205, 207, 213, 219, 237, 273 and 309; Jansen, The Interpretation of the Korun in Modern Egypt. footnote no. 35, page 27.

His reference to the Prophetic traditions as the first source for a mufassir, as previously mentioned, did not neglect the fact that the Qur in must be the primary agent in its own interpretation. He states that the elucidation of the Qur In should be performed in the first place by the Qur'In itself. 60 The fact that Chalil seems to have treated the two sources of talsir interchangeably was due to his belief in the organic nature of the two. He also considered the reports ascribed to the suhabab as the third source of talsir after the Qur'in and hudith. When dealing with these reports, he relied primarily on those of 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abbas and only rarely he depended on other suhabah, such as Abū Hurayrah, Ibn Mas'ud or the Prophet's wife, 'A'ishah.61 This was another way in which he confined himself to the most authoritative reports among the sahabah. He was committed to Ibn Abbās reports, even when they were cited in secondary sources. In such cases Chalil always verified the reliability of the citation before he used it. On the controversial issue of the description of heaven (januah) and hell (nar), for example, Chalil favored 'Abduh's rejection of most of its details, since Ibn 'Abbas did not quote the tradition which describes these places, even though it was not only transmitted by al-Bukhārī and Muslim but was also classified as a hudith quosi. 62

The reliability of reports from the 'uluma' salat' as a source for tassir was also discussed along with that of the sahābah. In so doing, Chalil wanted to give the salat credit not only for their piety, which used to be the only justification, but also for their erudite knowledge of revelation. It seems that what Chalil meant by 'vlama' salaf was the tābi un, the Muslim doctors who followed the immediate subābub of the Prophet. 63 He,

<sup>60</sup> Chalil, Tussir Quran Hidanjacur-Rahmuan, vol. 1, 34.

<sup>6</sup> lApart from his own preference for Ibn 'Abbas, Chalil also offers Ibn Kathīr's views. In the introduction to his cufsic. Chalil states that Ibn Kathir tends to advance the opinions of the suhabah closest to the Prophet on account of their superior knowledge of the Qur'an and their lives in the *Qur'anic* environment along with their deep piety. These criteria included all four orthodox Caliphs as well as 'Abd Allah Ibn Mas'ūd and 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abbās. In his *cufsīr*, however, Chalil prefers Ibn 'Abbās over the other suhābuh. Ibid., 35. 62 Ibid., 112.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 36.

thus, limited his dependence on this body to the first three generations following Muhammad. Whenever the above mentioned sources were found insufficient for any particular verse, a mufussir, in Chalil's eyes, was to resort to his independent opinion, a process which Chalil refers to as ra'y or ijiihād64

Although independent reasoning was long considered one of the primary tools of interpretation, a mulassir was only allowed to exert the power of his reason within strictly defined limits. For his part, Chalil provides certain criteria for what can be settled rationally and what must be accepted unconditionally. In this, he was following the principle that matters related to the sum fyāt (unconditional obedience to religious doctrines) and ibāduh (ritual) were not to be discussed rationally. The reason for this, according to him, is not due to any shortcoming in the use of reason, but because Muḥammad himself did not give rational explanations for his pronouncements on these matters. Beyond the sum ivāt and ibāduh, however, the path was clear for the exercise of responsible, rational investigation. 65

Chalil points out that the requirements for undertaking the task of culsir were discussed by the early scholars. As early as the second century of the Hijruh, al-Shāfi<sup>t</sup>ī wrote a book which laid down the requirements for a mulissir. Chalil's concern with the requirements was to show the scholarly nature of the task and to limit its practice only to the most competent scholars, due to the demanding nature of the work. It was so demanding that al-Bulqīnī asked for knowledge of fifty sciences, whereas al-Suyūtī required eighty. 66 Among these requirements. Chalil highlights only a few, such as mastery of ashīb al-auzūl. In this, he was not influenced by the disagreement over the ashāb al-auzūl existing among the classical authorities nor the modernists disfavor of it. Citing the opinions of Ibn Daqīq and Ibn Taymīyah, he states that the mastery of ashāb al-auzūl authorities nor the modernists disfavor of its.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid</sub>.

<sup>66</sup>lbid., 28.

nuzul is an indispensable tool in determining the context of the verses and their purpose. 67 Moreover, Chalil stresses the importance of knowing the particular causes that brought about the revelation of a certain chapter or verse in order to recognize the general applicability of the wording of the Qur'in. He also believes that in order to elucidate the meaning of the Qur'an, a musassir should have a thorough knowledge of the Arabic tongue, including its grammar, style and qirā ah. In addition, the mustassir must be knowledgeable in usul al-din (theology), usul al-fiqh (legal theory), history and sunnah 68

The thought of the early scholars was not categorically rejected by Chalil. He was very much concerned with the old modes of Qur interpretation, even though he often favored those of the modernists, if there was sufficient reason to do so. This approach served to exhibit the suitability of the modernist views, while at the same time confirming the continuity of thought between the medieval and modern, no matter whether they might sometimes appear contradictory. In some instances, Chalil did not hesitate to challenge the opinions of the earlier musassirs. For example, in his commentary on chapter 2: 28, Chalil disapproves of al-Suyūti's opinion to the effect that the sentence wa kuntum um wātan (you were without life) means a auxiah (sperm). He argues that the phrase "without life" indicates state of non-existence, whereas auxiah enjoys life and is a living being. 69 In another place, he questions the validity of a commentary given by al-Waḥidī, al-Jamāl and al-Sawi, who tried to associate the meaning of the word ul-raid with the angel guarding the clouds and the word ni-bury with the same angel's lasso declaring that such an interpretation to be superficial. 70 As for the controversy concerning the name and creation of Adam's wife, Chalil disagrees with the early musassirs, among them al-Rāzī, who, according to Chalil, gave the name Ḥawwā' to her. As for the creation of "Ḥawwā'", which is reported in Surat al-Nisa, 1, Surat al-A rat. 189 and Surat al-Zumar, 6, Chalil argues

<sup>67&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid., 29.</sub>

<sup>68</sup>Chalil. Al-Qur'an Duri Musu Ke Musu, 190-191.

<sup>69</sup>Chalil. Tufsir Qurān Hidanjutur Rahmaun, vol. 1, 124.

that some early *mulassics* did not catch the full meaning of these verses but only caught a glimpse of their true sense. He further states that the *mulassics* neglected to interpret certain verses in conjunction with *Sürnt al-Rüm* and several sound *hadīths*, which indeed never endorse the concept of the creation of "Hawwa" from Adam's ribs. 71

Muslim scholars of the early period found an easy solution, when faced with contradictory statements or injunctions in the *Qur'în*. They solved the discrepancies in the *Qur'în* by declaring the contradictory statements to be out of date. Their argument was based on the verse in which the *Qur'în* declares that whichever verse God has canceled or caused to be forgotten. He would replace it with a similar or a better one. 72 Since then the theory of the *nāsikh* (abrogating) and *mansūkh* (abrogated) became an established principle and its mastery was considered essential for those who deduced rulings from the *Qur'înic nuss* (text). al-Ghazāli, for instance, affirmed that a familiarity with the principle of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* was among the prerequisites for a *mujnthio* 73 This is despite the fact that scholars disagreed on matters related to the number of and criteria of those verses to which the principle of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* must be applied. Even though the modernists differed in their explanations of the contradictory verses, they were united in their distrust of the concept of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, for example, was convinced that nowhere in the *Qur'în* does a *maskh* (abrogation) actually occur. 74

Chalil approaches the issue of anskh by pointing out the defect of the asbāb nlauzūl for the verse mentioned above and by indicating that the hadīth employed by al-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>72</sup>The Qur Ta. 2: 106.

<sup>73</sup>Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?" IJMES. 16 (1984), 6.

<sup>74</sup>In fact, a pre-modern reformist like Shah Wall Allah already believed in the continuos validity of the verses and did not consider any verse as abrogated. This is in spite of the fact that some scholars maintained the view that his rejection of naskh was not total, but rather excepted five verses, Yet, even the remaining five could not at all be considered abrogated. Baljon, Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation, 49; Ernest Hahn, "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān's "The Controversy over Abrogation (in the Qur'an)": An Annotated Translation, Muslim World, 64 (1974), 124; Detlev Khālid, "Some Aspects of Neo-Mu'tazilism," Islamic Studies, 8 (1969), 321.

Suyuti was reported by at least two unreliable transmitters, namely Muhammad Ibn Zubayr al-Harrānī and Ḥajjāj al-Jazzārī. While the former's authority is obviously on it (weak). Chalil states, the latter's account should be very cautiously verified. In this, he is supported by 'Abduh, who dismissed the validity of the hadith altogether. Unlike Chalil, 'Abduh's objection was to the tradition's mata (content), which, according to 'Abduh, undermined Muhammad'sinfallibility. According to the hadith, the verse on naskh was revealed as a result of the Jewish attack on Muhammad, whom they accused of abrogating one legal ruling by another. Thus, the hadith denies the infallibility of Muhammad, which is an important doctrine in consolidating his prophethood. 75 Such an argument was in spite of 'Abduh's acceptance of the theory of naskh, for although 'Abduh accepted the latter, he practically denied the repeal of any verses of the Our'an. Instead, he tried to harmonize the so-called contradictory verses and warned against an easy and swift acceptance of certain Our inic verses as abrogated.

The controversy over *anskh* is discussed by Chalil at considerable length. He expresses his belief that if *anskh* were recognized as a valid device in the deduction of rulings, it would produce distorted results. Interestingly, his rejection is not forthrightly declared. Rather, he surveys a variety of sources, from which he extracts the opinions of those who were for or against it. He then detects that even among those who favored *anskh* a considerable dispute still occurred. Some of these scholars came to believe that *anskh* applied only to the ruling in question, while the wording of the verses remained unabrogated (anskh al-bukm dūna al-tilāwah). Some other scholars applied the principle of anskh to both the ruling and the wording. In his discussion of the issue, Chalil does not mention the method of abrogating the wording but not the ruling (anskh al-tilāwah dūna al-hukm), because he might have known that the last one was rarely applied. 76 He mentions, however, the disagreement on the number of abrogated verses and the two verses on the

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 191-193.

<sup>75</sup> Chalil. Tutsir Queda Hidaujutur-Ruhmann. vol. 1, 282-283.

basis of which the principle of *maskh* was justified. One of these was *Sūrut al-Baqarah*, 106, already mentioned above, and the other *Sūrut al-Naḥl*, 101, which states that when God substituted one *āyuh* for another. He knew best what He had revealed. 77 It was the practice of Muslim scholars to reduce the number of abrogated verses which had previously reached appalling proportions. Cases in point were al-Suyūṭī, who reduced the number of the abrogated verses from many hundreds to twenty and Shāh Walī Allāh, who reduced them to five only. 78

After delving into the arguments in favor of maskh. Chalil shows the other side of the coin. He does so by emphasizing the opinions of the opponents of maskh, who seemed to reverse the pro-maskh arguments, either by giving a different interpretation to the two verses or by claiming that there was no findith to support the conception of maskh. Indeed, the theory of maskh cannot be traced, as the Prophet is not reported to have provided any information on the existence of the abrogated verses in the Quran If any passage had been actually abrogated, he would have definitely pointed it out to his people. 80

Chalil explains that according to the opponents of *maskh* the verse from *Sürat al-Baquruh* indicates that the *Qur'ān* was sent down to Muḥammad with new rules, ordinances and decrees, which were better than those revealed to the previous Prophets. while the verse from *Sūrat al-Națil* aims at confirming the *mu'jizuh* of the *Qur'ān*. He also presents their ultimate arguments that is if *maskh* pertained to the *Qur'ān*, the *Qur'ān* was then capable of errors. This argument, according to Chalil, contradicts another verse

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>Ibid., the Qur'Za. 16: 101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup>Khālid, "Some Aspects of Neo-Mu'tazilism," 321.

<sup>79</sup> Chalil, Tufsir Qurun Hidunjutur-Ruhmuun, vol. 1, 193

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup>Ahmad Hasan, The Eurly Development of Islamic Jurisprudence (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1970), 67.

which decisively states that no falsehood could approach it (the *Qurlin*) from before or behind.<sup>81</sup>

In debating the issue of *miskh*. Chalil supports his argument with the opinions of Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī, a competent scholar whose rejection of *miskh* was cited by some prominent *mufussirs* such as al-Rāzī. al-Isfahānī was said to have been the only early scholar to have rejected the principle of *miskh* 82 Chalil's rejection of *miskh* was typical of the reformist attitude that the *Qur linic* verses were too lofty to cancel or be canceled by each other. 83 Reformists held that the proponents of *miskh* had depended on unreliable sources and that their division of abrogated verses into several categories, as mentioned above, was simply a product of their imagination. Furthermore, they discounted the arguments provided by the early jurists who saw in *miskh* an element of flexibility, al-Shāfi'ī, for example, explains that God used *miskh* to render the *Shari'nh* responsive to changing conditions. 84

The ambiguous verses (āyāt mutashābihāt) also proved to be a disputed point among the mutassics. This issue has its roots in the Qur ānic passage which states that God revealed to Muhammad verses which were either perspicuous (muhkamāt) and therefore of a fundamental nature, or ambiguous (mutashābihāt).85 The classical mutassics usually regarded any verse which they found to be obscure or admitting of various interpretations as falling into the category of āyāt mutashābihāt. Sometimes the abrogated

<sup>8 1</sup>The Qur'Aa, 41: 32.

<sup>82</sup>Chalil quotes al-Isfahāni's views from the latter's book, Jāmi' ul-Ta'wil. Chalil. Tulsir Qurān Hidaujatur-Ruhmaan, vol. 1, 292; 'Abd al-Laţif Muḥammad al-Subki, Tārīkh ul-Tushri' ul-Islāmī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sharq al-Islāmī), 60.

<sup>83</sup>Chalil's rejection of <u>nāsikh</u> and <u>mansūkh</u> was representative of the stance taken by the *Persis* with which he was associated as the chair of its *Majlis 'Ulamā'*. See "Nasich Mansuch," *Sual-Djawab*, no. 1, 51-54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup>Țāhā Jābir al-'Awānī, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh: Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence* (Herndon, Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1990), 41.

verses, being authoritative neither for belief nor for moral edification, were also reckoned as falling into this category.86

Chalil approaches the question of muhkumār and mutashābihār by first explaining the technical meaning of each term. He defines the former as those verses whose meaning is clearly elucidated, so that no interpretation is required for it. In illustration of this, he cites a verse which states that the Qur ān is the Book of verses with established meaning. 87 Chalil then comes to the conclusion that the muhkumāt verses are amenable to but one interpretation and that they cover various subjects, such as legal rulings, 'ibāduh' and mu'āmalah, which serve as the pillar (sendi) of Islam. 88

In contrast to the *muḥkumāt* verses, the *mutashābihāt* are amenable to more than one interpretation. Consequently, according to Chalil, the *mutashābihāt* are susceptible to misuse, as has been foretold in the verse saying: "As for those in whose heart is deviation, they follow what is *mutashābihāt* in it, desiring dissension (al-fitanh) and desiring the interpretation of it (m'wīlih)"89 Chalil then paraphrases this verse saying that inappropriate interpretation of the *mutashābihāt* could lead people to irresponsible practices. It was against this misuse, he further argues, that the Prophet warned Muslims and advised them to stay away from those who employed the *mutashābihāt* as a means of creating *fitaah* (intrigue). 90 What he was afraid of was basically that some should interpret the *mutashābihāt* without recourse to the *muḥkamāt* verses and pervert the correct signification in order to make them accord with their iniquitous intentions.

Chalil states his belief that God alone has full knowledge of the mutashābihāt. It is, however, important for people to try to understand them (by means of the muhkumāt

<sup>86</sup>Cited from al-Tabari in Baljon's Modern Muslim Korna laterpretation. 51.

<sup>87</sup> Chalil. Al-Qur'un Duri Musa Ke Musa, 48-49; the Qur'un, 11: 1.

<sup>88</sup> Chalil, Al-Qur'un Duri Musu Ke Musu, 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup>The *Qur'iia*. 3: 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ochalil. Al-Qur'un Duri Musu Ke Musu. 49-50.

those possessing knowledge, a keen intellect, mastery of 'ilm ul-Qur'ān (the science of the Qur'ān) and genuine Îmān are capable of undertaking such an arduous task. 91 Chalil also mentions that among the 'ulumā' there were those who limited the knowledge of the munishābihār to God alone. 92 Not surprisingly. Chalil disapproves of this attitude and adopts instead the modernist stance, which rejected any suggestion that the Qur'ān was an obscure book or that contained any superfluous parts.

In the classical period of Islam, much attention was focused on the  $i'j\bar{u}z$  (unparalleled uniqueness) of the  $Qur'\bar{u}n$  which was attributed to its wonderful and superior eloquence. This  $i'j\bar{u}z$  was of the utmost importance in Islamic doctrine, because it was held to prove the divine source of the  $Qur'\bar{u}n$ . Nevertheless, it was not accepted right away and it took quite a long time for the idea to become an established dogma. In fact, it was only in the latter part of the ninth century that the word  $i'j\bar{u}z$  became a fixed technical term, denoting the concept of the inimitability of the  $Qur'\bar{u}n.93$ 

Chalil classified i'jāz or mu'jizāh into two categories. The first was that of hissi (sensory) and the other that of mu'nawī or 'aqlī (rational) miracles. The sensory miracles manifested themselves in phenomena which violated the principles of nature, as perceived by the sensory organs. This category of mu'jizāh was created in order to impress its recipients, who were unprepared for more advanced proofs of prophethood. The other genre of miracle was called ma'nawī or 'aqlī because the people to whom the mu'jizāh was delivered had reached an intellectual level capable of reflecting upon them rationally. Unlike the other Prophets, who mostly received the first type of mu'jizāh. Chalil further

93 Issa J. Boullata, "I'jaz," in Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 7 (ed.) Mircea Eliade (London: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 87.

<sup>9</sup> lHis opinion concerning the capability of the possessors of knowledge to comprehend the mutushābihāt was partly based on the statement in the Qur In. 4: 162.

<sup>92</sup> Chalil, Al-Qur'an Dari Masa Ke Musa. 51; see also Jane Dammen McAulisse. "Quranic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir," in Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'in (ed.) Andrew Rippin (New York: Clarendon Press, 1988). 52.

explains that both types of miracles were attributed to Muḥammad although the second were more numerous than the first.94

Like other reformists, Chalil does not spare much enthusiasm for the hissi qualities attributed to the Our in 95 Nonetheless, he faithfully follows the conventional approach, in which i jūz hissi is discussed at length. He starts by paying attention to the traditional account of the Arabs' inability to match the Our in when they were challenged to do so. He also mentions the verses which invited them to produce something like the Our in, even if it were only ten verses or even one verse. Chalil also retold stories of disbelievers, such as al-Walid Ibn al-Mughīrah and 'Utbah Ibn Rabī'ah, who were affected by the magical power of the Our in when it was recited by the Prophet. 96

To this point, Chalil's discussion of the superb eloquence of the *Qur'în* falls under the heading of *i'nīz hissī* However, after having established the fact that the *Qur'în* was an authentic divine revelation, he moves on to the more important task of enumerating the proofs of the *i'nīz 'aqtī*. In this context, Chalil states that the content of the *Qur'în* was more astounding than its verbal power. The *Qur'în*, he explains, presents a wealth of information on a multitude of subjects, such as moral issues, war, society, the cosmic system, the stars and the planets. 97 His inclination to de-emphasize the *i'nīz hissī* can be deduced, for example, from his commentary on the verse stating that God divided the Red Sea (buhr al-quizūm), saving in the process Mūsā and his people and drowning Fir'awn and his forces. In his interpretation, Chalil argues that at the moment when Mūsā and his people were crossing the Red Sea, the sea was at its lowest tide. This the will (logical interpretation) indicates his inclination not to call attention to an *i'nīz hissī* of the *Qur'în* if there is any way to exercise a the will 98 He was of the opinion that Muḥammad was sent to

<sup>94</sup> Chalil, Al-Qur'un Dari Masa Ke Musa, 59-60.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 60; Baljon, Modera Muslim Korna Interpretation, 37.

<sup>96</sup> Chalil, Al-Qur'an Dari Masa Ke Masa, 60-64. 97 Ibid. 71-79.

<sup>98</sup> Chalil, Tufsir Quran Hidanjacur-Rahmana, vol. 1, 171.

the whole world and for all the nations. Therefore, God purposefully bestowed on him a rational miracle ('nqli), an eminently human miracle acceptable to all peoples. This miracle was the Our 'an.

The concept of a return to the simplicity of faith, which the modernists always spoke of, received Chalil's unconditional support when interpreting the *Qur'anic* verses pertinent to the issue. Chalil believed that the *Qur'an* follows the principles of simplicity and avoidance of hardship when issuing rules and ordinances. All decrees promulgated by the *Qur'an* contains less rigid and exacting elements. In addition, the *Qur'an* issues its objection to certain existing practices in stages, before finally prohibiting them. For an example of graduality (intendury) fintenshri'), Chalil refers to the ordinance concerning the prohibition of *Khamr*, which was initially objected to, before being pronounced unlawful (hunan). Citing particular verses, Chalil says that the *Qur'an* prohibits man from doing what is beyond his ability and relieves him of the shackles that had previously enchained him. 100 To ask for the details of a divine order is, therefore, condemned by the *Qur'an*, as symbolized in the story of the Jewish people, who repeatedly asked Mūsā to consult God for a detailed description of the cow that was to be slaughtered. 101

According to a *fundith*. Chalil argues, further details regarding a divine order would not only produce complexity, but could also contradict the intention of the *Shuriuh*, which was laid down to preserve the simplicity of religion. 102 Hence, Muḥammad always tried to keep the *Qur'ānic* orders simple by refusing to elaborate upon their specific descriptions. For example, when the verse on *funji* (pilgrimage) was revealed, one of his companions

<sup>99</sup> In order to prohibit alcohol, the *Qur'an* begins by comparing the advantages and disadvantages of alcohol and gambling. It then prohibits praying in a state of stupor and only later comes to an explicit prohibition of alcohol. Chalil, *Al-Qur'an Dari Masu Ke Musu.* 140; Chalil, *Kembali kepada Al-Qur-an dan As-Sunnah* (Djakarta: Bulan Bintang. 1956). 174-175.

<sup>100&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid.,</sub> 140-141.

<sup>101</sup>Chalil. Tufsir Qurān Hidunjutur-Ruhmuna. vol. 1, 212-214.

<sup>102</sup> Chalil cites a hadith which states that the previous peoples perished as a result of asking too many questions and disputing with their prophets. Chalil, Kembuli kepudu Al-Qur-un dan As-Sunnub. 283-284.

asked Muhammad to specify the frequency of performing this duty, but the Prophet declined to answer 103 It was due to this "misconduct" of his suhābah and their intense zeal that the Our In then enjoined the Muslims not to be too assertive and prohibited them from raising too many questions to Muhammad. 104 Nonetheless, Chalil insists that this prohibition does not operate whenever there is any question of taklif (legal obligation). Muslims were in fact encouraged to seek more knowledge about the basics of their religion. Indeed, Chalil mentions that twelve verses were revealed to Muhammad as a result of the questions proposed by his sahābah. 105

Basing himself on the concept of simplicity. Chalil attacks excess in performance of the 'ibadah' and over-concern with the other religious duties. Excessive zeal over one's religious duties creates pressure on human nature and contradicts the very foundations of Islam which, according to Chalil, never intended to suppress human desire, but rather kept itself within human dimensions. 106 Moreover, Chalil expresses his fear that exaggeration of the 'ibādah implies an imperfection in the Qur'ān in failing to provide details. In this regard. Chalil analyzes the verse that prohibits excessive questions and states that it was handed down only after all prescriptions concerning i'tique (belief) and 'amal (conduct) had been completely delivered.  $^{107}$  According to ' $\bar{\mathrm{A}}$ 'ishah's account, Chalil further explains that chapter 5 of the Qur in, which contains the prohibition against excessive questions. was the final chapter revealed to Muhammad. By that time, the Qur in had been revealed in its final format and any addition was an unnecessary accretion and, therefore, heresy, 108

<sup>103</sup>The verse is from the Qur'na. 3: 97; Chalil. Kembuli kepudu Al-Qur-un dun As-Sunauh. 282-283.

<sup>104</sup>The Qur'an. 5: 101.

<sup>105</sup>Chalil. Kembali kepudu Al-Qur-na dua As-Suaanh. 292.

<sup>106</sup>Chalil points out the stories reported by hudiths telling of the Arab practice of refraining from intercourse, eating meat and fat. Ibid., 294-298.

<sup>107</sup>Following the traditional argument on the concept of simplicity, Chalil quotes a number of hudith which basically support the idea that Islam aims at ease not hardship and makes things easier not more difficult. Ibid., 139-141. 108<sub>Ibid., 285.</sub>

Chalil's obsession with proving the greatness of the *Qur'an* led him to affirm that all possible fields of human knowledge could be derived from the *Qur'an*. According to Chalil, not only does the *Qur'an* convey the hidden future and details of the present and the past, but it also contains everything from which modern sciences such as sociology economy, pedagogy, politics and others might be deduced. 109 This is not to say, however, that his *tat'sir* is a *tat'sir* if (scientific exegesis). Indeed, his *tat'sir* is an unfinished work and as such cannot provide conclusive evidence for such an assumption. Although Chalil does not go to any great effort to seek the support of the sciences in expounding the meanings of verses in his *tat'sir*, his strong emphasis on *i'jāz'aqli*, his attempts at reducing the sensational aspects of the *Qur'anic* tales and his rationalization of the disbelief in the idea of excessive supernatural power all hint at a strong preference for *tat'sir'ilmi*.

The notion of relating the *Qur'an* to the sciences was an early phenomenon, although not as old as *Qur'an* exegesis itself. The earliest *rafsir 'ilmi* was attributed to lbn Abi Fadl al-Mursi (d. 1257) who found in the *Qur'an* evidence of most of the arts and technology known in his time. Chalil would have learned of al-Mursi's approach from a report contained in al-Suyūṭī's al-laqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān which served as one of Chalil's main references. 110 Also, his strong adherence to 'Abduh's school of thought had a great influence on Chalil, developing in him the rational outlook which was the most essential ingredient for practitioners of *tafsīr 'ilmī*. 111 A progressive man like Chalil had little difficulty in adopting such a rational outlook, especially as he needed to justify his claim of the Islam's compatibility with modernity. No wonder that Chalil had such high respect for

<sup>109</sup> Chalil, Al-Qur'un Duri Musu Ke Musu, 76-77.

<sup>110</sup> Jansen. The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt. 37-38.

<sup>111</sup> Abduh himself was not among the partisans of tassic 'ilmi, although he always made the texts of the Our in consistent with reason. Even though al-Maraghi rejected scientific exegesis, he considered it useful to employ some modern sciences as a prerequisite to contemporary tassic. Jansen, The Interpretation of the Korun in Modern Egypt. 43: al Dhahabi, al-Tassic wa al-Musassicun, vol. 3, 269.

Tantawi's al-Jawāhir, a controversial "scientific" exegesis which went too far in its scientific speculations. 112

That the *Qur'an* does provide divine "scientific" information did not lead Chalil to accept unconditionally various *hudiths* employed by *muliussics* to legitimize their scientific exegesis. Often these *hudiths* gave information of a medical nature. Such statements from the *hudiths* must have attracted Chalil's attention too. However, he examines them with the intention of suppressing their popularity. He questions the fact that such notions could have been prescribed by the Prophet. For example, he examines one *hudith* which states that "if a fly falls in your container [a plate, dish etc.], immerse it before you pull it out, since one of its wing contains a cure and the other a disease." Chalil admits that the *hudith* is *sahih* (sound), as it is narrated in almost all of the *nl-kurub al-sirah* (six canonical collections of *hudith*) except *Sahih al-Muslim* and has reliable transmitters. 113

Nevertheless, its report about the cure in one of the wings was mythical rather than scientific. No authority could deny the fact that the fly is a very dangerous insect which transmits diseases. 114

By casting doubt upon such reports. Chalil was simultaneously de-mystifying the position of Muhammad. He was neither angel nor God nor demi-god. Chalil always emphasized that Muhammad never ceased to be a human being, whose own personal opinions had no legal religious authority, as he himself once said. 115 To this category of non-religious and personal opinions belong the traditions that constitute what is known as

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 174-175; when the *Qur'ān* states that God designed the sky and made it in seven layers. Chalil argues that the word seven does not imply the plurality of the sky. In his argument, Chalil refers to Tantawi Jawhari's statement. Chalil, *Tufsir Qurān Hidaujatur-Ruhmuun*, vol. 1, 119.

<sup>113</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Benarkah Salah Satu Sajap Lalat Mengandung Obat? 1," Abudi (May, 5; 1960); on the procedure of verifying the reliability of the hudich in question, see Ibn Qutaybah, Kicāb Tu'wil Mukhculif al-Hudich (Mişr: Maţba'at Kurdistān al-Islāmīyah, 1908), 289-290.

<sup>114</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Benarkah Salah Satu Sajap Lalat Mengandung Obat? 2" Abudi (May, 6; 1960).

<sup>115</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Memperingati Pribadi Nabi Muhammad s. a. w. Abudi (November, 15; 1953).

al-fibb al-nabawi. A number of works in this genre, containing information about health care, medication and healing formulas based on Muhammad's personal observations or experience, were circulated among the traditionalists. Chalil's rejection of the scientific values of such *hadith* stemmed from the use of al-ribb al-nabawi literature by the traditionalists. 116 The reformists, on the other hand, considered both tibb (medicine) and hikmah (occult sciences), as practiced by the traditionalists, to be nothing other than magic and therefore unacceptable. This is in spite of the fact that Ibn Qayyim, who was highly esteemed by the reformists, wrote a major work in this discipline known as al-Tibb al-Nabawi. 117

As such, one can declare that Chalil doubted the authority of the hadith sahih (sound hadith) and did not accept it as legally binding when it stood in contradiction with reason. He affirms whenever reason contradicts revelation the former should win out over the latter. He also reiterates that whatever reason agrees with and commands is in conformity with the Shari ah and that whatever reason cannot reject belongs to the Shari ah as well. This was 'Abduh's position too, when contradiction occurred between reason and revelation. In addition, Chalil's attitude towards the hadith suhih was in line with 'Abduh's opinion on its unbinding nature. 'Abduh held that the authority of the hadith suhih was zanni (ambiguous), for it did not go beyond the category of the hadith uhad (a hadith which was reported by individuals and not by a collective audience). 119 It should be stated that Chalil's refusal to accept blindly the medical statements provided by any hadith sahih did not disqualify him from being a partisan of talsir 'ilmi. Muhammad

<sup>116</sup>There are at least two treatises of this kind, to which some traditionalists referred to for personal health care and medication. One of them is written by Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azraq and entitled Tushīl al-Munāfi' sī ul-Tibb wu ul-Ḥikmuh al-Mushtamil 'ulī Shisā' ul-Ajsām wu Kitāb ul-Ruḥmuh (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Mulkīyah, n.d.), and the other is written by al-Suyūṭī and entitled ul-Ruḥmuh sī ul-Tibb wu ul-Ḥikmuh (Miṣr: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, n.d.).

<sup>117</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu," Bijdrugen, 146 (1990), 262.

<sup>118</sup> Moenawar Chalil, Definisi dun Sendi Agumu (Djakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1970) 94-95.

Tawfiq Sidqi, one of the leading advocates of tatsir 'ilmi' and an important columnist for al-Manār, also questioned the intellectual value of some hadīths, which contained medical statements. He did so in his book, Durūs Sunan al-Kā ināt: Muḥāḍarāt Tibbiyah 'Imiyah Islāmīyah. Şidqī, who was himself a medical doctor, did not attribute any scientific value to the hadīth of the fly in spite of his recognition of its soundness. 120

Considering that Chalil's reformist thought was religious in nature, it was axiomatic that he should have attempted to elucidate the *Qur'ān*, which is the basis of the Muslim faith. Chalil's approach in his *cut'sīr* may serve as a "specimen" of the reformist treatment of the *Qur'ān*. The reformists, who always regarded the *Qur'ān* as the chief vehicle for modernizing society, argued that the *Qur'ān* should be explained in the light of reason. Hence, Chalil took that dictum seriously when he tried his utmost to purify the *Qur'ān* of all irrational elements and fantastic stories. His rejection of the *cut'sīrs* of the *sūfīs* and the *nth ni-bid'at* are indicative of his attempts to eradicate any element that could adulterate the noble meaning of the *Qur'ān*. Though he intended to clarify the *Qur'ān's* injunctions using *fundīth* material, he did not hesitate to reject any *fundīth* if its *isnād* was not reliable or its *mutn* contradictory to reason.

Chalil was convinced that the *Qur'nn* was so rich and universal that its message must embrace all aspects of human life. Hence, he believed that the *Qur'nn* can even foretell future scientific discoveries. Moreover, his belief in its universality led him to ascribe to the *Qur'nn's* injunctions the attribute of simplicity. It appears that he availed himself of 'Abduh's opinions and works in the writing of his *talsu*. His discussion of such issues as *anskh*, *muḥkumūt* and *mutushūbihūt* and *i'jūz* indicate that Chalil received his inspiration from the reformist fountain. His rejection of *nuskh*, his interpretation of the

<sup>120</sup> Chalil claims that he consulted Sidqi's book and had received support from Ahmad Ramali, a medical doctor and the chairman of the *Punitin Pertimbangun Kesehutan dan Shur'*. Chalil, "Benarkah Salah Satu Sajap Lalat Mengandung Obat? 2"; Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Korun in Modern Egypt*, 44.

mutashābihāt and his emphasis on i'jāz 'uqlī all give evidence of the rational approach which the reformists consistently adopted in their talsār: