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The Intercessory Role of the Prophet and the Holy Family through the Concept of the *hawd al-kawthar*: A Critical Study of Mahmoud Ayoub's Thoughts

*Havz-ı Kevser Kavramı Üzerinden Peygamber ve Ehl-i Beyt'in Şefaati Rolü: Mahmud Eyub'un
Düşünceleri Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Çalışma*

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Abstract

Mahmoud M. Ayoub has developed an Islamic model of redemption in his works particularly in the *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. By assuming that redemption is fulfillment through suffering, Ayoub has proposed an alternative Islamic model of redemption within the context of intercession (*shafā'ah*) in Twelver Shi'ism. In his opinion, intercession is the direct reward of the sufferings and martyrdom of the Holy Family (*ahl al-bayt*) so they can rescue their devotees from the hell and the God's punishment by this intercessory prerogative. The pool of *al-kawthar*, in Mahmoud Ayoub's model of redemption in Shi'ism, is a symbol of the rewards and favors of the Holy Family and the final vindication of their suffering. This article criticizes Mahmoud Ayoub's thoughts about the exclusive connection between the intercession and suffering in Shi'ism and argues that the intercessory privilege of the Prophet and the Holy Family is because of their high status before God which was stabilized even without their sufferings, however, those sufferings and privations have strengthened their high-ranking position. It means that God will never reject any requests of the Prophet and the Holy Family including their intercession not just because of their endurance of suffering and martyrdom, but because of God's love and respect towards them which has several reasons. Thus, the intercessory prerogative of the Prophet and the Holy Family on the Day of Judgment is an expression of God's feelings towards the Prophet and the Holy Family and demonstrates their high status to the entire creatures. Besides that, intercession's second purpose, which Mahmoud Ayoub also agrees with, is God's favor in order to benefit those who have led a good life but the amount of their evil deeds is more than the level of their good deeds and deserve to be punished. Finally, this article offers that, based on the second purpose of intercession, although the merciful and compassionate God in Twelver Shi'ism is not a passible God, He may have some similarities to what Christianity depicts as a sympathetic, passible God who suffers from the suffering of His people, especially in the works of Jürgen Moltmann.

Keywords: Shi'ism, Intercession, Mahmoud Ayoub, *hawd al-kawthar*, Redemption, Suffering

Öz

Mahmoud M. Ayoub, özellikle *The Redemptive Suffering in Islam* adlı eserlerinde İslami bir kurtuluş modeli geliştirmiştir. Ayoub, kurtuluşun ıstırap yoluyla yerine getirilmesi gerektiğini varsayarak, İsnâaşeriyye'de şefaât bağlamında alternatif bir İslamî kurtuluş modeli önermiştir. Ona göre şefaât, kendilerine inananları cehennemden ve Allah'ın cezasından kurtarabilmeleri için Ehl-i Beyt'in çektiği acıların ve şehadetlerin doğrudan ödülüdür. Mahmoud Ayoub'un Şiilik anlayışındaki kurtuluş modelinde kevser havuzu, Ehl-i Beyt'in ödülleri ve lütuflarının, ayrıca onların çektiği acıların nihai haklılığının bir sembolüdür. Bu makalede, Mahmoud Ayoub'un Şiilik'te şefaât ve ıstırap arasındaki münhasır bağlantı hakkındaki düşünceleri değerlendirilecek ve Hz. Peygamber'in ve Ehl-i Beyt'in şefaât imtiyazının, Allah'ın huzurundaki yüksek statülerinden kaynaklandığı ve onların acıları olmadan bile bu imtiyazın sabit olduğu, ancak bu acıların ve yoksunlukların onların konumlarını güçlendirdiği savunulacaktır. Yani Allah, Hz. Peygamber'in ve Ehl-i Beyt'in şefaât dâhil hiçbir isteğini sadece acılara ve şehadete tahammülleri nedeniyle değil, onlara olan sevgisi ve saygısı gibi çeşitli sebeplerle reddetmeyecektir. Dolayısıyla, Hz. Peygamber'in ve Ehl-i Beyt'in Kıyamet Günü için sahip olduğu şefaât imtiyazı, Allah'ın onlara karşı duygularının bir ifadesidir ve onların bütün mahlûkat içerisindeki yüksek konumunun bir göstergesidir. Bunun yanı sıra, Mahmoud Ayoub'un da kabul ettiği üzere şefaatin ikinci gayesi, Allah'ın lütfuyla, güzel bir hayat sürmüş ancak kötü eylemlerinin miktarı iyiliklerinden fazla olan ve cezayı hak edenlere fayda sağlamasıdır. Son olarak, bu makale, şefaatin ikinci amacına dayanarak, İsnâaşeriyye Şiiliği'ndeki merhametli ve şefkatli Tanrı'nın, hassas bir Tanrı anlamına gelmediğini, ancak Hıristiyanlıkta

özellikle de Jürgen Moltmann'ın eserlerinde geçen kullarının çektiği acılardan dolayı acı çeken sempatik, pasif bir Tanrı tasviri ile bazı benzerlikler gösterebileceğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şiilik, Şefaah, Mahmoud Ayoub, Havz-ı Kevser, Kefaret, Acı Çekme.

Introduction

Mahmoud M. Ayoub (d. 1443/2021) was a very well-respected *Shī'ah* scholar, Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary and the author of several books including *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* and *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* (vol. 1 & 2). Ayoub holds the view that there is no clearly defined doctrine of redemption in Islam, despite the vital role it has in the actual life of the Muslim community,¹ and he tries to develop an Islamic model of redemption. His model of Islamic redemption, which is presented in his work, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, is based on the context of intercession (*shafā'ah*).² It must be noted that in fact, he has portrayed redemption based on a Twelver *Shī'i* view, yet he attributed his model to the whole Islamic view. This article aims to analyze and critically appraise Mahmoud Ayoub's model of redemption in *Shī'ism* which has been connected mostly to the intercessory prerogative of the Prophet and the Holy Family.

Mahmoud Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption originates from his idea of redemptive suffering based on a similar concept found in Christianity. In his view, the salvation of the man will be obtained by intercession, which is a direct reward for the sufferings of the entire family of the Prophet, and of Husayn especially.

In order to determine the intercessory role of the Prophet and the Holy Family through the concept of the *hawd al-kawthar* in Mahmoud Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption and to appraise his theory, these questions must be investigated consecutively in this study:

- What is really meant by the pool of *al-Kawthar* in *Shī'i* belief?
- How Mahmoud Ayoub has portrayed Islamic redemption within the context of intercession?
- Is Mahmoud Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption adaptable to the fundamental teachings of the *Shī'i* eschatology?

¹ Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of in Twelver Shī'ism* (The Hague in the Netherlands: Mouton Publishers, 1978), p. 15.

² *Shafā'ah* (شفاعة) literally means to pair with or to attach something to another similar thing. Rāqib Isfahani writes: “*shafā'ah* is to adhere [or to attach] someone to another who is his/her protector and mostly has been used for attaching of a higher-ranking person to a lower ranking individual” (Isfahani, 2012, 426). Generally, this term is used when an authentic person applies his credit and respected status to change the mind of one who has the authority to punish or forfeit someone.

1. The Pool of *al-kawthar* and its Relation to Redemption in Shī'ism

Al-hawd al-Kawthar is a paradisaical spring where the Qur'an and the Holy Family will meet the Prophet in its proximity, afterwards other believers will come to them. When returning from *hajj al-wadā'* in the *al-Khīf* mosque, the Prophet said, "I will reach the *hawd* ahead of you, then you will come to me at the *hawd*, the pool whose width equals the distance between Bosrāh³ and San'a,⁴ it contains silver goblets as numerous as the stars of the sky".⁵

Allāmah al-Majlisī's *Bihār al-Anwār* describes the *hawd* and its masters in the chapter of *sifāt al-hawd wa sāqih*. One of the traditions that he reports on the authority of the sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Sādiq, portrays the *hawd* like this: "In coolness, it is like camphor (*kāfūr*); its fragrance is that of musk and its taste is that of ginger (*zanjabīl*), sweeter than honey, softer than butter, and clearer than tears...it springs out of Tasnīm and flows through the rivers of the gardens over a bed of rubies".⁶ In this tradition, the Imām affirms that whosoever drinks from the *hawd*'s water will never thirst again for all eternity.

The *hawd al-kawthar* nexus with the man's salvation not only is that the Prophet will intercede for his people in its proximity, which has been mentioned in several traditions, but also permission to drink from its water by the masters of the *hawd* means permission to enter heaven for righteous servants of God or even the sinners who have been interceded by the Prophet and the Holy Family. In this sense, the *hawd al-kawthar* is the symbol of man's salvation in Shī'ism with respect to the sinners and transgressors who have been rescued by intercession and is the symbol of the intercessory role of the Prophet and the Holy Family.⁷ That is why

³ Bosrāh is a city in Syria, which belongs to Dar'ā District.

⁴ The largest city and the capital of the Yemen.

⁵ al-Allāmah al-Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-anwār al-jāmi'at li-durar 'akhbār al'A'immat al-'Aḥār* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', 1983), v. 8, p. 19.

⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷ In 1916, Sayyid Reza Hindi who was a great Shia literate and mystic, wrote a poem that became so popular among the Shī'i community especially in Najaf. The poem, known as *al-Qasidah al-Kawthariyah*, starts with some verses about the exaltation and glory of the Prophet Muhammad and recourse to him. Then it mentions some praiseworthy virtues of the Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the first Imām and the Prophet's son in law and successor. In the middle part of the poem, Sayyid Reza Hindi says:

*'I have done many evil deeds but I represented my case to Haidar [Ali Ibn Abi Talib],
He is my shelter in the life's difficulty and he is my intercessor (shafi') in the Day of Resurrection,
In the light of his spiritual and temporal authority (wilāyah) I have given so many gifts which is impossible
to gratitude,
Those gifts are rendered to me and I will obtain more than I deserve,
Exemption from the biggest fire [hell] and safety from the maximum fear,*

Mahmoud Ayoub titled the sixth chapter of the *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* in which he presents extensively his model of Shi'i redemption within the context of intercession, as *At the Pool of al-Kawthar*.

2. Mahmoud Ayoub's Model of Redemption in Shi'ism

Ayoub determines two types of Islamic redemption. Islamic redemption in the first meaning is what people do with their own sin through repentance, expiation, worship, and sharing their wealth with the poor in order to compensate for what they have done wrongly.⁸ This type of redemption deals with the Islamic concept of expiation or *takfir* of sin, which must be done by the individual himself.

The other type, which he tends to consider as the only legitimate type of Islamic redemption, is that of intercession (*shafā'ah*). Mahmoud Ayoub asserts that the concept of redemption in Shi'i belief is always presented within the context of intercession.⁹ He believes that the Shi'i approach to the idea of redemption, i.e. redemption by intercession, is close to the Christian view. In this regard, he asserts that: "the proximity of the Shi'i view to that of Christianity is perhaps due to the fact that both accept a mediator between man and God, one whose essential being and place in human history plays a determining role in the divine plan for creation, revelation, and salvation".¹⁰

To provide an overview it must be considered that Mahmoud Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption is based on the human suffering and death where the mythological idea of redemption was born.¹¹ But to be more precise, he emphasizes that the sufferings of the Holy Family of Muhammad are connected to the high status of its members on the Day of Judgment and the salvation of their devotees.¹² Mahmoud Ayoub asserts that: "the intercessory prerogative of the *imāms* is dependent upon their patient endurance of privation, rejection, and persecution".¹³ In his model, intercession (*shafā'ah*) is the reward of the *ahl al-bayt*'s sufferings and martyrdom so by this intercessory power they can rescue their devotees from the hell and God's punishment. A reward by which the Prophet and his descendants can save anyone in whose heart is the love of the Holy Family from fires of the hell. Hence, Shi'i belief hopefully explores redemption within the context of intercession. Although Ayoub connects the intercession to the high

Will he [Ali Ibn Abi Talib] prevent me to drink from the pool of al-Kawthar while he has the control over it?

⁸ Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, Edited by Irfan A. Omar (New York, Orbis Books, 2007), p. 93.

⁹ Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, p. 197.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹¹ Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity*, p. 91.

¹² Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, p. 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

status of the Prophet and the Holy Family, the point he introduces is that this status could be attained exclusively through martyrdom and suffering.¹⁴ The basic theme of Mahmoud Ayoub's model of redemption is that fulfillment in human life can be attained not in spite of, but through, suffering and even death.¹⁵

The pool of *al-Kawthar*, in Mahmoud Ayoub's model of redemption in Shi'ism, is a symbol of the rewards and favors of the Holy Family and the final vindication of their suffering. It is also a symbol of the authority of the Prophet and his descendants and the source of eternal life and relief from hardship on the Day of Resurrection.¹⁶ The blood and tears of all the martyrs, including of the Holy Family and of all who died in the way of God, and even whosoever showed his/her love to the Holy Family by weeping tears or attending the mourning assembly (*majlis*) will be washed by its waters.¹⁷ Thus, all the faithful followers (*Shi'ah*) of the *imāms* will be released from all those distresses and pains in the hereafter because of their devotion to the *imāms* and participation in their sufferings and sorrows.

2.1. Who will be interceded?

Mahmoud Ayoub's depiction of the people who deserve to drink from the pool is somewhat ambiguous. Once he reports a narration that implies that many will be turned away from the pool of *al-Kawthar* at first but when the Prophet sees that among them are some who love the Holy Family, he will intercede for them and God will accept his intercession. Then he mentions a tradition that specifies the spiritual and temporal authority (*walāyah*) of the Imām Ali is a prerequisite to drink from the pool or benefit from the intercession.¹⁸ In another place, Ayoub says, "if we take the large number of *hadiths* known as *ahadith ash shafā'ah*, or the traditions of intercession, we find so clearly the idea that it will be Muhammad who will intercede on behalf not only of the Muslims but the entire world".¹⁹

On the other side, some traditions about who will be interceded imply that the Prophet will intercede for those who have committed major sins, therefore those who are righteous do not need any intercession. Four types of people will be interceded by the Prophet: those who respect and honor the Holy Family, those who fulfill their desires, those who work for sake of them, and those who love them from their hearts and by the tongue.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 205.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁹ Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity*, p. 94.

Contrary to what Mahmoud Ayoub argues that Prophet Muhammad will intercede on behalf of the entire world, the Prophet says, “One who considers the prayers (*salāt, namāz*) to be insignificant and trivial is not from me. By Allāh! He shall never come close to me at the pool of *al-kawthar*”.²⁰ Imām Ja’far al-Sādiq also warns those who are negligent and careless towards the prayers and asserts that: “Our intercession shall never reach one who considers his prayers to be inconsequential and unimportant”.²¹ The reason for placing conditions like prayer for intercession is in Shi’a theology a righteous believer is always between fear and hope, fear of God’s wrath and hope for his mercy, so intercession would not be an excuse or guarantee for those who want to do whatever they want and desire no punishment.

In actuality, the Prophet will intercede for all men and women, not just for Muslims or Shi’ites, because the Qur’an introduces him as a mercy to the entire world (21: 106-107). The Qur’an also describes him as a messenger among people that what they suffer is grievous to him and he is concerned about them (9: 128). The implication of these Qur’anic verses does not belong to any special group or religion; he was merciful even toward his enemies. For example, the way he treated the prisoners of war who have been taken captivated by the battle of *Badr* demonstrates his kindness and generosity to all the people even his enemies. Prophet Muhammad’s kindness and merciful behavior were not only for human beings but also for animals. He forbade his companions to keep the animals hungry or thirsty or injure them. In a tradition on the authority of Abū Hūrairah, Prophet tells an anecdote about a thirsty traveler who came across a well in the desert, so he got inside the well and drank from its water but when he came out he saw a dog licking mud due to thirst. The man got into the well again and carry some water for the dog. At the end of this anecdote, the Prophet points out that this act of kindness has made God’s satisfaction and forgiveness of the traveler’s sins.²² Indeed a Prophet who admires a man, who prepared water for a thirsty dog, shall not prevent people, even sinners, to drink from the pool of *al-kawthar*.

Also, it must be considered that there is no difference between the Prophet and Imām Ali in their intercessory role at the pool of *al-kawthar*, because they both have the intercessory prerogative and they both have the highest position before God in Shi’i view. In the *hadith al-Manzilah*, which is a frequently-narrated tradition (*mutawātir*), the Prophet on several occasions have said about Imām Ali: “You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, except there is no prophet after me”. The Qur’an is introducing Aaron as the successor of Moses and the next Prophet after him, so

²⁰ al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, v. 82, p. 224.

²¹ Shaykh al-Sadūq, Abū Ja’far Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Babawayh, *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih* (Qum: Mu’assisah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1429 A.H), v.1, p. 206.

²² al-Bukhārī, Muhammad ibn Ismā’īl, *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathir, 2002), p. 569.

considering that Prophet Muhammad has denied only the continuance of prophecy, his succession for Imām Ali is confirmed.

There are also narrations in which the Prophet stresses the unity between Ali and himself since they are from the same light. For example, it is quoted from Salmān to have said, "Ali and I were a single light before God. Four thousand years before the creation of Adam, when God created Adam, He placed this light in his loin. Then this light was divided into two, part of this light was placed in Abdullah's loin and the other part was placed in Abū Tālib's loin. Therefore, Ali is from me and I am from Ali. His flesh is my flesh and his blood is my blood. Hence, whoever loves Ali is because he loves me and whoever is hostile to him is my enemy".²³

It means that the Shī'ah belief recognizes both the Prophet and the Imām Ali as the owners and the masters of the pool of *al-kawthar*. The usage of both the terms "hawd e-Nabi" and "hawd e-Ali" in Persian literature is evidence of this view. It must be considered that this emphasis on Imām Ali as the master of the *hawd* does not mean that other *imāms* are not the masters of the *hawd*, but it is because of the great number of traditions indicating Ali as the master of the *hawd al-kawthar*. Furthermore, the conflicts between the Shī'ah and the Sunni on the cooperative role of the Imām Ali beside the Prophet in the process of intercession have increased the motivation of the Shī'ah theologians to this emphasis. Otherwise, Shī'ah doctrine holds that all of the *imāms* are the masters of the pool of *al-kawthar*. One of Imām Husayn's epopees (*rajaz*) in the Battle of Karbalā clearly shows the intercessory role of the *imāms* at the pool of *al-kawthar* where he says, "and we are the masters of the *hawd*, we drink our devotees by a goblet, and that pool for a drink is *kawthar*".²⁴

Also, it should be noticed that for those who follow and love Imām Husayn there is an additional blessing because it is narrated from the Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq that whosoever recites elegy/poetry for Imām Husayn or weeps or makes others weep or even pretends the sorrow on the suffering of Imām Husayn will certainly go to the paradise.²⁵

2.2. Imām Ali as the Master of the Pool of *al-Kawthar* in Shī'i-Sunni Discussions

²³ Shaykh al-Sadūq, Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Babawayh, *al-Khisāl* (Qum: Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1403 A.H.), v. 2, p. 640.

²⁴ Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Muwaffaq b. Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Maliki, *Maqatal al-Husayn* (Qum: Anwār al-Hudā, 2002-3), v. 2, p. 37.

²⁵ Ibn Qūlawayh, Abū'l-Qasem Ja'Far b. Moḥammad b. Ja'far, *Kāmil al-Ziyarat* (Najaf: Dār al-Murtazawi'ah, 1977-8), p. 105.

Intercession as a way of man's salvation does not belong just to the Shi'i piety. Many scholars from the *Ahl al-Sunnah* school of thought also believe in intercession. Muhammad ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) who is one of the famous scholars and narrators of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* narrates on the authority of Abū Hūrairah from the Prophet that, "there is an answered prayer for every prophet, and I am going to reserve my answered prayer for interceding for my *ummah* in the Day of Judgment".²⁶ He has also collected nineteen traditions about the *hawd al-kawthar* in a section under the title: "*bāb un fī al-hawd*".²⁷

Also, Ibn Mājah (d. 273/887) has collected six narrations regarding the *hawd* before the section of intercession in his book *Sunan Ibn Mājah*.²⁸ These narrations in addition to several narrations from the other Sunni scholars show the position of the *hawd al-kawthar* in connection with salvation from the perspective of *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Furthermore, it proves the validity of the general idea of Ayoub about how the Muslim sinners will obtain salvation through intercession. But still, there is no agreement between the Islamic sects on 'who has the authority to intercede' and 'what precisely is necessary for people to win the intercession'.

If we concentrate on Mahmoud Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption, we will find out that while Imām Husayn and his sufferings and martyrdom occupy a very special place in his model, Fātimah al-Zahra and Imām Ali have also very important roles. Fātimah has been depicted in several Shi'i theological texts as a refraction of the divine Muhammadan light (*nūr muhammadi*) whose epithet (*laqab*) al-Zahra (the Radiant One) reflects her intercessory-eschatological role,²⁹ so Ayoub mentions her as the mistress of the Day of Judgment and describes her role in details. Furthermore, Ayoub places Imām Ali as the best of *imāms*, and indeed of all creatures after the Prophet, due to his superiority (*afdaliyyah*) based upon age, seniority, and priority of office, and introduces him as the master of the *hawd al-kawthar*.

As mentioned above, the idea of salvation through drinking from the *hawd* or intercession is agreed by the Shi'ah and the majority of Sunni Islam, but there is no agreement upon the one who is the master of the *hawd*. Contrary to the Shi'i view, the Sunni scholars reject the belief that the *imāms* in addition to the Prophet are masters of the pool of *al-kawthar*, thus we shall briefly review and analyze the arguments of both sides on the one who has the control over the *hawd*.

²⁶ al-Bukhārī, *Sahih al-Bukhārī*, p. 1573.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 1631.

²⁸ Ibn Mājah, Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah al-Rab'ī al-Qazwīnī, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rīfah, 1988. v.4, P. 730.

²⁹ Karen G. Ruffle, *May Fatimah Gather Our Tears: The Mystical and Intercessory Powers of Fatimah al-Zahra in Indo-Persian, Shi'i Devotional Literature and Performance*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30 (2010), p. 387.

Allāmah al-Hillī³⁰ (d. 726/1325) reports a narration on the authority of Ibn Abbas in order to prove that Ali Ibn Abi Talib is the owner of the *hawz*. Ibn Abbas says, “the Prophet said: ‘in the Day of Judgment, Ali is at the *hawz*, no one will enter to the paradise unless the one who will come with a permission by Ali’”. Obviously, this tradition implies that heaven’s admission depends on the acceptance of Imām Ali at the pool of *al-kawthar*,³¹ and he is a judge with absolute authority to identify who deserves to drink from the *hawz* and who does not.

Fazl Ibn Ruzbahān Khūnji (d. 939/1519) rejects the Allāmah’s argument and emphasizes that the Prophet is the only owner of the *hawz*. He asserts that the ownership of the *hawz* by Ali is one of the Shī’ah’s distortions and none of the valid traditions imply that.³²

Then, Muhammad Hasan al-Mūzaffar (d. 1375/1955) replies to Fazl’s claim by quoting some narrations from Sunni sources. In one of them which has been reported on the authority of al-Hakim and has been validated by Ali Ibn Abi Tal’hah, the second Imām, al-Hasan Ibn Ali says to the Mu’āviah Ibn Hudaij that: “you are insulting Ali, I swear to God if you meet him in the Day of Judgment, however, I do not think so, you will find him standing at the Prophet’s *hawz* whilst the hypocrites’ flags will be turned back from him”. Another similar narration from al-Savā’iq on the authority of al-Tabarāni says, “o Ali, in the Day of Judgment you will have a rod from paradisaal rods by which the hypocrites will be derived away”. Moreover, it has been reported in al-Kanz on the authority of al-Tabarāni that Ali Ibn Abi Talib says, “I protect the Prophet’s *hawz* from these infidels and hypocrites by my hand”.³³

3. Appraisal of the Mahmoud Ayoub’s Model

We have met the features, the role, and the masters of *hawz al-kawthar* so far. Now, it is the time to appraise and criticize Ayoub’s model of Islamic redemption through the intercessory role of the Prophet and the Holy Family regarding the concept of the *hawz al-kawthar* in Twelver Shī’ism. So, we should begin with the

³⁰ This part of the article focuses on the views of Allāmah al-Hillī , Fazl ibn Ruzbahān and Muhammad Hasan al-Mūzaffar because Fazl ibn Ruzbahān wrote a book, named as *Ibtal al-Nahj al-Hagh*, to reject the opinions of the Allāmah al-Hillī in his book, *al-Nahj al-Hagh*. Then al-Mūzaffar published *Dalāil al-Sidgh* in response to the Fazl’s refusal in order to deny his polemic arguments.

³¹ Allāmah al-Hillī, al-Hasan ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Mūtahhar. *Nahj al-Haq wa Kashf al-Sidq* (Qum: Manshūrāt Maktabah Basiratī, 1395 A.H), p. 379.

³² Fazl ibn Ruzbahān, *Ibtal Nahj al-Bātil wa Ihmal Kashf al-Atil* (Qum: Manshūrāt Maktabah Basiratī, 1395 A.H), p. 379.

³³ al-Mūzaffar, Muhammad Hasan, *Dalāil al-sidq li-nahj al-haqq* (Qum: Manshūrāt Maktabah Basiratī, 1395 A.H), p. 384.

philosophy behind the Intercessory privilege of the Prophet and the *imāms* and its relation with their sufferings in life. The question to be investigated here is whether the intercessory prerogative of the Prophet and the Holy Family is just because of the rewards for their sufferings and privations, as Mahmoud Ayoub believes, or we can put it in a more comprehensive idea?

As mentioned before, Mahmud Ayoub tries to introduce intercession as the direct reward of the Prophet and the Holy Family's sufferings. Ayoub points out, especially to the great position of the Imām Husayn before God, which leads to acceptance of his intercession on a larger scale, but he goes on: "his [Imām Husayn] status could be attained only through martyrdom".³⁴ He also reports a tradition in which the Prophet says to Imām Husayn, in a short vision-like dream on the morning before the battle of Karbalā: "O Husayn my beloved, behold your father, your mother, and your brother have come to visit me, and they are longing for you. Verily you shall have in the Gardens [of Paradise] high stations which you cannot attain save through martyrdom".³⁵

Nevertheless, it must be considered that Mahmoud Ayoub has committed a fallacy. In fact, the first weakness point/fault of the Ayoub's model is that the intercessory prerogative of the Prophet and the Holy Family is fundamentally related to their high status and respectful position before God, not just the reward of their sufferings. Although trial by suffering and martyrdom is a divine traditional way to determine the level of the man, it is not the only reason for the exalted status of the Holy Family. According to Shī'ī belief, God created the light of the Prophet and the Holy Family before the creation of the world. It means that they were the perfect men, the infallible persons, and the best creature throughout the entire world even before their sufferings and martyrdom. Thus, the Prophet and the Holy Family have a high status before God's throne which has several reasons e.g. infallibility, piety, purity in obedience to God's rules, and other virtues, however, bearing those sufferings and privations have strengthened their high ranking position. But it must also be considered that the efficiency level of enduring suffering to get someone closer to God depends on the sincerity rate of that person.³⁶

On the other hand, there are several narrations, whether in Shī'ah or Sunni resources, that God's wrath or satisfaction depends on the anger or happiness of the Fātimah, while she was alive and had a good life during the period that the Prophet was alive. For example, it is narrated that: "Allāh becomes wrathful for

³⁴ Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, p. 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p 122.

³⁶ In the Qur'anic verse 'Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O the *ahl al-bayt*, and to purify you with [extensive] purification' (33:33), the purity of the Holy Family has been attributed to God's will in the Shī'ah exegesis.

Fātima's anger and is pleased with her pleasure"³⁷ or the Prophet says, "Whoever hurts Fatima, hurts me, and whoever hurts me, hurts Allāh, exalted be His Majesty".³⁸ Hence, the high status of the Prophet and the Holy Family, which means that God never refuse their requests, had been developed in this world even before their sufferings. On various occasions when the *imāms* were asking God for something it would definitely have been accepted and happened by God's will. Intercession is also a request of the Prophet and the Holy Family from God which will be happened on the Day of Resurrection, but it must be considered that God never refuse their demands even before all those sufferings.

It seems that the intercessory prerogative of the Prophet and the Holy Family and the whole process of the intercession on the Day of Judgment is an expression of God's feelings towards the Prophet and the Holy Family and a demonstration of their high status to the entire creatures including the jinn and the man (*jinn wa ins*). So the exalted station of the *imāms* before the throne of God will be manifested to the entire creation in order to respect them.

Besides that, intercession has a second purpose. On the Day of Judgment, when neither remorse nor repentance of the sinners and transgressors shall avail, intercession is God's favor in order to benefit those who have led a good life but whose balance of good and evil deeds inclines more to the side of the evil than to the side of good.³⁹ In this sense, the merciful God just wants to find an excuse for his sinner servants and help them to escape from the consequences of what they did before. So the intercession originates from the compassion and sympathy of God for his poor and helpless servants. It can be understood from here that in Shi'i belief, Allāh is not just an emotionless and indifferent God, but His love and sympathy for all His servants even the sinners will make Him insistently search for a way to save them. However this merciful and compassionate God in Twelver Shi'ism is not a passible God, He may have some similarities to what Christianity depicts as a sympathetic, passible God who suffers from the suffering of His people, especially in the works of Jürgen Moltmann.

In the 1960s, Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926), the German Reformed theologian and Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen, represented the doctrine of Christian hope in a contemporary academic discussion by publishing his book *Theology of hope: on the ground and the implications of Christian eschatology*. In this book, which gave him international fame, he says, "If, however, the divinity of God is seen in his unchangeableness, immutability, impassibility and unity, then the historic working of this God in the Christ event of the cross and

³⁷ al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, 'Ala al-Din 'Ali ibn 'Abd-al-Malik Husam al-Din, *Kanz al-'Ummāl* (Beirut: Mu'asahah al-Risālah, 1981), v. 12, p. 111.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, p. 214.

resurrection becomes as impossible to assert as does his eschatological promise for the future”.⁴⁰

Moltmann portrays a God’s plan in which we participate in the Trinitarian process of God’s history as well as we participate actively and passively in the suffering of God, so too we will participate in the joy of God wherever we love, pray, and hope. It means that God is the great companion and the fellow sufferer, who understands our emotions and participates in our feelings.⁴¹ Hope and the cross are tied together in Moltmann’s thought and he believes that the Theology of hope is at its heart the core theology of the cross.⁴² In *Theology of hope* he claims that “From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology. . . The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set”.⁴³ On the other side in his next major work, *The Crucified God*, he says, “*Theologia crucis* is not a single chapter in theology, but the key signature for all Christian theology”.⁴⁴ Considering these two statements, Richard Bauckham tries to show how “The Crucified God is a fresh start in Moltmann's theology, substituting the cross for eschatology as the unifying theme in theology”⁴⁵ and finally concludes, “Theology of the cross is the reverse side of the theology of hope, giving it a more profound dimension”.⁴⁶

As mentioned before, Mahmud Ayoub’s theory of redemptive suffering in Islam within the context of intercession is impressed by the doctrine of redemption in Christianity. From Ayoub’s point of view, there are two types of redemption in Christianity. The first type of Christian redemption is a death on the cross, where the cross becomes a prototype of the biblical or more especially the Jewish temple alter.⁴⁷ The Catholic Church introduces this type of redemption as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin.⁴⁸ Mahmoud Ayoub also introduces the second type of Christian

⁴⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row [released by www.religion-online.org], 1965), p. 122.

⁴¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ As the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, Translated by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden from the German (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 225.

⁴² Richard Bauckham, “Moltmann’s Eschatology of the Cross”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30, no. 4 (1977): 301.

⁴³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 72.

⁴⁵ Bauckham, “Moltmann’s Eschatology of the Cross”, 301.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity*, p. 91.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, Joseph (The Interdicasterial Commission appointed by Pope John Paul II, presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger), *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States Catholic Conference: Inc.-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Second Edition, 1997), p. 155.

redemption as the one that characterizes the Eastern Church most notably which is redemption not by death and suffering so much as by victory.⁴⁹

The structure of Mahmoud Ayoub's theory is based on the first type of redemption in Christianity, which helps him to compare it to the sufferings and privation of the Shī'ah *imams*, especially the martyrdom of Imām Husayn. In this regard, the sufferings of Imām Husayn will be directly rewarded by God in intercession, such a reward is similar to what Christians say about how the sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as the compensation of their sins, will be terminated to the Christians redemption. Here is where the apostles and the church proclaim to the world that: 'God's saving plan was accomplished "once for all" by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ'.⁵⁰

But, the second weakness of Ayoub's model is that while he draws comparisons and uses similarities between what actually happened at both Calvary and Karbalā, and also their impacts on human redemption, he never mentions the differences and ignores some of the significant disparities between the claims made by Christians about Jesus Christ and by Shī'ī Islam about the nature of *imāmah*. For example, the Qur'an says, "no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (6:164) which means the sufferings and privation of the *imāms* will not clear other people's sins because no soul will bear the burden of another. In Shī'ah view, the Imām Husayn's martyrdom was because of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*al-Amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*) in order to reform the society. Thus, the martyrdom of Imām Husayn was not just a passive endurance of suffering but was an uprising against oppression and tyranny.

Finally, the third problem with the Ayoub's model is that: On the one hand, Ayoub assumes that where the faith is present (faith in its general sense which is just against the despair and annihilation of death), all sufferings for all people can be considered as being redemptive,⁵¹ which means all the believers who suffered in the life can request for intercession to save the sinners in the Day of Judgment. And on the other hand, Quran says: "no intercessor can plead with Him except by His permission" (10:3) and also "None shall have the power of intercession except one who has received permission (or a promise) from (Allāh) the Most Gracious" (19: 87) which means merely to have faith and to experience suffering in the life will not lead to having the intercession right. Of course, all the sufferings in life will be rewarded by God, but there is no authentic reason to prove Ayoub's claim. The third weakness somehow refers to the first one, but the difference is that it

⁴⁹ Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity*, p. 91.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 146.

⁵¹ Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*, p. 23.

criticizes Ayoub's thoughts regarding the intercession privilege in his model for all people not just for the *ahl al-bayt*.

As it has been explained before, the intercession in Twelver Shi'ism has two sides, i.e. a manifest to the glorification of the high status of the Prophet and the Holy Family before God and a God's sympathy and favor to protect His sinner servants from the fire and punishment. So the Shi'i redemption, instead of suffering, is based on the kindness and reputation of the *imāms* and the mercy of God for which God encourages the believers to be between fear and hope, a fear of punishment and hope of salvation. Thus, the Twelver Shi'i redemption is more close to the Christian theology of hope than the doctrine of redemption in Christianity.

The philosophy behind the *hawd*, therefore, is to comfort the frightened men and women who passed very scary moments before arriving at the *hawd*. In Islamic eschatology, fire is the symbol of punishment so on the contrary water is the symbol of the relive and pacifying of those who have committed sins and on the Day of Judgment will be expected to be sent into the hell. It must be considered that being the symbol of intercession and consultation does not mean that there is no pool filled with water in the reality. Despite what is attributed to the Shi'ah by its opponents about the esoteric interpretation (*ta'wil*), Shi'ah Muslims are loyal to the text's appearance and cannot deny or change the apparent meanings of the texts without rational evidence of authentic narrations from the Prophet and the *imāms*. Hence, Shi'ah Muslims believe in the existence of the pool of *al-kawthar*, which drinking from its water is a symbol of permission to go to paradise for all people, including the righteous and martyrs in addition to those who deserve to be render to the hell but intercession comes to help them. Eventually, when a sinner has been allowed to drink from its water that means he has been permitted by the intercessory privilege of the masters of the *hawd* to go to paradise.

Conclusion

Mahmoud Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption has some strengths and also weaknesses. It helps better understanding of the Twelver Shi'i eschatology and clarifies the intercessory role of the Prophet and the Holy Family through the concept of the *hawd al-kawthar*, which is the symbol of man's salvation. It also helps the upcoming researchers to develop an Islamic model of the theology of hope, based on Shi'i theological teachings, compared to what Jürgen Moltmann and others have done in Christianity. Nevertheless, Ayoub's model of Islamic redemption is not adaptable to the fundamental teachings of Twelver Shi'ism. His model, inspired by the Christian doctrine of redemptive suffering, is based on the mistaken belief that this intercessory prerogative could be attained only through suffering and martyrdom, however, *Shi'ah* Muslims believe that the intercessory

privilege of the Prophet and the Holy Family is because of their high status before God that has several reasons, including their endurance of sufferings. Although the highly respected status of the Holy Family before God already had been stabilized even without those sufferings, their endurance of sufferings and privations have strengthened this high ranking position, which brought them different privileges including intercession. Ultimately, this article concludes that the intercession process on the Day of Judgement is a manifestation of God's love and respect towards the Prophet and the Holy Family in addition to his mercy on the sinners by making a way to rescue them from punishment and the hell.

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