

# The Truth of Redemption and Purification in Islam as Exposed in *What I've Done* Song by Linkin Park

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**Abstract:** Most of Linkin Park's songs and albums raise the singer's or someone's past as well as regrets and disappointment over him or her in the past. This article brings up one of Linkin Park's song *What I've Done* as the song describes a person's regret for his bad past and then trying to find redemption for his mistakes in the past. Now, how are redemption and purification exposed through someone's deep apology of his past? Using qualitative methods by listening, quoting, and analyzing written sources, the paper writers would like to explain and to dissect how a person seeks redemption for all the mistakes he has made and then purifies himself so that he or she does not make the same mistakes anymore. The idea of redemption is in line with wide Islamic meanings in saying phrase of *istighfar*. The matter of purification finds its resemblance with concept of *taharah* in which people should be pure both physically and spiritually to pray before God himself. In conclusion, the idea of redemption and purification shows closed relations with religious perspective in literature. This is meant to reach God as the highest purpose and essence above all who could grant redemption and purity toward human beings.

**Keywords:** Islam, Linkin Park, Purify, Redemption, What I've Done.

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## Introduction

A song is one of the literary works that can be understood by reading and chanting its lyrics. In addition, same thing like poetry, a song usually represents its lyrics writer condition, both physically and mentally. Not just the writer, the singer also needs to be united with the song lyrics she or he sings. *What I've Done* is written by Mike Shinoda and sung by Chester Bennington. The theme of *What I've Done* is admitting to faults of the past and kind of accepting it, moving on, and trying to be something better (SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020). The lyrics are narrated from the perspective of someone who is penitent. Alternatively, put differently, from a moral standpoint meditating on his or her actions that disturb the doer. Thus, his current desire is to clean this slate, as in stop behaving the way he or she has done before. This means that he or she wants to start a new life. It is in order to do something to purify and to be forgiven for his or

her past (Anggraini et al., 2017). The theme of the song, that represent the deep feeling of guilt and seeking for purification, is consistent with Kenneth Burke's theory about guilt. The cycle of guilt-purification-redemption has emphasized condition of victim and mortification as modes of purification. The feeling of regret and guilt because of existence of sins in this world reminding a person about his bad or mistake in the past. Therefore, he or she will not do the same mistakes in the future (Dunlop, 2022; Noselya, 2021). Because nowadays, sometimes people who have done mistake or roughly said as sinner will then act as he or she never did it. This also explains how anxiety pumps up a person's adrenaline to make decision in his or her effort to fight situation. Now, the question is how may the lyrics in *What I've Done* represent deep apology of his past in Islam? The writer would like to seek and to propose how redemption affects anxiety and feel of guilt to find a way for purification. Almost all of Linkin Park songs talk about regret of past, guilt, despair, and

sin. The paper writers believe that redemption and purification in Islam religion is in line with the lyrics in *What I've Done* especially to what is taught in *Al-Qur'an*.

### Method

The paper writers are using qualitative method by deeply understanding and developing theory from Kenneth Burke and the other studies. Written data source like offline and online books, website pages, articles, song reviews, and analyses are used to explain and to find the truth of redemption and purification. The paper writers read carefully the available data source and study, develop theory and studies, and then advance to connect it to reality. The research also explores redemption and purification in matter of Islam alongside with further ideas in psychological indications.

### Results and Discussion

#### Guilt and Sin in Its Connectivity to Past Memories in Linkin Park's song

*What I've Done* is a metal song composed by Linkin Park and is one of the best song of their Minutes to Midnight album. It was placed on the 4<sup>th</sup> place in popular list of Linkin Park song and has been listened 563.856.105 times in Spotify. Although the song is released back in 2007, it is still popular until today. The popularity also remains because the song is used as official soundtrack in *Transformer: Revenge of The Fallen* (Anggraini et al., 2017). The song has a strong pressure of someone who regrets of his past. It is proven by Chester Bennington as the Linkin Park vocalist when he sang it with a very powerful voice especially when he reached the verse (SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020).

In this song, Chester Bennington sang about bad things someone has done in the past. He or she totally regretted the action, wanted to forget it all, and moved on (Fitri Waskita & Rafli, 2019; Noselya, 2021). According to Bennington, the theme of the song is "admitting to your faults of the past and kind of accepting it and moving on and trying to become something better". This song

mainly talks about someone who are about to say farewell to his or her old life. It is done due to full tiring feeling of regret of his or her past. In addition, in the second chance, he or she promises to own self that he or she will not live with regret anymore. Instead, the person will face it, let it go as a bad experience, and pick up the positive side so that he or she can learn to not fall down only because of his or her bad past (Anggraini et al., 2017; Fitri Waskita & Rafli, 2019). If the person chooses to hold it and to stay away from it, this could lead to great feeling of anxiety and haunt the person's life forever. The worst is that it will drive him or her mad. The full lyric of the song is the following;

[Verse 1]

In this farewell  
There's no blood, there's no alibi  
'Cause I've drawn regret  
From the truth of a thousand lies  
So let mercy come and wash away

[Chorus]

What I've done  
I'll face myself  
To cross out what I've become  
Erase myself  
And let go of what I've done

[Verse 2]

Put to rest what you thought of me  
While I clean this slate  
With the hands of uncertainty  
So let mercy come and wash away

[Chorus]

[Bridge]

For what I've done  
I start again  
And whatever pain may come  
Today this ends  
I'm forgiving

[Chorus]

[Outro]

(Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na)  
 What I've done  
 (Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na)  
 Forgiving what I've done  
 (Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na)  
 (Na-na na na) (GeniusMedia, 2015)

The first verse describes a person's tiring condition of guilt and regret of the past. Therefore, the person decides to start the purification progress by forgiving him or herself so that he or she will not be haunted by his or her past. The past itself is unclear in this song, but the album title *Minutes to Midnight* refers to nuclear warfare, otherwise known as the Doomsday Clock. It is a political statement, but could also indicate the pressure the band was under to finish the album (SongFact, 2018). In Islam, the condition when a Muslim people decide to let the past go and then to forgive him or herself is called *ikhlas* or sincerity. Remembering that Islam is the religion of peace and also blessings, it advises people to promote sincerity. The bad conditions of the past must be forgotten to amend the present and then to promote new future aspects of tomorrow (SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020).

The chorus then represents the person's phase of bravery to face all of his or her past instead of forgetting without forgiving at all. It is due to an anxiety the person starts to feel that he or she is no longer his or herself. What the person has done in his past has shaped such burdens for him or her that prohibits him or her to move forward (Fitri Waskita & Rafli, 2019; McAdams et al., 2021). Another message other than facing the past bravely and indicating self-forgiveness is about man vs nature. Humanity is portrayed as destructive to both the earth and its inhabitants. This portrayal of humankind is ironic. Humans usually regard themselves as the saviours of the Earth. However, as Linkin Park's video depicts, humans are the cause of world disasters. Humans caused issues of

poverty and hunger, war, terrorism, environmental and public health matters. Major war criminals such as Stalin and Hitler were also showcased. Although first verse mentions "*There's no blood...*", it does not mean the actual blood (SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020). It depicts the person's will to move to better way of life. It was also supported by the words "*... there's no alibi*", because it explain that the person have no time and nothing to make as an alibi. He or she has no other reason beside keeps moving forward. It means that the person has a very strong will to change into better life (Dunlop, 2022; McAdams et al., 2021). It becomes stronger furthermore until nothing can stop him or her besides God himself who gives mercy afterwards.

The second verse, especially the lyric "*Put to rest what you thought of me*" describes that the person is asking for his or her families and friends to stop all negative thinking aimed at the person. It was all because the person is also trying to fix him or herself from the bad past that almost haunted him or her permanently (Anggraini et al., 2017; Fitri Waskita & Rafli, 2019). However, he or she also does not know whether it will work or not as depicted in "*With the hands of uncertainty*". The only one knew about the future is only God or Allah Subhanahu wa ta'alla. Negative thinking in Islam is known as *suudzon* and it can be caused by past trauma or a mental condition called as paranoid (Al-Askari, 2022).

Then at the bridge part, he or she actually made it to start the new book of life in which no regret can let the person down. If the past starts to come to haunt the person again, he or she has already prepared because of self-forgiveness he or she has, and of course, the bravery that makes the person to be tougher than ever (Cox et al., 2019; McAdams et al., 2001). The lyric "*And whatever pain may come, today this ends*" signify the end of the person's anxiety in order to go a better way and just start the new book of life. The person at last starts to forgive him or herself alongside with its impacts to surroundings. He or she knows that the temptation will never end either. However, at least he or she indicates that high self-esteem must be obtained to support his or her further better life (McAdams et al., 2001, 2021; SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020).

### Redemption and Purification in Kenneth Burke, Al-Qur'an, and Hadist

According to Kenneth Burke's theory, any means whereby guilt is absolved is purification. Purification is the fulcrum of the process of guilt-purification-redemption. In Burke's theory, guilt is inherent in human nature, and redemption is the result of the process of purification. The cleansing of guilt must be contrived in a manner consistent with the source of that guilt. Burke defined condition of victim as "purification by sacrifice, by vicarious atonement, unburdening of guilt within by transference to chosen vessels without" (Dunlop, 2022). So in short, condition of victim is transference of guilt to a scapegoat. While condition of victim absolves guilt "homicidally," in the slaying of the scapegoat, mortification absolves guilt as suicidal, in self-punishment and self-denial. These two modes of purification are closely related, because while condition of victim is the mortification of the other (the scapegoat), mortification is the victimizing or scapegoating of the self (McAdams et al., 2021). In Burke's theory, guilt is inherent or permanent in human nature. Exercising oneself in a virtue is a type of mortification. The "perfect" victim is one who has been made worthy due to his or her virtue, and the other one who is too good for this world (Dunlea & Heiphetz, 2021; Scheinbaum et al., 2020).

As the authors noted before, purification is the most important part of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle. It is the fulcrum of the process of movement from guilt to redemption. Redemption is a temporary state at the end of the cycle before it repeats again. Furthermore, redemption as a moment of stasis, the still moment following the fusion and release of a symbol-induced catharsis, or the still moment of vision when, after the furious activity of dialectic, a fusion at a higher level of discourse takes place to produce a perceived unity among many previously discordant ideas and things. Burke sees redemption as a process of rebirth of someone from his or her sin and feel of guilt (Cox et al., 2019; Perlin & Fivush, 2021). For example, when someone done forgiving his or herself from whatever bad things the person has done in the past, he or she will be a better person in the next

day. It is much more like the good smell come from mouth after brushing teeth. The teeth brushing symbolize redemption. Burke says that symbolic rebirth can be provided through a positive view of life such as can be gotten through a feeling of moving forward towards a valuable goal.

The main idea in redemption is being aware of the guilt and would like to get away from it. Being aware then makes people who does bad deeds to stay away from those actions (Dunlop, 2022; McAdams et al., 2001). He or she will promise to him or herself for not repeating the same mistakes again. This is meant to grow up self-esteem inside someone's mind that has been polluted with sin. Moreover, the guilt itself could really be a serious problem in seeing how human's mind could not let go anything he has done before (Dunlea & Heiphetz, 2021; Scheinbaum et al., 2020). By understanding what has been done in the past, present aspect could be dug furthermore to re-shape matter of future times.

Besides redemption, matter of purification is also important psychologically. This is intended to show full intention of human beings to shift attitude from old lifestyle to the true track. Indeed, this idea is not instant at all. Further process must be done consequently and consistently to emphasize what is good and bad in real life. In this case, conscience indeed plays big role to make people understand about directing self to great matter (Dunlea & Heiphetz, 2021; Fitri Waskita & Rafliis, 2019). Even if someone does bad things, conscience will always ask that person to return to the right track. By regarding conscience as matter of own self of truth and voice of God, people should recognize that even he or she is always important for self and surroundings (Delker et al., 2019; Scheinbaum et al., 2020). Being valuable to own self then could direct human beings to understand own position between being part of own consciousness and part of bigger society.

In Islam, purification and redemption have strong connectivity to relation between human and the god (Allah Subhanahu wa ta'alla). Purification in Islam can be done by take a *wudhu*, say *istighfar* (أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ (*astaghfirullah*)), pray *tawbah*, etc. Purification in Islam is called *as taharah*. That is ritual purity from every minor and major

impurity and defilements. It not only includes cleanliness of body but even clothes, place and all aspects of Muslim's life (MuQeet, 2010). Purity holds an important place in Islam. Being clean is to fulfill half the demands of faith. The remaining half covers all other aspects of faith such as *Shalat*, *Tawaf*, and recite the Holy Qur'an (Elias, 2022). Cleanliness is a condition in which without it the obligations are invalid. It is said that purity is half of the faith and without it then a Muslim's faith will be incomplete (Al-Askari, 2022).

A Muslim achieves redemption in Islam by keeping him or herself to not doing anything that is contrary to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. In short, a Muslim is not allowed to do anything that said to be *haram* according to Holy Qur'an, the words of the Messenger of God (*sabda* Rasulullah), and *hadith* (Majah, 2022). Redemption can also be achieved by carrying out obligations and doing *sunnah*. *Sunnah* means the way of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) he said, did, and approved. The *Sunnah* are indicated from the statements called Hadiths that have been handed down from the Companions of the Prophet (Elias, 2022; IslamOnline, 2022). According to Islamic jurists, the *Sunnah* is second to *fard*. *Fard* means something is obligatory and must be done; to neglect it without any excuse is a sin. The *Sunnah* is divided into confirmed (*sunnah mu'akkadah*) and optional (*sunnah ghair mu'akkadah*). The confirmed *Sunnah* also should not be neglected, though it is not as important as the *fard*. The optional *sunnah* is recommended, but if someone neglects it, there is no sin or blame on that person. Redemption in Islam called as *Tawbah*. *Tawbah* or repentance means regretting the sins committed and making amends for sins according to the teachings in the Qur'an. *Tawbah* is normal and must be done by a Muslim when he realizes how big and many sins he has committed (Elias, 2022).

Purity is the key to prayer. Spiritual *taharah* means being free from sin. It is as important as physical cleanliness. Before a person stands before God in the special connection of a prayer, he must ensure that his heart is free from sin, arrogance, and hypocrisy. Almighty Allah revealed the verse; "O people of the Prophet's House! Allah intends but to

remove all sorts of uncleanness and blemish from you and to purify you with a thorough purification." (Surah al-Ahzaab, 33:33). A Muslim is considered good depends upon the purification of his or her hearts in this life. He or she must purify his or her heart from spiritual sins such as greed, malice, envy, arrogance, and worldliness. In their place, a Muslim must adorn the heart with spiritual virtues such as generosity, compassion, benevolence, humility, and asceticism. In addition, Allah said: "He has succeeded who purifies the soul, and he has failed who corrupts the soul." (Surah Asy-Syams, 91:9-10). Those two verses explain that as a Muslim, law of purity and cleanliness is obligatory or a must for every Muslim, especially when a Muslim is about to pray.

Apart from that, it does not mean that someone can pollute own self. There are jobs that inevitably require people to come into direct contact with *hadast*, such as a farmer, animal husbandry, machine mechanic, butcher, and so on. Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him), said, "The five prayers, Friday to Friday, and Ramadan to Ramadan will expiate the sins committed between them, as long as major sins are avoided." (Sahih Muslim 233). In Islam, there is one month that said to be full of mercy and happiness that every Muslim, even the *mualaf* (a person who just recently embraced Islam) can receive forgiveness for all of his or her sins. The month is Ramadhan and called the month of Holy Qur'an. Muslim peoples believe that in A.D. 610, the angel Jibril appeared to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) and revealed to him the Quran, the Islamic Holy Book. That revelation, *Laylat Al Qadar* or the Night of Power is believed to have occurred during Ramadhan. Muslims fast during that month as a way to commemorate the revelation of the Quran (Attar, 2022).

### **The Taharah and Tawbah to "Wash Away What I've Done"**

It is a must for a Muslim for *taharah* when he or she was attached with *hadast*, no matter big or small the *hadast* is. *Taharah* is important because it is a condition for performing the five daily-obligated prayers. Islam urged people to be clean at all times

as a healthy status of the body and the public. Allah Subhanahu wa ta'alla said; "Indeed, God loves those who are ever-penitent, and He loves those who purify themselves" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:222) (Mustapha, 2022). *Taharah* is one of the most important thing a Muslim must do before *shalat* either *fard* or *sunnah*. It was narrated that Ibn 'Umar (one of the companion of Prophet Muhammad) said: "The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) said: 'Allah does not accept any prayer without purification, and He does not accept any charity from *ghulul*'". In its general meaning, *ghulul* means taking something unlawful for a person, benefiting from it, and breaching the trust. In a more specific context, it refers to stealing something from war-gains before they are distributed, and to take secretly from what belongs to the public and abusing what belongs to the state (Gülen, 2015).

Apart from how obligatory or how must a Muslim to do *taharah*, there is also a group of people that exempted from *taharah*. They are individuals who are not of sound mind, children (under ten years old), people who unable to remove impurity because of illness or age and people who forgot the status of impurity they were in. *Wudhu* is one of the way of *taharah*. *Wudhu* is a cleansing ritual or ablution that is an important part of purity and cleanliness in Islam before performing worship. It follows a process to wash hands, mouth, nostrils, arms, face, ears, hair and feet. It prepares one mentally and physically ahead of prayer and must therefore be performed correctly (DudleyIndustries, 2020). Before performing *wudhu*, Muslims must read the intention of *wudhu* first. The intention is; "*Nawaitul whuduuna liraf'il hadatsil asghari fardal lillaahi ta'aalaa*" which means "I intend to perform ablution or *wudhu* to remove small hadats *fardhu* because of Allah Ta'ala." Eat anything, drink anything (unless pure water), fart, and touch any kind of hadast (even accidentally) could nullify ablution or *wudhu*. Falling asleep can also invalidate ablution. After a Muslim take a *wudhu*, he or she are expected to be released from small *hadats* that hinder his or her worship activities. Sometimes, there is a condition when a Muslim could not find any source of clean water. This usually happens when a Muslim is in a desert area where water is a scarce resource. In this

condition, a Muslim are allowed to perform *wudhu* using the dust or sand. This is called *tayammum* which in Arabic language means an aim or a purpose. In Islamic Law, it refers to 'aiming for or seeking soil to wipe one's face and hands with the intention of purification and preparing oneself to pray' (Majah, 2022; Saabiq, 2022).

In the song of *What I've Done*, the concept of *taharah* can be seen as the song itself that tells about purification of a person's soul even though the song did not mention Islam. Another way of *taharah* is by shower or *ghusl*. To purify oneself after such an impurity, a Muslim is required to take a shower, called *ghusl*. A person needs to wash their entire body, from head to toe, including their hair (Aslan, 2020). The song also reflects matter of redemption psychologically. The lyrics truly reflect how own self wants to be found again since being lost for a long time (Anggraini et al., 2017). The person tries to understand what he or she has been done in the past and try to amend it furthermore. The understanding of lies through regret then brings in understanding of mercy that wants to be attained (Delker et al., 2019; Scheinbaum et al., 2020). He or she could not do otherwise than apologizing without any further alibi. Indeed, the song is about total honesty that pushes purification to self. He or she knows that self is always uncertain but he or she could not do anything else beside leaving out all the rest and amend the sins (Cox et al., 2019; Perlin & Fivush, 2021; SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020).

The concept of *tawbah* can also be seen in the song as it tells someone whose regret for his or her past and then decide to just stop feel sorry and be the better person in the next opportunity. It is still done although his or her sin's victim feel objected or event unwilling to forgive him or her. In case of *tawbah*, the concept can be found almost along the lyrics. Especially in the chorus and the bridge. *Tawbah* mostly performed by a Muslim when he or she realizes that he or she has done some sins that could not be erased by just take a *wudhu* and then pray *fard*. One of the method of *tawbah* is *salah tawbah* (pray *tawbah*). *Salah tawbah* consist of no more than two *raka'at* and included in *sunnah* prayer. Allah says in Surah Al-Zumar, verse 53; "Say, Oh my servant, the one who has wronged himself,

do not despair from the mercy of Allah, indeed Allah forgives all sins, Indeed he is the oft-forgiving, The Most Merciful (Surah Al-Zumar, 53). A Muslim must keep in his or her mind that *tawbah* is not a plaything or easy-to-take matter. A Muslim has to abandon the sin and to stop doing it immediately or repenting for a sin could not happen (Shahid, 2020). *Tawbah*, according to Al-Maakki, “is not an optional act of religious devotion meant primarily for those who have committed themselves completely to God, but a requirement for the generality of believers”. Unlike other expressions of religious piety, *tawbah* is an essential and inescapable requirement for anyone who surrenders to God. It is not only done merely for repentance of individual sins, but also an all-embracing process of self-purification (Rassool, 2021). Besides, it is intentional as listed in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 222; *Allah loves those who are ever-penitent, and he loves those who purify themselves*”.

### Conclusion

In the lyrics of *What I've Done*, it can be concluded that purification and redemption in Islam have strong bound and connectivity to a Muslim's religion life aspect. *Tahara* and *tawbah* itself also have some condition to be done and have its own way and *niyyah*. Moreover, cleanliness both physically and mentally are parts of faith. In fact, many Muslims have proven this sentence. When their body, mind, and heart is clean, they become more focus or *khusyu'* when praying. In addition, Muslim is a peaceful religion that includes peace of mind and body. As purification (*taharah*) and redemption (*tawbah*) itself make body clean and healthy as it washes away any kind of dirt either outside (body) or inside (mind and soul).

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest concerning the publication of this article.

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