

Some Answered Questions, Free Will and Predestination

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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Free Will and Predestination

Question: When an action which someone will perform becomes the object of God's knowledge and is recorded in the "Guarded Tablet" of destiny, is it possible to resist it?

Answer: The knowledge of a thing is not the cause of its occurrence; for the essential knowledge of God encompasses the realities of all things both before and after they come to exist, but it is not the cause of their existence. This is an expression of the perfection of God.

As to the pronouncements which, through divine revelation, have issued from the Prophets regarding the advent of the Promised One of the Torah, these likewise were not the cause of Christ's appearance. But the hidden mysteries of the days to come were revealed to the Prophets, who thus became acquainted with future events and who proclaimed them in turn. This knowledge and proclamation were not the cause of the occurrence of these events. For instance, tonight everyone knows that in seven hours the sun will rise, but this common knowledge does not cause the appearance and rising of the sun.

Likewise, God's knowledge in the contingent world does not produce the forms of things. Rather, that knowledge is freed from the distinctions of past, present, and future, and is identical with the realization of all things without being the cause of that realization.

In the same way, the record and mention of a thing in the Scriptures is not the cause of its existence. The Prophets of God were informed through divine revelation that certain events would come to pass. For instance, through divine revelation they came to know that Christ would be martyred, which they in turn proclaimed. Now, did their knowledge and awareness cause the martyrdom of Christ? No: This knowledge is a sign of their perfection and not the cause of His martyrdom.

Through astronomical calculations, the mathematicians determine that at a certain time a solar or lunar eclipse will occur. Surely this prediction is not the cause of the eclipse. This of course is merely an analogy and not an exact image.



TRANSLATION