

Some Answered Questions, The Most Great Infallibility

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



Some Answered Questions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Fifth Edition, page 196

The Most Great Infallibility

It is said in the blessed verse: "He Who is the Dawning-place of God's Cause hath no partner in the Most Great Infallibility. He it is Who, in the kingdom of creation, is the Manifestation of 'He doeth whatsoever He willeth'. God hath reserved this distinction unto His own Self, and ordained for none a share in so sublime and transcendent a station."

Know that infallibility is of two kinds: infallibility in essence and infallibility as an attribute. The same holds true of all other names and attributes: For example, there is the knowledge of the essence of a thing and the knowledge of its attributes. Infallibility in essence is confined to the universal Manifestations of God; for infallibility is an essential requirement of Their reality, and the essential requirement of a thing is inseparable from the thing itself. The rays are an essential requirement of the sun and are inseparable from it; knowledge is an essential requirement of God and is inseparable from Him; power is an essential requirement of God and is likewise inseparable from Him. If it were possible to separate these from Him, He would not be God. If the rays could be separated from the sun, it would not be the sun. Therefore, were one to imagine the Most Great Infallibility being separated from the universal Manifestation of God, He would not be a universal Manifestation and would lack essential perfection.

But infallibility as an attribute is not an essential requirement; rather, it is a ray of the gift of infallibility which shines from the Sun of Truth upon certain hearts and grants them a share and portion thereof. Although these souls are not essentially infallible, yet they are under the care, protection, and unerring guidance of God—which is to say, God guards them from error. Thus there have been many sanctified souls who were not themselves the Daysprings of the Most Great Infallibility, but who have nevertheless been guarded and preserved from error under the shadow of divine care and protection. For they were the channels of divine grace between God and man, and if God did not preserve them from error they would have led all the faithful to fall likewise into error, which would have wholly undermined the foundations of the religion of God and which would be unbecoming and unworthy of His exalted Reality.

To summarize, infallibility in essence is confined to the universal Manifestations of God, and infallibility as an attribute is conferred upon sanctified souls. For instance, the Universal House of Justice, if it be established under the necessary conditions—that is, if it be elected by the entire community—that House of Justice will be under the protection and unerring guidance of God. Should that House of Justice decide, either unanimously or by a majority, upon a matter that is



TRANSLATION

not explicitly recorded in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from error. Now, the members of the House of Justice are not essentially infallible as individuals, but the body of the House of Justice is under the protection and unerring guidance of God: This is called conferred infallibility.

Briefly, Bahá'u'lláh says that "He Who is the Dawning-place of God's Cause" is the manifestation of "He doeth whatsoever He willeth", that this station is reserved to that sanctified Being, and that others receive no share of this essential perfection. That is, since the essential infallibility of the universal Manifestations of God has been established, whatsoever proceeds from Them is identical with the truth and conformable to reality. They are not under the shadow of the former religion. Whatsoever They say is the utterance of God, and whatsoever They do is a righteous deed, and to no believer is given the right to object; rather must he show forth absolute submission in this regard, for the Manifestation of God acts with consummate wisdom, and human minds may be incapable of grasping the hidden wisdom of certain matters. Therefore, whatsoever the universal Manifestation of God says and does is the very essence of wisdom and conformable to reality.

Now, if certain souls fail to grasp the mysteries concealed within a given commandment or action of the True One, they should raise no objection, for the universal Manifestation of God "doeth whatsoever He willeth". How often has it happened that a wise, accomplished, and sagacious person took a course of action, and those who were incapable of grasping its wisdom objected and questioned why he said or did thus. This objection is prompted by ignorance, and the wisdom of that wise man is free and sanctified from error.

In like manner, a skilled physician "doeth whatsoever he willeth" in treating the patient, and the latter has no right to object. Whatsoever the physician may say or do, the same is sound and true, and he must be regarded by all as the embodiment of "He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth." The physician will doubtless prescribe remedies that are at variance with popular notions, but is it permissible for those who have no knowledge of science and medicine to object? No, by God! On the contrary, they must all acquiesce and follow whatsoever the skilled physician prescribes. Thus, the skilled physician "doeth whatsoever he willeth", and the patients have no share in this station. First, the skill of the physician must be ascertained, and once this has been done, he "doeth whatsoever he willeth".

Likewise, a general who is unrivalled in the art of war "doeth whatsoever he willeth" in all that he says or commands, and the same holds true of the ship's captain who masters the art of seafaring, and of the True Educator Who possesses all human perfections: They do whatsoever they will in all that they say and command.

In sum, the meaning of "He doeth whatsoever He willeth" is that if the Manifestation of God issues a command, enforces a law, or performs an action whose wisdom His followers cannot grasp, they should not think for a moment of questioning His words or actions. All souls are under the shadow of the universal Manifestation, must submit to the authority of the religion of God, and are not to deviate so much as a hairsbreadth. Rather, they must conform their every act and deed to the religion of God, and should they deviate from it they will be reproved and held accountable before God. It is certain that they have no share of the station "He doeth whatsoever He willeth", for it is confined to the universal Manifestation of God.

Thus Christ—may my soul be a sacrifice for His sake!—was the embodiment of the words “He doeth whatsoever He willeth”, but His disciples had no share of this station, for they abided under His shadow and were not granted leave to deviate from His will and