

PREDESTINATION, PREORDINANCE, AND FREE-WILL.

There is a tradition that says: "Not even a feather from a sparrow falls to ground, but the hand of God brushes it off."

Whomsoever Thou willest Thou causest to draw nigh unto the Most Great Ocean, and on whomsoever Thou desirest Thou conferrest the honour of recognizing Thy Most Ancient Name. Of all who are in heaven and on earth, none can withstand the operation of Thy sovereign Will.

Baha'u'llah Prayer 50

Convey My greetings to My loved ones, whom God hath singled out for His love, and caused them to achieve their objects. All glory be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

Baha'u'llah G172

Is disease, hardship, injury and the time of our death, subject to the will of man. Or are we predestined to encounter these things?

19. O MY FRIENDS!

Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn, when in those hallowed and blessed surroundings ye were all gathered in My presence beneath the shade of the tree of life, which is planted in the all-glorious paradise? Awe-struck ye listened as I gave utterance to these three most holy words: O friends! Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings. Would ye but sanctify your souls, ye would at this present hour recall that place and those surroundings, and the truth of My utterance should be made evident unto all of you.

Say: This is the sealed and mystic Scroll, the repository of God's irrevocable Decree....In it have We decreed the destinies of all the dwellers of the earth and the denizens of heaven, and written down the knowledge of all things from first to last.

O Shaykh, O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God! By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose.

Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfil. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgment, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal.

LXVIII. O thou who art the fruit of My Tree and the leaf thereof! On thee be My glory and My mercy. Let not thine heart grieve over what hath befallen thee. Wert thou to scan the pages of the Book of Life, thou wouldst, most certainly, discover that which would dissipate thy sorrows and dissolve thine anguish. Know thou, O fruit of My Tree, that the decrees of the Sovereign Ordainer, as related to fate and predestination, are of two kinds. Both are to be obeyed and accepted. The one is irrevocable, the other is, as termed by men, impending. To the former all must unreservedly submit, inasmuch as it is fixed and settled. God, however, is able to alter or repeal it. As the harm that must result from such a change will be greater than if the decree had remained unaltered, all, therefore, should willingly acquiesce in what God hath willed and confidently abide by the same. The decree that is impending, however, is such that prayer and entreaty can succeed in averting it. God grant that thou who art the fruit of My Tree, and they that are associated with thee, may be shielded from its evil consequences.

Be fair in your judgment. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves. Will ye not comprehend? This same truth hath been revealed in all the Scriptures, if ye be of them that understand. Every act ye meditate is as clear to Him as is that act when already accomplished. There is none other God besides Him. His is all creation and its empire. All stands revealed before Him; all is recorded in His holy and hidden Tablets. This fore-knowledge of God, however, should not be regarded as having caused the actions of men, just as your own previous knowledge that a certain event is to occur, or your desire that it should happen, is not and can never be the reason for its occurrence.

Say: O God, my God! Thou hast committed into mine hands a trust from Thee, and hast now according to the good-pleasure of Thy Will called it back to Thyself. It is not for me, who am a handmaid of Thine, to say, whence is this to me or wherefore hath it happened, inasmuch as Thou art glorified in all Thine acts, and art to be obeyed in Thy decree.

Therefore, O ye beloved of God, be not grieved when people stand against you, persecute you, afflict and trouble you and say all manner of evil against you. The darkness will pass away and the light of the manifest signs will appear, the veil will be withdrawn and the Light of Reality will shine forth from the unseen Kingdom of El-Abha. This we inform you before it occurs, so that when the hosts of people arise against you for my love, be not disturbed or troubled; nay, rather, be firm as a mountain, for this

persecution and reviling of the people upon you is a pre-ordained matter. Blessed is the soul who is firm in the path! *Abdul-Baha BWF*

[Rom 9:20...A clay pot does not ask the man who made it, "Why did you make me like this?" After all, the man who makes the pots has the right to use the clay as he wishes, and to make two pots from the same lump of clay, one for special occasions and the other for ordinary use.]

[He will confer particular mercy upon whom He pleaseth.

Koran]

God says in His great Book Quran, "He specializes with His Mercy whomsoever He willeth." That is, God distinguisheth with His bestowal a number of souls and marks them with His own seal of approval. A similar statement is revealed in the Gospel, "Many are called but few are chosen." Now praise be to God that thou art of those "Few." Appreciate thou the value of this bounty, and occupy thy time as much as thou canst in the diffusion of the fragrances of God.

`Abdu'l-Baha in a letter to Howard Colby Ives. Portals to Freedom p249

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure.

LXXVII. And now, concerning thy question regarding the creation of man. Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify to this truth.

The incomparable Creator hath created all men from one same substance, and hath exalted their reality above the rest of His creatures. Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress. We fain would hope that the vernal showers of the bounty of God may cause the flowers of true understanding to spring from the soil of men's hearts, and may wash them from all earthly defilements.

"Nothing can befall us but what God hath destined for us."

Baha'u'llah quoting Muhammad in Seven Valleys p35

10. THE CALAMITIES EXPERIENCED BY THE WORLD AS A DIRECT RESULT
OF IGNORING GOD'S ADMONITIONS. G 218

11. INSPIRATIONAL TEACHING, RELIANCE UPON THE WILL OF GOD AND
ASSISTANCE FROM THE ANGELIC CONCOUSE.
G 280

6. DREAMS. PRECOGNITION OR PREDESTINATION?

We have indeed enabled thee to truly see in thy dream a measure of Our Cause.

The Bab SWOB 48

The phenomenon of the dream as described in the Baha'i Writings makes explicit mention of experiencing, whilst in the dream state, an event ten years before it actually happens. Baha'u'llah describes the world in which we dream as having, "neither beginning nor end".

Verily I say, the human soul is exalted above all egress and regress. It is still, and yet it soareth; it moveth, and yet it is still. It is, in itself, a testimony that beareth witness to the existence of a world that is contingent, as well as to the reality of a world that hath neither beginning nor end. Behold how the dream thou hast dreamed is, after the lapse of many years, re-enacted before thine eyes. Consider how strange is the mystery of the world that appeareth to thee in thy dream. Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelations...

G 161

"How is it that in the outer world thou seest today the effect of a dream when thou didst vision it in the world of sleep some ten years past? Consider the difference between these two worlds and the mysteries which they conceal, that thou mayest attain to divine confirmations and heavenly discoveries and enter the regions of holiness. God the Exalted, hath placed these signs in men, to the end, that philosophers may not deny the mysteries of the life beyond nor belittle that which hath been promised them."

Seven Valleys [Wonderment]

The Titanic Disaster April 14 1912

23 April 1912

Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Parsons
1700 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Notes by Joseph H. Hannen

Today I have been speaking from dawn until now, yet because of love, fellowship and desire to be with you, I have come here to speak again briefly. Within the last few days a terrible event has happened in the world, an event saddening to every heart and grieving every spirit. I refer to the Titanic disaster, in which many of our fellow human beings were drowned, a number of beautiful souls passed beyond this earthly life. Although such an event is indeed regrettable, we must realize that everything which happens is due to some wisdom and that nothing happens without a reason. Therein is a mystery; but whatever the reason and mystery, it was a very sad occurrence, one which brought tears to many eyes and distress to many souls. I was greatly affected by this disaster. Some of those who were lost voyaged on the Cedric with us as far as Naples and afterward sailed upon the other ship. When I think of them, I am very sad indeed. But when I consider this calamity in another aspect, I am consoled by the realization that the worlds of God are infinite; that though they were deprived of this existence, they have other opportunities in the life beyond, even as Christ has said, "In my Father's house are many mansions." They were called away from the temporary and transferred to the eternal; they abandoned this material existence and entered the portals of the spiritual world. Foregoing the pleasures and comforts of the earthly, they now partake of a joy and happiness far more abiding and real, for they have hastened to the Kingdom of God. The mercy of God is infinite, and it is our duty to remember these departed souls in our prayers and supplications that they may draw nearer and nearer to the Source itself.

These human conditions may be likened to the matrix of the mother from which a child is to be born into the spacious outer world. At first the infant finds it very difficult to reconcile itself to its new existence. It cries as if not wishing to be separated from its narrow abode and imagining that life is restricted to that limited space. It is reluctant to leave its home, but nature forces it into this world. Having come into its new conditions, it finds that it has

passed from darkness into a sphere of radiance; from gloomy and restricted surroundings it has been transferred to a spacious and delightful environment. Its nourishment was the blood of the mother; now it finds delicious food to enjoy. Its new life is filled with brightness and beauty; it looks with wonder and delight upon the mountains, meadows and fields of green, the rivers and fountains, the wonderful stars; it breathes the life-quickenning atmosphere; and then it praises God for its release from the confinement of its former condition and attainment to the freedom of a new realm. This analogy expresses the relation of the temporal world to the life hereafter--the transition of the soul of man from darkness and uncertainty to the light and reality of the eternal Kingdom. At first it is very difficult to welcome death, but after attaining its new condition the soul is grateful, for it has been released from the bondage of the limited to enjoy the liberties of the unlimited. It has been freed from a world of sorrow, grief and trials to live in a world of unending bliss and joy. The phenomenal and physical have been abandoned in order that it may attain the opportunities of the ideal and spiritual. Therefore, the souls of those who have passed away from earth and completed their span of mortal pilgrimage in the Titanic disaster have hastened to a world superior to this. They have soared away from these conditions of darkness and dim vision into the realm of light. These are the only considerations which can comfort and console those whom they have left behind.

Furthermore, these events have deeper reasons. Their object and purpose is to teach man certain lessons. We are living in a day of reliance upon material conditions. Men imagine that the great size and strength of a ship, the perfection of machinery or the skill of a navigator will ensure safety, but these disasters sometimes take place that men may know that God is the real Protector. If it be the will of God to protect man, a little ship may escape destruction, whereas the greatest and most perfectly constructed vessel with the best and most skillful navigator may not survive a danger such as was present on the ocean. The purpose is that the people of the world may turn to God, the One Protector; that human souls may rely upon His preservation and know that He is the real safety. These events happen in order that man's faith may be increased and strengthened. Therefore, although we feel sad and disheartened, we must supplicate God to turn our hearts to the Kingdom and pray for these departed souls with faith in His infinite mercy so that, although they have been deprived of this earthly life, they may enjoy

a new existence in the supreme mansions of the Heavenly Father.

Let no one imagine that these words imply that man should not be thorough and careful in his undertakings. God has endowed man with intelligence so that he may safeguard and protect himself. Therefore, he must provide and surround himself with all that scientific skill can produce. He must be deliberate, thoughtful and thorough in his purposes, build the best ship and provide the most experienced captain; yet, withal, let him rely upon God and consider God as the one Keeper. If God protects, nothing can imperil man's safety; and if it be not His will to safeguard, no amount of preparation and precaution will avail.

FREE-WILL Some Answered Questions

This question is one of the most important and abstruse of divine problems. If God wills, another day, at the beginning of dinner, we will undertake the explanation of this subject in detail; now we will explain it briefly, in a few words, as follows. Some things are subject to the free-will of man, such as justice, equity, tyranny, and injustice, as well as all the good and evil actions; it is evident and clear that these actions are, for the most part, left to the will of man. But there are certain things to which man is forced and compelled: such as sleep, death, sickness, decline of power, injuries, and misfortunes; these are not subject to the will of man, and he is not responsible for them, for he is com-pelled to endure them. But in the choice of good and bad actions he is free, and he commits them according to his own will.

For example, if he wishes, he can pass his time in praising God, or he can be occupied with other thoughts. He can be an enkindles light through the fore of the love of God, and a philanthropist loving the world, or he can be a hater of mankind, and engrossed with material things. He can be just or cruel. These actions and these deeds are subject to the control of the will of man himself, consequently he is responsible for them.

Now another question: Man is absolutely helpless and dependent, since might and power belong especially to God. Both exaltation and humiliation depend upon the good pleasure and the will of the Most High.

It is said in the Gospel, that God is like a potter who makes "one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour." Now the honoured vessel has no right to find fault with the potter, saying, Why did you not make me a

precious cup, which is passed from hand to hand? The meaning of this verse is that the states of beings are different. That which is in the lowest state of existence, like the mineral, has no right to complain, saying, O God, why have you not given me the vegetable perfections? In the same way, the plant has no right to complain that it has been deprived of the perfections of the animal world. Also it is not befitting for the animal to complain of the want of the human perfections. No, all these things are perfect in their own degree. The inferior beings as we have said, have neither the right to, nor the fitness for, the states of the superior perfections: no, their progress must be in their own state.

Also the inaction, or the movement of man, depends upon the assistance of God. If he is not aided, he is not able to do either good or evil. But when the help of existence comes from the Generous Lord, he is able to do both good and evil; but if the help is cut off, he remains absolutely helpless. This is why in the Holy Books they speak of the help and assistance of God. So this condition is like that of a ship, which is moved by the power of the wind or steam; if this power ceases, the ship cannot move at all. Nevertheless, the rudder of the ship turns it to either side, and the power of the steam moves it in the desired direction. If it is directed to the east, it goes to the east; or if it is directed to the west, it goes to the west. This motion does not come from the ship; no, it comes from the wind or the steam.

In the same way, in all the action or inaction of man, he receives power from the help of God; but the choice of good or evil belongs to the man himself. So, if a king should appoint some one to be the governor of a city, and should grant him the power of authority, and should show him the paths of justice and injustice according to the laws: - if then this governor should commit injustice, although he should act by the authority and power of the king, the latter would be absolved from injustice. But if he should act with justice, he would do it also through the authority of the king, who would be pleased and satisfied.

That is to say, though the choice of good and evil belongs to man, under all circumstances he is dependent upon the sustaining help of life, which comes from the Omnipotent. The Kingdom of God is very great, and all are captives in the grasp of His power. The servant cannot do anything by his own will; God is powerful, Omnipotent, and the helper of all beings.

This question has become clearly explained. Salutations!