

Defining Infallibility | Reason for Infallibility of Angels

What Is Infallibility? Is the Infallibility of Angels and Humans of the Same Kind?

Infallibility¹ is among those specialized terms that has also entered the lexicon of common people. For example, we often say, "Children are infallible," use the phrase "infallible Imams," or say, "Angels are infallible and sinless beings." But do we mean the same thing by infallibility in all these cases?

Infallibility means being distant and safe from committing sin and error, and more generally, it refers to being pure and innocent. When we say infallible and pure children, we are referring to the general meaning of infallibility. However, in the other two cases, while infallibility still refers to being distant from sins and errors, its nature and origin are different.

Perhaps the questions or ambiguities surrounding the concept of infallibility stem from not knowing these differences; for example, if angels are infallible beings, then why is the human being the noblest of creations?

In this article, we will explain the infallibility of angels and its difference from the infallibility of humans. But before discussing this subject, we must first make a brief reference to the structure and inherent qualities of angels and humans.

What Is the Reason for the Infallibility of Angels?

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In the article "[What Behaviors Do We Share with Other Beings? What Do Humans and Other Beings Have in Common?](#)" we stated that the structure of the human soul is composed of five levels: inanimate, vegetative, animal, intellective, and supra-rational.

In fact, each creature in this world belongs to one of these levels, and depending on its level, it possesses certain inherent qualities and perfections. Each level of existence includes the qualities of its lower levels. For instance, an animal is at the animal level, but it still grows and reproduces like a plant; it has weight and smell like an inanimate object, and it possesses various dimensions.

Angels belong to the intellective level, but they have a major difference from other creatures: Angels are not made of matter at all. For this reason, it is natural that the inanimate, vegetative, and animal qualities, which belong to material beings, do not exist in them. Therefore, they are not affected by the negative consequences of estimative and imaginal qualities that serve as a prelude to committing sins.

Angels are infallible because the capability to commit sin does not exist in them; that is, since they are immaterial beings belonging to the intellective level, they cannot commit sin, nor can they grow and reach the supra-rational level, which is exclusive to humans. So the infallibility of angels is not a matter of choice, but it is a part of their inherent qualities. Hence, there is no heaven or hell for them.

The Difference between the Infallibility of Angels and Humans

Why and how have the Infallibles achieved the status of infallibility? Generally, there are two common answers to this question:

1) The Infallibles do not commit sins because they know the negative consequences and the inner reality of bad deeds.

However, most of the time we also know the negative consequences of our bad deeds, but we still do them. For example, many smokers are aware of the damages of smoking, yet they continue to do so, even when they get to suffer from smoking-related heart disease. Or despite knowing the bad effects of fast food on our bodies, most of us eagerly eat it. Therefore, knowing the reasons for the badness of actions is not enough to avoid errors.

2) The Infallibles do not commit sin because they are not capable of doing so.

Unlike angels, a human being who achieves the status of infallibility has the capability to commit sins. That is, he possesses inanimate, vegetative, and animal levels and qualities that can serve as a platform for committing mistakes and sins. However, his supra-rational dimension is so powerful that it does not allow him to incline towards sin. In previous lessons, we mentioned that when the spiritual or supra-rational dimension controls our soul, we are in a state of human balance. An infallible person has achieved this balance to the point that there is no possibility for him to make mistakes or errors at all.

As a result, the main difference between human infallibility and the infallibility of angels is rooted in the structure of their existence; the infallibility of angels is compulsory and due to their existential structure.

However, the infallibility of the Infallibles is the result of their efforts and endeavors to make the supra-rational dimension rule over other dimensions of existence; therefore, it is a matter of choice. Although the reason for the infallibility of the Infallibles is not awareness of the inner reality of sin, this awareness somehow

affects achieving infallibility and can be the starting point for the human being to give primacy to the supra-rational faculty.

Misconceptions about the Infallibility of Angels

By understanding these differences, the answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the text may become clearer. Now we understand why, despite the infallibility of angels, it is the human being who has achieved the noblest status among creatures. Due to their existential structure, angels do not have the capability to commit sin, and their infallibility is involuntary; this inability makes their infallibility less valuable than that of humans.

A human who achieves the status of infallibility has achieved this position through his own free will and effort. Through practicing *taqwa* (self-restraint), the infallible human has attained such a degree of human or supra-rational power that he never inclines towards committing sin or error and does not lose his human balance. Therefore, unlike angels whose infallibility is an inherent and a *fitri* quality, **the infallible human achieves infallibility by choice, and for this reason, he is in a higher position.**

Now that the existential structure and the reason for the infallibility of angels became clear to us, the misconception of Satan being an angel is immediately dismissed. That is because if Satan were truly an angel, he would not have had the capability to disobey. Therefore, Satan belongs to another category of non-material beings who have free will.

In this article, we defined infallibility. We understood that the infallibility of angels is different in essence from human infallibility. Since the infallible human is completely controlled by the supra-rational faculty, he has reached a state of human balance where it is impossible for him to commit sin and bring about his downfall. Whereas the infallibility of angels depends on their existential structure and is not a matter of choice.