

the infallible action of all of the faculties concerned in the comparison. To call attention at this point to but a single difficulty: By what process can a man infer that one product of his mental activities,—namely, a certain standard,—is entirely independent of a universal condition of fallibility which has been operative in every thought and act throughout his whole life? It will be seen, then, that the affirmative statement, “He is infallible,” involves the declaration, “I am infallible, therefore I know.” The same course of reasoning applies to the Bible.

IV. *Even conceding the infallibility of a man or a book, this furnishes no guarantee that the teachings promulgated can be infallibly interpreted or applied to every-day life; but, on the contrary, the fallibility of man necessarily involves a fallible interpretation and application, and so destroys that very certitude the alleged need for which constitutes the raison d’être for such a revelation.*

As the strength of a chain is measured by the strength of its weakest link, so is the authority of an alleged infallible revelation reduced for each person to the authority of the weakest faculty or power brought into play by him when he tries either to comprehend or to apply it. The greater the emphasis laid upon the necessity for such a revelation, the greater the implied weakness of the link joining the revelation to the understanding of man. Some may say, “Did not God know what He wanted to say, and don’t we know what the language used means?”

Setting aside various readings in manuscripts, translations, and many other difficulties, the truth is, that we do not know the meaning of the language used to that degree of perfect precision which the transfer of infallibility from a book or man to the mind of a disciple would require. Even in the physical sciences, where many terms have been freed from ambiguity almost or quite up to the ideal limit, there is a subjective element involved, not interfering, ordinarily, with the communication of thought, but at times illustrating that language is not a perfect medium for inducing in one mind the state of another. How great the difference between the concept “oxygen” in the mind of an old chemist and in that of a high-school boy who has just witnessed his first experiments with this element! It is true that the word *denotes* the same thing, and so it serves the purpose of identification; but the *connotation*, the full meaning of the term to the two persons, is very different. What is true in physical science applies with even greater force in religion and ethics, where there is less real agreement as to the meaning of many of the terms employed.

Were Christians asked to point out a proposition in the Bible fundamental in religion and destined to be permanent, they would accept “God is love” as such an one. And yet how fluent, and necessarily so, are these terms, “God” and “love!” How different the meaning to a boy of ten and a Hedge or a Martineau, and how inadequate the present