

Then discoveries may be made to us which lie beyond the scope of the object for which the sacred writings are given or which unfold truth that could not minister to our spiritual advancement while we are in the body; or which the soul limited and restrained by the conditions of the present life, could not grasp and appropriate. In saying this we say nothing at variance with the declaration that the Law of the Lord is "perfect."

I proceed to observe that the perfection of Scripture implies^(a) its *infallibility*. The Scriptures "cannot be broken." The Bible makes no statements which contain error. Whether these statements relate to the past, the present, or the future, they are faithful and true. The Bible may tell us of what took place before human history began; it may record the words which God has spoken from time to time for the instruction, consolation, reproof of His servants, or for restraining and infusing fear into His enemies; or it may carry us forward to the time when the earthly history of man shall close, when the dead shall be raised and the living changed, when the judgment shall be set, when the sentence from which lies no appeal shall be pronounced, when eternity shall be entered on and the New Jerusalem, peopled with the countless multitude redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, shall descend from God out of heaven; but whatever be the time or the topic to which Scripture refers, its utterances are all to be received with absolute confidence in their truth. Its histories are true histories, its teachings on doctrine and duty are true teachings, its predictions are true predictions. Not only is the Book in its scope and substance, authentic, but it was free from the error which must have attached to it had it been, as some affirm, a purely human production. In putting forth this claim for immunity from error, I am not forgetting that there are apparent discrepancies arising from comparison of Scripture with Scripture, or of Scripture with uninspired history, or with certain departments of Science—discrepancies which it is not in our power, perhaps, at the present time, entirely to remove. To enter into details here were, in a discourse of this nature, entirely out of place; but I may be permitted to say that in no instance has the Bible been convicted of error; that in many instances a more accurate knowledge of Scripture, and a better acquaintance with the departments of human knowledge supposed to be in conflict with it, have removed seeming opposition, and brought to light most interesting coincidences and harmonies, thus making it more than probable that our defective knowledge, not any errors in Scripture, must account for the discrepancies alleged. The Scriptures have not indeed been supernaturally protected from such slight mistakes as transcribers, in the course of centuries, would inevitably make. But attaching to such mistakes the utmost importance which any opponent of the purity of Scripture would desire, it were ridiculous to affirm that the teachings of the volume are in any appreciable degree affected thereby. And the truth is, that by most diligent use of the materials for constructing the text of Scripture, we may now with confidence pronounce that text to be free from blemish than the text of any ancient classic. But it is not required that we should here enter upon any discussion of this matter. We may boldly say that whatever room there may yet be for the labours of the textual critic, no labours of his are necessary to give the Bible a title to our reverend trust, as declaring to us truth free from all admixture of error, concerning God and man, concerning sin and redemption, concerning the life which now is and that which is to come.

(b) Again the perfection of Scripture implies that we have in it an adequate discovery of the plan of salvation, and an adequate directory in the duties of life. This is much more than mere freedom from error and mistake. We can well conceive that a book should contain no misstatements, no wrong teaching; that its teachings should be good and salutary so far as they go, and that yet it should not convey to us all that we need to learn regarding the matters of supreme interest. It might stop short before the office of a religious guide is accomplished. We can conceive that words should have been spoken to us from Heaven, and yet these words should have contained