

of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:15b-16). Peter here asserts that some parts of Scripture are hard to understand.

But how can Scripture both be clear and plain to the understanding, and contain some things that are difficult to understand? As Louis Berkhof states in his *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (Eerdmans, 1956), p 22:

They [the sixteenth-century Reformers] did not deny that it [the Bible] contains mysteries too deep for human understanding, but simply contended that the knowledge necessary for salvation, though not equally clear on every page of the Bible, is yet conveyed in a manner so simple that anyone earnestly seeking salvation can easily gather this knowledge for himself, and need not depend on the interpretation of the Church or the priesthood.

The Westminster Assembly, meeting in London in 1647, gathered the scriptural truths into a doctrine of perspicuity in their *Confession of Faith*. Chapter 1, section 7, states:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear to all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

This statement distinguishes between the entire content of Scripture and those truths in Scripture which are necessary for salvation. It denies total or equal clarity of the entire content of Scripture both objectively (in itself) and subjectively (to the reader). Objectively, it denies that all parts are equally clear and plain in themselves. Subjectively, it denies that all parts are equally clear to all readers. This statement also affirms sufficient clarity of the truths in Scripture which are necessary to salvation, both objectively (in themselves) and subjectively (to the reader). Objectively, it affirms that these truths are sufficiently clear for the normal understanding, and that they are all revealed in one place or