

another in Scripture. Subjectively, it affirms that these truths are sufficiently clear for both the educated and uneducated, using "ordinary means." These ordinary means include the hearing or reading of Scripture; the use of ordinary mental processes, including simple knowing, thinking, and reasoning; and the accompanying illumination by the Holy Spirit of the spiritual understanding.

If this doctrinal statement is a true representation of scriptural truth, then what does the apostle John mean when he says (1 John 2:27) that "His anointing (i.e., the Holy Spirit's gift of spiritual understanding) teaches you about all things"? In the context of this verse, we discover that John is making a contrast between fallible human teachers and the infallible divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit. John tells his spiritual children that they have no need of final authoritative human interpreters of Scripture, for they have the indwelling divine Interpreter of Scripture. It is not true that the Holy Spirit is able to teach them authoritatively about some things, but that they need authoritative human teachers to teach them the other (perhaps more advanced) things in Scripture; rather the Holy Spirit is their authoritative Teacher in all things. Thus the emphasis is not upon the all-inclusiveness of the teaching which the Holy Spirit's anointing imparts to believers (so that they know everything about everything), but rather the all-sufficiency of the Holy Spirit's anointing to enable believers to understand what God has revealed, so that they have no need of any self-proclaimed infallible human teachers.

This suggests a principle which brings together scriptural statements, doctrinal formulations, and the experiences of believers in regard to the perspicuity of Scripture. Although scriptural truths necessary to salvation are sufficiently clear so that persons with no education in the Scriptures can understand these truths at a very basic and simple level, the other truths of Scripture (together with deeper levels of understanding of the truths necessary to salvation) vary in clarity, both in themselves and to various readers. Consequently the understanding of these truths is dependent upon (1) study, (2) careful observance of the principles of interpretation inherent in Scripture itself, (3) attempts to discover the teachings of individual Scriptures and the teaching of Scripture as a whole, (4) examination of the insights of creeds of godly councils and the writings of godly individuals to whom God has given large measures of understanding, (5) careful thought, and (6) fervent prayer for the further illumination of the Holy Spirit.