

Unlearned and Unstable

2 Peter 3:16 As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, **which they that are unlearned and unstable** wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Which they that are unlearned - The evil here adverted to is that which arises in cases where those without competent knowledge undertake to become expounders of the word of God. It is not said that it is not proper for them to attempt to become instructed by the aid of the sacred writings; but the danger is, that without proper views of interpretation, of language, and of ancient customs, they might be in danger of perverting and abusing certain portions of the writings of Paul.

Intelligence among the people is everywhere in the Bible presumed to be proper in understanding the sacred Scriptures; and ignorance may produce the same effects in interpreting the Bible which it will produce in interpreting other writings.

Every good thing is liable to abuse; but the proper way to correct this evil, and to remove this danger, is not to keep the people in ignorance, or to appoint some one to be an infallible interpreter; it is to remove the ignorance itself by enlightening the people, and rendering them better qualified to understand the sacred oracles. The way to remove error is not to perpetuate ignorance it is to enlighten the mind, so that it may be qualified to appreciate the truth.

And unstable - Who have no settled principles and views. The evil here adverted to is that which arises where those undertake to interpret the Bible who have no established principles. They regard nothing as settled. They have no landmarks set up to guide their inquiries. They have no stability in their character, and of course nothing can be regarded as settled in their methods of interpreting the Bible.

They are under the control of feeling and emotion, and are liable to embrace one opinion to-day, and another directly opposite to-morrow. But the way to prevent This evil is not by attempting to give to a community an authoritative interpretation of the Bible; it is to diffuse abroad just principles, that men may obtain from the Bible an intelligent view of what it means.

(Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Paragraph Structure Modified)