

## FURTHER STATEMENT ON INERRANCY – RELATION TO NOBBY ADDRESS.

I have never used the term “error” with regard to God’s Word. I reject it as a rational concept and definition which does not apply to what God has revealed to us.

To be consistent I also dislike the term “inerrant”. It likewise is a rational concept and definition which is inadequate when applied to the Word of God, particularly when it concentrates attention on minute details to such an extent that the heart and centre of the Scripture does, it seems, become secondary. “Inerrancy” is not a Biblical term, even as “immortality” is not the Biblical term with regard to the soul.

The Biblical term is “truth”, a term which, I believe, gives the Word a richer and fuller dimension than the rational “inerrant”. Here we are ultimately speaking in theological terms which takes us beyond the limitations of reason and of human language. This [is] the thrust of the final sentence of the Thesis of Agreement, VIII:10, “... for Holy Scripture is the book of divine truth which transcends everything called truth by the wise men of this world ...”

At the same time I do accept the positive content and intent of the term “inerrant”, and have always subscribed to the emphasis of the Theses, viz. that “it is an article of faith, and belief in something that is hidden and not obvious”. Th. VIII:10. The fact that it is hidden shows that from a human point of view the Scriptures cannot be proved to be inerrant, as the Theses again state in the same paragraph, “How in such cases it is possible that differing accounts of the same event or the same saying are the true and inerrant report of one and the same fact cannot and need not always be shown by rational harmonization.” From the perspective of God, however, His Word is true – totally! This is the realm of theology – “God-Word” – which we comprehend only by faith.

This is what I thought I had made clear in my Nobby address. It appears, however, that I am accused of stating openly in the two examples given that there are clear cases of error. Again I state emphatically, this is not my position.

Let me try again to explain what I there set out to do. I used the two examples to test the understanding of inerrancy over against those who insist that there can be no contradictions in any form, and at the same time insist that, unless Scripture itself indicates that a statement is figurative, every word or statement must be literally true. What does inerrancy mean to these people when confronted with clear accounts of real events and the precise details do not agree, nor can they be made to agree?

[p. 2] On the basis of cross-examination, as e.g. in a court of law, you cannot prove what the voice of God actually said at Jesus’ Baptism. Nor does it solve anything to say that the disagreement in words only seems so, it is not really so. All we know of God’s original words are what the Scriptures record. Anything beyond this record is speculation and no basis for faith, (not to mention some of the further problems I raised at Nobby).

For myself I do not say that there is error here. I accept both accounts as true, firstly because on the theological as well as rational level there is absolute clarity and agreement as to what God said, and secondly because that is the way the Holy Spirit has given as the record and I accept it as such. Maybe a court of law would reject the evidence because the witnesses could not agree in terms of precise words, but the Church has no difficulty in understanding and accepting the message because the Theses state that inerrancy does not depend on absolute verbal accuracy, neither can we nor need we always harmonize everything in Scripture.

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