

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1 B. THE SCRIPTURES

# The Theses of Agreement and inerrancy

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1. The Theses of Agreement [TA] apply the term 'inerrancy' to the Scriptures. Their intention is to stress the Bible's full authority while taking into account the rich complexity of the Holy Scriptures as fully and entirely Word of God and fully and entirely word of human beings.
2. So although the Theses of Agreement understand 'inerrancy' in its normal sense of freedom from all error and contradiction in both facts and theology, they say that this inerrancy 'cannot be seen with human eyes nor can it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith, a belief in something which is hidden and not obvious' (TA VIII.10).
3. This understanding of inerrancy implies that, although error may *appear* to be present in the Scriptures, it is not really so. The Theses give two examples:
  - Errors which found their way in through deliberate or accidental alterations made by the person or persons who copied the text by hand.
  - The absence of verbal accuracy and uniformity in parallel accounts. For example, the accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew 26:17-29, Mark 14:12-26 and Luke 22:7-22.
4. The Theses also refer to *apparent* errors in other directions. For example, seeming deficiencies which are related to, and caused by, the fact that the holy writers
  - used methods of researching and writing history which were familiar to them and common in their day;
  - employed the language and terminology which people used in those days to speak of nature and the world.

5. These are evidences for the limitations of the human mind. In no way do they invalidate the inerrancy of God's written Word. Instead, they illustrate the servant form of Scripture, which is not interested in technical precision for its own sake. It is rather concerned with making a popular, intelligible presentation which best serves God's saving purposes.
6. We have to remember that it is actually very difficult to give a proper and adequate description of the written Word of God, mainly because we have to do justice to both its human and its divine side, and keep the two together properly. So everyone in the church should be careful not to speak and teach against the church's declared confessional position on inspiration and inerrancy.
7. However, while we should all try to speak as precisely and clearly as possible on the subject, we should deal in love and forbearance with those who struggle to understand and to express themselves adequately. Such an attitude will contribute to the building up of the body of Christ among us in love and peace, through the truth.
8. Some ways of speaking and teaching which are not in keeping with the sound doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Theses of Agreement are to
  - speak of 'errors' in the Holy Scriptures
  - hold that what the Bible clearly says actually is or actually happened may be regarded as what actually is **not** or actually did **not** happen
  - adopt uncritically and propagate the claims of historical criticism. These claims often rest on or lead to an unbiblical scepticism regarding the historical bases of the Christian faith
  - use modern knowledge to judge any biblical statement and to attack the authority of Scripture
  - make faith in the inerrancy of Scripture in any way dependent on human certainty achieved by rational argument and demonstration
  - regard all statements of the Scripture as being of equal value and importance
  - treat the Bible in a way which gives the impression that the Bible's divine authority makes historical investigation unimportant or irrelevant.